

Western Governors' Association
Policy Resolution 06-2
June 13, 2006
Sedona, Arizona

U.S.-Mexico Border Environment

A BACKGROUND

1. The United States-Mexico border region presents great challenges for sustainable development. Continual economic activity along the border, reflected in increasing numbers of maquiladoras, cross-border vehicular traffic and population has the potential to do great harm to the region's natural resources and environment. For example, currently some 11.8 million people live in the border region, and this population is expected to double by 2030. In 2004 there were 91.3 million vehicle crossings into the United States, up 38 percent from 66.4 million in 1995.
2. In 1996 the Western Governors' Association recognized the role states could play to resolve some of these issues and developed the Border Environmental Dialogue Program. It allows leaders of the environmental agencies of the ten U.S.-Mexico border states to work collectively on common issues of mutual concern. State leaders have developed close relationships, allowing them as a bloc to not only engage federal officials and border institutions of both countries, but also make significant environmental achievements.
3. The goals of the Border Environment Dialogue program include encouraging decentralization efforts in Mexico to increase state and local environmental decision-making, facilitating cooperation between the states on short- and long-term projects benefiting the border environment, and developing a permanent mechanism to fund and facilitate this state-to-state cooperation. The program has also developed and assisted with the implementation of agenda items for the Border Governors' Conference.
4. Under the Border Environment Dialogue program, the environment agency leaders from the ten U.S.-Mexico border states have met nine times. Significant accomplishments include the major restructuring by EPA and its Mexican counterpart, SEMARNAT, of the binational border environmental protection program Border 2012, to change it from a federal program directed out of Washington and Mexico City to one that is regionally based, with state and federal co-chairs in four regional work groups. In addition, U.S. and Mexican states have developed state-to-state strategic plans that allow them to cooperate on critical environmental issues through technical and data exchange.
5. Most recently, a ten-state retreat was hosted by the California Environmental Protection Agency in April 2006. The actions undertaken at the retreat by the ten states include: a) developing the proposed environment declarations for the XXVI Border Governors Conference in Texas; b) meeting with federal officials from EPA and SEMARNAT to exchange views on the progress of the Border 2012 program, and c) reviewing the future role of the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) and the North

American Development Bank (NADBank), binational border environmental institutions whose goal is to provide environmental infrastructure to the U.S.-Mexico border region.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. Western Governors endorse the outcomes of the Ten State Retreat and support our states' environment leaders as they work to implement these outcomes through coordination of environmental planning, programs and data sharing.
2. Western Governors urge the federal government to continue to supply sufficient operating funds to the BECC, and NADBank and the U.S./Canada/Mexico North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation. Federal funding should be utilized in a manner that maximizes regional, state, and locally based solutions. Furthermore, Western governors urge the federal government to secure at least \$100 million annual funding for the Border Environment Infrastructure Fund to meet the NADBank's ten-year needs assessment for financing a portion of the region's environmental infrastructure. This annual funding—a line item in EPA's budget—has for several years not been at the \$100 million level needed for border projects and this year was at only \$25 million in the president's budget.
3. Western Governors once again commend the federal governments in the U.S. and Mexico for developing jointly with U.S. and Mexican border states the Border 2012 program, now designed on a regional basis using a bottom-up approach. This program is allowing local participation in directing and implementing border environmental management by those who know the issues best, border residents.
4. WGA calls on the U.S. federal government to support the Border 2012 program with dedicated resources. Currently, the Border 2012 program is not funded with line-item appropriations from EPA's budget but rather with monies from individual offices in EPA. Direct funding of the Border 2012 program would demonstrate the commitment of the federal government to improving the environment and health of the residents of the U.S.-Mexico border region.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. The Western Governors' Association (WGA) shall post this resolution to its web site to be referred to and transmitted as necessary.
2. The WGA shall assist the states in seeking funding to facilitate the Border Environment Dialogue program and it shall monitor, report to Western Governors, and coordinate with the states regarding each of the policy issues raised above.

This policy resolution was originally adopted by the Western Governors in 2000 and was readopted in 2003 as 03-06.