

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER
FIELD COORDINATING COMMITTEE (FCC)
1999 ACTIVITIES**

United States-Mexico Environmental Education

- The 16th training course on "Management of Protected Areas" was completed January 6-15, 1999, in Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico. The Instituto Nacional de Ecologia, Profauna, and the NPS United States-Mexico Affairs Office coordinated this international training course. NPS and FWS personnel participated as instructors.
- The 5th International Symposium on the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro was held at the Pedro Coronel Cultural Center in Zacatecas, Zacatecas, Mexico. NPS, BLM, the City of Española, and Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) helped organize the meeting. NPS and BLM personnel participated as instructors.
- BLM, NPS and BIA provided financial support to the International Sonoran Desert Alliance to initiate a program to develop youth groups in three communities devoted to environmental education-based activities with a focus on recycling. Results exceeded expectations with more than 150 youths and adult volunteers from five communities participating.
- FCC bureaus helped support the Sonoran Institute and the International Sonoran Desert Alliance in the promotion of Sonoran desert ecosystem, tourism and cultural resources partnerships.

Aerial Photography and Resource Mapping

- The \$30+ million, ten- to twelve-year project to produce imagery and integrated digital geospatial data and graphic maps for the United States-Mexico border region is three to five years ahead of schedule. On the United States side, color infrared photography at a scale of 1:40,000, Digital Elevation Models (DEMs), Digital Raster Graphics (DRGs), the Public Land Survey System, and Political Boundaries were completed in previous years. Digital Orthophoto Quadrangles are 95% complete, of which 46% (4,747 quarter quadrangles) were completed in 1999. Hydrography and transportation themes are in progress. Finished projects are available through USGS.
- USGS and the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geográfica, e Información (INEGI), the Mexican mapping agency, have been working to build GIS data sets along the Mexican side of the border. Both agencies have initiated a joint pilot

project to test data sharing procedures in the Ciudad Juárez-El Paso border area. They have developed joint standards for the integration of digital elevation data sets.

Research and Management of Shared Water Resources

- Work on the Fact Sheet for the Lower Rio Grande Valley--below Falcon reservoir to the Gulf of Mexico (Subarea No. 8) neared completion in 1999. By the end of the year, it was in colleague review and was being prepared for publication.
- An initial draft of the Fact Sheet for the Pacific Basins/Salton Trough (Subarea No. 1) was written in 1999 and is now being modified and reviewed.
- Fact Sheets for the Mimbres/Animas Basins (Subarea No. 4) and the Rio Grande--Elephant Butte Reservoir to above Rio Conchos (Subarea No. 5) were initiated in 1999.
- Issue Team members prepared a work plan and accompanied Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt to Mexico City to describe the need to initiate a binational assessment of natural resources along the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo from Ft. Quitman to Amistad International Reservoir. Current plans include a binational symposium on the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo in the above designated reach and incorporation of relevant data from the previously mentioned aerial photography and resource mapping project. The intent of the symposium is to raise awareness of the complex social and environmental issues in the Rio Grande basin.
- Issue Team members participated in a planning process with appropriate agencies to continue the development and use of GIS for examining disease/environmental stressor interactions, and to develop a pilot program for evaluating human health issues in the United States-Mexico border region.
- Issue Team members continued to work with the International Boundary and Water Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other State and Federal agencies along the border to develop an agreement to ensure comparability between water quality samples collected by different agencies.

Upper San Pedro River Basin

- BLM hosted an avian monitoring training program for 19 Mexican biologists during the week of June 14-18, 1999. The training included avian monitoring techniques, field design, survey protocol, data storage and analysis, and data distribution. The skills learned by Mexican biologists can be used to establish avian monitoring programs in various habitats, natural reserves, forests, and national parks throughout Sonora, Mexico. In cooperation with Coronado National Memorial staff, a spotted owl survey was included in the training.

- On June 22, 1999, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and Julia Carabias Lillo, Mexico's Secretariat of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries (SEMARNAP), signed a Joint Declaration to work together in the Upper San Pedro River Basin. This Joint Declaration was built upon, *inter alia*, more than five years of binational collaboration by the FCC Upper San Pedro River Basin Issue Team.
- In June 1999, the tri-national Commission for Environmental Cooperation issued its final report titled "Ribbon of Life, An Agenda for Preserving Transboundary Migratory Bird Habitat on the Upper San Pedro River." Members of the FCC Upper San Pedro River Basin Issue Team contributed to the development of this report.
- In August 1999, the Bureau of Land Management and the Sonoran Institute compiled a "San Pedro & Santa Cruz Rivers Resource Directory" on behalf of the FCC Upper San Pedro River Basin Issue Team. The directory lists conservation and research efforts by government, academic, private and non-profit organizations taking place along these two rivers.
- Members of the Upper San Pedro River Basin Issue Team helped support and participated on the Organizing Committee of an international conference titled "Divided waters - Common ground, Aguas divididas - Áreas comunes" held in Cananea, Sonora, Mexico, on the San Pedro River, and in Bisbee, Arizona, November 7-10, 1999. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt was a Keynote Speaker. More than 160 people participated.
- Thanks to digital information provided by the Institute for the Environment and Sustainable Development for the State of Sonora (IMADES), the Upper San Pedro River Basin Issue Team developed a map of the Basin depicting land ownership both in the United States and Mexico.
- The FCC, in cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency, USDA-Agricultural Research Service Semi-Arid Land-Surface-Atmosphere (SALSA) Program and IMADES, participated in the development and paid for the printing of a poster that provides a glimpse of 25 years of change in the Upper San Pedro River Basin (1973-1997) based upon satellite imagery and on-the-ground research. It attempts to depict this information in terms that are easily understood by everyone.

Lower Rio Grande

- A fill-text and keyword-searchable version of "Biology of the Rio Grande Border Region: A Bibliography" was made available on the Internet. This popular bibliography was first produced in print version in 1997. The bibliography focuses on the biological literature of the Rio Grande transboundary region with

supporting literature from the physical and environmental sciences. See <http://www.cerc.usgs.gov/pubs/riogrande/riogran3.htm>

- A searchable Directory of Federal Natural Resources Research in the Rio Grande Border Region has been made available on the Internet. The database currently contains information on natural resource programs of Department of the Interior bureaus with interests in the Rio Grande border region. Brief project descriptions and contact information are included in this searchable database. Information on other federal agencies will be added as the database is expanded. See <http://www.cerc.usgs.gov/pubs/RioGrande/index.htm>

United States-Mexico "Sisters" Areas

- A second "Letter of Intent" meeting for natural protected areas in the Western Sonoran Desert was held in Tucson, Arizona on July 27-28, 1999. The meeting was organized and coordinated by members of the FCC, the Department of the Interior and SEMARNAP. Over 60 individuals participated. The status of projects that began in 1997 were discussed and a work plan for 2000 was developed.

Habitat Conservation

- The FCC Habitat Conservation Issue Team developed, received funding for, and initiated a project to synthesize the on-going ecological activities on both sides of the United States-Mexico border that includes inventory, monitoring, research, habitat restoration, and management of habitat and species. The first phase of the project is being done by a Mexican National graduate research student at the University of Arizona. The student is developing a database and questions to be asked of the various agencies and organizations along the border. The initial phase will examine the States of California, Arizona, Baja California Norte, and Sonora. The following phase will examine the remaining border states.
- The Habitat Conservation Issue Team also is continuing to work with the Sonoran Institute on community-based restoration of the Santa Cruz River in Sonora, Mexico.
- FCC-supported research conducted in northeastern Sonora, Mexico by New Mexico State University resulted in the identification of eight live jaguar; five females (two of which had a kitten) and one adult male. It appears that a viable population exists north of Rio Aros, Sonora, Mexico. This population may be the source of jaguars reaching the United States.
- An FCC-supported survey in Cienega de Santa Clara estimated the population of Yuma clapper rail at more than 6,000. This does not include the main stem of the Lower Colorado River, the Rio Hardy, El Doctor wetlands or adjoining backwaters. The population of Yuma clapper rail in the Lower Colorado River Delta appears to be in large numbers and healthy.