



**Border 2012 Four-State Regional Workgroup
Texas-Tamaulipas-Nuevo León–Coahuila**

Gulf Task Force

WORKPLAN AND PROGRESS REPORT

Priorities and Projects (2006-2009)

July 2009

Water Committee

Border 2012 Goal: Reduce Water Contamination

Priority #1: Train operators at wastewater facilities in Tamaulipas.

Border 2012 Objective Being Addressed: Objective 1 includes language about increasing the “number of homes connected...to wastewater collection and treatment systems.”

Objective 2 is to “...achieve a majority of water quality standards currently being exceeded in [transboundary]... waters.”

Projects:

- A. **Title: “Assessment of the present level of operations and operator proficiency in wastewater plants in Reynosa and Nuevo Laredo, to establish a baseline for future training of operators”**

Possible Funding Source: Comisión Nacional del Agua (CNA).

Lead Implementing Agencies: Mexico’s Comisión Nacional del Agua (CNA) and the Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas (UAT-Rodhe).

Other Partner(s): City of McAllen, Brownsville Public Utility Board, EPA, and TCEQ.

Explanation and Status: Subcommittees were established during the committee meeting to begin work on this project. The subcommittees are responsible for: (a) identifying operational procedures for wastewater plants in Nuevo Laredo and Reynosa, along with the level of training received by the existing operators (ongoing); (b) identifyint sources of training and funds for such training; and (c) designing a specific training program for each of the operators

Result/Product: Baseline information on training needs at wastewater plants and information on sources of funding.

- B. **Title: "Formulation, identification and prioritization of water quality projects with the support of CNA."**

Funding Source: CNA

Lead Implementing Agencies: CNA, local governments (state and municipio)

Actions proposed for funding: (a) Review of proposals from the municipalities; (b) implementation of this project through the Tamaulipas state water commission (CEAT); (c) municipal authorities and water plant operators must submit their applications for projects in September of each year or as determined by the Comisión Estatal de Agua Potable de Tamaulipas (CEAT).

Priority #2: Clean up Laguna Escondida, which drains into the Río Bravo/Rio Grande.

Border 2012 Objective Being Addressed: Objective 2 is to "...achieve a majority of water quality standards currently being exceeded in [transboundary]... waters."

Project:

Title: **"Restoration of the Laguna Escondida in the Municipio of Reynosa, Tamaulipas"**

Proposed Funding Sources: SEMARNAT, Comisión Nacional del Agua (CNA), PEMEX, the State of Tamaulipas, and the Municipio of Reynosa.

Proposed Actions to Obtain Funding: Present the master plan to different entities such as EPA, the Government of Canada, etc.

Proposed Implementing Agency: The Municipio of Reynosa Tamps.

Other Partner(s): Rio Grande Valley Fire Departments, EPA, Texas Department of State Health Services, PROFEPA, and TCEQ.

Explanation and Status: The Laguna was used for decades by the public for aquatic activities such as fishing, swimming, and boating. These activities have been restricted due to the water quality in the Laguna and the lack of environmental protection for its shoreline. The Municipio, the Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, ITESM (Monterrey Tech), and PEMEX have completed an environmental assessment. This assessment was submitted to CNA in November 2007 for that agency's decision on relinquishing jurisdiction over this water body so that remediation may begin. The Municipio of Reynosa would be the lead in carrying out the work, with advice from various Mexican and U.S. agencies.

SEMARNAT has given Reynosa a Master Plan prepared by the Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas (UAT) and the city of Reynosa in turn has asked CNA to provide their opinion on the Master Plan. The municipality must notify the CNA in case of an emergency that exceeds protective flood levels.

Result/Product: Restoration of Laguna "La Escondida" for use as a recreational area for the public, and a reduction in pollution of inflow to the Río Bravo/Rio Grande.

Air Committee

Border 2012 Goal: Reduce Air Contamination

Priority #1: Identify the principal sources of air emissions in the Mexican part of the Gulf Task Force region (by sector and location).

Border 2012 Objective Being Addressed: "Interim Objective 1: Define the baseline and alternative scenarios for emissions reductions along the border, and their impacts on air quality and human exposure."

Projects:

A. **Title: "Develop an assessment of local emission sources"**

Sources of funding: Possible sources to explore are: Texas A &M; UAT; CONACYT; local governments; PEMEX (Juan Arturo Hernandez Carrera will research); RAMAC (Reynosa Maquiladora Association)

Proposed actions to obtain funding: (1) Mario Lugo from the Municipality of Reynosa will contact PEMEX; (2) Mauricio from UAT will research if CONACYT can provide funds for such a project; (3) Genny Carrillo will research whether Texas A&M can provide support or in-kind resources for the sampling and analysis of air quality; (4) UAT offers engineering and infrastructure; and (5) PROFEPA will support with enforcement.

B. **Title: "Encourage local authorities (State and municipalities) to implement a vehicle testing program "**

Proposed funding sources: Local governments, North American Development Bank.

Proposed actions to obtain funding: The municipal environmental authorities will negotiate with mayors to (a) adopt the draft; (b) budget the resources for the purchase of vehicle testing stations; (c) set the standards and regulations in the local area, and (d) install vehicle testing centers

Persons or institutions that could develop the project: (a) local governments; (b) Customs; (c) SEMARNAT; (d) university students to assist in the sampling of vehicles; and (e) civil society in general.

Immediate action to implement each project: Negotiate with SEMARNAT and state governments to adopt the proposal.

Result/Product: Installation of vehicle test centers, implementation of the test program, reduction of emissions through the testing of vehicles.

Priority #2: Identify the health impact caused by exposure to air pollutants

Border 2012 Objective Being Addressed: "Interim Objective 1: Define the baseline and alternative scenarios for emissions reductions along the border, and their impacts on air quality and human exposure."

Project:

Project: **Environmental education on asthma in the border area of Mexico and the United States** (project to link with the committees for environmental health and education)

Funding Source: EPA-Border 2012 Program

Proposed Implementing Agency: Texas A&M Health Science Center – McAllen.

Other Partner(s) Hidalgo County Health Department (HCHD), Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Idea School, Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon (UANL)

Explanation and Status: This project addresses two important topics in the U.S.–Mexico border region--asthma and pesticides. Asthma is a widespread public health problem; the incidence has

increased in Texas and throughout the United States. Asthma places a significant burden on affected children and their families. It limits a child's ability to play, learn, and sleep and it necessitates potentially complex and expensive interventions. Pesticides contribute to the incidence of asthma and may also cause other adverse health effects. The McAllen – Edinburg – Starr metropolitan area reported 3,028 asthma-related hospital admissions during 1999-2003.

The project will provide environmental education to physicians, nurses, promotoras, school health professionals, asthma patients, families, and farm workers to reduce asthma health care encounters and to increase the number of symptom-free days for asthma sufferers and to decrease exposure inside and outside households.

On April 2009 the Texas A&M Health Science Center (McAllen) hosted one-day Healthy Homes workshops in McAllen and Harlingen. This workshop was designed specially for community health workers and promotoras. The objective of this workshop was to train the promotoras on environmental health education, in order to reduce the environmental hazards commonly found in and around the home. The workshop (a) complements hazards-specific training regarding mold, lead-based paint home safety, and pest control, (b) identifies root causes of health problems such as asthma that are influenced by the indoor environment, and (c) focuses on the seven of healthy housing principles.

Result/Product: The education program will result in healthier indoor environments in elementary schools, middle schools, and households in low-income Mexican-American communities in Hidalgo and Starr counties.

Priority #3: Implement monitoring and statistical actions which allow updating of databases on changes in the air basin.

Border 2012 Objective Being Addressed: “Interim Objective 1: Define the baseline and alternative scenarios for emissions reductions along the border, and their impacts on air quality and human exposure.”

Project:

Project: “**Acquisition of mobile air monitoring stations**”

Proposed funding sources: To be determined.

Product/Result: To be determined.

Waste Committee

Border 2012 Goal: Reduce Land Contamination

Priority #1: Develop and implement a Regional Solid Waste Plan for Matamoros and Valle Hermoso that includes the regional landfill in Matamoros along with transfer stations in Matamoros and in Valle Hermoso.

Border 2012 Objective Being Addressed: Objective 1 includes the language “...identify needs and develop an action plan to improve institutional and infrastructure capacity for waste management and pollution prevention as they pertain to hazardous and solid waste and toxic substances along the U.S.-Mexico border.”

Project:

Title: “Regional landfill and solid waste transfer stations”

Funding Sources: The federal Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL), the State of Tamaulipas, the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), the North American Development Bank (NADB), and the Municipios of Matamoros and Valle Hermoso.

Lead Implementing Agencies: The Municipios of Matamoros and Valle Hermoso

Other Partner(s): To be determined

Explanation and Status: The old Matamoros landfill did not meet new federal regulatory requirements in Mexico, which are similar to U.S. requirements for sanitary landfills. Older landfills have three categories of potential impact on public health: acute air quality episodes resulting from open burning (a common practice by scavengers to reduce the volume of waste); breeding grounds for mosquitoes; and impacts on surface and groundwater.

The full project has three phases. In November 2005 SEDESOL awarded a grant of \$2,000,000 for the first phase – the design and construction of a regional landfill to serve Matamoros and the neighboring community of Valle Hermoso. Construction was subsequently co-funded by the State of Tamaulipas, NADB, and Matamoros. The landfill began operating in December 2007, and construction of additional capacity was expected to continue for several months.

The second phase is the closure and remediation of the old Matamoros open-air landfill and the development of a transfer station in Valle Hermoso. The BECC certified the proposal for this project in March 2007, leading to a NADB loan of \$2,000,000. The old landfill is still being used on a limited basis. Plans will be made soon for closure and remediation. The construction of the Valle Hermoso transfer station was scheduled to begin in 2008, but no additional information is available.

A third phase involves the development of two transfer stations in Matamoros. The Municipio is currently researching possible funding sources.

Result/Product: The eventual closure of the old landfill and full operation of the new landfill will significantly reduce the public health impacts of municipal waste management in Matamoros.

Priority #2: Remediate and close open dumpsites in Reynosa.

Border 2012 Objective Being Addressed: Objective 1 includes the language “...identify needs and develop an action plan to improve institutional and infrastructure capacity for waste management and pollution prevention as they pertain to hazardous and solid waste and toxic substances along the U.S.-Mexico border.”

Project:

Title: “Remediation and closure of dumpsites in Reynosa”

Proposed Funding Source: EPA’s Border 2012 grant program.

Proposed Implementing Agency: Municipio de Reynosa.

Other Partner(s): To be determined

Explanation and Status: There are currently four open-air dumpsites in Reynosa (Anacuas, Calabazas, Corrales, and Pedro J. Mendez) that cause health concerns among residents who live nearby as well as in the western area of the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas. Fires set to dispose of brush, trash, and tires in these dumpsites have caused serious air quality episodes. Reynosa's objective was to manage or close and remediate these dumpsites so that health problems would be significantly reduced.

The Calabazas site comprises 125 acres on the banks of the Rio Grande. Twenty-five of those acres were remediated and closed as a dump in the fall of 2008; action on the remaining 100 acres is pending. No more burning occurs at the site. A private company is permitted to use the 25 acres that have been remediated as the site for a transfer station at which 100 tons of MSW per day are processed and sent to the municipal landfill.

The Anacuas site (25 acres) is being managed by the municipio and fires no longer occur. The site receives 60 tons of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) per day from *carretoneros*.

The Corrales site has been closed and burning incidents have ceased. The Pedro J. Mendez site comprises 25 acres and includes human settlements. Remediation and closure are pending.

Result/Product: Elimination of acute air quality episodes resulting from open burning, and elimination of mosquito breeding grounds.

Priority #3: Address the problem of scrap tires accumulating in the Matamoros-Valle Hermoso-Reynosa region, and the resulting public health risks.

Border 2012 Objective Being Addressed: Objective 1 includes the language "...identify needs and develop an action plan to improve institutional and infrastructure capacity for waste management and pollution prevention as they pertain to hazardous and solid waste and toxic substances along the U.S.-Mexico border."

Projects:

A. **Title: "Reduction of existing scrap tire piles in Matamoros"**

Funding Source: EPA Border 2012.

Implementing Agency: Municipio of Matamoros.

Other Partner(s): The City of Brownsville.

Explanation and Status: There are some 1.5 million scrap tires in piles within the jurisdiction of the Municipio of Matamoros. These piles present potential public risks; they are a breeding ground for mosquitoes and generate acute air quality problems when the piles occasionally catch on fire.

The Environmental Protection Agency's Border 2012 Grant Program awarded \$75,000 to the City of Brownsville, which purchased a portable sidewall cutter, a transport vehicle, and a front-end loader on behalf of Matamoros in fall 2008. Necessary customs arrangements are being made, and Matamoros expects to take possession of the equipment in 2009. The Municipio will dispose of the cut tire pieces at the regional landfill, using at least some of the material as ballast. It is estimated that within the first year of operation about 250,000-300,000 scrap tires will be disposed of at the landfill. From December 2008 to January 2009 Matamoros sent 23,591 scrap tires to CEMEX Monterrey. The Municipio intended to sign a second agreement with CEMEX to dispose of between 27,000 to 30,000 scrap tires in the month of March 2009.

Result/Product: Over time, the existing piles will be eliminated. But a significant number of new scrap tires are generated each year and for the longer term, Matamoros hopes to participate in a regional program that will address the ongoing generation of new scrap tires.

B. Title: “Reduction of scrap tire piles in Reynosa”

Funding Source: Municipio of Reynosa

Implementing Agency: Municipio of Reynosa

Other Partners: CEMEX

Explanation and Status: In March 2008 Reynosa organized a scrap tire collection program that resulted in the collection of 150,000 scrap tires from storm drains, parks and lots. These tires were sent to a CEMEX cement kiln in Monterrey.

Result/Product: Elimination of existing scrap tire piles.

C. Title: “Regional long-term scrap tire collection for Matamoros, Valle Hermoso, and Reynosa”

Proposed Funding Sources: EPA’s Border 2012 grant program, SEMARNAT, and the Tamaulipas environmental agency.

Proposed Implementing Agencies: The Municipios of Matamoros, Valle Hermoso, and Reynosa.

Explanation and Status: In addition to the accumulated piles of scrap tires in Matamoros and Reynosa (discussed in the projects above), there will always be new generation of scrap tires that require management.

SEMARNAT has established an agreement with the Tamaulipas state agency and Matamoros to transport scrap tires to a CEMEX plant in Monterrey. Matamoros was given a large tire cutter by the state agency and will soon obtain a second tire cutter (this second cutter is portable) from Brownsville (see project above).

Reynosa and the state environmental agency have been in talks with a private company regarding a possible agreement under which the company would cut the scrap tires and transport the material to a cement kiln.

Result/Product: The three municipios will identify sustainable disposal options, largely based on transport to cement kilns, which will allow them to manage the ongoing generation of scrap tires.

Priority #4: Develop a public recycling awareness campaign focusing on the collection of recyclable material and scrap tires in colonias in Hidalgo County.

Border 2012 Objective Being Addressed: : Objective 1 includes the language “...identify needs and develop an action plan to improve institutional and infrastructure capacity for waste management and pollution prevention as they pertain to hazardous and solid waste and toxic substances along the U.S.-Mexico border.”

Project:

Title: “Campaign to increase recycling in Hidalgo County colonias”

Proposed Funding Source: EPA’s Border 2012 grant program.

Proposed Implementing Agency: To be determined.

Other Partner(s): To be determined.

Explanation and Status: To be determined.

Result/Product: To be determined.

Priority #5: Initiate recycling and recovery programs in Matamoros and other cities aimed at reducing the amount of solid waste that has to be disposed of in landfills.

Border 2012 Objective Being Addressed: Objective 1 includes the language "...identify needs and develop an action plan to improve institutional and infrastructure capacity for waste management and pollution prevention as they pertain to hazardous and solid waste and toxic substances along the U.S.-Mexico border."

Projects:

A. **Title: "Clean Matamoros"**

Proposed Funding Source: Municipio of Matamoros, U.S EPA

Proposed Implementing Agency: Municipio of Matamoros

Other Partner(s): SEMARNAT, PROFEPA, and U.S. EPA

Explanation and Status: The objectives of the Municipio of Matamoros are to increase the levels of recycling and to better manage the disposal of household hazardous wastes from residents and small generators.

Recycling -- The municipio has contracted with a private company to begin a recycling program in 50 schools in late January 2009. The municipio will assist with the training and the publicity. The company will collect plastics, cardboard, paper, and aluminum cans and transport the material for sale to another company.

Household Hazardous Waste Program – With assistance from SEMARNAT, and U.S. EPA, Matamoros established a household hazardous waste collection program in August 2008 that has been collecting used oil, batteries and filters among others. The municipio established four transfer stations that serve as temporary collection centers for the pilot program, in order to sort trash and properly dispose of solid waste and recyclable products disposed at each of the collection centers.

Additionally, in August 2008 PROFEPA developed an environmental compliance certification program to certify Matamoros compliance staff as environmental investigators for the enforcement of solid waste disposal regulations and to respond to complaints of illegal dumping. A clean-up program, with assistance from PROFEPA and the Maquiladora Association, was started to clean up and beautify public parks and green areas in the community.

Results/Product: (1) Increased levels of recycling, resulting in less material going to the landfill as well as more efficient use of resources, and (2) better management of hazardous wastes, thus reducing the various environmental threats created by improper disposal.

B. **Title: "Reynosa's Household Hazardous Waste program "**

Proposed Funding Source: Municipio of Matamoros, U.S EPA

Proposed Implementing Agency: Municipio of Matamoros

Other Partner(s): SEMARNAT and U.S. EPA

Explanation and Status: The objective of the Municipio of Reynosa is to better manage the disposal of hazardous wastes from households and small generators.

With assistance from SEMARNAT and U.S. EPA, Reynosa initiated a hazardous waste collection program in August 2008 that has been collecting used oil, batteries, filters, and other materials. The municipio established four transfer stations that serve as temporary collection centers for the pilot program. At these centers, the materials are sorted and it is determined what can be recycled and what needs appropriate disposal. The municipio contracts with a private company that makes these determinations and that takes materials requiring final disposal to one of Mexico's permitted hazardous waste facilities.

Results/Product: Better management of hazardous wastes from households and small generators, thus reducing the various environmental threats created by improper disposal.

C. *Title:* **“Border-Wide Workshop on Household Hazardous Waste”**

Funding Source: U.S EPA

Implementing Agency: Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)

Other Partner(s): None

Explanation: containers.

Project Description: The TCEQ organized a border-wide workshop on household hazardous waste (HHW) that was held in Brownsville, Texas, on July 21, 2009. The purpose of the workshop was to offer a venue for cities with collection programs to exchange information and “lessons learned” and to offer models for cities that are interested in initiating programs.

Attendees and speakers came from California, Arizona, Coahuila, Tamaulipas, and Texas.

Results/ Product: A sharing of knowledge on this subject, and guidance for cities wishing to develop programs.

D. *Title:* **“ Brownsville-McAllen Household Hazardous Waste Workshop and Collection Program”**

Proposed Funding Source: City of Brownsville (Texas), City of McAllen (Texas), and U.S EPA – Border 2012

Proposed Implementing Agency: Cities of Brownsville and McAllen

Other Partner(s): SEMARNAT and U.S. EPA

Explanation: Listed as a priority under this goal, the proposed plan is an environmental project aimed at coordinating a household hazardous waste (HHW) workshop to include best practices, lessons learned, cost and market analysis, sustainability strategies, methodology on how to measure environmental results, and public participation strategies. The proposal also includes a regional municipal waste collection series of events to benefit the citizens of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas as to how to responsibly handle and dispose of house-hold hazardous waste and their containers.

Project Description: The project will include a training workshop and a series of three household hazardous collection events to be held in the west, middle, and lower portions of the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The workshop will be open to the public to educate citizens on the proper handling of

common household hazardous wastes, including pesticides. All public participants will be provided with literature and helpful give-a-ways to promote responsible handling practices.

The two cities collaborated to develop a proposal for this project that Brownsville has submitted to the BECC under EPA's Border 2012 grant program.

Results/ Product: Better management of household hazardous wastes, thus reducing the various environmental threats created by improper disposal.

Environmental Health Committee

Border 2012 Goal: Improve Environmental Health

The Objectives of this committee are to address pesticide issues and to address public health issues related to the other Border 2012 Goals.

Priority #1: Address mosquito-borne diseases like dengue and West Nile virus through proper management of scrap tires and solid waste on both sides of the border.

Border 2012 Objectives Being Addressed: Objective 3 under the Land Contamination Goal contains language concerning "cleanup of piles of scrap tires...because they serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes."

Project:

Title: "Give vocal support from the health community to various local, state, and national efforts to better manage scrap tires and identify health-related indicators of success"

Funding Source: To be determined

Proposed Implementing Agency: To be determined

Other Partners: To be determined

Explanation and Status: Health officials recognize and are concerned about the potential public health ramifications of scrap tire piles. As breeding grounds for mosquitoes, they are a factor in the incidence of diseases related to this vector. Additionally, when tire piles catch on fire, the resulting smoke creates acute air quality problems and these fires are not easy to extinguish. For these reasons, public health officials will continue to express their support for any efforts to address this problem.

Progress is being made. Several activities are summarized above in the "Land Contamination" section of this document.

At the Border 2012 National Coordinators Meeting in September 2008 Reynosa signed the Tire Initiative Agreement to collect and properly dispose of scrap tires accumulated in public parks, storm drains and lots.

Result/Product: To be determined, but expected to address the incidence of dengue fever and West Nile virus.

Priority #2: Encourage proper management and disposal of household chemicals and pesticides from sources on both sides of the border.

Border 2012 Objectives Being Addressed: Sub-Objective 4B under the Health Goal refers to “...binational environmental health training for ...health care providers...for pesticides.”

Projects:

A. **Title: “Environmental Education in Asthma and Pesticides in the U.S.-Mexico Border ”**

Funding Source: EPA-Border 2012 Program

Proposed Implementing Agency: Texas A&M Health Science Center – McAllen.

Other Partner(s) Hidalgo County Health Department (HCHD), Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Idea School, Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon (UANL)

Explanation and Status: This project addresses two important topics in the U.S.–Mexico border region--asthma and pesticides. Asthma is a widespread public health problem; the incidence has increased in Texas and throughout the United States. Asthma places a significant burden on affected children and their families. It limits a child’s ability to play, learn, and sleep and it necessitates potentially complex and expensive interventions. Pesticides contribute to the incident of asthma and may also cause other adverse health effects. The McAllen – Edinburg – Starr metropolitan area reported 3,028 asthma–related hospital admissions during 1999-2003. The project will provide environmental education to physicians, nurses, promotoras, school health professionals, asthma patients, families, and farm workers to reduce asthma health care encounters and increase the number of symptom-free days for asthma sufferers and to decrease exposure inside and outside households

Result/Product: The education program will result in healthier indoor environments in elementary schools, middle schools, and households in low-income Mexican-American communities in Hidalgo and Starr counties.

B. **Title: “Management and disposal of household chemicals”**

Funding Source: To be determined.

Proposed Implementing Agency: To be determined.

Other Partner(s): To be determined.

Explanation and Status:

Result/Product: To be determined.

Environmental Preparedness Committee

Border 2012 Goal: Enhance Joint Readiness for Environmental Response

Priority #1: Develop a communications plan for emergency responders from both countries in the Gulf Region.

Border 2012 Objectives Being Addressed: Objective 1 requires establishment of a “chemical emergency advisory/notification mechanism between Mexico and the United States.” Objective 2 requires that “joint contingency plans...be in place and operating....”

Communication is critical to both those objectives.

Project:

Title: **“Regional emergency communications plan”**

Funding Source: To be determined.

Lead Implementing Agencies: The fire departments of municipalities in the Gulf Task Force area.

Other Partner(s): PROFEPA, SEMARNAT, Protección Civil at all levels of government, EPA, the Texas Department of State Health Services, the TCEQ, and the Lower Rio Grande Valley Council of Governments.

Explanation and Status: The objectives are to (1) assure that all relevant federal, state, and local response agencies in the region have periodically updated list of each other’s contact data and capabilities, and (2) develop a communications network that uses the most effective technology. A report will be shared with all emergency management entities. The intent is to consider all categories of potential hazards (e.g., hazardous materials, natural disasters, fire fighting, and public health).

In Texas, in 2008 the Lower Rio Grande Valley Council of Governments began working with counties and cities to establish an Inter-Operability Plan. The next step is to integrate Tamaulipas municipios into this plan in a mutually satisfactory manner. Funding needs to be obtained for the purchase of necessary radio equipment. In addition, the possible acquisition of a mobile communications trailer for binational use is being explored.

Result/Product: A communications plan incorporating (a) compatible communications equipment, (b) binational contact lists that are periodically updated, and (c) other information on local capabilities.

Priority #2: Develop a regional risk map for hazardous materials along both sides of the border in the Gulf Region.

Border 2012 Objectives Being Addressed: Objective 3 states that “by 2012, 50 percent of sister city joint contingency plans will be supplemented with preparedness and prevention related efforts, such as risk and consequence analysis, risk reduction, and counter-terrorism.”

Project:

Title: **“Regional hazardous materials risk map”**

Funding Source: To be determined.

Proposed Implementing Agencies: Rio Grande Valley Fire Departments, Proteccion Civil, PROFEPA, and EPA.

Other Partner(s): The Texas Department of State Health Services, PROFEPA, SEMARNAT, and TCEQ.

Explanation and Status: The objectives are to (1) identify and gain access to existing sources of data regarding storage of hazardous materials, (2) determine whether there are gaps and how they can be filled, and (2) put the available data into a GIS-based map that be accessed by stakeholders and emergency response personnel.

It has been determined that data for Texas are publicly available from the Tier II program of the Texas Department of State Health Services. Perhaps additional data are available from the EPA’s Toxic Release Inventory and the Texas Department of Public Safety. EPA staff will explore their agency’s capability of mapping the data for the Texas border region and including what is available on the Mexican side of the border.

For Mexico, PROFEPA has data, but these data have been difficult to obtain in the past. The director of Civil Protección for Tamaulipas believes he has access to the data and can assist. The Maquiladora Associations of Matamoros and Reynosa also may be able to help. In addition, the Tamaulipas Civil Protection director has stated that the State of Tamaulipas has begun a project to map the data nationally, but the border region has not been mapped yet.

Result/Product: A document showing locations of hazardous materials storage, transportation, and disposal, for use by first responders and emergency management personnel for response and planning purposes.

Priority #3: Improve and increase the number of sister-city exercises and make them truly binational in nature, so that responders may work together under a unified command system.

Border 2012 Objectives Being Addressed: Objective 2 states that “by 2008, joint contingency plans for...sister cities will be in place and operating (including exercises....)”

Projects:

A. *Title:* **“Updates and regionalization of McAllen-Reynosa sister-city plan”**

Funding Sources: U.S. EPA’s Border 2012 grant program, plus local governments.

Implementing Agencies: Sister cities of Reynosa (Tamaulipas) and McAllen (Texas).

Other Partner(s): Edinburg, Hidalgo, Mission, Pharr, Weslaco, and Donna (all in Texas), and Rio Bravo (Tamaulipas)

Explanation and Status: With McAllen as the lead agency (and recipient of the EPA grant), the goal of this project was to update the Reynosa-McAllen Emergency Response Plan and simultaneously to make it more regional by adding more communities on the Texas and Tamaulipas side – Edinburg, Hidalgo, Mission, Pharr, Weslaco, Donna and Rio Bravo. Under this goal, there were four objectives: 1) conduct meetings with key individuals on both sides of the border to discuss the plan for McAllen-

Reynosa; 2) conduct bi-national table top exercises to test the plan; 3) conduct a risk analysis of the sister city area; and 4) train first responders in this region.

The intention was to expand the categories of emergencies covered by the plans to include public health emergencies and natural disasters. Currently, sister-city plans typically address only chemical releases and acts of terrorism. A risk analysis was conducted to determine appropriate revisions to the plan. The risk analysis involved conducting a survey of hazardous materials stored within and transported through the area, including primary routes used, potential terrorism scenarios, and natural disasters such as floods, tornados, and hurricanes. Local capabilities were assessed to determine whether the existing resources are sufficient to respond to an emergency.

In January 2009 the training was conducted, based on the results of risk analysis and input from the first responders on both sides of the border. On June 4, 2009 the updated US/MX Cross-Border Regional Contingency Plan was signed and the tabletop exercise was performed.

Result/Product: An updated US/MX Cross-Border Regional Contingency Plan and a tabletop exercise.

B. Title: “Update of Matamoros-Brownsville sister-city plan”

Proposed Funding Sources: U.S. EPA, plus local governments

Proposed Implementing Agency(ies): Civil Protección of Matamoros and the Brownsville Fire Department

Other Partner(s): To be determined.

Explanation and Status: The original sister-city plan for these two municipalities was prepared in 1997. It was updated in 2002. It is time to update it again. TCEQ staff has met with officials in Matamoros to begin a discussion of what’s needed to be done. The two cities collaborated in developing a proposal that Brownsville has submitted to the BECC under the Border 2012 grant program. The intention is to update this sister-city plan and to include Harlingen, San Benito, and Los Indios. The effort may include a binational exercise.

Result/Product: An updated regional sister-city plan and a binational exercise/drill.

C. Title: “Development of sister-city plans for Roma-Cd. Aleman and Rio Grande City-Camargo”

Proposed Funding Sources: U.S.EPA, plus local governments

Proposed Implementing Agency(ies): Civil Protección in Cd. Aleman and Camargo (Tamaulipas), and the Fire Departments in the Cities of Roma and Rio Grande (Texas).

Other Partner(s): To be determined.

Explanation and Status: These municipalities do not currently have joint emergency plans. At a meeting of the Gulf Emergency Response Committee in November 2008, it was proposed that contact be made with appropriate officials and a discussion be initiated.

Result/Product: Two sister-city plans for these small municipalities.

Environmental Education Committee

Environmental Education does not have its own “Goal” in Border 2012. It is considered a tool for assisting in the accomplishment of the Goals related to water, air, land contamination/waste, waste, environmental stewardship, emergency response, and environmental health.

Priority #1: Develop a campaign to promote recycling in colonias in the Rio Grande Valley, involving television and radio media and focusing on the collection of recyclable materials and scrap tires.

Border 2012 Objectives Being Addressed: Objective 1 under the Land Contamination Goal includes the language “...identify needs and develop an action plan to improve institutional and infrastructure capacity for waste management and pollution prevention as they pertain to hazardous and solid waste and toxic substances along the U.S.-Mexico border.”

Project:

Project To be determined.

Proposed Funding Source: To be determined.

Proposed Implementing Agency: To be determined.

Other Partner(s): To be determined.

Explanation and Status: Colonias in the Lower Rio Grande Valley lack recycling services. As a result, plastics, cardboard, and glass mixed with residential waste and scrap tires are illegally disposed of in isolated areas, creating visual and health nuisances. The Environmental Education Committee will consult with the Waste Committee to generate specific project ideas.

Result/Product: To be determined.

Priority #2: Develop a water conservation campaign focusing on the re-use of water for secondary uses in colonias along the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Border 2012 Objectives Being Addressed: Border 2012 does not have any objectives related to water conservation. The water-related objectives under Goal 1 (“Reduce Water Contamination”) all focus on improving water quality. Although no Border 2012 funding is available for water conservation programs, the Border 2012 partners recognize that water conservation is important for the environment, and water committees are free to pursue program ideas in this area.

Project:

Title: To be determined.

Proposed Funding Source: To be determined.

Proposed Implementing Agency: To be determined.

Other Partner(s): To be determined.

Explanation and Status: The Water Committee proposed developing a water conservation campaign in colonias in the Lower Rio Grande Valley after a presentation by a

representative from Jovenes Ambientalistas, an NGO in Reynosa, Tamaulipas that has conducted successful recycling and water conservation campaigns involving schools and maquiladoras. The committee felt that ideas could be borrowed for a similar campaign in colonias in Texas. The Environmental Education Committee will consult with the Water Committee and then develop a project proposal.

Priority #3: Develop teaching modules in English and Spanish that can serve as training tools for promotoras, teachers, and school nurses on asthma triggers, lead poisoning, and pesticide exposure.

Border 2012 Objectives Being Addressed: Objective 4 includes language regarding “..binational environmental health training for...health care providers...for pesticides and water.”

Project:

Project: **To be determined.**

Proposed Funding Source: To be determined.

Proposed Implementing Agency: To be determined.

Other Partner(s): To be determined.

Explanation and Status: The proliferation of imported products from China, especially toys, was an issue of concern to the members of the Environmental Education Committee. The University of Texas Health Science Center in Harlingen has conducted lead tests on products such as toys and school supplies and found high levels of lead. Since most of the toys donated are given to colonia children, the committee decided to request funding to provide teaching modules such as publications and training tools to educate teachers, school nurses, and promotoras from colonias on the identification of symptoms associated with lead poisoning and pesticide exposure. The Environmental Education Committee will consult with the Environmental Health Committee to generate specific project ideas.

Result/Product: To be determined.