

US-Mexico Border 2020: Summer Newsletter

News from the San Diego Border Office

During these past several months we have seen unprecedented changes. While we were adapting to the challenges and tragedies related to COVID-19, we are now facing a pivotal moment in race relations.

For me, my work has been a solace as the Mexico Border Team has continued reaching out to you as our program partners to continue working for improved conditions along the U.S.-Mexico Border. Thank you for your steadfastness as you also adapt to the current circumstances.



We have many milestones and updates to share in this newsletter. We remain dedicated to our shared mission to protect public health and the environment in the border region and are committed to doing it better. For that we look to your input and an upcoming opportunity is related to the [Draft Border 2025 Framework](#).

I also want to take this opportunity and announce I will begin a three-year assignment in July to work on implementing the environmental chapter of the United-States Mexico Canada Agreement. While I will miss the San Diego Border Office, this new role will overlap with our US-Mexico Border work. In September we will be initiating Border 2025 and I will be celebrating this milestone with you.

Sincerely,

Héctor Aguirre
Director San Diego Border Office

Border 2025 Draft Framework

The draft Border 2025 Program framework has been [posted on our website](#) and will be available from **June 1 to July 24, 2020**. Please follow this link to review and e-mail comments to Border2025@epa.gov.

We will have a series of informational sessions via webinar in both English and Spanish.

- June 30, 4:00PM PDT
- July 2, 1:00PM PDT
- July 8, 9:00AM PDT

See more information on the webinars and sign-up at this [link](#).

For questions on the webinar reach out to Jessica Helgesen at helgesen.jessica@epa.gov

COVID-19

U.S. EPA has provided various resources on COVID-19, most recent updates can be tracked through press releases at this [link](#). There is also a webpage on '[frequent questions related to coronavirus- covid-19](#)' with topics like disinfectants, drinking water, indoor air, waste, wastewater and septic systems and grants. *Remember if you use disinfectants to read the label!*

For most up-to-date information on COVID-19 please visit our federal partner, the [Center of Disease Control \(CDC\)](#), for how to keep yourself, friends and family safe and protected during this time.

Lastly, there are grant opportunities related to COVID-19. For example, [see this environmental justice grant](#) to assist communities impacted by the pandemic with June 30th deadline.

EPA's 50th Anniversary and #EarthDayAtHome

Many communities celebrated Earth Day virtually due to stay at home orders by creating signs, gardening and improving their indoor environments. The public shared pictures of their artwork on social media using the hashtag #EarthDayAtHome, #EarthDay2020, and #EPAat50. Learn more about EPA's 50th birthday [here](#).



Border 2020 Partner Accomplishments (2019-2020)

Border 2020's Action Plan summaries provide a brief description of projects and initiatives in Arizona-Sonora and California-Baja California that align with Border 2020 Goals and Objectives. The Action Plans track progress of funded activities, project timeframes, status, as well as expected outputs and outcomes. These also serve as a planning tool to review resource needs and identify future program priorities.

The most recent **California-Baja California Action Plan** included 44 actions and initiatives and 16 projects have been completed. In all, 58% of the projects achieved *significant progress* or *were completed*.

The **Arizona-Sonora Action Plan** included 36 actions and 11 projects that have been completed. To date, over 53% of the projects achieved *significant progress* or *were completed*.

For more information on the 2019-2020 Action Plans please visit this [link](#).

Recently Funded Border 2020 Projects

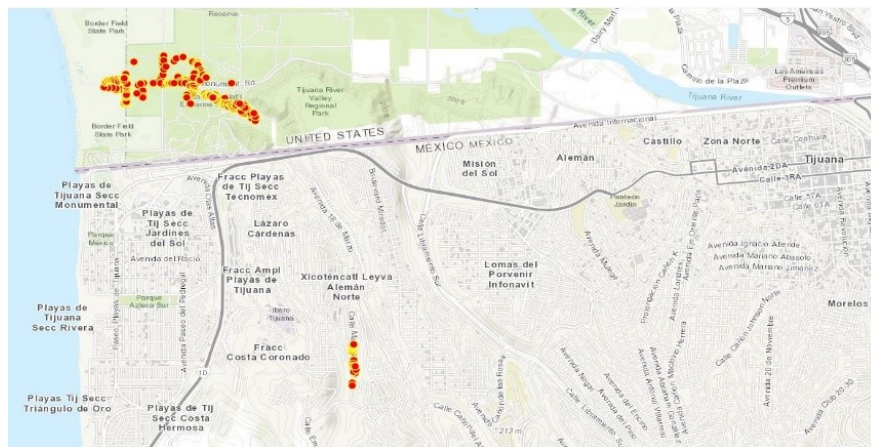
This past Spring the Border 2020 program in Region 9 successfully awarded \$535,000 to eight projects in our border region. With the North American Development Bank, we are considering challenges to COVID-19 and working with grantees on modifications so projects can move forward during this time. Please read our press releases on the exciting environmental and public projects [here](#).

- U.S. EPA awards \$255,000 Arizona- Sonora Border Region Projects ([English/Spanish](#))
- U.S. EPA awards \$280,000 California-Baja California Region Projects ([English/Spanish](#))

New Border 2020 Grantee and COVID-19 Outreach

A recently funded Border 2020 grantee, the University of Arizona (UA), is working with Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona, Regional Center for Border Health and three tribes in the border region the Tohono O'odham Nation, the Cocopah Tribe, and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, to identify environmental health priorities and training needs on integrated pest management and vector-borne diseases.

UA has been proactive with their outreach and has sent out two community integrated pest management [newsletters](#) this past April on how to disinfect COVID-19 and how to safely use a facemask during the COVID-19 pandemic. They encouraged, "...pesticide handlers to improve their knowledge about respirator types, use and maintenance, and for pest management professionals to adopt an integrated pest management (IPM) strategy, which in many instances can reduce dependence on pesticides." UA also shared a helpful link from Stop Pests ["What is Essential Pest Control Service during the Coronavirus/COVID-19 Outbreak?"](#)



Map of collected trash data locations during the ground survey

Addressing Marine Litter

Earlier this year, a Border 2020 grantee, 4Walls, in collaboration with University of California at Irvine completed the first phase of unmanned aerial (drone) field surveys to estimate trash in Tijuana that would flow into the US as well as estimate the amount already in the Tijuana River Estuary Research Reserve (TRRER) impacting wetland vegetation.

The project, to be completed in 2021, is developing a methodology to predict trash flow and assess investment options in Mexico to remove trash before it flows into the wetland. The red and yellow dots in the map in Figure 1 show the surveys that were completed in both Mexico and the US.

Projects Seeking to Improve Air Quality

The group Redspira and the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District have begun work on a project that will expand their binational air monitoring network, which makes data from low-cost sensors available to the public in [real-time](#). The project will add an additional 30 sensors to measure particulate matter levels in the Imperial-Mexicali air basin. The group has also made updates to their mobile app and website to align with updated Mexican air quality standards.

The University of California - Berkeley, in collaboration with partners in Mexico, has begun developing an environmental justice indicator tool, similar to the state of California's CalEnviroScreen, to calculate exposures to air pollution from transportation in Mexicali. The group hopes to use the findings to identify where electrification of city buses would reduce emissions and improve air quality for sensitive populations in the Calexico-Mexicali region.



The University of Washington, in collaboration with San Diego State University, the Universidad Autonoma de Baja California, and the community group Casa Familiar, have concluded a study of air quality in communities near the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa Points of Entry, in the Tijuana area. The project found elevated levels of fine particulate matter near the ports, compared to other sites in the Tijuana area. Complete findings are available on the study's [website](#).

Additional support to the US-Mexico Border Region

Environmental Justice Grant Awarded in San Diego

[EPA's Environmental Justice Small Grants Program](#) supports and empowers communities working on solutions to local environmental and public health issues.

Groundworks San Diego- Chollas Creek was awarded \$30,000 in November 2019 to engage low-income youth in southeast San Diego to understand and improve residential indoor air quality through their Climate-ready Health Homes Campaign, enlisting 20 students as Healthy Home Ambassadors, training them to do Healthy Homes education and outreach, and integrating air quality into Millennial Tech Middle School's science curriculum.

Protecting Communities through the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)

The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and California's Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) have submitted RCRA grant work plans for July 2020 – June 2023 outlining support for the Border 2020 program and follow-up support under the new Border 2025 program. ADEQ continues its emphasis on addressing binational trash issues in the Nogales wash, Arizona and DTSC's activities include environmental inspections at ports-of-entry and compliance assistance workshops in California, drawing over 200 participants in the past.

Stay Connected



History

Building from the La Paz Agreement, the U.S. EPA and Mexico's Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) have implemented four successive binational programs to meet emerging environmental challenges in this dynamic region. The most recent, Border 2020, continues a bottom-up approach and tackles emerging environmental issues. Program goals were established binationally and seek to improve air and water quality, reduce waste, strengthen emergency preparation and response, promote environmental stewardship and address environmental health. These goals directly align with the U.S. EPA's core programs, local priorities, and the original mandate from the La Paz Agreement to address the complex and on-going regional environmental challenges.

[EPA Border 2020](#)

[SEMARNAT: Frontera 2020](#)

[EPA Region 6 Calendar](#)

[EPA Region 9 Calendar](#)

[North American Development Bank](#)

Border 2020 Framework: [English](#) [Spanish](#)

Border 2020 Video: [English](#) [Spanish](#)

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