

MINUTES

California-Mexico Border Relations Council Meeting

January 31, 2017 | 1:00 pm - 4:30 pm

City of Calexico City Hall Chambers

608 Heber Avenue

Calexico, California 92231

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 PM by Chairman Rodriquez

I. Roll call

The following Council members were present:

- **Secretary Matthew Rodriquez**, California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), Chair
- **International Affairs Liaison Helen Lopez**, representing Director Mark Ghilarducci, California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES)
- **Assistant Secretary Ben De Alba**, representing Secretary Brian Kelly, California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA)
- **Special Assistant Catherine Ohaegbu**, representing Acting Secretary Alexis Podesta, Business Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH) - *via conference line*
- **Director Jeff Scott**, Pacific Southwest Land Division– United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA)
- **Undersecretary Jim Houston**, representing Secretary Karen Ross, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) – *via conference line*
- **Secretary John Laird**, Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) – *via conference line*
- **Chief April Fernandez**, Office of Binational Border Health, representing Secretary Diana Dooley, California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS)

A quorum of the Council members was established.

II. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Rodriquez provided opening remarks and welcomed the public. Chair Rodriquez provided an overview of the agenda, and noted that action items would include voting on approval of the July 12, 2016 Council meeting minutes and the presentation of the Solid Waste and Waste Tire Strategic Plan to Council Members.

III. Vote on Minutes from July 12, 2016 Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Councilmember Laird and seconded by Liaison Lopez. All members in attendance were in favor. No nays. No abstentions. **Minutes were therefore unanimously approved.**

IV. Conflict of Interest Code Adoption

Chair Rodriguez informed councilmembers that since 2011, the Council has been exempt from the requirements of Government Code section 87300, which requires a state agency with decision-making authority and a budget that exceeds \$150,000 to adopt a conflict of interest code. On January 1, 2016, a change to Public Resources Code section 71103 gave the Council authority to award grants when previously, the Secretary for Environmental Protection had that authority. The Budget Trailer Bill for the 2015-16 Fiscal Year appropriated \$300,000 for the support of the Council (AB110, 2015). In July, the Council discussed these changes and thought they may require Council members and their designees to file Form 700's for the Council. In September 2016, the FPPC ultimately determined that because the Council has no designated employees, is made up solely of state agency secretaries and undersecretaries and the Council designees are second in command at state agencies, all of which have full, statewide disclosure requirements, the Council is exempt from filing requirements. The exemption will expire after two years. After two years, the Council can request another exemption.

V. Water Issues at the Border – Updates on the New River and the Tijuana River Valley

Updates on the New River

Jose Angel, Executive Director for the Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board (Region 7 Water Board), provided updates on water issues at the Border, particularly the New River Parkway, the New River Improvement Project (NRIP), and water-related infrastructure issues.

- Executive Director Angel presented an overview of and updates on the New River Parkway, presenting maps of the New River flow from the border to the Salton Sea. The design and documentation for the Parkway are complete, and they are in the process of requesting additional funds that would be needed to complete construction.
- Executive Director Angel presented an update on the New River Improvement Project (NRIP), a project that exists parallel to the New River Parkway project. The NRIP design with 2016 updates now involves a trash screen, pumping station and water conveyance system in Calexico. In September of 2016, the Governor signed legislation appropriating \$1.4M towards the NRIP. This funding will be used for Phase I of the project – design, engineering and environmental permitting of the

project. The Department of Water Resources has prepared a draft scope of work based on existing information provided by Region 7 Water Board and CalEPA.

- Executive Director Angel presented infrastructure problems related to regional border water issues in Region 7 and Mexicali. He started with an overview of water-related infrastructure issues. In 2014, Mexicali experienced several raw sewage bypasses, in which the amount of raw sewage was more than sewage treatment plants could handle, and the raw sewage thus flowed into local waterways and across the border into the United States untreated. The Region 7 Water Board urged USEPA and the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) to address the emerging problems in 2014. In 2015, the Region 7 Water Board discussed emerging problems in Mexicali at an Assembly Committee Oversight Hearing. Subsequently, members of the U.S. Binational Technical Committee (BTC) held a policy meeting. Members include the USEPA, the State of California, Imperial County, Imperial Irrigation District, International Boundary and Water Commission, Comision Nacional del Agua, and Poder Ejecutivo de Baja California. In July of 2015, the North American Development Bank funded an infrastructure study, and in December of 2016, the study findings were discussed by the BTC. The study found that 520 kilometers of aging sewage collectors are set to expire by 2020, and that there is a need for at least 6 vacuum-trucks, replacement of 520 kilometers of pipe, repairs/modifications of all main lift stations, and repair/rehabilitation of Pumping Plants 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8. The consequences of these problems include 5-20 mgd of raw sewage bypasses from Mexicali I and III areas, and 20 mgd from Mexicali II and IV areas. The next steps to addressing these problems is requesting a policy meeting with CalEPA to prioritize funding and establish capital outlay and revenue for binational projects.

Questions and Comments from Council members:

Chair Rodriquez thanked Executive Director Angel, and noted that members of the public were welcome to fill out public comment cards to speak. Chief April Fernandez (CHHS) asked if they have provided a notice regarding the New River threat to public health to the California Department of Health and Human Services Agency yet. Executive Director Angel confirmed that they have provided notification to CHHS.

Updates on the Tijuana River Valley

Melissa Valdovinos, Water Resource Control Engineer for the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Diego Water Board), provided updates on cross-border flow issues at the border affecting the San Diego region and in relation to the work being done by the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team (TRVRT).

- Ms. Valdovinos gave an update that the TRVRT hosted a 3.5-hour public meeting on January 30th, 2017. The meeting highlighted results of a Tijuana River watershed historical ecology study, performed by the San Francisco Estuary Institute. The agenda also included updates on the Border 2020 program, potential climate change impacts, sediment

modeling, as well as pollution prevention and clean-up activities taking place in the watershed.

- Ms. Valdovinos gave an update on the TRVRT Five-Year Action Plan, which includes ten projects:
 1. Reclamation of the Nelson Sloan quarry;
 2. Brown property restoration;
 3. Preparation of a sediment management plan for the Tijuana River valley;
 4. TRVRT mission support;
 5. Targeted sediment and trash removal projects;
 6. Binational water monitoring and assessment project;
 7. Partnering with Mexico on source reduction of sediment and trash;
 8. Channel improvement and trash interception in Stewart's drain;
 9. Climate change and adaptation plan for the estuary and river valley; and
 10. A Tijuana River watershed education/outreach program.

Project updates:

- The TRVRT is about to start the planning phase to potentially move sediment excavated from the valley to the Nelson Sloan quarry, which will be used for its reclamation. The planning phase includes environmental evaluations, permitting, and engineering design.
- The Brown property is a site near the river, where illegal fill was placed to elevate the property in order to reduce flooding risk. The County of San Diego owns the property and recently secured funding for a hydrology study to evaluate impacts that may occur due to removal of the fill.
- The Tijuana River Action Network continues to coordinate large-scale, binational clean-up events. During the 2016 Tijuana River Action Month activities, close to 3,000 volunteers removed 64,000 pounds of trash.
- In December 2016, the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve released a draft document on resilience and adaptation strategies for the River Valley. The goal is to inform coastal decision-makers on how to consider climate change in managing natural resources and infrastructure.
- The TRVRT is currently coordinating education and outreach in San Diego and Mexico. They created a summary document of watershed conditions north of the border, and they made one-page flyers. They would like to conduct outreach in Tijuana with elected officials.
- TRVRT Co-Chair Dave Gibson sent Secretary Rodriguez a letter requesting the CMBRC's assistance in securing funding for four critical projects that strongly support State and regional priorities and would help to alleviate ongoing threats to water quality, sensitive habitats, public health, recreation, and flood control:
 1. Installation and maintenance of trash interceptors in the Tijuana River main channel and Smugglers Gulch;
 2. Reclamation of the former Nelson Sloan quarry for restoration of native upland habitat;
 3. Routine removal, transport, and disposal of sediment and trash from the Goat Canyon sediment basins in Border Field State Park; and

4. Restoration of the Brown property to improve habitat, recreational uses, and hydrologic function.

Questions and Comments from Council members:

Chair Rodriguez thanked Ms. Valdovinos for her presentation and for TRVRT's work, and asked the Council if they had any questions. Undersecretary Houston said he wanted to announce his presence on the phone. Secretary Rodriguez asked if the sedimentation in the Nelson Quarry has increased due to increased rainfall in northern and southern California, and whether that has affected sedimentation in the Valley. Ms. Valdovinos was unsure of the effect on the amount of sedimentation in the Valley. Secretary Rodriguez confirmed that he had received the letter, and although the Council does not have a budget, it would consider the request.

Chair Rodriguez took a moment to welcome Kimberly Barraza from Assembly Member Garcia's office, Olivia Tomas from Congressman Vargas's office, Erik Ortega from the Imperial Irrigation District and Supervisor Renison from Imperial County Board of Supervisors, as well as representatives from Baja California, including Michelle Opaquez, Estephany Martinez, and Belem Avendaño.

VI. Regional Solid Waste Working Group Updates, including Grant Project Updates from WILDCOAST and the Sonoran Institute, and presentation of the Solid Waste and Waste Tire Strategic Plan

WILDCOAST Demonstration Project Update

In 2015, Senate Bill (SB) 83 appropriated \$300,000 from the California Tire Recycling Management Fund to the California Environmental Protection Agency to support the California-Mexico Border Relations Council, which was granted to WILDCOAST and the Sonoran Institute for solid-waste remediation projects along the Border. Fay Crevoshay, WILDCOAST Communications and Policy Director, provided updates on the WILDCOAST demonstration project.

- WILDCOAST is currently cleaning up waste tires from the watershed at three sections of the border. Their goal is to remove the waste tires and to find permanent solutions to this problem. 1-2 million tires are exported to Mexico per year, and waste tires impact over 18,000 acres of land. In May and June of 2016, 3,150 tires were collected.
- WILDCOAST has been focusing collection activities on the Mexican side of the border. They had to wait for a permit to collect the tires, in one instance. The tires were then picked up by either a trash company or Eco Commodities, who would sell them. During the rainy season, they cannot remove the tires from the mud.
- The group meets every 2-3 months. To date, they have picked up almost 18,000 tires, but the tires keep coming. Their process is to spend 3-4 days per area picking

up tires, and then take them to a municipal landfill to a shredder. In order to be reused, waste tires need to be shredded – however, the existing shredder produces pieces that are too large for effective reuse – causing a backlog of tires. The Secretary of the Environment in Baja California (SPA) has therefore given them a permit to accumulate tires. They prefer not to burn them as it is not considered a recycling practice.

- WILDCOAST has been looking for long-term reuse solutions for waste tires. Examples include creating “Tredagain” tire shoes, and using the material as playground material. Pasa/Gen decided to invest in a shredder center. The technology is from China, and they will shred and de-vulcanize the tires, and make slabs for rubber that can be reused for tire shoes (Tredagain) or playground material.
- The demonstration project is set to finish in April 2017. WILDCOAST requested authorization to continue this project until the end of the calendar year. They have spent only one quarter of the funds thus far, and will provide a status report in April.

Questions and Comments from Council members:

Chair Rodriguez thanked Director Crevoshay for her presentation and for WILDCOAST’s work, and asked the Council if they had any questions. Director Jeff Scott asked a question regarding the presentation.

Sonoran Institute Demonstration Project Update

Dr. Francisco Zamora, Director of the Colorado River Delta Program for the Sonoran Institute, provided an update on the Sonoran Institute demonstration project. The Sonoran Institute received \$200,000 from the SB 83 appropriation to conduct a one-year demonstration project to reduce illegal disposal of solid waste in drains that contribute to the pollution of the New River.

- The purposes of the project are to: prepare a Needs Assessment and Action Plan that compiles information on solid waste issues and potential El Niño impacts; perform cleanup activities that address drain sanitation; deliver environmental education to selected schools in the Mexicali region; and disseminate project information and objectives to regional communities. Results to date include: 3,800 cubic meters of solid waste was removed from three drains: Tula, Mexicali and the Colector del Norte. The organization is on track to meet the target of 6,000 cubic meters removed.
- The Sonoran Institute also seeks to rehabilitate these drains into green corridors. The rehabilitation of the International Drain site in Mexicali was successful and the Institute is considering a similar model for the remaining work. After implementation, the Mexicali area has eliminated illegal dumping and the project has proven to be an asset to the community.
- The project is benefiting from collaboration among many government agencies and groups including CalEPA, CalRecycle, Imperial County Health Department,

Calexico Public Works, Comite Civico del Valle, Calexico New River Committee, the International Boundary and Water Commission, City of Calexico, Colorado River Regional Water Quality Control Board.

- Approximately 1,500 students and adults received instruction through the education component, which includes participation in environmental education conferences.
- The social media component of the outreach campaign is set to debut in 2017.
- Phase 2 includes a community engagement initiative titled “*Fluye*.” The model doesn’t work by solely removing trash, so the Institute is working with government agencies and communities. People get involved when they see the benefit of the change. The Institute made a community park that is clean and used by the community in Mexicali. So far, 1,700 tires have been removed. They are on track to reach their target in the next two months.
- For outreach, they have posted a “*Fluye*” billboard in Mexicali where 3,000 people see it per day. They have conducted radio and news outreach, and are visiting schools to work with students and communities on the Mexican side of the border.
- On the California side of the border, most of the New River trash comes from Mexico, but there are also five sites where trash is being dumped domestically. The Institute has been working with Homeland Security. They open the trash screens twice per day to let the trash flow through the New River. The Institute is hoping to install a camera in order to measure the amount of trash crossing the border. There is a lack of awareness as Mexico doesn’t know where the trash ends up.
- A progress report was submitted to CalEPA on January 31, 2017.

Questions and Comments from Council members:

Chair Rodriguez thanked Dr. Zamora for his presentation and for the Sonoran Institute’s encouraging work.

Solid Waste and Waste Tire Strategic Plan Presentation

Mr. Ken DaRosa, Chief Deputy Director of CalRecycle, presented the Solid Waste and Waste Tire Strategic Plan. In 2015, SB 83 mandated the “development of a waste tire abatement plan, which may also provide for the abatement of solid waste, with the appropriate government entities of California and Mexico.”

- The 2015 Budget Act’s accompanying trailer bill (SB 83) establishes the Solid Waste Working Group (SWWG) within the Border Relations Council. The SWWG is tasked to develop and coordinate long-term solutions for problems associated with waste tires, solid waste, and excessive sedimentation along the border, and is focused on problems that degrade valuable estuarine and riparian habitats, and threaten water quality and public health.
- Upon formation (in July 2015), the Working Group was tasked with achieving the following:
 - An update to CalRecycle’s 2009 Tire Flow and 2012 Tire Management Plan studies, including an evaluation of the studies’ recommendations.

- Spending recommendations for the \$300,000 appropriation (Budget Act of 2015) for the Council’s consideration.
- Developing a Strategic Plan to identify short and longer-term clean-up needs, projects, and opportunities, and recommendations on enhancing cooperation amongst agencies and entities with regional interests and roles.
- The Working Group has been successful in achieving, or beginning, several of the requested tasks:
 - Tire Flow Study Update
 - WILDOCOAST and the Sonoran Institute projects
 - Solid Waste and Waste Tire Strategic Plan
- Working Group Membership includes:
 - Alex Rodarte, CalEPA
 - Jose Angel, Colorado River Basin Regional Board
 - David Gibson, San Diego Regional Board
 - Chris Peregrin, Resources Agency, Parks and Recreation
 - Ken DaRsoa, CalRecycle
- The revised Working Group conducted a series of meetings to inform and finalize the Strategic Plan. The topics included:
 - Fundamental market drivers of waste tires and other solid waste streams at the border.
 - Sedimentation drivers, and interactions with other waste streams.
 - Leveraging and enhancing cooperation across borders and levels of government.
 - Sustainable funding mechanisms for addressing waste tires and solid waste.
- The Plan incorporates the knowledge and perspective gathered from the meeting series and includes additional information from other studies, research, and analysis. But it is not an exhaustive examination of the border region.
- The Plan and its recommendation are organized by the Working Group’s specific subject areas:
 - Waste Tires
 - Solid Waste
 - Sedimentation
- The Plan also includes two overarching recommendations relevant to the subject area recommendations and an overall organizational strategy. These are:
 - Identifying a lead entity to coordinate efforts and facilitate communication; and
 - Securing steady and flexible funding sources for ongoing border needs.

Waste Tires:

- The Working Group recognizes that strategies and effective waste tire management programs must address the fundamental drivers of the region’s waste tire issues. Solutions, and regulatory constructs, should include consideration of alternative

and economically viable uses of waste tires, and how best to address source problems of unmanaged waste tires.

- The Working Group finds that addressing fundamental waste tire drivers and encouraging long-term programmatic infrastructure can be facilitated, in part, by improving tracking and existing hauling systems.
- Recommendation #1 is to eliminate gaps in California's Waste Tire Tracking System such as moving to an electronic manifest system, and revising program identification numbers to better track tires through the system to their eventual destination.
- Long-term and sustainable programmatic infrastructure requires four key components including financing, collection systems, processing facilities, and market demand.
- Recommendation #2 is to provide technical assistance to increase waste tire processing infrastructure and market development in Baja California. This could include:
 - Encouraging market infrastructure investments on the border.
 - Disseminating best practices and existing models, such as BECC's Scrap Tire Management Model to create self-sustaining programs.
- Addressing waste tires, and building the components of long-term and sustainable programmatic infrastructure could also be supported by:
 - Recommendation #3 – Increasing tire amnesty events along the border, and inviting Mexican officials to attend and observe these.
 - Recommendation #4 - Supporting the development of standards, and raising awareness for using waste tires in civil engineering projects.
 - Recommendation #5 – Provide expertise and consultation with Mexico on comprehensive tire management programs, including fee-based systems, free market system, government-operated, or producer responsibility system.

Solid Waste:

- Long-term programmatic infrastructure is important, and clean-up efforts only offer temporary solutions. However, the Working Group does find that trash and sediment collection must continue until other practical measures, such as drain cleaning and conservation easements, are developed.
- Recommendation #1 is to increase trash and sediment capture devices and provide for maintenance and operations. These could include:
 - Trash interception booms (e.g., Goat Canyon).
 - Sediment retention basins or weirs to capture sediment and non-floatable trash.
- The Working Group will carefully review the outcomes and recommendations from demonstration projects because these projects can offer models for other clean-up and management efforts.
- Recommendation #2 is to increase capacity for drain cleaning. This could include an effort to:

- Identify funding sources.
- Establish public-private partnerships based on successful demonstration projects.
- Exploring the feasibility of securing donated or surplus equipment for local governments.
- Consistent with the recommendations for waste tire management programs, the Working Group finds that consultation and technical assistance opportunities exist for other materials.
- Recommendation #3 is to formalize a cooperative solid waste management framework between California and Mexico. Management of solid waste streams was not included in the Joint Action Plan for the MOU. An option could be to add an addendum to the 2014 MOU to work on solid waste as a priority action area. California is prepared to:
 - Share program information regarding the State's e-waste program, including overviews of both CalRecycle's and the Department of Toxic Substances Control's roles, program history, and regulations.
 - Provide information on financing and fee mechanisms to support materials management programs.
 - Consultation and information sharing on market development strategies (e.g., loan, grant, and incentive payment programs).
 - Consultation and guidance on effective local government collaboration and support, including the interaction between the state and local enforcement agencies.

Sedimentation:

- The Tijuana Estuary is one of thirty-eight wetlands of international importance that have been identified within the United States. Sedimentation in the Tijuana Valley has negatively impacted the estuarine environment and changed the topography. Sediments and trash are washed downstream from degraded upstream environments. The build-up of sediments affects the ecology of the valley, as sediments and trash collect downstream and traps solid waste. The build-up of material also increases flood risks to infrastructure in the valley.
- Three key watershed areas are impacted:
 - Goat Canyon - Sediment discharged from the Goat Canyon watershed is degrading salt marsh habitats in the valley.
 - Smuggler's Gulch - Sediments from the Smuggler's Gulch watershed contribute to flooding dangers.
 - Los Laureles Canyon - The erosion and sediment build-up harms growth of native species and contributes to the loss of soil.
- Assistance and technical support to the appropriate government agencies in Mexico can lead to upstream erosion prevention measures that over time will lower the need for and the cost of remediation efforts in the US.
- Building upon the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team 5-Year Action Plan, and other sources, the Working Group recommends several restoration and control measures. These include:

- Recommendation #1 – Implementing water quality measures to reduce runoff and erosion. This can be accomplished by:
 - Increasing the number of bio filtration basins (i.e., sediment retention basins) to minimize sediment flow into protected areas.
 - Encouraging road paving and green infrastructure improvements throughout the City of Tijuana as part of storm water control measures.
- Reclamation and restoration projects can also remediate and effectively manage sedimentation.
- Recommendation #2 – Constructing and maintaining green infrastructure to improve water quality through restoration of hydrologic function. Projects could include reclamation of the Nelson Sloan quarry (est. \$17.6M to \$33.5M) and restoration of the Brown Property (est. \$2M for planning and construction).
- Recommendation #3 - Supporting wetland restoration projects in the Tijuana River Valley. Estuary restoration will improve the estuary’s ability to naturally flush sediments from the system and sustainably accommodate relatively higher levels of pollution.

Overarching Recommendations:

- The Working Group has also identified two overarching goals and recommendations relative to communications and reliable funding strategies.
- Recommendation #1 - Designate lead entity to coordinate efforts and facilitate communication. To avoid duplication and maximize coordination a lead entity could serve as the key point of facilitation and communication. This entity could build partnerships and relationships that offer diversity of perspective, help monitor changing waste streams, and maintain focus to sustain efforts. Border 2020 is one possible suggestion for a lead entity.
- California cannot independently resolve all solid waste issues on the border. Both federal governments, Mexican state governments, and local jurisdictional stakeholders must all contribute to planning and funding. One-time, short-term, and sustainable funding are critical elements to achieving these the Plan’s recommendations.
- Recommendation #2 - Secure steady and flexible funding sources for ongoing border needs. Potential funding sources and funding mechanisms include:
 - The California Tire Recycling Management Fund (Tire Fund) - The Tire Fund currently supports two demonstration projects. But the Tire Fund can only support those projects that address risks of waste tires returning to California.
 - AB 1071 (Chapter 585, Statutes of 2015) Supplemental Environmental Projects - Boards, departments, and offices within CalEPA have developed Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) catalogs.
 - Assembly Bill 965 (Chapter 668, Statutes of 2015) - Authorizes the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to consult with the BRC to establish criteria for Prop. 1-funded projects for cross-border urban creeks and watersheds.

Questions and Comments from Council members:

Chair Rodriguez thanked Mr. DaRosa for his work on the Strategic Plan, and asked if the Council had any questions. Seeing no questions, the Chair encouraged Mr. DaRosa to submit the Strategic Plan to the State Legislature.

VII. Update on Zika Virus at the California Mexico Border

Chief April Fernandez, Office of Binational Border Health (OBBH), California Department of Public Health, reported on vector-borne diseases at the border, including Zika.

- Dengue, Chikungunya and Zika are border diseases that can be asymptomatic.
- The number of travel-associated cases of Dengue and Zika in California have increased. In 2015, there were 141 travel-associated cases of Dengue in California, and 179 in 2016. In 2015, there were 17 travel-associated cases of Zika in California, and 335 in 2016. There were 282 cases of travel-associated Chikungunya in California in 2015, and 34 in 2016. From 2015-2017, 157 travel-associated cases of Zika originated from Mexico. Risk of local transmission in California is low, and outreach and education is key.
- The US-Mexico Binational Technical Workgroup (BTWG) through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been addressing these issues. In January, the OBBH and BTWG hosted a US-Mexico Binational Infectious Disease Tabletop Exercise. Composed of federal, state and local public health officials from the United States and Mexico, their two objectives were to exercise the existing Operational Protocol for US-Mexico Binational communication and coordination on disease notifications and outbreaks, and to enhance situational awareness as it relates to surveillance, control, and response activities in the US and Mexico regarding Zika.

Questions and Comments from Council members:

Chair Rodriguez thanked Chief Fernandez for her presentation. The Council had no questions.

VIII. Update on Border Ports of Entry Infrastructure Projects

Mark Baza, Executive Director of the Imperial County Transportation Commission, provided an update on border infrastructure projects.

- Imperial-Mexicali Binational Alliance is an advisory entity to address border infrastructure, economic development and environmental issues. The last meeting was held in Mexicali, and the following meeting will be held in Imperial County in

March 2017. US Agencies include: CaliBaja Bi-National Mega-Region; Caltrans; US Customs and Border Protection; City of Calexico; City of El Centro; City of Holtville; County of Imperial; US General Services Administration; Southern California Association of Governments; US Consulate General. Mexican Agencies include: Cámara Nacional de la Industria de Transformación; Consejo Coordinador Empresarial; Clúster de Turismo Medico; Comisión de Desarrollo Agropecuario del Municipio de Mexicali; Comité de Turismo y Convenciones del Municipio de Mexicali; Dirección Municipal de Protección al Medio Ambiente; Instituto de Administración y Avalúos de Bienes Nacionales; Secretaria de Protección al Ambiente del Estado; and Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores.

- Executive Director Baza presented on border ports of entry infrastructure projects and studies being conducted.
- The Calexico West/Mexicali I U.S. Expansion Project is utilizing \$98 million for Phase 1, building a southbound vehicle bridge, and a northbound vehicle inspection and head-house. Construction began in November 2015 and is set for completion in March 2018. The President's 2017 budget request including a request for funding for Phase 2. GSA proposes \$248 million to undertake Phase 2 for the reconfiguration and expansion of the existing land port.
- Another project is the widening of SR-98 and Cesar Chavez Boulevard. \$10 million of funding is needed to widen Cesar Chavez Boulevard from 4 to 5 lanes, and to widen SR-98 from 4 to 6 lanes. This would include widening, signalization, channelization, lighting, pedestrian/bicycle and ADA improvements.
- The Calexico East/Mexicali II U.S. Expansion Project has an estimated cost of \$65 million. This project includes widening the bridge over the All American Canal, adding three new commercial inspection lanes, adding six new northbound POV lands, road construction, pedestrian pathway improvements (such as shaded sidewalks and a cell phone/transit lot), implementing ITS and air quality monitoring technologies, and a toll collection administration and operations facility.
- A pedestrian and bicycle transportation access study was completed on six California-Mexico ports of entry. The study made infrastructure, policy, programs, education and design guideline recommendations. This includes 53 recommended San Diego/Tijuana/Tecate projects, 42 Imperial/Mexicali projects, and 7 policy recommendations. California is currently collaborating with Mexico to pursue a pedestrian crossing improvement. Right now, the pedestrian crossing is a two-mile walk, and they are hoping to reduce it to 0.75-mile walk. Sometimes people can spend 3-4 hours crossing by foot northbound (each direction), and with high summer temperatures, this is challenging for pedestrians.
- The Calexico Border Intermodal Transportation Center Feasibility Study was completed with a final recommendation for the conceptual site plan.
- Last year, more than 55 million people drove northbound from Baja California into San Diego and Imperial Counties through the 6 land ports of entry. Another 16.6 million people walked across northbound. San Ysidro Port of Entry is reported to be the busiest land crossing in the Western Hemisphere. More than 7 million pedestrians and more than 25 million people in cars crossed from Baja California. A similar number of crossings takes place into Tijuana. San Ysidro

Port of Entry accommodated approximately 65 million people in 2015. To put this figure in perspective, LAX, as the second busiest airport in the US, handled about 75 million passengers. The Crossborder Xpress facility opened in December 2015 and is used by ticketed passengers flying in and out of Tijuana International. Otay Mesa is both a passenger and commercial crossing. It processed about 3.4 million pedestrians and more than 12 million individuals in passenger vehicles. Tecate is the smallest of the San Diego region ports of entry, handling 4 to 5 percent of the crossings into the San Diego region. In Imperial County, Calexico West is the busiest crossing for pedestrians, with nearly 4.5 million people crossing on foot from Mexico and more than 7.6 million people crossing in vehicles. Calexico East also is both a passenger and commercial crossing with more than 6.7 million (M) individuals crossing in passenger vehicles. Andrade is the smallest crossing in Imperial County and is heavily used by pedestrians. The future Otay Mesa East crossing will provide much needed capacity for cross-border travel and cargo.

- A new border study underway will conduct surveys/interviews at California-Baja California ports of entry; collect border crossing time data; evaluate technologies to monitor wait times; develop and implement an economic outreach plan, and an air quality/climate outreach plan; estimate border delay impacts on the economy and air quality/climate; and develop study recommendations. The new study's title is, "A Fresh Look at Impacts of Border Delays at California-Baja California Ports of Entry."
- A 2012 study commissioned by the Southern California Association of Governments quantified the economic losses due to commercial and passenger vehicle delays and found an annual output loss of \$2.3 billion (\$620 million loss to State of California, \$384 million loss to Imperial County, \$755 million loss to Mexico, and \$629 million loss to Baja California).

Questions and Comments from Council members:

Chair Rodriquez thanked Executive Director Baza for his presentation. Assistant Secretary Ben De Alba noted the Governor has a goal of reducing border crossing wait times from hours to minutes.

A public member made a public comment in Spanish with a translator. She said she is familiar with all border crossings in Tijuana and Mexicali. The drop off and pickup sites for pedestrians are non-existent and/or inefficient. Many people prefer to cross the border on foot to save gas, but in the design of the crossing, there hasn't been sufficient respect to pedestrian needs. Chair Rodriquez thanked her for her comment, and asked members of the public to please fill out comment cards.

IX. Update on Border-related Memoranda of Understanding

Alexa Kleysteuber, Deputy Secretary for Border and Intergovernmental Relations of CalEPA, provided an overview of 2016 activities under the Memorandum of Understanding signed between California, the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico, and the National Forestry Commission of Mexico in 2014.

- This is a four-year effort with four priority action areas that each have a respective Working Group with California and Mexico leads: climate change, air quality, clean vehicles, and wildfires. There is also an interest in strengthening cooperation on solid waste issues. The overall objective is to strengthen the capacity of both governments to cope with the challenges of climate change and to protect and preserve natural resources. There is overall coordination between CalEPA and SEMARNAT. A Joint Action Plan was established in 2015 with goals for each area, and the working groups submit progress internally every quarter. CalEPA publishes an Annual Progress Report in English and Spanish, and the 2016 Annual Progress Report will soon be publicly available, and an upcoming MOU meeting will be scheduled in the coming month.
- Climate Change Working Group: In February 2016, SEMARNAT held a workshop with support from the Environmental Defense Fund in Mexico focusing on monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) issues. ARB's greenhouse gas reporting section manager and a lead staff from the greenhouse gas verification section attended. In October, CONAFOR and the Air Resources Board (ARB) met in Sacramento for an information exchange on ARB's offset protocol for US forest offset project and to discuss Mexico's forestry program. They also engaged in knowledge sharing on California's greenhouse gas reporting program, renewable portfolio standards, and how Renewable Energy Certificates (REC) fit in with California's cap and trade program. California explained how a REC and allowance/offset are not interchangeable units for accounting purposes.
- Air Quality Working Group: ARB worked with the Secretariat for Environmental Protection (SPA) to initiate a joint, two-year study of particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5) in Mexicali. California also donated air monitoring equipment to Baja California. Trans-border air quality meetings were held, such as the Air Quality Task Force meetings in Mexicali and Calexico in May, and the US-Mexico Air Quality meeting in Tijuana and Calexico. In September, senior staff discussed the broader aspects of air quality planning and the role that legislation, science and policy play in the process. They will develop a list of potential training topics, such as legislative mandates, development of emission inventories, regional air quality monitoring, assessment of potential mitigation strategies, regulation writing and adoption, and enforcement of regulations.
- Clean Vehicles Working Group: SEMARNAT plans to update its standards for criteria and greenhouse gas emissions to align with US standards by 2025. SEMARNAT representatives traveled to Sacramento for two days of in-depth training on California's On-Board Diagnostics (OBD) II program and the use of OBD system in the California Smog check program. The group engaged in technical knowledge sharing on California's approval procedures for alternate fuel retrofit systems.

Helen Lopez, International Affairs Liaison of the California Office of Emergency Services, provided an overview of the MOU's 2016 Wildfire Working Group activities.

- The Wildfire Working Group has been working on training and development. In April 2016, eight CONAFOR participants attended the S-130/S-190 Wildfire Suppression Training Course in Tecate, Baja California. Led by 15 CAL FIRE instructors, this course provided 71 Mexican firefighters with entry-level wildland firefighting training, as well as an introduction to wildland fire behavior and personal safety.
- On October 24 thru November 4, 2016, CAL FIRE collaborated with CONAFOR and together provided the "International Wildland Firefighting" training with instructors from both agencies. The training took place over the course of two weeks at a National Park in Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico. CAL FIRE provided ten instructors, four from the Riverside Unit and six from the San Diego Unit. CONAFOR provided seven instructors, including the North West Region Chief. CONAFOR also provided a representative from each State in Mexico. Firefighters representing local, state, and federal agencies from Baja California North, Baja California South, Sonora, and Sinaloa attended the training, which was 80% classroom and 20% fieldwork. Topics and instruction included Instructor 1A, S-390, Atmospheric Pressure, Topography, Fire Behavior, Fire Prevention, Fire Investigation, ICS, Communication, Aviation, Firefighter Safety and Survival, Firing Devices, and Finance.
- The working group is coordinating and planning on providing additional training in 2017 and proposing a border region exercise.

Questions and Comments from Council members:

Chair Rodriguez thanked them for their presentation, and noted that wildfires are a serious issue in California.

Emilio Camacho, Chief of Staff to California Energy Commissioner David Hochschild and Advisor to Chair Robert Weisenmiller on California-Mexico Issues, presented progress made on the California Energy Commission (CEC) MOU.

- The CEC supported CalEPA and the Under2 MOU to recruit Mexican states.
- They hosted joint academic exchanges, best practices, and technical workshops in Imperial Valley with Imperial Irrigation District, UC academics, CENACE, SENER, CFE and others for renewable energy integration.
- CEC hosted three commissioners from CRE in Mexico in June to work on net metering. CRE adopted net metering in January 2017.
- In Mexico, the Federal Government is in charge of energy, except in Baja Norte, which is connected to California. States may now have solar options.
- CEC has an MOU with Jalisco to work on clean energy. CEC assisted Jalisco to create an Energy Agency to advance renewables.

- The State of Tabasco is concerned about the sea level rise, and has expressed interest in transitioning away from an oil-based economy. They want to partner with CEC to explore clean energy options.
- The CEC hosted the state of Aguascalientes and signed an MOU to work on clean energy issues, particularly clean transportation.

Ben De Alba, Assistant Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), presented an update on the CalSTA MOU.

- In 2014, Secretary Brian Kelly of CalSTA signed an MOU with the Mexican Ministry of Communications and Transportation, highlighting the importance of binational cooperation on the development of the new Otay Mesa East International Port of Entry project. Specifically, the MOU established a binational oversight committee to monitor construction of Otay Mesa East. The committee focuses on financing, toll revenue sharing, reducing air pollution and congestion, project management coordination and ensuring appropriate staffing for ensuring safety, security and efficiency of the new port of entry.
- Assistant Secretary De Alba provided an update that the technical work has shifted down to the staff level, and they are meeting on a quarterly basis.

Questions and Comments from Council members:

Chair Rodriguez thanked them for their presentations, and noted that Undersecretary Houston was no longer on the conference call and thus would not be giving his MOU update. Council Member Laird also announced he had to leave the call.

X. Federal Government Border Program Updates

Director Jeff Scott applauded the progress made by WILD Coast and the Sonoran Institute and by other project partners and agencies to create a lasting change within the community. Director Hector Aguirre then provided an update from the US EPA San Diego Border Office on Border 2020 Program priorities for 2017.

- Key milestones: The US EPA recently completed the 2015-2016 CA/Baja Action Plan Assessment, an overall effort to aid program managers in prioritizing future project efforts. This activity also considers emerging issues in formulating priorities for the CA/Baja CA region. Action Plans track projects implemented by all partner agencies related to CA/Baja CA, and they have completed 25 projects addressing water, air, waste, and other environmental issues. They will be working with Cal EPA, and their Mexican partners, on the 2017-18 Action Plan to be completed over the next several weeks, which will include previous and new initiatives. They will also continue to meet as regional task forces and collaborate on supportive projects.

Reducing Air Pollution:

- Priority 1) Continue monitoring:

- There is a binational effort in Mexicali of PM_{2.5} monitors at two sites to assist in determining transport of pollution between Mexicali and Imperial County. It was challenging to get the equipment through Mexican customs. Mr. Aguirre thanked CARB for working with SPA to get the equipment over and the project up and running. The study ends in May 2018, at which point CARB will draft a transport study.
- San Ysidro Port of Entry (POE) monitoring: USEPA coordinated with GSA and SDAPCD to monitor PM_{2.5} at the POE from Feb 2015 until Aug 2016 (ended due to active construction). A report is under development (anticipated February) to evaluate PM_{2.5} data collected. The plan is to initiate collection at a new location in San Ysidro area in 2017.
- Priority 2) Engaging the public:
 - There is a grant with the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District. Marquee, an electronic billboard that displays messages in a mall in El Centro, provides air quality information and advice to Imperial County and Mexicali drivers. There is also a radio and television campaign targeting burning of wood, tires, and fireworks.

Clean and Safe Water:

- Priority 1) Water Infrastructure Projects: wastewater projects to help support water quality improvements for both countries.
 - Niland wastewater improvement projects: through EPA's Border Water Infrastructure Program, EPA is working with Imperial County and the BECC and NADB to bring the wastewater plant in Niland, CA and Holtville, CA into compliance with the Clean Water Act.
 - Reduce spills to the Tijuana River: EPA is concluding a collector rehab project in Tijuana and is working with CESPT and CONAGUA to develop the second phase of a project that will further reduce spills into the Tijuana River, which affects the quality of transboundary flows of the Tijuana River during storm events, and the quality of the coast during dry weather.
- Priority 2) Joint Efforts
 - Tijuana sediment model: EPA is in its final stages of completing a sophisticated sediment model for a sub-basin in the Tijuana watershed. Preliminary results show that by paving all roads in Los Laureles Canyon, sediment production decreases by 40%, but peak flows increase by 20%. GI and other mechanisms are being explored to reduce sediment loads.
 - Mexicali infrastructure diagnostic: Mexicali's diagnostic is nearly complete. The diagnostic identified numerous repairs that are needed. CESP, the Mexicali water utility, has already has already invested \$10.4M in repairs since 2014 and expects to spend another \$1.1M. The diagnostic will also help the utility decide what infrastructure projects to prioritize.
 - EPA has also funded trash and tire cleanup projects in Tijuana and Mexicali with Wildcoast and Sonoran Institute. These projects were expanded thanks to the contribution of California.

Clean Land:

- Priority 1) Sustainably Manage Materials:
 - EPA promoted sustainable materials management practices of discarded electronics and other materials containing high risk toxics and manufactured in large volumes (e.g. plastics), which pose substantial environmental impacts.
- Priority 2) Mitigate and Remove Trash impacting California's watersheds and ocean:
 - Mitigating trash and illegal dumping through educational outreach, enforcement, and other practices. Waste impacts California's watersheds and ocean, which have direct public health, environmental, and economic impacts to the US.

Joint Emergency Preparedness:

- Priority 1) Training and Exercises:
 - EPA collaborated with San Diego County, DTSC and Protección Civil in sponsoring an annual Hazmat Training. Last Summer and Fall training was delivered in Tijuana and Otay Mesa. The hazmat technical training involved classroom instruction on chemistry, toxicology, and *Hazcat* review with lab demos of some of the tests. The *Hazcat* is an analytical toolbox of test devices to systematically determine which family a chemical contaminant fits into. With this information, the hazmat responder can at least determine what type of immediate hazards he or she is up against. The training also involved air monitoring and Personal Protective Equipment review and practice (PPE levels A-D) including decontamination. The class was fully subscribed and students completed the 3 full days of training. EPA hopes they can count on DTSC for ongoing support.
 - All of these efforts, along with ongoing efforts to update Sister City Emergency Plans, support preventing and minimizing the magnitude of emergency incidents along the border. For example, cross-border cooperation provided the immediate support to address an Agua Prieta, Sonora warehouse fire. The binational plan was activated in response to a Warehouse fire at 3:50 AM on March 5, 2016. Douglas Fire responded with one engine and two firefighters on board and stayed on scene for approximately 6.5 hours to address the incident. The smoke was a threat to both sister cities.
- Priority 2) Equipment Donations.

Environmental Compliance:

- Priority 1) Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) inspections at Ports of Entry:
 - EPA's grant to DTSC provides direct support for environmental inspectors to work in collaboration with Customs to conduct environmental inspections of north bound vehicles and to support Customs in their

programs in inspecting south bound vehicles (inspecting for sham recycling of solvents, electronics, and hazardous cargo). Thanks to DTSC for their continued service at the port of entry carrying out environmental compliance inspection.

- Priority 2) Public Outreach to Border Communities on Toxic Release Inventory (TRI)
 - EPA's grantee prepared industrial toxic release fact sheets for border communities in CA/BC and AZ/SN. EPA's next step is to set up informational workshops on the TRI program data in late Spring.

Protecting Environmental Health:

- Priority 1) Renewed EPA and Border Health Commission (HHS) Partnership
 - In 2016, EPA and HHS (Border Health Commission) expanded their commitment to work together to address health issues faced by communities in the Border Region such as vector-borne diseases.
 - Border 2020 partners teamed with UABC medical school in Mexicali and health agencies on both sides of the border to convene a symposium to increase capacity and build awareness on the relationship between trash in the environment and vector-borne disease. Participants learned the importance of personal protection, trash removal and standing water to control vector-borne diseases. Over 160 participants signed pledge posters to commit to following through with strategies and sharing the knowledge with their communities.
 - Under the HHS agreement, we also will continue the commitment to build capacity to community environmental health workers on a range of issues including asthma, lead and pesticides.
 - Border 2020 recently expanded a grant to El Centro Regional Medical Center to build asthma awareness in low-income housing communities of Imperial County. To date, IVCAP has conducted 10 community forums and enrolled 27 families into one-on-one asthma awareness and healthy homes practices home intervention sessions. Asthma intervention session topics included indoor air quality, allergies, mold, moisture, carbon monoxide, etc. IVCAP is also working to train maintenance workers employed by local housing authorities to recognize and address asthma triggers.

Questions and Comments from Council members:

International Affairs Liaison Helen Lopez said she would be interested in discussing Wildfire training with US EPA. Chair Rodriquez noted the work and programs that US EPA runs are important, and that CalEPA appreciates the relationship they have looking ahead.

Delegate Alfonso O. Blancafort Camarena of the Mexican environment and natural resources agency, *Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales* (SEMARNAT), provided an update.

- SEMARNAT has enjoyed working with CalEPA and US EPA, and collaborating on programs. SEMARNAT looks forward to strengthening collaboration on MOU activities in the upcoming years.
- Noting that many of the joint efforts had been covered in other presentations, Delegate Blancafort provided an update on the project to help save the Vaquita whale, which has been facing extinction due to getting caught in illegal fishing nets. Under the leadership of the Mexican government, a rescue and recovery plan will be launched involving 20 different organization with experts from around the world. Vaquita Conservation, Protection and Recovery is an emergency plan to move whales to a temporary sanctuary while the government continues to combat illegal fishing and to eliminate gillnets in their habitat. The Program of Recovery and Repopulation of Species at Risk (PROCER) will contribute 89,222,047.04 million pesos from January-April in the Port of San Felipe, Mexicali.
- SEMARNAT looks forward to continued collaboration with California and US partners.

Questions and Comments from Council members:

Chair Rodriquez commented that today's meeting is indicative of the positive relationship we want with Mexico. He stated that the Council plans to continue all of their work with Mexico that was discussed today, and they look forward to working with Mexico.

XI. Future Meetings and Agenda Items

Chair Rodriquez mentioned that the next Council meeting will be on July 18th in San Diego, and that any inputs to the 2016 Annual Report should be sent to Alex Rodarte or Alexa Kleysteuber by February 20, 2017. He also asked for anyone to send feedback so the meetings can be as informative and helpful as possible.

XII. Public Comments

Imperial County Supervisor John Renison thanked Chair Rodriquez and Jose Angel for their work, and noted that Imperial County has been meeting regarding operation and management of the New River Improvement Project.

Alberto from Imperial County said he was working on environmental justice and education campaigns with 200 families, some of whom were in the audience today, and thanked them. They have been working on the air monitoring project between Mexico and Coachella Valley. Chair Rodriquez thanked him for his comment and added that CalEPA takes environmental justice very seriously.

XIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:01 PM by Chairman Rodriquez.

