



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

**Falcón Task Force**

**WORKPLAN AND PROGRESS REPORT**

**Priorities and Projects (2006-2011)**

Updated in January 2011

**Background**

The **Falcón Task Force** is one of three Task Forces that together comprise the **Four-State Regional Workgroup** under Border 2012. This Regional Workgroup includes the border regions of three Mexican states (Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas) and the adjoining border region of Texas.

The three Task Forces in the Workgroup are geographically defined; this arrangement was established at the beginning of 2006. The Falcon Task Force covers a geographical area that includes the following adjacent areas of Texas, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas: the Counties of Webb and Zapata in Texas, the municipios of Anáhuac and Sabinas Hidalgo in Nuevo León, and the Municipio of Nuevo Laredo in Tamaulipas.

This Workplan and Progress Report lists the priority challenges that have been identified by each committee of the task force since the first committees were established in 2006 and the projects or programs that have been proposed to address those priorities.

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## ***Water Committee***

Border 2012 Goal: Reduce Water Contamination

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Priority #1: Disconnect the sewer connection lines from the stormwater lines in Nuevo Laredo to eliminate sewer discharges to the Rio Grande.

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

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Project:

***Title: "Sewer and Stormwater Infrastructure Project in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas"***

*Funding Source(s):* North American Development Bank (NADB) and Comisión Nacional de Agua (CONAGUA)

*Implementing Agency:* COMAPA (Comisión Municipal de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado de Nuevo Laredo)

*Other Partner(s):* Municipio de Nuevo Laredo

*Explanation and Status:* As of 2008, a number of sewer lines in Nuevo Laredo were connected to the stormwater system, which meant that the sewage discharged to the Rio Grande. That year COMAPA received a loan from the NADB to (a) disconnect 16 sewer lines from the stormwater system in selected areas of the city and redirect them to wastewater treatment plants, and (b) construct a new wastewater treatment plant to treat wastewater discharges in the western part of the city. COMAPA subsequently accomplished the first objective in the southern portion of the city, but required more funding to connect sewer lines from the central part of the city to the wastewater treatment plant.

COMAPA applied through the BECC for additional NADB funding but was told in 2009 that funding was not available at that time. COMAPA applied to CONAGUA funding for \$5 million to disconnect six sewer collectors from the storm water system. In June 2010 CONAGUA awarded \$780,000 for a small portion of the project (disconnecting two sewer lines from the stormwater system) which is expected to be completed in March 2011 and was informed that funding was not available to complete the rest of the project. In 2011, COMAPA will submit a grant application through the EPA's BEIF program for \$5 million to disconnect the remaining sewer collectors and connect them to the wastewater treatment plant.

*Result/Product:* These efforts are redirecting sewage from the stormwater system in Nuevo Laredo to both an existing and a new wastewater treatment plant, thus reducing the contamination of the Rio Grande.

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Priority #2: Develop a plan for installing sewer connections at 100% of the households in Anáhuac, Sabinas Hidalgo, and Colombia.

*Border 2012 Objective Being Addressed:* Objective 2 includes language about increasing the “number of homes connected...to wastewater collection and treatment systems.”

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Project:

**Title: “Sewer connection program in Sabinas Hidalgo and Anáhuac, Nuevo León”**

*Funding Source(s):* Los Servicios de Agua y Drenaje in Monterrey and the Corporación para el Desarrollo de la Frontera Norte (CODEFRONT), and possibly the North American Development Bank.

*Implementing Agency:* Municipios of Sabinas Hidalgo and Anáhuac, Nuevo León

*Other Partner(s):* CODEFRONT of Colombia, Nuevo León.

*Explanation and Status:* According to the census conducted in 2000, 66 percent of the 8,355 households in Sabinas Hidalgo had sewer connections and 34 percent had septic tanks. In Anáhuac, 48 percent of the 4,624 households had sewer connections and 52 percent had septic tanks. The relatively large proportion of septic tanks created a health concern, because weather conditions and poor maintenance can degrade their operation and untreated sewage can enter water bodies that carry it to the Rio Grande.

The water utility for Monterrey (Los Servicios de Agua y Drenaje) provided funding to Sabinas Hidalgo and Anáhuac to construct sewer connections to the households that were using septic tanks, linking them to the wastewater treatment plant in Sabinas Hidalgo. As of 2005, the number of households in Sabinas Hidalgo had increased to 8,821 and the proportion connected to the sewer system was up to 93.6 percent. In that same year, Anáhuac had 4,881 households, with 86 percent of them connected to sewer lines.

CODEFRONT, Servicios de Agua y Drenaje en Monterrey, and Anáhuac applied for a BECC/NADB grant. In May 2009 BECC notified CODEFRONT that the project did not qualify for funding. In 2010 the BECC revised its criteria, but another review by BECC staff concluded that Anáhuac did not meet the criteria. . In November 2010 Servicios de Agua y Drenaje de Monterrey, the statewide water utility, decided to provide funding for the expansion of water and wastewater collection lines in Anáhuac, as well as improvements to the wastewater treatment plant. This effort will bring Anáhuac to 100% coverage and is expected to be completed in late February 2011. There are future plans to reuse the treated effluent for irrigation purposes.

The State of Nuevo León will continue to look for funding sources to address the needs in Sabinas Hidalgo.

*Result/Product:* A significant reduction in the number of septic tanks (ultimately approaching zero) in the two municipalities reduces the possibility of untreated sewage draining to the Rio Grande.

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Priority #3: Train operators at wastewater facilities in Tamaulipas.

*Border 2012 Objective Being Addressed:* Objective 4 is to "... identify opportunities for improvement in overall water system efficiencies."

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Project:

*Title:* **"Training courses for wastewater operators in the State of Tamaulipas"**

*Possible Funding Source(s):* EPA

*Implementing Agency:* The Frank Tejada Center (Texas Engineering Extension Service, Texas A&M University), Laredo, Texas

*Other Partner(s):* COMAPA in Nuevo Laredo

*Explanation and Status:* The Tejada Center, with COMAPA as a partner, is exploring funding sources that might be available. At the Falcon Water Committee meeting in October 2010, EPA announced that it will be working with BECC and CONAGUA to obtain funding for wastewater operator training courses in the Mexican side.

*Result/Product:* Trained operators in the wastewater treatment plants will assure more effective and efficient management of the plants.

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Priority #4: Continue an annual program for river bank clean-up in Nuevo Laredo involving school children, in parallel to a similar program in Laredo (the integration into this program of Colombia in Nuevo León will also be explored).

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

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Due to the nature of this priority, which consists of fostering water quality and conservation awareness through binational networks along the watershed and because it fits into the goals of the Environmental Education Committee, the Water Committee deferred it to the other committee as a priority. Please see that section of this report for relevant information.

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Priority #5: Develop public education programs to address non-point source pollution in Laredo and Nuevo Laredo.

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

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The Water Committee, recognizing the relevant accomplishments and continuing interest of members of the Environmental Education Committee, deferred to that other committee for this priority also. Please see that section of this report for relevant information.

## **Waste Committee**

Border 2012 Goal: Reduce Land Contamination

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Priority #1: Develop municipal or regional programs related to scrap tire management.

*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.”

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Projects:

A. **Title: “Development of a regional collection center for scrap tires in Sabinas Hidalgo, Nuevo León”**

*Funding Source(s):* The Government of the State of Nuevo León is hoping to obtain support from SEMARNAT and BECC.

*Implementing Agencies:* Corporación para el Desarrollo de la Frontera Norte (CODEFRONT) and Sistema Integral para el Manejo Ecológico y Procesamiento de Desechos (SIMEPRODE), both agencies of the State of Nuevo León).

*Other Partner(s):* Agency for Sustainable Development of the State of Nuevo León.

*Explanation and Status:* There are approximately 60,000 scrap tires that are abandoned and illegally disposed of in lots and along roads in 12 rural municipalities in the State of Nuevo León. These municipalities do not have the economic resources to transport the tires from their locations to cement kilns in Monterrey for use as fuel (the only viable alternative now), and as a result, the tire piles pose the standard risks—the potential for tire fires and serving as breeding grounds for mosquitoes when rain collects.

Nuevo León’s CODEFRONT is conducting a feasibility study for a regional collection center for scrap tires that would be located on a property adjacent to the Colombia Solidarity Bridge and provide services to several small towns. Meanwhile, the Nuevo León Agency for Sustainable Development has received US\$405,000 in funding from the Mexican federal government for purchase of a mobile tire shredder. The agency has issued a request for bids. When the shredder is purchased, it will be loaned to SIMEPRODE, the state’s waste services agency, and used at the regional collection site.

The facility near the Colombia Bridge also could potentially process scrap tires from Texas cities and then return the shredded material to those cities, because the property has the necessary legal status to engage in certain kinds of activities related to cross-border commerce.

Related to this project but on a broader scale, the Environmental Work Table for the Border Governors Conference has drafted a declaration that would commit each of the governors to obtaining tire shredders for similar efforts border-wide. Governors’ approval of this declaration may have to await a meeting in 2011.

*Result/Product:* A regional system for processing scrap tires and forwarding the material for productive use would significantly reduce the number of scrap tires piles in the state of Nuevo León and thus reduce the number of tire fires and the breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

**B. Title: “Scrap Tire Management Program in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas”**

*Funding Source(s):* Municipio de Nuevo Laredo and APASCO Inc.

*Implementing Agency:* Municipio de Nuevo Laredo

*Other Partner(s):* TBD

*Explanation and Status:* In 2008, Nuevo Laredo signed an agreement with APASCO Inc. (A cement company) to use the company’s shredder at the city’s tire recycling site to process scrap tires and transport the material to the company’s cement kiln in Ramos Arizpe, Coahuila. The agreement specified that the municipio would cover the operational and utility costs of the facility, while APASCO would cover the cost of transporting the scrap tires to its kiln. From 2008 to 2009, Nuevo Laredo disposed of 508,000 scrap tires. The municipio implemented temporary collection stations to collect the scrap tires and transport them to their recycling facility. The agreement ended in October 2009. Nuevo Laredo is seeking to renew the agreement with APASCO in order to process the remaining scrap tires at their recycling site.

*Result/Product:* The project at least temporarily reduced significantly the number of scrap tires laying in piles in Nuevo Laredo, thus reducing the public health risks associated with potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes and potential fires.

**C. Title: “Scrap Tire Cleanup Campaign and Enforcement Plan in Laredo, Webb County, and Nuevo Laredo”**

*Funding Sources:* Border 2012 and local government

*Implementing Agency:* The Laredo Health Department

*Other Partner(s):* Laredo Environmental Services Department and the Municipio de Nuevo Laredo

*Explanation and Status:* In 2010 the Laredo Health Department received a Border 2012 grant for \$40,000 to implement a scrap tire cleanup and an enforcement plan to prevent illegal dumping and the accumulation of scrap tires. To gain community input, the department formed a Solid Waste Reduction and Vector Control Committee for the purpose of developing a community scrap tire cleanup campaign and collaborate with Mexican officials on implementing enforcement policies to prevent the re-use of scrap tires in Mexican border communities.

As part of the project, the health department prepared and distributed a survey about dengue risks and scrap tire hazards as part of an awareness campaign in elementary schools to involve schoolchildren along the community. The department sent out 8,000 copies of the survey to 26 elementary schools and received 3,000 responses.

The committee designed a mascot (a tire with a cowboy hat and boots) to foster tire awareness issues throughout the community and to promote a scrap tire clean-up event. The event was held over a weekend in September 2010, with participation from city departments and community residents. More than 10,000 scrap tires were collected during the weekend.

In addition, the committee finalized a proposed a new scrap tire ordinance for the city, which would require generators to charge a disposal fee. The proposal is subject to approval by City Council. The committee is also coordinating a binational Solid Waste and Vector Control workshop in March 2011, to discuss the risks posed by scrap tire piles, and experience with, and prospects for, scrap tire markets and disposal programs..

*Result/Product:* To mitigate vectors and reduce gastrointestinal illnesses generated by scrap tires.

Priority #3: Develop a pilot project to use tree trimmings and sludge from wastewater treatment plants in Nuevo Laredo to create compost, with later collaboration from, or replication in, Laredo.

*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:* **"Municipal composting operation in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas"**

*Funding Source:* Municipio of Nuevo Laredo

*Implementing Agency:* Comisión Municipal de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado (COMAPA) de Nuevo Laredo

*Other Partner(s):* Obras Publicas de Nuevo Laredo and the Dirección de Ecología de Nuevo Laredo.

*Explanation and Status:* The objective of COMAPA of Nuevo Laredo is to generate compost by processing a combination of the municipio's sludge and yard wastes, and apply the compost to public parks and green areas. In April 2010, COMAPA signed an agreement with the Nuevo Laredo Public Works Division to borrow the latter's wood chipper for this operation. Yard waste is being processed and mixed with the sludge from the wastewater treatment plant to generate compost. The City of Laredo is interested in tracking this project closely in order to develop a similar composting operation.

*Result/Product:* Nuevo Laredo is (1) avoiding the disposal costs for sludge and yard wastes, and (2) improving soils, and increase water retention at sites where the compost is applied (including municipal parks).

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Priority #4: Develop a pilot project to use methane off-gassing from the landfill in Nuevo Laredo to generate electricity.

*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.”

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Project:

**Title: “Electricity from landfill gas in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas”**

*Funding Source(s):* SEMARNAT, Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL), U.S. EPA, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and BECC

*Proposed Implementing Agency:* Municipio of Nuevo Laredo

*Other Partner(s):* TBD.

*Explanation and Status:* With a \$300,000 grant in 2008 from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Municipio of Nuevo Laredo paid for a feasibility study on a proposed project to extract the methane gas from the municipio’s landfill and burn that gas to generate electricity for municipal uses (street lights and government buildings). The municipio subsequently prepared an RFP aimed at identifying a company that would collaborate with the city to install and operate the appropriate technology. The municipio obtained a required approval for the RFP from the Tamaulipas state legislature in May 2010 and issued the RFP in June. The project is expected to generate between 1.5 to 2.2 megawatts of electricity, which is sufficient to power approximately 10,000 street lights and the city’s public buildings.

*Result/Product:* The project is expected to run at peak capacity (1.5 megawatts) for approximately eight years. Because methane is a much more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, the burning of the methane, with CO<sub>2</sub> as a by-product, will reduce the net effect on global climate change. Nuevo Laredo hopes to generate revenue by selling carbon bonds to the winning bidder.

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Priority #5: Prepare an engineering study for a new landfill in Nuevo Laredo.

*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.”

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Project:

**Title: “Engineering study for new landfill in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas”**

*Proposed Funding Source(s):* SEMARNAT and the State of Tamaulipas

*Proposed Implementing Agency:* Municipio of Nuevo Laredo

*Other Partner(s):* Servicios de Tecnología Ambiental S.A. de C.V.

*Explanation and Status:* As of early 2009, storage capacity at Nuevo Laredo's existing landfill was scheduled to run out in 2011. In April 2009 the municipio signed a new 15-year contract with the company that had been providing solid waste services, Servicios de Tecnología Ambiental S.A. de C.V (STASA), to continue providing such services, to identify a site for a new landfill, and to design, build, and operate that new landfill. In January 2010, SETASA initiated an engineering study for a new site, which will be located next to the current landfill and scheduled to be inaugurated in the first half of 2011.

*Result/Product:* Nuevo Laredo will add new landfill capacity in a timely fashion.

Priority #6: Develop programs to encourage proper disposal of household hazardous wastes and used electronics, to reduce the risks associated with improper disposal.

*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."

[Note: The City of Laredo, Texas already had a used electronics collection program in place when the Falcon Task Force committees were launched, as well as a household hazardous waste collection program. Descriptions of those pre-existing programs, therefore, are not included here.]

Projects:

A. **Title: "Used Electronics Program in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas"**

*Funding Source(s):* EPA's Border 2012 grant program

*Implementing Agency:* Municipio de Nuevo Laredo

*Other Partner(s):* TBD

*Explanation and Status:* Nuevo Laredo received a Border 2012 grant in 2010 from EPA (through the BECC) to launch a used electronics program to collect computers, monitors, and mobile devices from the community. The municipio established two collection stations in strategic locations in the community, and signed an agreement with a recycling company to transport the electronics to the company's facility, where they are disassembled and evaluated to determine if they can be re-used or recycled. As a result, more than 20,000 lbs of used electronics were recycled from May through September 2010.

*Result/Product:* Used electronic products will be properly disposed of by a significant number of persons in Nuevo Laredo.

B. **Title: "Household Hazardous Waste Collection Project for Colonias City of Laredo and Webb County Colonias"**

*Funding Sources:* EPA's Border 2012 grant program and local government

*Implementing Agency:* Laredo Environmental Services Department

*Other Partner(s):* TBD

*Explanation and Status:* The City of Laredo was awarded a \$30,000 grant by EPA in the spring of 2010 for the purpose of implementing a program regarding household hazardous in colonias throughout Webb County. The Environmental Services Department is currently developing a detailed workplan prior to implementation.

*Result/Product:* Colonia residents will become more aware of which household wastes are hazardous and will be provided with a program that will lead to proper disposal, thus reducing health risks in the home.

Priority #7: Develop a recycling program to collect recyclable material from households and waste generators in order to extend the life of the landfill

*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:* **"Recycling Program in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas"**

*Funding Source(s):* TBD

*Implementing Agency:* The Municipio of Nuevo Laredo

*Other Partner(s):* TBD

*Explanation and Status:* The municipio signed an agreement with SETASA (a waste disposal services company) to develop a community-wide recycling program. The municipio developed an environmental awareness and sustainable development campaign, using local media, to involve community residents in the program. The program requires most waste generators to recycle plastic, paper, and aluminum; it is voluntary for households. Collection began in late March 2010. SETASA uses 35 trucks equipped with GPS systems to collect recyclable material in each of the city's districts and transport it to an area near the landfill, where it is sorted. The public outreach strategies developed by the municipio through media sources resulted in the cumulative collection of more than 250,000 lbs of recyclable material through the end of June.

*Result/Product:* Nuevo Laredo will extend the life of its landfill by recycling plastic, paper, and aluminum.

## ***Environmental Health Committee***

### **Border 2012 Goal: Improve Environmental Health**

Priority #1: Develop a binational training program focusing on the hazards of chemicals and pesticides to human as well environmental health.

*Border 2012 Objectives Being Addressed:* Objective 3A states that “By 2006, an assessment and pilot program will be completed that explores the feasibility of harmonizing a binational system for reporting acute pesticide poisonings.”

Objective 4B states that “By 2004, extend current efforts in binational environmental health training for 100 health care providers each for pesticides and water.”

#### Projects:

A. **Title: “Preparation of documents and training modules related to chemicals and pesticides”**

*Funding Source:* The City of Laredo and U.S. EPA

*Lead Implementing Agency:* Health Department, City of Laredo, Texas

*Other Partner(s):* Input for the updated Guide and training modules was provided by a workgroup that included the Border Health Office of the Texas Department of State Health Services, Dr. Miguel Fernández (Director of the Poison Control Center for South Texas in San Antonio and Dr. John Haynes (Director of the similar center in El Paso for West Texas), and the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio and Texas A&M. A second workgroup for binational support included the medical schools of the Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas Autonomous Universities and the U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission.

*Explanation and Status:* With funding from an EPA Border 2012 grant, the Laredo Health Department completed an update of the Physicians’ Guide for Chemical and Pesticide Poisoning (originally published in 1989) in 2008. A “pocket-sized” version was developed in 2009. The document is also available on the web (<http://www.argus1.com/lhdepa/>). The guide lists phone numbers and a special hotline for pesticide poisoning information, as well as the acute and chronic symptoms of different types of pesticides and treatment options. Additionally, in 2009 the department developed a “Guide for a Healthy Home and Healthy Environment” and used it to train 60 promotoras on recycling, indoor air quality, and household hazardous waste issues.

The Health Department also developed a web-based Public Health Syndromic and Disease Surveillance tool, which provides state and national health alerts and allows physicians to share tools on cases related to pesticide poisoning or chemical exposure to nerve agents. Training modules have been developed that can be used by physicians and medical students in pesticide training courses offered by DSHS (as part of a continuing education program).

Related to this effort, in October 2007 the Department of Health had obtained a CARE (Community Action for a Renewed Environment) grant from EPA to provide community

outreach on pollution prevention and household hazardous waste programs. Implementation proceeded through September 2010. The department and local community partners visited schools and colonias to distribute educational materials on household hazardous waste. In addition, Health Department staff conducted nine home investigations to investigate the causes of elevated levels of lead in children's blood, and provided lead training and materials to 60 promotoras, who in turn provided outreach in colonias. Ultimately, the department estimated that education was provided to more than 39,000 residents.

*Results/Products:* First, two tools have been provided to health providers:

- (1) An update of the Physicians' Guide for Chemical and Pesticide Poisoning available in hard copy; and
- (2) A website titled Public Health Syndromic and Disease Surveillance, which provides notice of all State of Texas and national (U.S.) health alerts and links to "articles of interest," and will serve as a site where physicians can enter information on cases of chemical and pesticide exposure.

Secondly, promotoras were given training that they can use repeatedly. Thirdly, the materials funded by the two EPA-funded programs reached thousands of city residents.

**B. Title: "Childhood exposure and susceptibility to pesticides in the Texas-Mexico border region"**

*Funding Source:* U.S. EPA

*Implementing Agency:* Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, School of Rural Public Health, Texas A&M Health Science Center

*Other Partner(s):* Brigadas Internacionales Universitarias de Promoción de la Salud, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, and the University of North Texas Health Science Center.

*Explanation and Status:* With funding from EPA, the School of Rural Public Health completed a project in 2007 that had five components:

- (1) Development of a Home Safety Health Education module in both English and Spanish;
- (2) Training 89 Texas promotoras and six Mexican promotoras in the use of the module;
- (3) Development of a Pesticide Inventory Questionnaire and a Pesticide Use Questionnaire;
- (4) Training four Texas promotoras in the two questionnaires, and the use by those promotoras in 50 homes where small children resided; and
- (5) Testing of 47 children for pesticide exposure (both "hand-rinse" and "hand-tracing" samples, as well as urine tests), as part of a larger study (with additional EPA funding) to determine the influence of a certain genotype on the metabolism of organophosphates.

All materials produced are transferable to other regions and to Mexico.

*Results/Products:* The project developed education modules and questionnaires related to pesticides in both English and Spanish, trained promotoras, applied the materials in homes, and tested children for exposure.

B. **Title: “Teach Back, Reach Out: Professionally Trained Environmental Ambassadors for Community Health (PEACHes)”**

*Funding Source:* U.S. EPA

*Implementing Agency:* UT Health Science Center, San Antonio (Laredo office)

*Other Partner(s):* South Central Area Health Education Center.

*Explanation and Status:* Under an EPA grant, STEER (The South Texas Environmental Education Research) developed an Spanish/English environmental health training module for promotoras and taught 150 South Texas promotoras to understand, evaluate, and intervene when household indoor air exposures pose a potential risk for children or adults with asthma. STEER staff developed and presented a comprehensive program on asthma and implementation of effective in-home interventions to decrease asthma triggers. Promotoras provided community outreach by making 450 house calls to families that had at least one family member with asthma. The project ended in November 2008.

*Result/Product:* The project developed bilingual environmental health materials and trained 150 promotoras who made 450 house calls.

## ***Environmental Preparedness Committee***

Border 2012 Goal: Enhance Joint Readiness for Environmental Response

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Priority #1: Develop a communications plan for the emergency responders from Laredo and Nuevo Laredo

*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.”

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Project:

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

*Proposed Funding Source:* TBD.

*Lead Implementing Agencies:* The Laredo and Nuevo Laredo Fire Departments, Protección Civil, and CILA (Mexican section of the IBWC).

*Other Partner(s):* None.

*Explanation and Status:* In 2008 the City of Laredo Fire Department met with Protección Civil officials from Nuevo Laredo to discuss how to improve cooperation between the two cities. EPA, with assistance from TCEQ, then planned and coordinated an Emergency

Response Knowledge Exchange Workshop that took place in April 2009 with the participation from those two agencies. The workshop addressed emergency response communication strategies and explored technologies to improve communication networks in case of public health and hazardous material incidents.

The Falcon Task Force's Emergency Preparedness Committee met in June 2009 to discuss the Los Dos Laredos Sister-City Plan. The existing plan was developed in 1999 and the committee determined that it needed to be updated to include current information on emergency response contact officials, all hazards, and emergency response procedures, and that it would be important to conduct joint contingency exercises. In March 2010 officials of the Laredo Fire Department and Nuevo Laredo Protección Civil completed a draft version of a new plan. The Nuevo Laredo City Council subsequently approved it, but the Laredo City Council has delayed approval because of security and safety concerns related to current conditions in Nuevo Laredo and their implications for mutual assistance that is discussed in the plan.

*Result/Product:* Development of a better joint response agreement and improved communications for the regional emergency responders from Laredo and Nuevo Laredo. Compilation of contact information and capabilities of personnel in both cities.

### ***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.

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Priority #1: Develop public education programs to address non-point source pollution in Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, thus supporting Border 2012's water-related goal ("Reduce Water Contamination").

*Border 2012 Objectives for Water Being Addressed through Environmental Education:* Objective 2 under the "Water" goal is to "...achieve a majority of water quality standards currently being exceeded in [transboundary]... waters."

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Project:

*Project:* **"Dos Laredos NPSP early childhood education video"**

*Funding Source:* EPA's Border 2012 grant program

*Implementing Agency:* Environmental Services Dept., City of Laredo

*Other Partner(s):* Office of Ecology of Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas

*Background and Status:* With funding from EPA's Border 2012 grant program, the City of Laredo's Environmental Services Department produced a 15- to 40- minute animated video for pre-K children, in English and Spanish, on prevention of non-point source pollution.

The video includes cartoon characters/mascots that had been created using a previous Border 2012 grant that generated printed materials and songs.

Production problems delayed finalizing the video as planned for much of 2009, but a final English version was shown at an Environmental Education Committee meeting held in January 2010. The video has since been translated into Spanish and will be distributed to Laredo and Nuevo Laredo schools as part of a “waste in place” workshop (to train teachers and students on recycling), which is scheduled to take place in 2011.

*Result/Product:* The video educates schools on the importance of recycling and bringing awareness to non-point source pollution.

Priority #2: Continue an annual program for river bank clean-up in Nuevo Laredo involving school children, in parallel to a similar program in Laredo (the integration into this program of Colombia in Nuevo León will also be explored).

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

Project:

***Title: “Día del Río awareness campaign in Laredo, Texas, and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas”***

*Funding Source(s):* EPA

*Proposed Implementing Agency:* The Rio Grande International Study Center

*Other Partner(s):* CILA

*Explanation and Status:* This program has been carried out for 12 years in Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, coordinated by the Rio Grande International Study Center in Laredo and its Mexican affiliate, El Centro de Estudios Internacionales Del Rio Bravo (CIER). At its height, the program attracted 2,000 participants, a majority of them schoolchildren. They participated in clean-up activities along the banks of the Rio Grande, rowed in the river, attended a conference with local and national speakers, and participated in contests. However, funding sources have been reduced dramatically. For the first ten years, the Rio Grande Basin Coalition supported the event, but the group ceased to exist. The Municipio of Nuevo Laredo supported the program on the Mexican side for a couple of years, but beginning in 2007 was not able to provide any more funding (with the exception of loans of equipment from the municipio and cleanup activities in creeks).

In February 2010 the Rio Grande International Study Center (RGISC) received a Border 2012 grant for \$20,000 from EPA for the Laredo part of a 2010 program. As a result of the funds, RGISC hired a coordinator to conduct outreach activities aimed at increasing public awareness and participation for the Dia del Rio event and to purchase information and promotional materials such as brochures, and PSA’s to advertise the event.

RGISC was able to develop a network of bi-national partners along the Rio Grande watershed, which enabled them to coordinate water awareness events throughout the border area during the Dia del Rio held in October 2010 such as a Water Round-Up, which

consisted of forming 60 student teams from U.S. and Mexican schools to conduct water quality sampling along the watershed on eleven parameters (another partner provided the water kits for the sampling), a Water Relay, which began at the headwaters in Colorado and consisted of collecting water samples from each school participating at the round-up to be transported for a ceremonial pouring at the Gulf of Mexico's estuaries.

In Nuevo Laredo, CIER—RGISC's Mexican counterpart—was able to coordinate a clean-up event along the banks of the Rio Grande, with participation from 1,200 volunteers, as well as workshops on water quality and water conservation in schools. RGISC will continue working with CIER and their partners to coordinate next year's event.

*Result/Product:* Children learn more about the river, water quality, and waste disposal, and the banks of the Rio Grande get cleaned up once a year.