

U.S.-Mexico Border 2020: Fall 2020 Newsletter

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Please follow this [link](#) to view the newsletter as a PDF in English

News from the San Diego Border Office

My name is Idalia Pérez and I am the Acting Director for the San Diego Border Office. During the past few months Border 2020 has adapted to achieve results despite the pandemic. We have supported our Border 2020 grantees modifying their grant work as needed. We have also transitioned to virtual meetings, including our virtual presentation at the U.S. EPA Region 9 Tribal Conference, among others.



In particular, I'd like to highlight a bilingual webinar in recognition of Binational Health Month and Children's Health Month this past October. Border 2020 cohosted this bilingual webinar with the North American Development Bank, showcasing experts from the Western Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit. They answered questions on wildfire smoke; mental health; and green cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting

during the COVID-19 pandemic. [If you missed it, I encourage you to view the Children's Health Recording and slideshows on our website in both English and Spanish.](#)

Please keep an eye out for our upcoming virtual task force meetings on air, water, waste, emergency preparedness and response. Meetings are posted on our website <https://www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder/region-9-calendar>. Note at this time meetings are virtual sessions with the option to connect by computer or phone. Most meetings have presentations, so it is best to at least sign-in to the webinar platform if possible. Reach out to Lorena López- Powers for more information on task force groups, Lopez-Powers.Lorena@epa.gov

Hoping you and your family stay safe and healthy during these times,

Idalia Pérez

*Acting Director of the San Diego Border Office,
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

Upcoming Meetings

Please join EPA and Border 2020 program partners at various upcoming meetings in the border region. All meetings during this time are virtual due to COVID-19 challenges. See the Border 2020 calendar for more information and meeting updates:

<https://www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder/region-9-calendar>

- **United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement ([USMCA](#)) Meeting**
 - November 20, 2020 via Microsoft Teams
 - 10am to 11:30pm PT
 - For questions, reach out to Gabriela Baeza-Castañeda, baeza-castaneda.gabriela@epa.gov
- **San Diego – Tijuana Air Quality Task Force Meeting**
 - December 16 2020
 - 10am to 12pm PT via Zoom Video Communications
 - Simultaneous interpretation will be available
 - For questions, reach out to Ryan Atencio, Ryan.Atencio@arb.ca.gov
- **Arizona- Sonora Waste and Enforcement Task Force Meeting**
 - December 9, 2020
 - 10:30am to 12pm PT- via TBD
 - Simultaneous interpretation will be available
 - For questions, reach out to Emily Pimentel, pimentel.emily@epa.gov

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

Border 2020 Spotlight: North American Development Bank

Going back to 2005, EPA Region 9 has had a long-standing working relationship with the staff of North American Development Bank (NADB). The NADB's Border 2020 Program staff works closely with key partners to improve the environment and public health in the communities within the U.S.-Mexico border region.



In particular, we'd like to recognize and thank Jorge Hernandez, Interagency Project Manager for NADB, the current manager and technical project officer for the implementation of the Border 2020 Program in coordination with EPA in the Arizona/Sonora and California/Baja California regions. During COVID-19 Jorge provided technical support to transition Border 2020 meetings to a virtual environment. If you have participated in a recent virtual meeting, you will have seen Jorge's coordination and facilitation skills in action! Jorge has a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering and graduated from National University of Mexico, where he completed his Master's degree in Transportation, specializing in public transportation. He has over 25 years of experience in the environmental arena. The Border 2020 Program has benefitted greatly from Jorge's efforts and passion to help improve public health and the environment in the U.S.-Mexico border region.

Additionally, we would also like to recognize the outstanding support of binational border communities provided by Javier Torres, Abril Quiroz, Marielena Constandse and Sylvia Renteria who are all part of NADB's managerial and technical team.

U.S. EPA Project Updates in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region

Emergency Preparedness and Response Training Comes to Baja California



Mexicali Training, March 2020

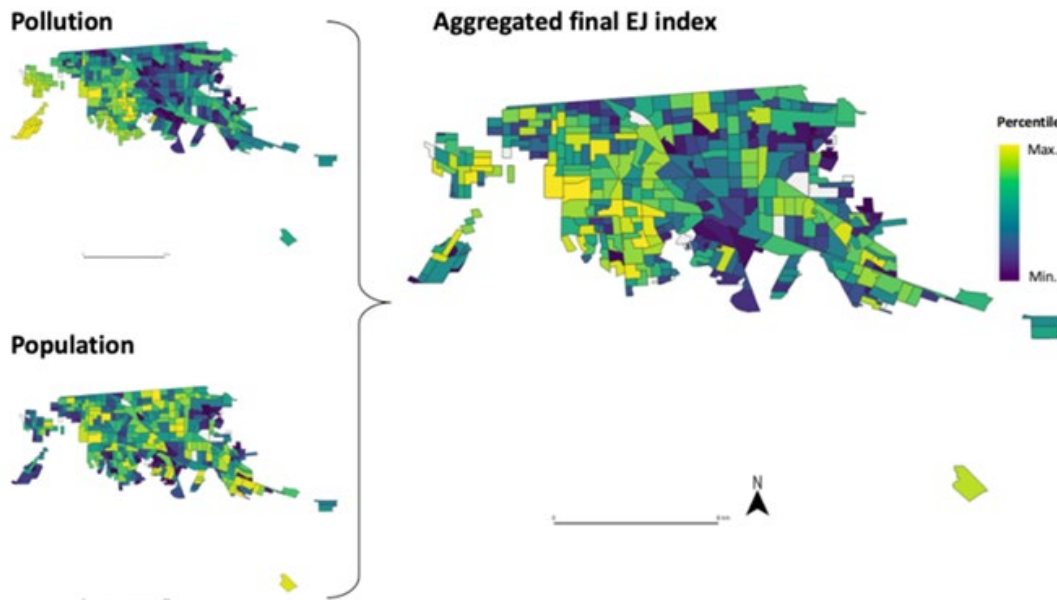
5th Phase Training and Consulting was subcontracted by the EPA to bring two sessions of Incident Command and Hazardous Materials training to Mexicali, Baja California to enhance emergency responder expertise. Each session consisted of Incident Command System (ICS) Training, First Responder Awareness (FRA) Trainings, and a 24 hours First Responder Operations Course (FRO).

The first session was conducted in March and 250 personnel were trained over a 5-day period. The second session in October trained 133 personnel due to COVID-19 restrictions placed on the training by the host university. The trainers were Mexicali firefighters who had taken and passed a train-the-trainer class that 5th Phase had conducted previously in Sonora with a previous Border 2020 grant. These essential trainings keep our border communities safe and prepared for emergencies in the border region.

Mapping Environmental Justice and Transportation in Mexicali, Baja California

Border 2020 has funded researchers at the University of California at Berkeley and Tecnológico de Monterrey to develop an environmental justice indicator tool for the City of Mexicali, similar to [EPA's EJSCREEN](#), with a focus on the transportation sector. In Phases 1 and 2 of the project, they have developed maps that spatially overlay variables related to both demographics and pollution exposure.

The researchers have made the map data available to the public here: <https://github.com/MexicaliEJTransportation> [EXIT EPA]. They have also begun work to evaluate the City of Mexicali's transportation infrastructure. In future phases of the project, the group plans to use their findings to help identify where electrification of city buses would reduce emissions and improve air quality for sensitive populations in the Calexico-Mexicali region.



Pollution and population aggregated index (left side), with the aggregated final EJ index for Mexicali (right side). Dark color represents a lower percentile and therefore lower comparative burden values; brighter green and yellow represent a higher aggregated burden value.

Reducing Waste Contamination in Ambos Nogales



Workshop on best practices for dismantling junk vehicles, March 2020

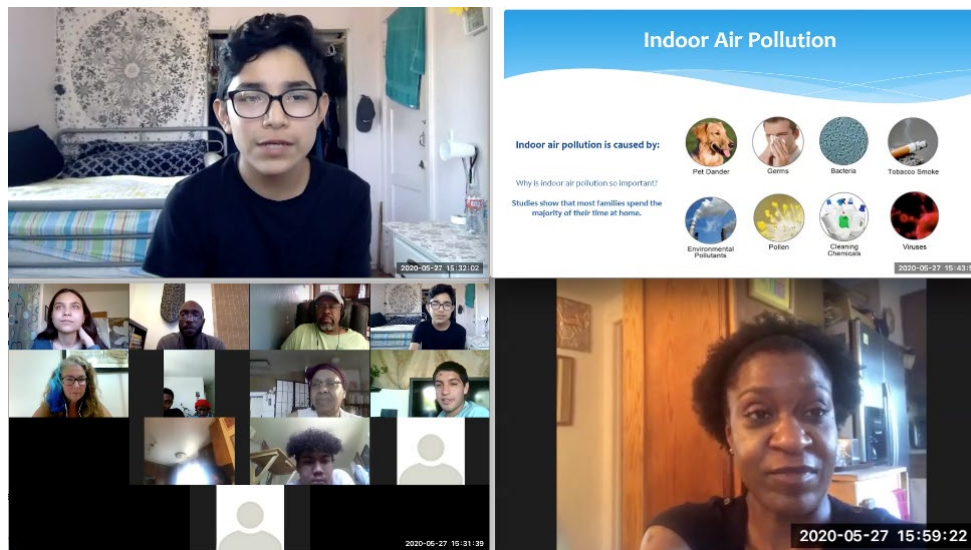
Nogales Municipality's Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Ecología (Secretariat of Urban Development and Ecology in Sonora) is reducing land contamination derived from various sources, among them clandestine dumping and junkyards with support of two Border 2020 grants.

The Municipality is responding to public reporting of illegal dumpsites using WhatsApp notifications, by verifying reported sites after receiving a notification. Under a separate grant

they are inventorying vehicle junkyards and planning workshops with junkyard owners and operators to share vehicle dismantling best practices and providing compliance assistance. Through these two efforts, the Municipality will work with local stakeholders to reduce transboundary land contamination in the Ambos Nogales region.

Contact Municipal Engineer Adriana Guerrero Martínez Agm1804@hotmail.com for more information.

EPA Environmental Justice Grant Supporting Community Work in Chollas Creek



High school Green Team presenting their webinar to Chollas Creek community

[EPA's Environmental Justice Small Grants Program](#) supports and empowers communities working on solutions to local environmental and public health issues. [Groundwork San Diego- Chollas Creek](#) [EXIT EPA] was awarded \$30,000 in November of 2019 to engage low-income youth in southeast San Diego to understand and improve residential indoor air quality through their Climate-ready Healthy Homes Campaign.

“Groundwork San Diego was pleased to implement its first EPA EJ Small Grant award through which we engaged low-income youth and families in an innovative approach to understanding and mitigating in-home air pollutants, exacerbated by climate change. Our high school Green Team students served as Healthy Home Ambassadors, outreaching to their fellow students, their school families and to their community at large with air quality information and education. Even shifting to online presentations during COVID, we reached hundreds of residents with this invaluable information!” **Leslie Reynolds, Executive Director**

They enlisted 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.

Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) Polices Border During COVID-19



U.S. Customs and Border Protection Otay Mesa Port of Entry truck and vehicle inspection area

The mission of DTSC is to protect California's people and environment from harmful effects of toxic substances by restoring contaminated resources, enforcing hazardous waste laws, reducing hazardous waste generation, and encouraging the manufacture of chemically safer products. DTSC, in a partnership with the County of San Diego Hazardous Management Division, conducts border truck stop inspections at the Calexico East and Otay Mesa Port of Entry.

In the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, field inspections were temporarily paused while these agencies developed safe inspection practices. In the September 23, 2020 California/Baja California Waste and Enforcement Task Force meeting Carlo Rodriguez (DTSC San Diego Border Office Supervisor) reported on DTSC's continued monitoring and communication with the ports of entry to maintain the safe management of hazardous waste during the pause, including:

- Maintaining communication with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) Officers;
- Providing staff to assist USCBP as needed; and
- Collecting and reviewing Hazardous Waste Manifests.

During this time, commerce continued. On-site inspections resumed in late August with augmented practices to keep inspectors and the public safe by adapting inspection procedures to using social distancing, hand-washing, and keeping all inspection activities outdoors.

For more information on U.S.-Mexico border inspections see this link:

https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/deh/hazmat/hmd_hirt/borderprogram.html
_ [EXIT EPA]

Grant Opportunities

Now Open: FY 2021 Grant Opportunity for North America Marine Debris Prevention and Removal Projects

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration just announced a new funding opportunity related to the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement for prevention and removal efforts, prioritizing work at the U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada, [more info here](#).

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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