

U.S. - MEXICO BORDER FIELD COORDINATING COMMITTEE



Welcome to the first issue of the Department of the Interior (DOI) U.S.-Mexico Border Field Coordinating Committee (FCC) newsletter. The purpose of our newsletter is to communicate relevant developments and other information that may be useful as we manage, protect, inventory, and monitor natural and cultural resources along our international border with Mexico.

What is the FCC?

The FCC was established in 1994 to promote, facilitate, and enhance communication and coordination between and among member bureaus and offices with respect to U.S.-Mexico border environmental issues of DOI interest and concern. The FCC is recognized within the Department as a forum to provide field input and coordination for Department policies and priorities along the border. The FCC has enabled the Department to speak with one voice to Mexico and to other Federal, tribal, and state agencies and non-government organizations in the U.S. 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.

When and where does the FCC meet and can I attend a meeting?

The FCC meets at least twice a year at a location within the border region. Meetings are open to any DOI employee having an interest in border activities. Commonly, representatives from other agencies and non-governmental organizations are invited to give presentations or lead field trips. Future meetings of the FCC are planned for El Paso, TX during October 19-21, 2004; April 19-21, 2005 in Tucson, AZ; and October 18-20, 2005 in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas.

Who represents my bureau on the FCC?

Each member bureau has a designated field representative and one or more alternates. Current membership includes:

Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Gail Acheson, FCC Chair, and Beau McClure

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS): Lloyd Woosley, FCC Vice-Chair, John Klein, and Denny Buckler

Bureau of Reclamation: Lorenzo Arriaga

National Park Service (NPS): Ramon Olivas

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA): Barry Welch and Amy Heuslin

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS): Jim Rorabaugh

Minerals Management Service (MMS): Jim Kendall

DOI International Affairs (IA): Karen Clark

DOI Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC): Stephen Spencer and Patricia Port



More information about the FCC is available at: <http://www.cerc.usgs.gov/FCC/>

FCC Meets in Yuma, AZ

The FCC's spring meeting was hosted by the BLM in Yuma during April 20-22, 2004.

Following are summaries of selected presentations given at this meeting.





Arizona Border Control Initiative

Illegal cross-border traffic represents a threat to the public and results in significant environmental damage to our nation's borderland resources. Damage to Interior lands results from unauthorized vehicle traffic, significant levels of pedestrian traffic, tons of trash (including bio-hazardous material), and escaped warming fires. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is leading a multi-agency effort in Arizona to stop illegal cross-border traffic. The Arizona Border Control (ABC) Initiative began in March 2004 and will continue into the fall. DOI is supporting the initiative by providing the Border Patrol access to DOI managed lands and allowing for the placement of associated infrastructure within applicable law. Interior law enforcement personnel also are cooperating in this multi-agency effort to better secure our borders. The safety of visitors, employees, law enforcement personnel, and residents on DOI managed lands is the Department's highest priority.



The NPS, BLM, FWS, and BIA all manage lands in southern Arizona. Some units include endangered and sensitive species habitat and wilderness areas. Among the major Interior units are Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife

Refuge, Ironwood Forest National Monument, the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, Coronado National Memorial, Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, and San Bernardino/Leslie Canyon National Wildlife Refuges. The BIA also works with the Tohono O'odham Nation, whose tribal lands abut the border, and other tribes.

For more information contact Beau McClure at Beau_McClure@blm.gov.

Transboundary Ground-Water Resources

At the request of ISARM (International Shared Aquifer Resources Management), Jim Stefanov, International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC); Antonio Rascon, CILA [Comision Internacional De Limites Y Aguas Entre Mexico (International Border and Water Commission, Mexico Section)]; and John Klein, USGS gave presentations at the Transboundary Aquifers of the America's meeting. The intent of these presentations was to communicate to the representatives of the other countries that the U.S. and Mexico share a border that is plagued by a general lack of water for municipal and natural resource needs. An additional objective of the presentations was to impress upon the meeting attendees that a working knowledge regarding the border region's water resources is lacking and there exists a need to conduct the scientific studies necessary to characterize and quantify water availability and sustainability. An overview was provided of the proposed bi-national ground-water study that is contained in the proposed legislation *United States-Mexico Transboundary Aquifer Assessment Act* (S. 1957).

The presentation also offered an opportunity to extend an invitation to the ISARM Americas group to hold their 2004 annual meeting in El Paso, TX so that a case history of the El Paso/Juarez bi-national





ground-water study could be presented. That invitation was accepted and work is now underway by IBWC and CILA to host this meeting later this fall.

Cocopah Tribe Conservation Initiative

Colin and Paul Soto, members of the Cocopah Tribe, gave a presentation on the Tribe's conservation initiative and desire to establish protected areas in both Arizona and Sonora, Mexico. Cocopah means "River People." About two-thirds of the Tribe's members reside in Mexico. Colin said, "The Tribe's cultural survival is dependent on the restoration and protection of the Colorado River." They are focusing on the riparian corridor from the Tribal reservation, which is about five miles southwest of Yuma, south into Mexico to the Gulf of California. This area has been included in the planning effort. Water availability for environmental benefits is a Tribal priority. Concerns include potential destruction of riparian habitat associated with a flood diversion canal proposed by the IBWC and CILA. The Cocopah Tribe wants to reintroduce native plants. However, water is needed to restore vegetation and wildlife. The casino on tribal lands is providing funding opportunities for the initiative.

Team Tamarisk: Cooperating for Results

Tamarisk is an invasive species introduced into North America that causes considerable ecological and economic loss. Tamarisk was sold as an ornamental plant for gardens during the 1800 and 1900's. Its seeds escaped cultivated areas and started growing rapidly along stream banks and rivers. Tamarisk has now spread to most of the western United States, displacing native cottonwoods and other plants and transpiring large quantities of water. Eradication of this invasive species is now a priority for many Federal, state, and local government agencies and private landowners.

During March 31-April 2, 2004, 400 representatives from government agencies as well as non-government organizations and private landowners from 19 western states met in Albuquerque, NM. This alliance, called Team Tamarisk, is an inclusive group of cooperating agencies and individuals devoted to the control of non-native invasive plants.

"Team Tamarisk wants to coordinate efforts to allow officials to work across jurisdictional boundaries, such as state lines or on federal or public land," said Scott Cameron, DOI Deputy Assistant Secretary for Performance and Management. "Working together to get rid of tamarisk will make the work done in each state more effective. New Mexico and Colorado may do a great job inside their own borders on tamarisk, but if tamarisk trees in Wyoming keep on sending seeds south, then ultimately, New Mexico and Colorado will fail," Cameron said. Thomas Stohlgren, USGS Science Program Director of the National Institute of Invasive Species Science in Fort Collins, said "Technology is a new aspect in the fight against tamarisk. The USGS is using mapping and forecasting services to better predict what areas in the Southwest need the most attention." The Institute's map of tamarisk hotspots is available online at:

<http://squall.nrel.colostate.edu/cwis438/tmap/index.html>.

Team Tamarisk also is working on a set of anti-tamarisk guiding principles that will give agencies a direction to follow when working on local programs for eradication or control efforts.

More information about Team Tamarisk and the meeting is available at:

<http://www.invasivespecies.gov/teamtam/>





Border Environmental Health Project

The USGS has undertaken a project entitled "Environmental Health in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region". The objective of the project is to develop an earth and biological resources database within a geographic framework using an Internet map service (IMS) that can be used to further our understanding of the linkages between the condition of the physical environment and environmental/human health issues. The initial study area is shown in the figure below.



The project will provide data and tools for furthering our understanding of the occurrence and distribution of disease-causing agents in the environment and their specific exposure pathways in water, air, biota, and soil. A stakeholder workshop was held in McAllen, TX during April 27-28, 2004 to present the project and to encourage the participation and collaboration of other Federal, state, and local entities from both the United States and Mexico.

More information about the project is available at:
<http://tx.usgs.gov/borderhealth/index.html>

Natural and Cultural Resources Transboundary Cooperation

Ramon Olivas presented an overview of his recent research project where he used a focus group method to share perceptions about the

management of natural and cultural resources in protected areas along the border. Focus groups included resource managers from both countries. His study concluded that there is a lack of a common understanding of what transboundary cooperation should involve. There is interest in learning more about bi-national planning and training on the culture and history of both countries. Based on his research, the NPS is developing training courses to be held at New Mexico State University (NMSU) for park managers working within the border region.

Ken Osborn, Charter FCC Member

This first issue of the FCC newsletter is dedicated to our late friend and colleague, Ken Osborn, who recently passed away. Ken's leadership in the production of imagery and map products for the border region has and will continue to be invaluable. Ken will be missed and will remain a member of the FCC in spirit.



If you would like to submit an article for the FCC Newsletter or announce the availability of a publication or future meeting relevant to the U.S.-Mexico border region, please send your contribution to Lloyd Woosley at lwoosley@usgs.gov.

