UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S.-MEXICO BORDER FIELD COORDINATING COMMITTEE (FCC)

FCC Goals, Purpose, and Importance

Fact Sheet

FCC GOALS

Leadership: FCC is recognized as a leader on border natural and cultural resource issues.

Policy: FCC is the recognized forum to provide field input and coordination for Department policies and priorities along the border.

Resources: FCC enhances understanding, management, conservation, and protection of shared natural and cultural resources along the United States-Mexico border.

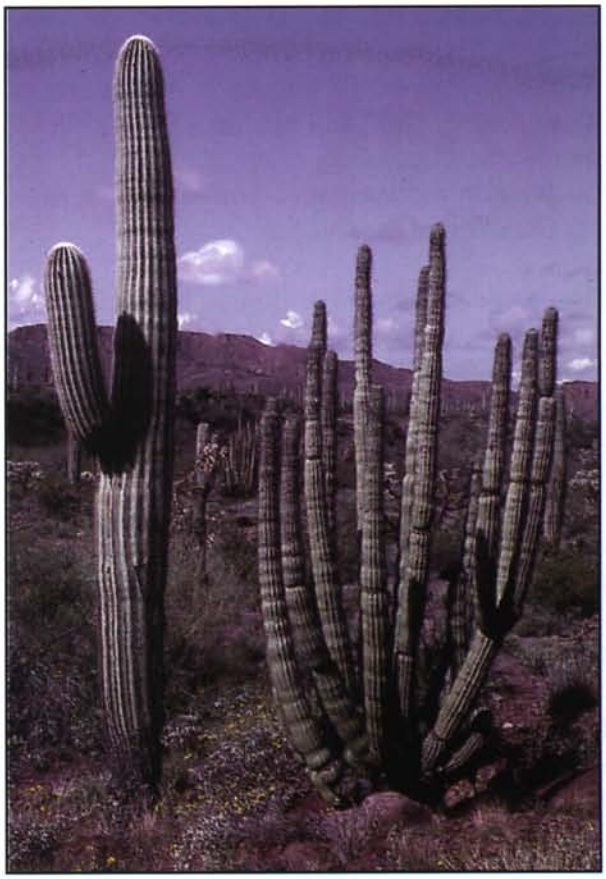
Issues: FCC establishes a framework for natural and cultural border resource issues that provides direction for effective actions.

Communication: FCC effectively communicates information on border natural and cultural resource issues.

FCC PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE

The purpose of the FCC is to promote, facilitate, and enhance communication and coordination between and among member bureaus and offices with respect to United States-Mexico border environmental issues of Department of the Interior interest and concern.

The United States-Mexico border region contains nationally significant natural and cultural resource protection areas. These include national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, and conservation areas; wilderness areas; waterways; and natural resources and special areas for protection on the Outer Continental Shelf. A myriad of federal trust species such as federally endangered or threatened species, migratory birds, and some marine mammals can be found in border habitat. Their well-being is the responsibility of the Department of the Interior. Also along the border are extensive Native American reserved lands of great natural and cultural heritage value.



Alamo Canyon, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Arizona. Photo by L. Norris.

BACKGROUND

Opportunity: A United States-Mexico Border Environmental Issues Conference was hosted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on November 2-3, 1993. Recognition of the need for a closer working relationship among bureaus within the Department working along the border, and eventually the idea of a Border Field Coordinating Committee, developed from this meeting. On August 11, 1994, the FCC was established.

Participants: The Charter was signed by the National Directors of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Mines[1], Bureau of Reclamation, Minerals Management Service, National Biological Survey[2], National Park Service, US Geological Survey, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. The Regional Environmental Offices of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and San Francisco, California are ex-officio members of the FCC, as is a Washington representative from the office of the Secretary of the Interior

Structure: Each member bureau has a designated field representative and one or more alternate. The FCC meets at least twice a year. Additional meetings are held as determined appropriate. Since establishment, the chairmanship of the FCC has been held jointly by field representatives for the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and US Fish and Wildlife Service; the land management agencies along the border within the Department of the Interior.

Intra-Departmental Issue Teams have been established to address, study and analyze specific program or problem areas or topics deemed by the FCC to be of critical concern or interest to the Department or any of its bureaus. The Issue Teams are composed of field experts from the Departmental bureaus represented on the FCC which have a specific jurisdiction, special expertise or bona fide interest in the issue. The Issue Teams report periodically to the FCC, and submit recommendations, as appropriate.

Function: Since the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, binational attention on United States-Mexico border environment and natural resources issues has greatly increased. The FCC has enabled the Department to speak with one voice to Mexico, other US Federal, Tribal, and State agencies and non-government organizations concerned about sustainable development and natural resources protection in the border region. In addition, the Department's participation in establishing Administration priorities for the border has been accomplished through the FCC.

Activities: Current FCC efforts include: US-Mexico Environmental Education, Research and Management of Shared Water Resources, Aerial Photography and Resource Mapping, Upper San Pedro River Basin, Lower Rio Grande, Tohono O'odham Resource Protection, US-Mexico "Sisters" Areas, and Habitat Restoration and Conservation.

[1] The Bureau of Mines was subsequently abolished.
[2] The National Biological Survey was subsequently merged into the US Geological Survey as its Biological Research Division.

FCC members and friends at Reserva de la Biosfera Alto Golfo de California y Delta del Río Colorado Headquarters, El Gulfo, Sonora, Mexico, October 1998. Photo by B. McClure.

For more information, see the FCC Home Page at <http://www.doi.gov/fcc>.