

## U.S. - MEXICO BORDER FIELD COORDINATING COMMITTEE



The purpose of the Department of the Interior (DOI) U.S.-Mexico Border Field Coordinating Committee (FCC) 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.

### Partnerships and Volunteers in Resource Protection and Restoration

The Department of the Interior (DOI) is charged with managing the vast majority of Federal lands along the international border with Mexico. These lands not only house tremendous mineral, natural, and cultural values but also are heavily utilized by recreationists and other users. In recent years, lands along the international border also have been subjected to a range of impacts associated with illegal smuggling activities that significantly affects the Department's resource management, protection, and restoration efforts. Fortunately, DOI has help in protecting and restoring these nationally significant lands.

An intensive volunteer program and partnerships with other organizations allows Federal land managers and scientists to leverage limited resources and accomplish important projects. For example, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Arizona has utilized the Student Conservation Association (SCA) to contract interns for a variety of environmental restoration projects within the borderlands. The SCA interns typically work in teams or small groups for six months to a year. Living conditions vary but often involve government trailers or subsidized apartments. Besides housing, SCA interns receive a small stipend and an education voucher (up to \$5,000 for a year's service), which may be utilized to pay student loans or apply at accredited schools or universities.

*Why do SCA interns work on DOI lands in often remote and challenging locations?* They volunteer for a variety of reasons, not limited to potentially "getting their foot in the door" with potential employers, developing professional contacts, and gaining valuable experience working with resource managers and scientists.



*What are they accomplishing?* SCA interns working for the BLM Tucson Field Office since 2003 have been essential to its program to mitigate impacts from illegal smuggling activities, such as restoring illegal roads, picking up tons of trash and hundreds of bicycles and tires, closing off and signing areas, and installing cattleguards and building fencing. The SCA interns are often successful in recruiting other volunteers to assist in their projects. To-date in the Tucson area alone, the interns and their volunteer recruits have completed over 150 projects. The SCA interns are contributing immensely to restoring DOI lands within the borderlands.

### U.S.-Mexico Border Mapping Update

Thanks to various activities in the U.S. and changes in Federal policy in Mexico, mapping and geospatial data availability along the U.S.-Mexico border advanced during the first half of 2006. These advances include borderwide mapping updates as part of the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) Border Environmental Health

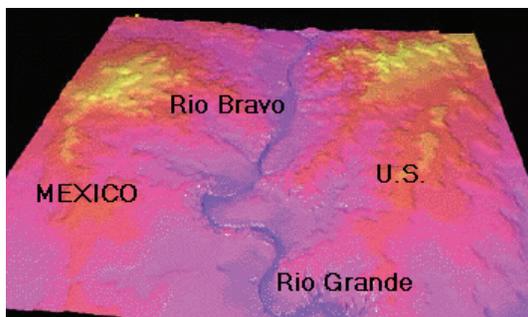


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Initiative; public release of geospatial data from INEGI (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática); partnerships resulting from the USGS-Southwest Consortium of Environmental Resources and Policy (SCERP) Border GIS Summit; and new products from the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC).

The **USGS Border Environmental Health Initiative** extended the project's geospatial datasets from Brownsville/Matamoros to San Diego/Tijuana. The binational integration methodology piloted in the initial phase of the Initiative for the Lower Rio Grande Valley was extended along the entire border. The regional datasets, such as land use and land cover, medium resolution hydrography and transportation, national and international boundaries, populated places, watersheds, Landsat imagery, and elevation data are now viewable borderwide on the Internet Map Service at <http://borderhealth.cr.usgs.gov>. Geologic data at 1:5,000,000-scale will be incorporated soon.



Along the Texas portion of the international border, higher resolution datasets have been added. These include the 2004 digital orthophotos, major and minor aquifers, geographic names, updated colonias boundaries (El Paso and Maverick Counties), contaminants in biota, and potential sources of contaminants. The USGS is working towards obtaining Mexican datasets for hydrography, transportation, census population, contaminants, and geographic names

to complete the binational datasets for the Texas-Mexico portion of the border region. All of these data, along with documentation and maps can be viewed at the website. The next step is to offer an ftp download site for the public domain binational datasets so users can have access to the data for further interpretation and display.

The **Annual National Geography Conference of Mexico** again hosted by INEGI was held in Monterrey during March 29-31, 2006. The main focus of this year's conference was partnership development, advancing the Spatial Data Infrastructure of Mexico, and showcasing new INEGI products. Invited attendees included Federal, state, and local governmental agencies working on mapping and other geospatial applications. Attendance continues to grow with over 1,600 participants at this year's conference. The sessions were set up as panels, working meetings, and conference lectures. Some highlights include:

**Orthophotos Viewer and Web Mapping Service (WMS)** – Orthophotos for Mexico are available through a WMS service, which can be accessed through INEGI's Orthophoto Viewer available at <http://mapserver.inegi.gob.mx/map/visorto/viewer.htm>, or added to an ArcMap document as a WMS service available at <http://mapserver.inegi.gob.mx/geografia/espanol/prodyserv/ortofotos/ortofotos.cfm?c=718>.

**National Watersheds Working Group** – INEGI, CNA (Commission Nacional De Agua), and INE (Instituto Nacional de Ecología) are standardizing the delineation, naming convention, and watershed codes for Mexico at a scale of 1:250,000. The methods and watershed limits will be characterized by hydrologic criteria, instead of administrative boundaries. The working group has defined watershed size, such as large watersheds greater than 50,000 km<sup>2</sup>, medium watersheds between 5,000 and 50,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and small watersheds less than 5,000 km<sup>2</sup>.





INEGI is making great advances in their data availability and new products. Currently they offer their 1:50,000-scale digital elevation models for free download at <http://www.inegi.gob.mx/lib/usuarios/default.asp?s=geo&sistema=mde> and now offer their orthophotos web mapping service for public use. INEGI's vector data layers at 1:50,000-scale remain copyrighted material.

The **SCERP-USGS Binational GIS Summit** was held in El Paso, Texas during April 10-11, 2006. In the early planning for a binational GIS summit, the SCERP and USGS agreed to cooperate on the development of the borderwide GIS infrastructure for which many researchers along the border have long advocated and have executed a Memorandum of Understanding. The Summit included two break-out sessions that addressed issues and needs associated with (1) water availability, supply, and quality; natural resources management and sustainability; and socio-economic issues related to urban growth and human health; and (2) networking and data sharing issues by geographic regions. The presentations and final reports of the breakout sessions can be viewed at the website <http://mapper.nmsu.edu/scerp%5F2006summit/index.html>.

A new **IBWC and USGS Interagency Agreement** calls for updating the U.S.-Mexico Border Image Maps along the Texas-Mexico border and where the Colorado River defines the international border along Sonora-Arizona. In addition, the USGS will integrate the U.S. National Hydrography Dataset data with INEGI's 1:50,000-scale hydrography data to create a transboundary networked ArchHydro dataset for watersheds that extend into California, Arizona, and New Mexico. These data will help IBWC manage the borderlands and watersheds between our two countries.

For more information about geospatial products and data along the U.S.-Mexico Border, please contact Jean Parcher at [jwparcher@usgs.gov](mailto:jwparcher@usgs.gov).

### A Partnership in Protecting and Promoting Our Shared Cultural Heritage INAH Baja California and California BLM

On March 22, 2000, the BLM and Mexico's *Instituto Nacional De Anthropologia e Historia* (INAH) signed a joint declaration that pledges closer cooperation in cultural resource management programs. The declaration commits both agencies to developing specific cooperative projects on cultural resources management. In response to this joint declaration, INAH Baja California and the California State Office of BLM have co-sponsored an annual binational symposium, "Balances and Perspectives on Anthropology and History of Baja California." This binational symposium promotes the preservation of heritage resources between our two countries. Previous cosponsored symposiums have been held in Mexicali, Tecate, Rosarito Beach, and Tijuana. The 2006 symposium is being held in Mexico City this month.



In addition to the annual binational symposium, the BLM and INAH are partnering to address the significant impacts to cultural resources associated with major off-highway vehicle usage. In an effort to leverage available resources, the BLM hosted a meeting with representatives from INAH and the U.S. Forest Service, and the California State Historic Preservation Officer and Deputy Director for State Parks, and BLM has



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visited sites damaged by off-highway vehicle near Mexicali, Baja California.

The partnership between INAH and BLM is addressing other binational cultural resource issues and expanding to include the participation of State and other Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, academia, and cultural resources consulting firms. BLM is sponsoring participation of INAH professionals at professional meetings in California, including the Society for California Archaeology (SCA) annual meetings; has sponsored a symposium on Baja California at the 2005 SCA annual meeting; and has facilitated field trips for visiting INAH cultural resource professionals to the Presidio in San Francisco, Anthropology Department and Phoebe Hearst Museum at University of California Berkeley, and Fort Ross of California State Parks. For more information about this binational partnership, contact Ken Wilson at [Ken.Wilson@ca.blm.gov](mailto:Ken.Wilson@ca.blm.gov).

### U.S. Borderland Management Task Force

Illegal immigration has become a serious issue for the DOI lands along the U.S. – Mexico border. Almost 86% of the Arizona-Mexico borderlands are Federal or Tribal lands. In Arizona, the number of illegal crossers that have been apprehended in the last three years ranges from 376,302 in FY02 to 577,390 in FY05. Unfortunately, the number of deaths associated with Arizona border crossers have steadily increased from 145 in FY02 to 251 in FY05. Departmental lands, already suffering from prolonged drought, have been impacted from illegal smuggling and with some of the associated enforcement and infrastructure needs. The managers, staff, and law enforcement rangers engaged in managing DOI lands are now extended to dealing with illegal smuggling and coordinating with other key agencies, such as the Border Patrol Agency, to protect and restore these lands.

In 2002, the Borderland Management Task Force was formed in Tucson with the mission to facilitate a U.S. intergovernmental forum for cooperative problem-solving on common issues related to the Arizona-Mexico border. The primary mission of the Task Force is to address border security, human safety, and natural and cultural resource protection through shared resources, information, communication, problem-solving, standardization, and training. In addition to DOI agencies, the Task Force includes managers and law enforcement units from the Departments of Homeland Security, Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and Defense; State of Arizona departments; and Tribal representatives. The Task Force maintains no staff but accomplishes its work by sharing information, formulating joint proposals, and through subgroups, addressing specific issues.

Among the accomplishments of the Task Force are a communications guidebook for law enforcement, common recommendations on border signing, a coordinated plan, and a safety video. Other Task Force groups have now formed in Yuma and San Diego. The Yuma group is completing a multi-agency plan to treat salt cedar along the Colorado River in a fashion that permits increased safety while preserving key ecological components. Working relations between the agencies have improved, shared experiences have led to common solutions, and scarce resources have been shared as well.



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For more information about the Borderland Management Task Force, contact Shela McFarlin at [Shela\\_McFarlin@blm.gov](mailto:Shela_McFarlin@blm.gov).

## New NPS International Agreements with Mexico

On March 23, 2006, DOI Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett, and her Mexican counterpart, Felipe Adrian Vasquez, Undersecretary of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), signed a Joint Declaration of Sister Park Partnerships, officially designating seven sister area relationships between the two countries. Under the Sister Park Initiative, National Park Service (NPS) sites provided their Mexican counterparts with training in a variety of fields, helped set up monitoring protocols, developed interpretive materials, and in one case, provided a sister park with surplus U.S. firefighting equipment. Mexican parks, in return, provided the NPS with much needed assistance in controlling invasive species, fighting wild land fires, monitoring of shared species, and more.



The seven parks designated under the Declaration of Sister Park Partnerships include:

Big Bend National Park with Maderas del Carmen & Cañón de Santa Elena Flora and Fauna Protected Areas

Saguaro National Park with Sierra San Pedro Mártir National Park and Constitución 1857 National Park

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument with El Pinacate y Gran Desierto de Altar Biosphere Reserve

White Sands National Monument with Cuatrociénegas Flora and Fauna Protected Area

Chiricahua National Monument with Ajos-Bavispe Conservation Area and Reserva de la Biosfera Sierra de Álamos Biosphere Reserve  
Coronado National Memorial, Fort Bowie National Historic Site & Tumacacori National Historic Park with El Chico National Park

Guadalupe Mountains National Park with La Michilía Biosphere Reserve.

Regarding future cooperation, the NPS and CONANP have been discussing, along with Parks Canada, plans to develop international training programs on park management, joint monitoring protocols throughout North America, interpretive exhibits on shared migratory species (such as the Monarch Butterfly), and an increased focus on marine protected areas. Further Information on the Initiative is available at <http://www.nps.gov/oia/topics/sisterparks/sisterparks.htm>.

## Next FCC Meeting

The fall meeting of the FCC will be held in Las Cruces, NM, during October 17-19, 2006. Please mark your calendar and plan on attending our next meeting. For more information about the meeting, contact Greg Thomsen, FCC Chair, at [Gregory\\_Thomsen@ca.blm.gov](mailto:Gregory_Thomsen@ca.blm.gov). Information about the FCC can be found at <http://www.cerc.usgs.gov/FCC/index.htm>.

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](mailto:lwoosley@usgs.gov).

