COMMITTEE ON BINATIONAL REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO) may take action on any item appearing on this agenda.

Tuesday, November 5, 2013

3 to 4:30 p.m.

SANDAG, 7th Floor Conference Room
401 B Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101-4231

Staff Contact: Hector Vanegas
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AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

- FOLLOW UP ON 2013 BINATIONAL SEMINAR RECOMMENDATIONS
- COLEF “FRONTERAS DEL MUNDO” SEMINAR
- UPDATE ON TIJUANA INNOVADORA

MISSION STATEMENT

The Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO) will advise the Borders Committee of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) concerning both short- and long-term binational related activities, issues, and actions; provide input regarding binational border-related planning and development; and identify ways to assist and coordinate with existing efforts in the binational area. The COBRO will serve as a working group to the SANDAG Borders Committee to facilitate a better understanding of the binational border-related issues and needs of the California-Baja California region.
Welcome to SANDAG! Members of the public may speak to the COBRO on any item at the time that the Committee is considering the item. Please complete a Speaker’s Slip which is located in the rear of the room and then present the slip to Committee staff. Also, members of the public are invited to address the Committee on any issue under the agenda item entitled Public Comments/Communications. Speakers are limited to three minutes. The COBRO may take action on any item appearing on the agenda.

This agenda and related staff reports can be accessed at www.sandag.org under meetings on SANDAG’s website. Public comments regarding the agenda can be forwarded to SANDAG via the email comment form also available on the website. Email comments should be received no later than noon, two days prior to the COBRO meeting.

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ITEM #

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

+2. SUMMARY OF MEETINGS

   +A) Summary of the May 7, 2013, meeting
   +B) Summary of the September 3, 2013, meeting

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBER COMMENTS

   Members of the public shall have the opportunity to address the COBRO on any issue within the jurisdiction of SANDAG that is not on this agenda. Anyone desiring to speak shall reserve time by completing a “Request to Speak” form and giving it to the COBRO coordinator prior to speaking. Public speakers should notify the COBRO coordinator if they have a handout for distribution to COBRO members. Public speakers are limited to three minutes or less per person. COBRO members also may provide information and announcements under this agenda item.

CONSENT (4)

+4. UPCOMING EVENTS

REPORTS (5 through 7)

+5. 2013 BINATIONAL SEMINAR “MOVING THE BORDER FORWARD: COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY” RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOW UP (Chair Paul Ganster)

   The COBRO recommendations from the 2013 Binational Seminar were reviewed on October 25, 2013 by the Borders Committee and will be presented to the Board of Directors for approval. Potential efforts for the implementation of these recommendations, pending Board of Directors approval, should be discussed by this Committee:
A) Discuss the next steps in the process of making the San Diego – Tijuana Border Liaison Mechanism become our region’s stakeholder voice for the United States-Mexico Partnership concerning the 21st Century Border Management.

B) Identify potential forums, new or existing, to discuss elevating the issue of border crossing wait times to become a local, state, and national priority. Discuss list of stakeholders to include in order to broaden the circle of participants.

C) Identify responsible agencies’ existing collaboration efforts for binational emergency and natural disaster response and preparedness in order to support said efforts, and encourage the development of additional joint binational action planning, where needed.

6. COLEF “FRONTERAS DEL MUNDO” SEMINAR (Maria del Rocío Barajas Escamilla, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte)

El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF) hosted an international “Borders of the World” seminar on October 24 and 25, 2014 entitled, “Integration Processes and Borders: Comparative experiences in transborder regions, theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence.” This presentation will provide a synopsis of the event.

7. TIJUANA INNOVADORA (Laura Araujo, Tijuana Innovadora)

Tijuana Innovadora is an organization of residents of the border region who love Tijuana, and want its true story told, with the goal of promoting innovative ideas to improve their city and border region. The third edition of Tijuana Innovadora will take place from October 16 to 26, 2014.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the COBRO is scheduled for Tuesday, February 4, 2014, from 3 to 4:30 p.m., at SANDAG.

+ next to an item indicates an attachment
November 5, 2013

AGENDA ITEM NO.: 2A

Action Requested: APPROVE

MEETING SUMMARY OF MAY 7, 2013 File Number 3400200

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The May 7, 2013, Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO) meeting, was called to order by Chair Paul Ganster, Institute for Regional Studies of the Californias, San Diego State University (SDSU) at 3:00 p.m.

Members present were: Chair Paul Ganster, Institute for Regional Studies of the Californias at SDSU; Hon. Remedios Gómez Arnau and Juan Carlos Rivas, Consulate General of Mexico in San Diego; Carolina Chávez, Daniela Villamor, and Jahzeel Villalpando, City of Tijuana Binational Affairs Office; Sergio Pallares, Caltrans; Mario Lopez, Denice Garcia and Mayra Vasquez, City of San Diego; Efraín Ibarra, South San Diego County Economic Development Council (South County EDC); David Mayagoitia, Desarrollo Económico e Industrial de Tijuana (DEITAC); Tito Alegria, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF); Rodolfo Argote, Instituto Metropolitano de Planeación de Tijuana (IMPLAN); Jason M-B Wells and Thomas Currie, San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce; Dave Fege and Doug Liden, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Border Liaison Office (U.S. EPA); Cecilia Luken, Fundación Internacional de la Comunidad, A.C.; Susan Reinert, Consulate General of the United States in Tijuana; Chris Peregrin, California Department of Parks and Recreation Representative for the Tijuana River National Estuary Research Reserve; Justine Kozo, County of San Diego; Nathan Owens, San Diego Dialogue, and Christina Luhn, San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation and Cali Baja Mega-Region Initiative.

SANDAG staff members present were: Héctor Vanegas, Ron Saenz, Laurie Gartrell, Christina Casgar, and Tayah Waterhouse.

2. SUMMARY OF MEETING

Action: Upon a motion by Chair Paul Ganster and a second by Mario López, COBRO unanimously approved the summaries of the November 6, 2012, and the February 5, 2013, meetings.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBER COMMENTS

Chair Paul Ganster welcomed everyone and introduced Tayah Waterhouse, the Borders Planning Intern at SANDAG, as well as Cecilia Luken, the new alternate for the Fundación Internacional de la
Comunidad A.C., and Chris Peregrin from the California Department of Parks and Recreation who works at the Tijuana River National Estuary Research Reserve.

Chair Ganster invited everyone to attend an event on May 14 and 15 entitled “Managing the Binational Tijuana River Watershed: A Workshop.” The event will take place in Tijuana and Imperial Beach and will include field trips, receptions, and informal discussions. The objective of the event is to come up with specific solutions to shared critical problems facing the watershed, which fits in with the ongoing discussions of renegotiating a new Minute of the 1944 Water Treaty (Water Treaty for the “Utilization of Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande”).

Chair Ganster asked if other members had additional upcoming events to announce.

Doug Liden, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Border Liaison Office (EPA), announced that the EPA is offering a day-long technical workshop on hydraulic and sediment modeling on June 5, at the Tijuana River Estuary Training Center that members may be interested in joining. The EPA is partnering with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop a sediment model for the Tijuana River Watershed, and this workshop will be an opportunity for technical experts on both sides of the border to give input on the model.

Jason M-B Wells, San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce, thanked and acknowledged SANDAG, the City of San Diego, and Caltrans for their participation in the recent forum on the new pedestrian crossing at Virginia Avenue. He also announced an Independence Day Celebration in San Ysidro taking place on June 29.

Fey Crevoshay, Wildcoast, member of the public, invited members to register for a fundraising event called “Baja Bash” taking place on June 15, at Broadway Pier in San Diego.

Laura Araujo, Tijuana Innovadora, member of the public, asked members to save the date for the 2014 Tijuana Innovadora event which will take place sometime in October 2014. The general theme of the event will focus on the San Diego-Tijuana region as a meeting place for the Mexican diaspora.

Efrain Ibarra, South County EDC, announced the Annual Economic Summit event, which will take place on September 13. Mr. Ibarra noted that the keynote speaker for the event will be the CEO of WD40.

Chris Peregrin, Tijuana River National Estuary Research Reserve, announced that the Tijuana River Action Month is an event that takes place in mid-September or early October and consists of a consolidated group of activities focused on cleaning up the Tijuana River Valley. The event is organized by local non-profits under the name of Tijuana River Action Network and offers opportunities to help with cleanup of trash, planting of plants and other activities.

Mario Lopez, City of San Diego, announced a new initiative called “The Incubator for Civic Imagination and Neighborhood Initiatives” that the Mayor of San Diego introduced today. The initiative is a broad proposal that seeks a new process by which the city can be more creative by bringing cross-sector ideas together to engage civic government. One of the objectives of the initiative will be to come up with a vision for San Diego-Tijuana border area. Additionally, Mr. Lopez mentioned that the Mayor will give a presentation at the next Borders Committee
meeting about his participation at the San Diego Chamber trip to Mexico City. Mr. Lopez also announced that there are two interesting initiatives the city is currently working on. First, the Mayor was invited to submit a bid for 2024 Olympics, and responded that he was interested in submitting a joint bid in conjunction with the City of Tijuana. The response received was that under the current international Olympic charter, it is not possible to submit a bid on behalf of two countries. Therefore, the City of San Diego is working with Mayor Bustamante of Tijuana to collaborate to submit a binational bid and address issues of border crossing infrastructure and mobility. Lastly, Mr. Lopez announced that the U.S. Border Mayors Association will be meeting at end of the month in Ciudad Juárez, and he will provide an update at the next COBRO meeting.

David Mayagoitia, DEITAC, informed the members that the Tijuana Economic Development Corporation, along with the National Chamber of the Electronics, Telecommunications and Information Technology (CANIETI), is hosting a Forum on Technological Innovation on May 29. Approximately 60 city and state organizations will participate to create a map of innovation initiatives of Baja California. Mr. Mayagoitia also announced the fourth Aerospace Forum taking place on August 29 at the Convention Center in Tijuana.

Chair Ganster thanked everyone for their comments and directed the group to move to agenda Item No. 6.

**CONSENT (4)**

4. **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Chair Ganster invited attendees to review upcoming events and meeting times that were included in the agenda packet.

**Action:** This item was presented for information. No action was taken on this item.

**REPORTS (5 through 9)**

5. **2013 BINATIONAL SEMINAR – “MOVING THE BORDER FORWARD: COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY” (Héctor Vanegas, SANDAG)**

Chair Ganster invited Héctor Vanegas, SANDAG, to inform the members about the 2013 Binational Seminar.

Héctor Vanegas directed the Committee to the Save the Date flyer with details on the seminar, which will be held on Tuesday, June 4, 2013, from noon to 5 p.m., at Caltrans District 11 Headquarters (4050 Taylor Street, San Diego, CA 92110). He noted that the seminar program should be complete within approximately one week, at which point it will be distributed. Mr. Vanegas explained that there will be two keynote speakers in the context of NAFTA and the La Paz Agreement, a legislative panel and a panel to identify challenges and opportunities for the border region to move forward. He added that staff is working on a white paper which will be finalized and circulated soon. Mr. Vanegas encouraged the members to help spread the word about the event.
6. BORDER HEALTH EQUITY TRANSPORTATION STUDY (Laurie Gartrell, SANDAG)  
(Item was moved up and was presented after Item No. 3)

Laurie Gartrell, SANDAG, thanked the group for the opportunity to present and introduced Sherry Ryan, Ph.D., of Chen Ryan Associates, who is also working on the Border Health Equity Transportation Study. Ms. Gartrell explained that SANDAG received a 2012 Caltrans Environmental Justice grant to study mobility and health issues that affect the border communities. Dr. Ryan explained the scope of the project, which is led by Chen Ryan Associates, with support from Human Impact Partners and Casa Familiar. The study has begun and should last for two years. The study will focus on three key stages: an existing conditions analysis, health analysis and recommendations and then propose an evaluation and monitoring program. The essence of the study is to try to draw connections between transportation systems and health outcomes and use this study as a pilot for transportation studies in the future. Dr. Ryan noted that periodic updates will be given to COBRO in order to draw on the members’ knowledge of the San Ysidro community, health issues therein and transportation projects in the area. She added that the project will require a technical advisory committee, and hopefully some COBRO members could be recruited to participate.

Dave Fege, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Border Liaison Office (U.S. EPA), asked whether the study would look at air quality due to emissions from vehicles. Dr. Ryan answered that for the “existing conditions” phase of the study, they plan to go into the community and seek input from community members on priority health issues; for example, if a community member says that their child’s asthma is their main health concern, the study would research what is causing or exacerbating the condition, in which case factors such as air quality would be taken into consideration, and appropriate recommendations would be made in relation to transportation projects.

Mario Lopez, City of San Diego, asked if there would be an economic impact component of the study. Dr. Ryan answered that the social equity aspect of the study aims to measure health impacts in a comparative fashion to identify possible disproportionate effects in the San Ysidro community, which may involve looking at related effects on employment, household income and economic hardship.

Denise Ducheny, Retired State Senator, noted that the study would inevitably have to be put in the context of the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Dr. Ryan responded that it will indeed be relevant to look at the issues in a local, state and federal legislative context.

Tito Alegría, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), asked what the geographical extension of the study is. Dr. Ryan answered that there was initial strong support for the study to look at the binational community on either side of the border; but that the study area was limited to just the community of San Ysidro.

Denise Ducheny, Former State Senator, asked if the study would analyze the crossborder impacts. Dr. Ryan answered that while the study does take the Port of Entry into account, it is not within the scope of the study to go into Tijuana and gather data. Denise Ducheny, Retired State Senator, noted that contact should be made with the County Cross Border Health Department to ensure that the crossborder impacts of communities on both sides of the border are taken into consideration.
Chair Ganster thanked the presenters for the update on the study and directed the Committee to Item No. 5.

7. “BEST TIME TO CROSS THE BORDER” MOBILE APP: A NEW TOOL FOR COMMUTERS AT BORDER CROSSINGS (Ganz Chockalingam, California Institute For Telecommunications and Information Technology (CALIT2))

Chair Ganster introduced Ganz Chockalingam, Qualcomm Institute, formerly known as CALIT2.

Mario Lopez, City of San Diego, thanked Ganz Chockalingam for coming and noted that the mobile application won 3rd place in the 2013 Mobile World Congress and that its development is a perfect example of how to tap into the capacities of local universities on both sides of the border to address border challenges.

Mr. Chockalingam thanked Mr. Lopez and explained that the mobile application was made to help people crossing the border not just between the U.S. and Mexico but also the U.S. and Canada. He added that he leads the mobile applications team at the Qualcomm Institute, which is a public-private partnership located on the campus of the University of California, San Diego. The institute is based on soft-funding and has core competencies in many areas, including visualization, robotics, as well as forensics of DaVinci paintings, and Mr. Chockalingam leads the mobile applications group.

Mr. Chockalingam noted that the application was developed about a year ago and the impetus for its creation was the experience of crossing delays and finding available border crossing wait time data insufficient. Mr. Chockalingham began collecting and archiving U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CPB) data and compiling it into trends, which were used as the baseline for the app. However, the app is based on the premise that people actually crossing the border have the best data on actual wait times, therefore its goal is to leverage and validate community-sourced data in order to reduce the reliance on CPB data and the negative economic, environmental and quality of life impacts of border wait times.

Regarding the particulars of how the app works, Mr. Chockalingam explained that border crossers can report wait times for nearby ports of entry (POE). The app presents historical wait time trends for each POE by day of the week, providing precise numbers based on CBP trends and little by little, more crowdsourced data. There are six blogs included in app: delay estimation; mobility tracking; traffic patterns; commuter network (information sharing and social network); real time analytics (time wasted, purpose of trip, etc), and queuing theory (better manage pipeline).

Mr. Chockalingam noted that the app has received a great level of support to date. The app now has about 30,000 users and is the 11th most popular travel app among iPhone users in Mexico and Canada and has a 4+ star rating in the app stores.

Chair Ganster asked if the app distinguishes between pedestrian and motor vehicle traffic. Mr. Chockalingam answered affirmatively.

Christina Luhn, San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation and Cali Baja Mega-Region Initiative, asked if there are plans to create an app that is compatible with Blackberry mobile
Mr. Chockalingam answered that there is no plan to do so currently since limited resources need to be carefully allocated.

Dave Fege, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Border Liaison Office (U.S. EPA), asked if the app automatically tracks user location from “point A” to “point B” using GPS data, or if users manually track their own travel times. Mr. Chockalingam clarified that users manually enter their wait times into the system and that there is no automatic process, especially due to issues with mobile phone battery drain.

Efraín Ibarra, South San Diego County Economic Development Council, commented that phone antennas do not work well on the border and that global roaming charges inhibit people from using data on their mobile phones in the border area. Mr. Chockalingam acknowledged this challenge and noted that one solution his team has worked on is a feature called “save now, submit later” whereby users can log their wait time, but wait until they are logged on to a wireless network to submit their border wait time; this enables a broader user radius, as well as more accurate user reporting times.

Cecilia Luken, Fundación Internacional de la Comunidad, A.C., asked whether or not Mr. Chockalingam’s team has considered including data for north to south crossings. Mr. Chockalingam responded that there is not currently a reliable feed of wait time data to access, and the only way to create data trends on southbound border crossing would be to use crowd-sourced user data.

In reference to Mr. Chockalingam’s comments regarding the app’s inability to differentiate between Ready Lanes and Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) lanes, Jason M-B Wells, San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce, asked if users can report which lane they are in. Mr. Chockalingam responded that users do specify which lane they are in when they report their wait time, so that different lane wait times are indeed segmented by lane number and type.

Nathan Owens, San Diego Dialogue, asked whether or not the app currently includes a social networking component. Mr. Chockalingam clarified that the app currently only connects users by allowing them to share their reported wait times, but that they are working on developing the social network component. Mr. Owens suggested looking into a program called “Strava” that he uses for cycling, which has a great social networking module. Mr. Chockalingam agreed that it is helpful to look at other social network examples and that the “Best Time to Cross the Border” app’s social network would likely start out as a user chat forum.

Mario Lopez, City of San Diego, thanked Mr. Chockalingam for his presentation and for all the member comments and acknowledged the importance of accurately reporting border wait times. He also asked all of the meeting attendees to share information about the app within their networks in order to broaden its user base and augment the amount of crowd-sourced data reported, which will result in more accurate wait times.

Héctor Vanegas, SANDAG, asked what related technology Mr. Chockalingam forsees for the future. Mr. Chockalingam responded that the next version of the app will include a timer feature so that user do not need to time their wait times themselves. He added that the app collects a wealth of data from users, and the next challenge is how to mine all this data from different locations to get accurate, real-time crowd-sourced wait time estimates.
David Mayagoitia, DEITAC, asked if, with the data that is currently available, it is possible to estimate wait times for the next year. Mr. Chockalingam responded that they do not yet have the critical mass necessary to make forecasts, and for this reason, attendees were encouraged to download the app, start reporting wait times, and also to spread the word about the app to others in the region. David Mayagoitia asked what the critical mass criteria are. Mr. Chockalingam responded that critical mass would include at least 10 percent of the community population, meaning a minimum of approximately 10,000 users in this region.

Chair Ganster thanked Mr. Chockalingam for his presentation, and introduced Chris Peregrin, California Department of Parks and Recreation), who presented Item No. 8.

8. Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve (Chris Peregrin, California Department of Parks and Recreation)

Chris Peregrin, California Department of Parks and Recreation Representative for the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, began by providing some background on his work. He stated that he has been working at the Reserve for six years and serves as the stewardship coordinator, doing restoration and for the last year and a half has served as the Acting Reserve Manager, filling in for Clay Phillips. Mr. Peregrin stated that the objective of his presentation is to ensure the Committee is aware of the Reserve’s programs and focus on the binational collaboration accomplished throughout the years, as well as to receive feedback on the program the Reserve manages, and how to better align it with other projects COBRO is involved in.

Mr. Peregrin noted that there are 28 National Estuarine Research Reserves across the country, and each Reserve is largely funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (N.O.A.A.). He stated that is important to note that the management process is complicated by the fact that there are many landowners in the River valley, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He continued that the management is generally a federal-state partnership; each Reserve receives annual funding from N.O.A.A. to operate and each Reserve has a different state partner, which for the Tijuana River Reserve is the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Peregrin added that the Tijuana River Reserve has also partnered with a non-profit, the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association, helping them to manage the Reserve more effectively. He continued that a large portion of the Reserve employees are non-profit status.

Mr. Peregrin then provided an overview of the programs managed at the research reserve, which are the same at most of the National Reserves, and include the following: The Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge; a Research Program; a Coastal Training Program; a Stewardship Program; and a Community Outreach Program. He stated that there was also a Watershed Program, which is not currently funded.

The Program at the Tijuana River Reserve is generally focused on bringing outside researchers in and conducting in-house research and monitoring, which is largely water quality monitoring and looking at salinity, oxygen and PH levels and also looking at vegetation, invertebrates and fish. He commented that the data set on these monitoring findings is available to people researching these subjects and is a valuable tool. The goal is to take the science from the Research Reserve and other universities and research institutes and translate it for decision makers to inform decision making for the region’s coastal areas. Another aspect of the program is public relations and community
outreach, including managing an Education Program working with elementary and high school kids and offering an online curriculum outline that teachers can use for classroom activities.

Mr. Peregrin stated that he has been managing the Stewardship Program for six years, and that this program is focused on restoration and land management, which includes interacting with the other land owners to ensure that habitats are high-quality and that endangered species are monitored.

Regarding the need for binational coordination at the Reserve, Mr. Peregrin stated that Reserve itself is at the base of the binational watershed and that dealing with sedimentation and trash is one of the most important binational issues the Reserve faces. He continued that the Reserve uses a three-pronged approach to address sedimentation in the estuary: 1) restoring the existing salt marsh; 2) trapping sediment at the border; and 3) working with agencies and communities in Mexico to implement source control techniques.

Mr. Peregrin showed a visual schematic of the sediment basins in the region and commented that the Goat Canyon Sediment Basin Facility was constructed in 2004 with the goal is capturing sediment that would otherwise go directly into the salt marsh. He added that the sediment basins need to be emptied every year, representing a significant economic burden on the State of California. He continued that they are looking for effective ways to dispose of the material and use it beneficially, such as depositing it in the ocean.

Mr. Peregrin noted that the annual cost of maintaining the sediment basins is $800,000 to $1 million. He continued by stating that a number of government and non-government parties are investing a huge amount of money in the Tijuana River Valley for natural resource conservation and restoration, and that many of the projects being funded would not be necessary if some of the upstream issues were resolved.

Some accomplishments related to binational collaboration include a planning document for Los Laureles Canyon, which was adopted into Mexican policy in 2007; another was the development of conservation easement in Los Sauces Canyon, which is one of several conservation easements in Mexico. Mr. Peregrin stated that the development of conservation easements is an important stepping stone to start to conserve natural areas more broadly throughout Baja California.

Mr. Peregrin noted that EPA funding has allowed the Reserve to conduct a number of important projects in Mexico, including a trash tracking project in which radio transmitters were attached to bottles, deposited into illegal dumping sites and then followed through the watershed into the estuary. In addition, some display projects have included utilizing trash as a functional building material in order to not only use trash in a beneficial manner, but also as an interpretive element in order to raise awareness about the issue of trash management. He added that additional projects that have mainly taken place in the Los Laureles sub-drainage area, including trash cleanups and native plant restoration.

Looking to the future, Mr. Peregrin pointed out that the Reserve is well connected to the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team, which is a group comprised of many of the land managing agencies and non-profits and other research entities in the area. He added that the Reserve has been collaborating with the Team on a strategy document, and largely focuses on the issue of controlling sediment and trash. Mr. Peregrin stated that another proposal the Reserve is planning to focus on is supporting the proposed Minute to the 1944 U.S.-Mexico Water Treaty. He specified that
because the sediment management process is so costly, and since the State of California's partners are growing weary of helping fund the effort, it is necessary to obtain more federal buy-in to address the issue; having the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) address sediment and trash directly through a Treaty Minute is key to the future of the Tijuana River Valley Estuary.

Finally, Mr. Peregrin noted that a unique feature of the Reserve is that as an on-the-ground land management agency, it has the opportunity to bring in non-profit partners. On that note, he stated that the Tijuana River Action Network, a collaboration of non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and Mexico, is a group the Reserve has been working with. He concluded that the combination of research, education and training efforts is much more effective with community support, and that is essential to leverage the community in order to promote a healthier border environment.

Chair Ganster thanked Mr. Peregrin and asked if there were any questions.

Efrain Ibarra, South County EDC, asked what changes have been noted in relation to the animals that live in the estuary. Mr. Peregrin responded that the most detailed data set the Reserve manages is for endangered bird species, which are monitored every year in a standardized way. He added that this data set can be referenced to help understand changes in animal populations and the many related variables.

Chair Ganster stated that the recent history of the Estuary is similar to previous evolution of border cooperation in the Imperial Valley related to the New River and how to deal with pollution once it reached the international boundary. Through this process, people realized it made more economical sense to work with Mexico and international agencies to improve treatment facilities on both sides of the border. Chair Ganster noted that the work the Reserve is doing is a tremendous opportunity to improve the overall quality of environment by on both sides of the border at a lower cost. Chair Ganster acknowledged the complexity of getting three levels of government to work together and obtain crossborder funding, and noted that the joint initiative of the IBWC and the Comisión Internacional de Límites y Aguas (CILA) is a good example of how we are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Pallares asked what the impact of the border security road being built by CBP is, and how can that impact be remedied. Mr. Peregrin replied that 52 acres of the California Department Parks and Recreation land and approximately 140 acres of the San Diego Regional Park land were transferred to Homeland Security for additional border infrastructure. He stated that the most direct impact has been loss of habitat. In addition, Mr. Peregrin noted that if CBP does not maintain those lands in a high-quality state, there is a potential for long-term non-native invasive plant issues. Mr. Pallares asked if the lack of connectivity between the southern and northern parts of the estuary is also a problem. Mr. Peregrin replied that the connectivity was already previously largely compromised due to roads and the border fence in the area, but acknowledged that constructing additional fences and roads definitely poses a significant threat to biological connectivity.

Chair Ganster thanked Mr. Peregrin for his presentation.

Before concluding the meeting, Chair Ganster announced that Denise Garcia, City of San Diego, would be leaving to continue her studies in New York, thanked her for her participation, and
wished her good luck. Ms. Garcia thanked Chair Ganster, said it has been a pleasure working with everyone in San Diego, and that she will return in a year.

Mr. Pallares mentioned that there would be a U.S. Department of Transportation Border Finance Workshop on May 23 to explore innovative financing opportunities and challenges for improving the infrastructure on both sides of the border, and asked attendees to let him know if they would like to participate.

Chair Ganster and Consul General Gómez Arnau thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

Chair Ganster announced that the next meeting of COBRO would be a special session for the 2013 annual binational seminar “Moving the Border Forward: Competitiveness and Sustainability” scheduled for Tuesday, June 4, 2013, from 12:00 to 5:00 p.m., at Caltrans District 11 Headquarters.
November 5, 2013

AGENDA ITEM NO.: 2B

Action Requested: APPROVE

MEETING SUMMARY OF SEPTEMBER 3, 2013

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The September 3, 2013, Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO) meeting, was called to order by Chair Paul Ganster, Institute for Regional Studies of the Californias, San Diego State University (SDSU) at 3:00 p.m.

Members present were: Chair Paul Ganster, Institute for Regional Studies of the Californias at SDSU; Hon. Remedios Gómez Arnau and Juan Carlos Rivas, Consulate General of Mexico in San Diego; Jahzeel Villalpando and Carolina Chávez, City of Tijuana Binational Affairs Office; Sergio Pallares and Connery Cepefa, Caltrans; Mario Lopez, City of San Diego; Efraín Ibarra, South San Diego County Economic Development Council (South County EDC); Tito Alegria, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF); Rodolfo Argote, Instituto Metropolitano de Planeación de Tijuana (IMPLAN); Jason M-B Wells, San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce; Dave Fege, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Border Liaison Office (U.S. EPA); Cecilia Luken, Fundación Internacional de la Comunidad, A.C.; Halla Razak, County of San Diego Water Authority; and Dennis LaSalle, Consejo de Desarrollo Económico de Tijuana (CDT).

SANDAG staff members present were: Héctor Vanegas, Elisa Arias, Laurie Gartrell, Tayah Waterhouse and Elias Sanz.

2. SUMMARY OF MEETING

No action was taken to approve the summary of the May 7, 2013 meeting, as quorum was not met.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBER COMMENTS

Chair Paul Ganster welcomed everyone and invited the members to introduce themselves, and then asked if other members or the public had any upcoming events to announce.

Efrain Ibarra, South County EDC, announced that the 23rd Annual Economic Summit will be taking place on September 13th 2013 at the Convention Center. The Summit will include three panels in the morning: an economic development panel; a health sector panel; and an elected officials’ panel. In the afternoon there are another two confirmed keynote speakers: the co-founder of Stone Brewery, and the WD-40 CEO.
Dennis LaSalle, Consejo de Desarrollo Económico de Tijuana (CDT), called attention to the work the U.S. General Administration Services (GSA) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is doing in San Ysidro with segmentation of the pedestrian READY lanes, pointing out that it is very helpful for the users who have invested in a READY pass. Chair Ganster asked how the lanes are segmented, and Mr. LaSalle clarified that to the right of the normal pedestrian lane there is a turnstile gate for READY and SENTRI members, who can bypass the normal line. Mr. LaSalle then mentioned Mexican President Peña Nieto’s State of the Union address, and expressed hope that Consul General Gómez Arnau would comment on it.

Sergio Pallares, Caltrans, announced that Ensenada, Baja California is hosting a Western Regional Meeting of the Binational Bridges and Border Crossings Group (BBBXG), in which regional border issues will be discussed. The public is welcome to attend the public sessions the morning of September 12th.

Denise Ducheny, Retired State Senator, announced that the North American Competitiveness Conference is scheduled for October 27-30 at the La Jolla Hilton Torrey Pines. The title of the conference is “Three Countries, Two Borders, One Economy,” and will include a tour of Tijuana and University of California, San Diego, as well as panels, discussions and addresses by the respective Commerce Secretaries of Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. Ms. Ducheny also mentioned a recent debrief meeting with El Paso Congressman Beto O’Rourke, concerning border region coalition building, especially regarding border crossings and the importance of trade with Mexico, and how to present a collaborative message to delegates at the visit to Washington D.C. at the end of September.

Miguel Aguirre, a San Ysidro business owner, brought the group’s attention to the San Ysidro Intermodal Transportation Center Study that SANDAG is leading, and encouraged the members to participate in the study and stay involved in the process of the project.

CONSENT ITEMS (4 through 6)

4. UPCOMING EVENTS

Chair Ganster invited attendees to review upcoming events and meeting times that were included in the agenda packet, and directed the group to move to agenda item 5.

Action: This item was presented for information. No action was taken on this item.

5. OVERVIEW OF THE SAN DIEGO REGION INTERNATIONAL LAND PORTS OF ENTRY
(Héctor Vanegas, SANDAG)

Chair Ganster invited Héctor Vanegas, SANDAG, to inform the members about the report.

Mr. Vanegas noted that the last time a similar report was presented to the Committee was in 2011 and that with all of the Port of Entry (POE) construction activities currently taking place on the border, that it is an opportune time to present this information. He stated that the report is an
overview which compiles updates on the improvement projects for the three operating POEs, and the two planned future POEs.

6. COBRO CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014 (Chair Paul Ganster, Institute for Regional Studies of the Californias at SDSU)

Chair Ganster announced that the next COBRO meeting will be held November 5, 2013, and noted that the other important date to save is June 3, 2014 for the next annual Binational Seminar.

Chair Ganster pointed out that the meeting agenda is available online for members to refer to. Héctor Vanegas, SANDAG, clarified that as announced last year in September, complete agendas would no longer be printed out for meetings, and that if a member wishes to have a printed copy of the agenda and corresponding item reports, they can request one in advance of the meetings, or else refer to the digital copy posted on the SANDAG website.

REPORT ITEMS (7 through 9)

7. OUTCOMES FROM THE 2013 BINATIONAL SEMINAR – “MOVING THE BORDER FORWARD: COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY” AND TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS (Dave Fege, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

Chair Paul Ganster introduced Dave Fege, U.S. EPA, who mentioned that since 1997, SANDAG has organized a binational seminar. COBRO then discusses the outcomes and makes recommendations to the Borders Committee on possible recommendations for follow up. Mr. Fege gave a brief overview of the content of this year's seminar “Moving the Border Forward: Competitiveness and Sustainability,” which focused on the 20th anniversary of the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the 30th anniversary of the signing of the La Paz Agreement, and drew over 100 participants from both sides of the border.

Mr. Fege informed the group that a COBRO Task Force met on August 6th to discuss outcomes and potential recommendations from the seminar, which, if approved by COBRO, would be presented to the Borders Committee for action. Mr. Fege noted that the event summary and the report on seminar outcomes, which are part of the agenda packet, contain a more detailed overview of the day's event and task force discussions for member reference, and then shared the key messages from the event in a PowerPoint Presentation.

Mr. Fege's slide presentation concluded with a review of the three Task Force recommendations and he explained that the Task Force agreed that the primary challenges brought up at the binational seminar can be generally arranged into two categories: 1) Expanding the understanding and awareness of border issues to promote a positive narrative of United States-Mexico relations and effectively managing issues at a local level; and 2) Border crossing infrastructure and wait times, which is an issue that cannot be managed locally since progress relies on the actions of the federal government.

The recommendations presented were: 1) Explore ways to make the San Diego-Tijuana Border Liaison Mechanism (BLM), which is led by the Consuls General of Mexico in San Diego and of the United States of America in Tijuana, become our region’s stakeholder voice for the United States-
Mexico Partnership concerning the 21st Century Border Management; 2) Convene a forum to discuss elevating the issue of border crossing wait times to become a local, state, and national priority. In this forum, broaden the circle of participants to include staff from legislator’s offices and stakeholders from the private sector and business leaders; and 3) Support responsible agencies’ existing collaboration efforts for binational emergency and natural disaster response and preparedness, and encourage the development of additional joint binational action planning, where needed.

Sergio Pallares, Caltrans, commented on Recommendation 1, saying he wondered if there is a conflict of interest in recommending that the Consuls General play the role of representing the region when they are part of federal agencies (The U.S. Department of State and the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores or SRE in Spanish). Hon. Remedios Gómez Arnau, Consulate General of Mexico in San Diego, commented that both Consuls have been working for many years along the border with the BLM, and can convene meetings on important border issues and include authorities from the local, state and federal levels. She clarified that the important aspect of these meetings is to hear the opinions of local stakeholders. Consul General Gómez Arnau stated that the last meeting took place last year, and that the next one would take place in October.

Mr. Pallares clarified his comment, acknowledging that the respective Consulates do a great job representing the region and bringing the issues to the national level. He continued the potential problem he sees is that we are asking both Consuls to be regional voices when they are part of federal agencies. Chair Ganster commented that both Consulates have the power to bring agency representatives from the respective federal governments, as well as stakeholders from both sides of the border together, an authority that no other body has. He continued that the authority to convene this regional voice is important because though we have worked for years with San Diego and Tijuana to try to create an effective regional voice, more work needs to be done.

Héctor Vanegas, SANDAG, added that the Task Force did not want to create a new protocol or mechanism when we already have something that exists, and that instead of proposing a new body to elevate the local regional issues and communicate them to the federal governments, it was suggested better to ask the support of the two Consuls General to utilize the existing channel of the Border Liaison Mechanism to connect local input with the 21st Century Border Management Partnership.

Ramon Riesgo, U.S. General Services Administration, agreed that Recommendation 1 suggests supporting something that is already in place; he mentioned that both Consulates have organized BLM meetings that include a public session. Mr. Riesgo added that the Infrastructure Committee at the 21st Century Border Management Partnership is chaired by both Mexico’s Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores or SRE (Secretariat of Foreign Relations) and the U.S. Department of State, meaning they are the agencies tasked with sending the local messages to the respective federal governments.

Denise Ducheny, Retired State Senator, further clarified Mr. Pallares’ concern, stating that if we ask the Consuls to take a regional proposal to the 21st Century Border Management Taskforce and it contradicts the position of SRE and the Department of State, there could be a conflict of interest. Mr. Vanegas replied that the BLM is not opposed to transmitting local perspectives to the federal governments. Consul General Gómez Arnau agreed, stating that even though the Consuls General
are appointed by the federal government, they are specifically tasked with communicating regional interests to the federal government.

Mario Lopez, City of San Diego, stated that one of the main concerns is that the BLM has not always met regularly over the past number of years. Consul General Gómez Arnau replied that besides the BLM, other meetings for consideration could be the 21st Century Border Management Partnership in which high-level federal officials participate, and meetings of the Bridges and Border Crossings Group (BBBXG), which include public sessions in which members of the public can attend and share questions and suggestions. Mr. Riesgo added that the public session of this month’s BBBXG meeting in Ensenada only currently includes one presentation on the San Diego-Baja California region, and encouraged members interested in presenting on a certain regional topic to contact the organizers and request a presentation time slot.

Ms. Ducheny asked if, following Recommendation 1, the BLM in particular would be meeting more regularly or include a broader range of participants than have been included in past meetings. Chair Ganster stated that the BLM is a flexible and neutral mechanism that can meet at any time for any purpose, and Consul General Gómez Arnau agreed.

Efrain Ibarra, South County EDC, said that the recommendation is great in his opinion, though it has its challenges. Mr. Ibarra brought up the concern that there would be a lack of private sector participation in BLM meetings convened to receive regional stakeholder input.

Mr. Riesgo stated that the BLM is divided into various groups, and Mr. Pallares added that there is a technical working group for each POE. Mr. Riesgo continued that in terms of infrastructure, the Border Master Plan (BMP) is the key tool, and that the first step is for everyone in the region to support the BMP so that it becomes the one voice for different binational stakeholders to identify priorities and infrastructure needs. Mr. Riesgo was concerned that without all agreeing on the priorities outlines in the BMP, each regional group will meet on different issues and will lack cohesion.

Jason M-B Wells, San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce, echoed Mr. Ibarra’s concern regarding lack of private sector inclusion in BLM meetings, stating that the public sessions may last an hour or two, but then the rest of the sessions are closed, and that is when the important decisions are made. Because of this, Mr. Wells advocated improving the BLM in order to have more meaningful private sector participation. Regarding Recommendation 2, Mr. Wells suggested making the wording more direct and action-oriented. He also mentioned the creation of a land POE authority could take care of Recommendations 1 and 2.

Tito Alegría, COLEF, stated that while the issue of border wait times is important, the deeper issue is that of integrating the border communities by ameliorating the barrier that the border represents. As an alternate way to integrate the border, aside from physically crossing it, Dr. Alegría suggested the idea of recommending the creation of one single crossborder telephone zone. Chair Ganster stated that no region of the world has successfully overcome crossborder telecommunications. Consul General Gómez Arnau pointed out that some phone carrier services include North American packages in which binational calls between the U.S. and Mexico are considered local calls. Mr. Vanegas recalled that Professor John Eager, from the Center for International Communications at San Diego State University, had the same idea years ago of creating a crossborder telephone zone, but that at the time it was not possible due to technological incompatibility. Dr. Alegría
clarified that the telephone zone is not the only way to achieve what he proposes, which is a greater level of contact between the two sides of the border communities, such as special permits given to University students to cross the border for educational or research purposes.

Mr. Pallares stated that for the record, he supports Recommendation 1.

Consul General Gómez Arnau stated that the main challenge regarding Recommendation 1 is encouraging the participation of all the stakeholders, since many border region residents are not aware of, or concerned about the issues. Mr. Lopez agreed that trying to make locals who are not border crossers aware of the importance of border crossing delays and cognizant of the regional consequences, is a great challenge.

Chair Ganster explained that generally COBRO agrees to forward the recommendations to the Borders Committee, then the recommendations are presented for approval to the Board of Directors. Next, the program for the following annual seminar is developed over the subsequent months. In regards to the process for implementing the recommendations, Mr. Fege asked who would be responsible for convening the forum mentioned in Recommendation 2. Mr. Vanegas replied that it would be SANDAG’s responsibility, which could mean the forum is convened as part of a COBRO meeting.

Chair Ganster said that the group would move forward with the recommendations unless there were any objections, and asked the members to contact Mr. Vanegas with any specific wording change suggestions.

8. COBRO WORKING GROUP CHARTER AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATE (Chair Paul Ganster)

Chair Ganster informed the group that there were revisions to the COBRO Charter, which meant some potential changes in Membership. He continued that COBRO does not function like other SANDAG Committees since group membership is convened from both sides of the border, which necessitates more flexibility than other groups. Chair Ganster asked Héctor Vanegas, SANDAG, to describe the specific revisions.

Mr. Vanegas stated that the Committee has been experiencing some problems with quorum, which led to looking at which organizations had been missing meetings. The Charter had a strict rule which stated that if a regular member fails to attend three meetings, their status would be adjusted to become advisory members. If that rule is executed, the Committee risks being under-represented binationally, which is problematic since it is a Committee addressing binational issues. Members who have failed to attend three or more meetings were contacted and expressed interest in continuing their membership and also expressed their difficulty in attending. Mr. Vanegas therefore explained that the Charter was modified to be more flexible, and now states that if a member fails to attend three consecutive meetings without having his or her inattendance excused by the Chair in advance, SANDAG will reevaluate the organization’s membership, including adjusting the member’s status into an advisory member.

Tito Alegría, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), asked Mr. Vanegas how quorum would be achieved under this new rule. Mr. Vanegas explained that in order for the Committee to reach quorum, they need to have half of the members, plus one, in attendance. He continued that presently there are 27 members, so it is necessary to have at least 14 members present. Mr. Vanegas
added that since the rule is new, no member’s status will be adjusted at this point, but that members who have failed to attend three meetings will be contacted.

Jason M-B Wells, San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce, asked the Chair if he would consider convening an ad hoc sub-committee to review COBRO’s Charter, based on the premise that if the group had a clearer idea of the Committee’s objectives, including action items, it would encourage attendance. Mr. Vanegas replied that he would check with Legal Counsel, since the Committee is part of SANDAG and must adhere to its rules. Mr. Wells asked if the Charter is available online and Mr. Vanegas replied affirmatively and said that it was also sent in the agenda packet, and that any input on the Charter would be welcome.

Chair Ganster mentioned that adjusting members into advisory members has been an effective way to deal with the issue of a member who has difficulty attending meetings regularly. He continued that not fulfilling quorum has been an ongoing management issue since the Committee was established, especially with public agencies turnover, and that SANDAG staff does its best to track and encourage members to attend.

Denise Ducheny, Retired State Senator, mentioned that maybe the issue with not reaching quorum is related to the membership base, and that there should be more private sector members. Mr. Vanegas stated that COBRO has always been open to considering extending membership to any entity that expresses interest. He explained though that as was the case with the Border Trade Alliance, many groups expressed interest in the beginning, became members, then stopped attending regularly and became advisory members, then stopped coming entirely.

Mario Lopez, City of San Diego, said that there are different categories of groups that attend the meetings: academia; business organizations; private sector; public sector, etc., and suggested the idea of implementing a buddy system in which members would be paired up and reach out to one another to supplement staff communications and meeting reminders. Mr. Vanegas expressed his agreement with this idea, stating that SANDAG does expect Committee member assistance in reminding and encouraging one another to attend meetings. Mr. Lopez asked if it would be possible to create a COBRO chat module on SANDAG’s website so that members could communicate more easily. Mr. Vanegas stated that the issue is funding, since the creation, implementation and maintenance of such a system would require funding and staffing, and those resources are scarce. Mr. Lopez responded that maybe it could be done externally and Ms. Ducheny agreed that maybe an email list of members could be circulated.

Sergio Pallares, Caltrans, suggested creating an exit poll or questionnaire that is administered to COBRO member agencies prior to reclassifying them to advisory members, asking them how we can improve the Committee or make it easier for groups to attend. Mr. Lopez agreed that it would be helpful to know why members are not attending; whether it is an issue of time, traffic, staffing, interest, etc.

9. 2012 SAN DIEGO – BAJA CALIFORNIA BORDER CROSSINGS AND TRADE STATISTICS
(Tayah Waterhouse, SANDAG)

Chair Ganster invited Tayah Waterhouse, SANDAG, to present the 2012 regional border crossing and trade statistics. Ms. Waterhouse used a PowerPoint Presentation to present data on the most recent border crossing and trade statistics for the three operating land POEs in the San Diego-Baja
California region: San Ysidro-Puerta México; Otay Mesa-Mesa de Otay; and Tecate-Tecate. Border crossing statistics were presented in two categories: northbound vehicle crossings, which included trucks, buses and private vehicles, and northbound individual crossings, which includes pedestrians and passengers in private vehicles. Trade statistics were also presented for northbound and southbound trade in two categories: trade transported via rail and trade transported via truck. All data was gathered from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA).

Ms. Waterhouse concluded her presentation by stating that as the statistics make clear, the POEs in the region are under a great deal of constraint, but that the current expansion and construction projects that are underway will add capacity in the coming years, thereby ameliorating the situation. She then gave a brief overview of a few of the POE construction and expansion projects that are ongoing in the region and informed the group that all of the data presented, including the graphs, are posted on SANDAG’s website and available for review.

10. UPDATE ON THE BORDER HEALTH EQUITY TRANSPORTATION STUDY (Laurie Gartrell)

Chair Paul Ganster introduced Laurie Gartrell, SANDAG. Ms. Gartrell explained that she is the Project Manager for the Border Health Equity Transportation Study (BHETS), and that she would follow up on her introductory presentation that she gave to the Committee in May. She began by giving a brief overview on the project, which is funded by a Caltrans Environmental Justice grant and is a planning study looking at mobility and health challenges affecting the community of San Ysidro. Ms. Gartrell explained that the two objectives of the study are to: 1) Develop recommendations to address health within the transportation and planning process; and 2) Make the study available as a tool for other communities to emulate.

Ms. Gartrell informed the group of the study’s progress to date, stating that a public workshop was held in San Ysidro in July with approximately 65 attendees to identify what the exact mobility and health challenges are for the community, and how behavior and social, economic and political frameworks can affect health. In addition, two stakeholder meetings have been held to identify health and mobility indicators, and to review available data and past or current plans and studies that are similar and can be drawn from. Ms. Gartrell continued that an Existing Conditions Report is currently being developed, for which a draft will be available in mid-October, and the final report is expected to be complete by early December, 2013. The Existing Conditions Report will lay the groundwork for the recommendations that will be completed in late 2014. Ms. Gartrell stated that she will give another update to COBRO in January 2014, and that the expected completion date for the entire study is January-February, 2015.

Ms. Gartrell concluded by saying that if any of the members have any questions, they can feel free to contact her, and if anyone is interested in joining the stakeholder group, they are welcome, and that the group meets on the fourth Thursday of every other month.

Chair Ganster stated that the study is quite important since it looks at the issue of how people move around in San Ysidro area, which funnels in all of the border crossings from Mexico into a relatively confined area. He continued that the study will be important in helping define how the San Ysidro region can function more effectively in terms of transportation, health, and environmental justice issues.
Sergio Pallares, Caltrans, mentioned that Caltrans is in phase one of a study looking at mobility at the California border communities, and asked if the information received to date in the BHETS is available for review by Caltrans or its consultant in order to inform the study they are currently working on. Ms. Gartrell responded that there is not much tangible data developed to date, but that the Existing Conditions Report, which will be ready in draft form in October, will be helpful to review.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

Chair Ganster thanked all of the presenters and announced that the next meeting of COBRO would be held Tuesday, November 5, 2013, from 3:00-4:30 p.m. at SANDAG.
UPCOMING EVENTS

WHAT: 5th Annual Blue Tech & Blue Economy Summit in San Diego
Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies
WHEN: November 7 & 8, 2013
WHERE: Liberty Station Conference Center
MORE INFO: 619-450-450, x141 or http://themaritimealliance.org/2013/05/5th-annual-blue-tech-blue-economy-summit/

WHAT: 2013 California Economic Summit: Advancing the Triple Bottom Line
California Forward and the California Stewardship Network
WHEN: November 7 & 8, 2013
WHERE: Los Angeles, CA
MORE INFO: http://www.caeconomy.org/summit

WHAT: ART SAN DIEGO Contemporary Art Fair
WHEN: November 7-10, 2013
WHERE: Balboa Park, San Diego
MORE INFO: (858) 254-3031 or http://artsandiego2013.com/

WHAT: Global Business Strategy Seminar: Optimizing Your Global Supply Chain
University of San Diego School of Business Administration
WHEN: November 11, 19 & 21, 2013
WHERE: Robinson Complex, UCSD
MORE INFO: Erin Kellaway at ekellaway@sandiego.edu or www.sandiego.edu/gbs

WHAT: The Blue Economy: Tapping San Diego’s Ocean of Opportunity
UCSD School of International Relations and Pacific Studies
WHEN: November 12, 2013
WHERE: Balboa Park, San Diego
MORE INFO: darobertson@ucsd.edu or https://calendar.ucsd.edu/DisplayEventDetail.asp?iEventID=47355&iSubCatID=38&iRoomID

WHAT: Panorámicas Socioculturales de Fronteras Latinoamericanas
El Colegio de la Frontera Norte
WHEN: November 14, 2013
WHERE: Aula Magna Raúl Rangel
MORE INFO: informes@colef.mx or http://www.colef.mx/?evento=panoramicas-socioculturales-de-fronteras-latinoamericanas&lang=es
WHAT: 2013 All My Friends Music Festival
WHEN: November 16, 2013
WHERE: Casa de la Cultura, Tijuana, B.C.
MORE INFO: http://amfmf.com/

WHAT: Energy Reform in Mexico
WHEN: November 21, 2013
WHERE: UC San Diego Faculty Club
MORE INFO: http://usmex.ucsd.edu/events/index.html

WHAT: San Diego Bay Wine & Food Festival
WHEN: November 18-24, 2013
WHERE: 20 City-wide events throughout the City of San Diego
MORE INFO: http://www.sandiegowineclassic.com/ or 619-342-7337

WHAT: Foro Regional sobre Infraestructura Verde
WHEN: November 21, 2013
WHERE: Aula Magna Raúl Rangel
MORE INFO: informes@colef.mx or http://www.colef.mx/?evento=foro-regional-sobre-infraestructura-verde&lang=es

WHAT: Governance of Public Health in Mexico
WHEN: December 4, 2013
WHERE: Institute of the Americas Deutz Room
MORE INFO: amrobinson@ucsd.edu or http://usmex.ucsd.edu/events/index.html

Key Staff Contact: Hector Vanegas, (619) 699-1972, hector.vanegas@sandag.org
2013 BINATIONAL SEMINAR “MOVING THE BORDER FORWARD: COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY” RECOMMENDATIONS – OVERVIEW OF EXISTING BINATIONAL NATURAL DISASTER AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE COLLABORATION EFFORTS

Introduction

Earthquakes, floods, mudslides, tornados, hurricanes, wildfires and hazardous materials spills or releases, which are often secondary effects of natural disasters, all pose a significant risk to the millions of people living in the U.S.-Mexico border region, as well as the ecosystems and wildlife. These natural disasters and emergencies do not respect administrative boundaries, and therefore response efforts must often be coordinated across the border. On a government-to-government level, some institutional frameworks are in place to coordinate United States-Mexico binational response to natural disasters on a national level, but residents of the border region often rely on more informal practices to organize binational cooperation in the absence of comprehensive formal agreements. While large-scale response efforts are dependent on the actions and resources of the respective federal governments, preparedness and localized response often needs to be managed on a smaller, regional level, especially when fast and effective real-time response is needed.

Recognizing the importance of coordinated natural disaster and emergency preparedness, COBRO’s 2013 Binational Seminar Recommendations include a recommendation on supporting binational planning efforts in this area that reads: “Identify and support responsible agencies’ existing collaboration efforts for binational emergency and natural disaster response and preparedness, and encourage the development of additional joint binational action planning, where needed.”

The attached report (Attachment 1) provides an overview of existing federal and selected regional binational collaboration mechanisms in the field of emergency and natural disaster preparedness and response. This report is a brief synopsis and is intended to serve as a quick reference for future points of discussion. Detailed information can be accessed through project lead agencies identified in this report.

Next Steps

Project development will be monitored and periodic updates will be provided as needed.

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OVERVIEW OF EXISTING BINATIONAL NATURAL DISASTER AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE COLLABORATION EFFORTS

This report is prepared for discussion of the Committee on Binational Regional Opportunities (COBRO), following the discussions during the 2013 Binational Seminar. Context for this report can be reviewed in the summary of the seminar and discussions during the September 3, 2013 COBRO meeting.

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United States-Mexico Consultative Committee on Natural Disasters

History: In 1980, Mexico and the United States signed the U.S.-Mexico Agreement on Cooperation During Natural Disasters to establish the U.S.-Mexico Consultative Committee on Natural Disasters.

Mission: To foster cooperative information sharing and planning in the border region for natural disaster preparedness.

Objectives and Scope of Work: The mandate of the Committee includes exchanging information and personnel, conducting risk assessments, training, and studying damage assessment techniques and the role of communications in early planning. The agreement also calls for each country to facilitate prompt entry and exit of personnel and equipment from its territory.

Organization and Collaboration: Membership of the U.S.-Mexico Consultative Committee on Natural Disasters includes the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), the U.S. State Department, the Southwest Border Regional Commission, and Mexico’s Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior or Gobernación, National Defense, Navy, Treasury and Public Credit, Communications and Transportation, Human Settlements and Public Works. The agreement stipulates that the members are to meet at least annually and has the ability to create joint working groups with the participation of the federal, state, and local governments and the private sector. However, implementation of the agreement has been limited, and therefore does not enable sufficient binational response efforts.

United States-Mexico Joint Contingencies and Emergencies Plan for Preparedness and Response to Events Associated with Chemical Hazardous Substances in the Inland Border Area (Inland Border Plan)

History: In January, 1988, Mexico and the United States signed the Mexico-United States Joint Contingencies and Emergencies Plan for Preparedness and Response to Events Associated with Chemical Hazardous Substances in the Inland Border Area (hereafter referred to as “the Inland Border Plan” or “The Plan”), is the collaborative binational plan the two countries have in place for dealing with emergency response related to releases, spills, fires, or explosions of hazardous substances or pollutants, including oil and natural gas. The Inland Border Plan was most recently updated in 2009.

Mission: The mission of the Inland Border Plan is based on the principles of Annex II of the 1983 La Paz Agreement: To protect the health, human safety and the environment, and provide joint and coordinated responses to significant chemical hazardous substances contingencies or emergencies that affect the Inland Border Area between Mexico and the United States, which is defined as the area situated 100 kilometers on either side of the inland international boundary.

Objectives/Scope of Work: The Inland Border Plan is a mechanism to provide response to a chemical hazardous substances emergency that may present a significant threat for both countries, or that affects one of them in such a way that justifies the notification of the other country or request for assistance. Assistance includes the following: facilitation of the entrance of officials from one country to the other; the provision of assistance at the request or after receiving the prior
consent of the other country; the coordination of federal efforts, activities, and resources of both
countries; and/or the exchange of information between the Participants.

Organization and Coordination: The United States and Mexico serve as Co-chairs for the Inland
Border Plan. Mexico has two Co-chairs: one from the Secretariat of Environment and Natural
Resources (Secretaría del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales or SEMARNAT in Spanish) through
the Office of the Under Attorney of Industrial Inspection of the Federal Attorney General for
Environmental Protection (La Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente or PROFEPA in
Spanish); and the General Coordinator for Civil Protection (Coordinador General de Protección Civil
or CGPC in Spanish) within the Secretariat of the Interior (Secretaría de Gobernación or SEGOB in
Spanish). The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) within the Office of Solid Waste and
Emergency Response of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the coordinating
authority for the United States The role of the Co-chairs includes: Developing and maintaining the
necessary communication systems that allow for effective communication; keeping their respective
National Coordinators, which are authorities designated by the La Paz Agreement, informed of all
key activities and emergency activations conducted under the Inland Border Plan; securing the
involvement of the agencies in their respective countries in cooperation with the Ministry of
Foreign Affairs (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores or SRE in Spanish) in Mexico and the
Department of State in the United States; and promoting the development, maintenance, and
implementation of the Joint Contingency Plans of border region “Sister City” pairs.

The Inland Border Plan acts through a Joint Response Team (JRT), which is the policy and decision-
making body with overall responsibility for the maintenance and effective implementation of the
Plan for both the United States and Mexico. In Mexico, the JRT is composed of representatives of
PROFEPA and CGPC. In the United States the JRT is composed of the EPA, and appropriate support
agencies to coordinate responses to chemical hazardous substances contingencies or emergencies.
The Co-chairs of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Border-wide Workgroup will Co-chair
the JRT, and are to ensure the coordination with JRT support agencies.

There are also Situation/Incident-Specific Joint Response Teams (ISJRT) responsible for implementing
the Inland Border Plan effectively at the state and local level in Mexico and at the regional level in
the United States, consistent with JRT policies. The overall function of the ISJRT includes planning
and preparing for a chemical hazardous substances contingency or emergency, as well as
monitoring and supporting response operations and resolving preparedness issues that require
localized geographic action or coordination of appropriate personnel. The Co-chairs of the JRT are
responsible for designating a representative to lead this team. The ISJRT may be comprised of
federal, regional, state, and local agencies from each country and in the case of the United States,
also by representatives of tribal governments.

The On Scene Coordinator (OSC) is the federal authority designated in each country to perform the
functions and responsibilities of coordination of joint response actions at the site of the chemical
hazardous substances contingency or emergency in the Inland Border Area of that country and to
provide information on the chemical hazardous substances contingencies or emergencies to the
ISJRT. For Mexico, two OSCs are to be designated in the affected zone; one will be designated by a
PROFEPA Representative and the other by the General Coordinator of Civil Protection from the
Secretariat of Government. For the United States, the OSC is to be designated by the regional EPA
office in the affected zone. Technical assistance is available to help the OSC in response operations
under this Inland Border Plan in the form of experts and specialized equipment through the ISJRT. Such resources include experts with experience in cleaning techniques, chemistry, engineering, biology, hydrology, health effects, toxicology, communications, natural resources and other related situations that involve control and evaluation of the response.

**United States-Mexico Joint Contingency Plan Regarding Pollution of the Marine Environment due to Oil and Other Toxic Substances Spills (Marine Plan)**

**History:** On July 24, 1980, the Mexican and U.S. governments signed the Agreement of Cooperation between the United States of America and the United Mexican States Regarding Pollution of the Marine Environment by Discharges of Hydrocarbons and Other Hazardous Substances (hereafter referred to as “Agreement”), which went into force in March, 1981. Based on this Agreement, the Mexico-United States Joint Contingency Plan Regarding Pollution of the Marine Environment due to Oil and Other Toxic Substances Spills (Marine Plan) was implemented. The Marine Plan covers chemical hazardous substances contingencies or emergencies that affect the marine environment or coastal waters. According to the Agreement, the marine environment of each of the parties is defined as “the area of the sea, including the adjoining shoreline . . . within 200 nautical miles of the baselines from which the breadth of its territorial sea is measured.”

**Mission:** In recognition that pollution of the marine environment by hydrocarbons or other hazardous substances may cause damage to the ecology of the sea and the cause a threat to public health and welfare, the mission of the Marine Plan is to preserve the marine environment and conserve the living organisms which inhabit it. The Marine Plan is to be implemented in coordination with the Inland Border Plan, in the event both plans are activated for the same contingency or emergency.

**Objectives/Scope of Work:** The objectives of the Marine Plan are to develop measures to prevent and detect polluting incidents, to ensure an adequate response in each case and to minimize the adverse effects to the marine environment and public health.

**Organization and Coordination:** In the United States, the Marine Plan is coordinated by the Coast Guard and the National Response Team, and in Mexico, it is coordinated by the Ministry of the Navy. Additional government agencies from both countries serve as auxiliary agencies, depending on the nature of the incident.

Both countries’ coordinating agencies designate authorities to constitute a Joint Response Team (JRT) with Mexican and U.S. Co-chairs, and also On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs). The OSCs are responsible for coordinating detection and response operations, determining potential impacts on human health and welfare and natural resources, informing the JRT of every aspect of the incident and recommending a joint response plan to the Chairman of the JRT. The JRT is set up to meet to develop procedures for anticipated coordinated response and to meet in case of emergency incidents. In order to propose initiation of a joint response, both JRT Chairmen must submit a formal recommendation to the U.S. Department of State and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores or SRE in Spanish) in Mexico. Other functions of the JRT include advising the OSCs regarding available response resources and evaluating measures taken by the OSC and recommending improvements or necessary actions.
Sister City Cross-Border Joint Contingency Plans (Sister City Plans)

**History:** Ninety percent of the border population resides in fifteen paired border referred to as “Sister Cities,” and chemical hazardous substances contingencies or emergencies affect the local community first and foremost. For that reason, members of the United States-Mexico Inland Border Plan Joint Response Team (JRT) agreed that subsequent planning efforts were needed for the tribal governments and the 30 Border Cities that could be affected by a major hazardous chemical substance release. Therefore, the co-chairs for the Inland Border Plan are responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of the Sister City Contingency Plans (Sister City Plans) at the tribal, state, and local level so that they have up-to-date and information about potential hazards, as well as adequate equipment and trained personnel for responding to chemical hazardous substances contingencies or emergencies. Accordingly, the mayors of numerous sister border cities pairs signed agreements agreeing to cooperate with one another in cases of local disasters.

**Mission:** The overall mission of the Sister City Plans is the same as the Inland Border Plan, which is based on mission of the La Paz Agreement: To protect the health, human safety and the environment, and provide joint and coordinated responses to significant chemical hazardous substances contingencies or emergencies that affect the Inland Border Area between Mexico and the United States. The Sister City Plans were created so that cities along the United States-Mexico border can respond more effectively to accidental releases of hazardous materials into the environment by jointly utilizing available resources and manpower to respond to the emergency.

**Objectives/Scope of Work:** These plans, jointly developed by residents of the neighboring border cities, set out specific procedures for working together in the event of chemical release and often entail training exercises to maximize preparedness. The Sister City Plans help to reinforce close relationships between city mayors, fire chiefs and other governmental officials in the United States and Mexico, and assist with maintaining continuity through changes in political administration. In order to evaluate the Inland Border Plan procedures, each Sister City pair must plan and conduct binational theoretical and field drills and exercises, as needed. While many of the Sister City Plans are limited in scope, and only apply to hazardous materials spills, as opposed to all types of emergencies and disasters, some still informally respond to requests for aid whether or not they relate to hazardous materials. Other Sister City Plans have been updated to include other disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes, and floods.

Since the Sister City Plans are equivalent to Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), the United States and Mexico federal governments do not recognize the agreements as binding. This means that the Sister City agreements are not enforceable, but also means that their scope is very flexible.

**Organization and Coordination:** There are currently paired Sister Cities with a Joint Contingency Plan in the all of the following fifteen city pairs: San Diego/Tijuana; Imperial County/Mexicali; San Luis/San Luis RC; Nogales/Nogales; Conchise County/Naco; Douglas/Aguas Prieta; Columbus/Puerto Palomas; El Paso/Ciudad Juarez; Brownsville/Matamoros; Del Rio/Ciudad Acuña; Eagle Pass/Piedras Negras; Laredo/Nuevo Laredo; McAllen/Reynosa; Presidio/Ojinaga; and Weslaco/Rio Bravo. Since the inception of the Sister City Plans, these pairs have worked together to develop partnerships between complimentary departments (police, fire, hospitals, emergency management and the

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private sector), establish protocols, share information and conduct training exercises and drills, and have jointly responded to numerous emergencies along the U.S.-Mexico border. The Sister City Plans are periodically updated, and technical assistance funding support for these updates is provided by EPA and the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC).

International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) or Comisión Internacional de Límites y Aguas (CILA)

**History:** The International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) was established in 1889 by an agreement of the U.S. and Mexico to address boundary and water issues along the U.S. Mexico border as established by the 1848 Treaty of Hidalgo. The IBWC is an international body composed of a section in the U.S. (called the International Boundary and Water Commission or IBWC), and a section in Mexico, called La Comisión Internacional de Límites y Aguas or CILA in Spanish. The IBWC has emerged in its modern form from The Treaty of 1944 for “Utilization of Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande.”

**Mission:** The IBWC’s overall aim is “to preserve the international boundary and improve the quality, conservation, and utilization of transboundary water resources in the border region.”

**Objectives/Scope of Work:** The IBWC is responsible for implementing the provisions of treaties covering boundary and water matters, including: preservation of the international boundary; distribution of waters of the boundary rivers between the two countries; control of floods on the boundary rivers; regulation of boundary rivers through joint storage works to enable division and utilization of the waters by the two countries; improvement of the water quality of boundary rivers; solution of border sanitation problems; and use of international waters of the Rio Grande to jointly develop hydroelectric power. In terms of natural disaster and emergency preparedness and response, the U.S. IBWC and CILA are not only responsible for coordinating response action for any instance of chemical hazardous substance spills in international waters, they also collaborate to play a major role in flood control in the U.S.-Mexico border region.

**Organization and Coordination:** The IBWC is a binational organization, consisting of a Mexican and a U.S. section, under the guidance of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores or SRE in Spanish) in coordination with the National Water Commission (Comisión Nacional del Agua or CONAGUA in Spanish), and the Department of State (DOS), respectively.

In the case of a spill or release of chemical hazardous substances into international rivers and waters along the Inland Border Area, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Regional Offices and/or the Office of the Under Attorney of Industrial Inspection of the Federal Attorney General for Environmental Protection (La Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente or PROFEPA in Spanish) and the General Coordinator for Civil Protection (Coordinador General de Protección Civil or CGPC in Spanish), must notify the IBWC corresponding sections. Mexican and U.S. Commissioners to the IBWC are then responsible for responding to the event. The Commissioners are to inform the Co-chairs of the Inland Border Plan Joint Response Team (JRT) and the tribal, state, and local authorities in their respective countries of such events. If an incident exceeds the response capacity of the IBWC, the Commissioners have the responsibility to contact the Mexican National
Communications Center (Centro Nacional de Comunicaciones or CENACOM in Spanish) and the U.S. National Response Center (NRC), in order to assure that the response actions are carried out. The IBWC would also seek assistance from the EPA and PROFEPa and CGPC to assure that responsible action is taken.

**Border 2020: United States-Mexico Environmental Program (Border 2020)**

**History:** The Border 2020: U.S.-Mexico Environmental Program (Border 2020) is the latest environmental program implemented under the 1983 La Paz Agreement. It is a collaborative binational effort administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Mexican Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales or SEMARNAT in Spanish). Border 2020 Program builds upon the Border 2012 Environmental Program, emphasizing regional, bottom-up approaches for decision making, priority setting, and project implementation to address environmental and public health problems in the border region. As in Border 2012, the new Program encourages meaningful participation from communities and local stakeholders.

**Mission:** In partnership with U.S. border tribes and federal, state, and local governments in the United States and Mexico, the mission of the Border 2020 program is to: “Protect the environment and public health in the U.S.-Mexico border region, consistent with the principles of sustainable development.”

**Objectives/Scope of Work:** One of the five long-term goals of Border 2020 is to enhance joint preparedness for environmental response. The specific objectives within this goal are to: Update eight sister city joint contingency plans with risk identification and reduction of all hazards; facilitate easier trans-boundary movement of equipment and personnel; and continue updating the U.S.-Mexico Joint Contingency Plan.

**Organization and Coordination:** Consistent with the La Paz Agreement, National Coordinators from the United States and Mexico manage overall Border 2020 program implementation, and ensure cooperation, coordination and communication among all coordinating bodies. There are five Policy Forums, each of which has a federal co-chair from each country and focuses on a border-wide, multi-regional issue that is primarily federal in nature and that requires broad policy considerations. One of the policy forums is focused on Emergency Preparedness and Response.

There are also Regional Workgroups that are geographically based and coordinate environmental and public health activities at the local level. Each Regional Workgroup has one state and one federal co-chair from each country. The Regional Workgroups are able to create Task Forces to identify priority issues and help facilitate pilot projects by engaging with local, state, and tribal governments, academia, NGOs, and the public. The Emergency Preparedness and Response Policy Forum has a Workgroup called the Emergency Preparedness and Response Border-Wide Workgroup. The EPA authorizes grant funding for Border 2020 projects through the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), which provides its services to facilitate stakeholder meetings, as well as identify, contract and manage projects.
Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) or Comisión de Cooperación Ecológica Fronteriza (COCEF)

**History:** The Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), or La Comisión de Cooperación Ecológica Fronteriza (COCEF) in Spanish, is a binational institution created by the U.S. and Mexico in 1993 under an environmental side-agreement to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

**Mission:** BECC’s mission is “to preserve and enhance environmental conditions and quality of life for people living along the U.S.-Mexico border” by effectively applying binational policies and programs that support the sustainable development of environmental infrastructure in the border region.

**Objectives and Scope of Work:** BECC’s original mandate focused on water pollution and conservation, wastewater, waste management and recycling, and was later expanded to include air quality, clean and efficient energy, public transportation and municipal planning and development. More recently, the following sectors have been added to the scope of BECC’s mandate: International border crossings; energy transmission and distribution; production of goods and services to enhance or protect the environment; and infrastructure projects to minimize future negative environmental impacts in the region. The institution’s objectives include the following: Certifying the technical feasibility and the environmental-health impacts of projects; ensuring transparency and promoting community-based support for projects; and providing technical assistance for project development. Project jurisdiction in the border region is defined as the area located within 100 kilometers (about 62 miles) north of the international boundary and 300 kilometers (about 186 miles) south of the border.

In regards to emergency preparedness and response, BECC works with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to approve grant funding for technical assistance projects within the Border 2020 U.S.-Mexico Environmental Program (Border 2020). One of the five program goals of Border 2020 is Emergency Preparedness. In 2012, eight percent, or $688,000 of all Border 2020 projects funded through BECC were focused on Emergency Preparedness.

**Membership and Organization:** BECC shares a Board of Directors with its sister institution, the North American Development Bank (NADB). The Board is a structure of binational organizations in which civil society is represented. The Board consists of the following five Mexican members: Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público or SHCP in Spanish); Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores or SRE in Spanish); Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales or SEMARNAT in Spanish); a Border State Representative from the State of Baja California; and a Border Public Representative. U.S. members are the following: Department Of The Treasury; Department Of State; Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) a Border State Representative; and a Border Public Representative. The chairmanship of the board alternates between U.S. and Mexican representatives every year.

**Border Liaison Mechanism (BLM)**

**History:** The Border Liaison Mechanism (BLM) was developed within the U.S.-Mexico Binational Commission in response to a growing need for institutionalized border cooperation. It was
established in 1992 as a result of a bilateral agreement between the U.S. and Mexico calling for the formation of crossborder meetings of federal, state, and local authorities organized and chaired by principal officers from both countries. The BLM was established in the San Diego-Tijuana region in 1993.

Mission: To enhance crossborder communication, ensure that unique local issues are not overlooked by the federal governments and address local issues directly without guidance from the capitals.

Objectives and Scope of Work: To enable the Consuls of Mexico and the U.S. in the border cities to convene state, local, and federal agency representatives and others from both sides of the border to formally discuss matters of mutual interest, including ports of entry security, public health, immigration, public safety coordination, natural resources, health, and the environment. BLMs hold both regularly-scheduled meetings and emergency meetings in the event of any important border incident; emergency meetings have dealt with problems arising from bridge blockades and incidences of violence. The establishment of the BLMs has made it possible for federal, state, and local authorities from both countries to act promptly and collaboratively to address local problems and conditions, including emergency response.

Membership and Organization: Chaired by U.S. and Mexican Consuls, the BLMs include U.S. and Mexican civic leaders, inspection agency representatives and law enforcement contacts who meet to share information and discuss problems. The meetings were to be alternatively held on the American and Mexican sides of the border, with each principal officer jointly responsible for determine the agendas. The BLMs operate in "sister city" pairs, which exist in Tijuana-San Diego, Mexicali-Calexico, Nogales-Hermosillo, Ciudad Juárez-El Paso, Laredo-Nuevo Laredo, Matamoros-McAllen, and Matamoros-Brownsville. Additional BLMs are being planned. Due to the increasing number of issues dealt with by the BLM, and the length of the plenary meetings, subgroups or baskets focused on issues such as border security, migration, bridges and border crossings and the environment were created.

The Border Agency Fire Council (BAFC)

History: The Border Agency Fire Council (BAFC) held its first meetings in the fall of 1995 due to a dramatic increase in wildfire activity in southeastern San Diego County. The Council was formally created during the 1996 fire season. In 2008, BAFC members from the U.S. and Mexico updated the Mutual Assistance Agreement, which establishes dispatching and resource utilization procedures that enable participating agencies to work cooperatively to suppress fires and take appropriate actions on floods and other emergency situations along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Mission: To save lives and property and to protect the sensitive habitat of the border area.

Objectives/Scope of Work: The three main goals of the BAFC Charter are to: 1) Establish and maintain relationships with Mexican government agencies; 2) Strengthen awareness and cooperation on biodiversity; and 3) Continue effective fire prevention, suppression, and emergency response.

Organization and Coordination: The BAFC operates under a mutual assistance agreement that is facilitated by the U.S. and Mexican consulates in the region. The BAFC is made up of forty-three United States and Mexican government agencies and organizations representing fire protection,
law enforcement, legislators, emergency responders, natural resource managers, and elected officials that address public safety issues pertaining to wildfire along the U.S.-Mexico border. Members meet quarterly during the winter and every six to eight weeks during fire season in San Diego County. Through collaborative efforts, member agencies have maintained fire breaks, conducted controlled burns, and have altered the environment that runs along the border to allow better access for emergency responders. They have also enhanced communication among responders on both sides of the border, have implemented binational fire safety campaigns, and have coordinated crossborder wildfire assistance.

**Binational Integral Flood Alert System in the Tijuana River Basin**

**History:** Implemented in 2003 with participation from government institutions, universities, and other organizations from both countries, the Binational Integral Flood Alert System in the Tijuana River Basin (Flood Alert System) utilizes a system of rain and stream gauges to provide real time data to emergency managers in each country. The Flood Alert System covers a geographic area including Morena Lake, points east to Tecate and west to the coast. This flood warning system is the first along the U.S.-Mexico border.

**Mission:** The mission of the Flood Alert System is to protect at-risk populations from the negative impacts of flooding of the Tijuana River.

**Objectives/Scope of Work:** The Flood Alert System supplies real-time information of hydrological conditions (rainfall and storm flow) in the binational basin to emergency officials and decision makers on both sides of the border in order to enable effective decision making during floods and to protect local populations from harm.

**Organization and Coordination:** An Automatic Local Evaluation in Real Time (ALERT) system is maintained in the United States by the County of San Diego, and the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) in Mexico. Other project participants include the following agencies: Mexico’s National Water Commission (Comisión Nacional del Agua or CONAGUA in Spanish); the U.S. National Weather Service; the County of San Diego; the City of San Diego; the Civil Protection Agencies of Baja California, Tijuana and Tecate; State of California Department of Parks and Recreation; San Diego State University; and El Colegio de la Frontera Norte. Early leadership was also provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

**HAZMAT Equipment Transfers across the Border Region**

As part of the inaugural stage of an innovative bi-national equipment transfer initiative involving the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), the U.S. Agency for International Development, Mexican Civil Protection (Protección Civil or PC in Spanish), The Mexican Federal Attorney for Environmental Protection (La Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente or PROFEPA in Spanish) and the U.S.-Mexico Border Governors Emergency Management and Civil Protection Worktable, hazardous materials response related equipment and specialized training were transferred to five Mexican border cities in 2009. The cities included the highest risk areas of Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Nogales. To support a coordinated regional response, training was provided jointly to Mexicali Baja California/San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora, and Acuña/Piedras Negras in Coahuila. Topics covered included practical chemistry and toxicology, air monitoring, contaminant survey and detection, safety and decontamination, and terrorism and
biological sampling. Students engaged in drills involving simulated responses to drug labs, chlorine releases, railroad and pipeline spills, and tanker rollovers.

Sources:


HAZMAT Equipment Transfers across the Border Region: