TCEQ Border Initiative

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The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has developed a comprehensive and cooperative initiative focused on benefiting residents along the Texas-Mexico border. Since 2008, TCEQ's Border Initiative has served Texans in the 32 border counties and engaged sister agencies in the four neighboring Mexican states, as well as local and federal stakeholders on both sides of the border. The purpose of the Border Initiative is to promote the agency's mission on the border: to protect public health and natural resources consistent with sustainable economic development. Since the conservation of natural resources and public health does not stop at international boundaries, protecting our shared resources requires a multifaceted, binational approach.

Under the direction of Executive Director Toby Baker, Commissioner Bobby Janecka leads the Border Initiative, with support from the Border Affairs team. The agency has 88 employees and contractors dedicated to the border region, including regional offices in El Paso, Midland, Laredo, and Harlingen, and at TCEQ's headquarters in Austin. Regional office staff support compliance with agency rules and regulations, respond to complaints, serve as first responders during emergencies, and provide confidential environmental compliance assistance to small businesses and local governments, both in-person and through a toll-free hotline (800-447-2827).

TCEQ plays a leadership role in the binational environmental program Border 2025, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Mexico's Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources. In conjunction with Border 2025, the Border Initiative works to implement environmental aspects of several international treaties. To ensure U.S. treaty obligations are fulfilled, TCEQ meets regularly with officials from environmental agencies in Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, and Chihuahua. TCEQ has signed Memoranda of Cooperation with these states, which facilitate collaborative air and water quality monitoring and promote cooperative action on air, water, waste, and emergency response matters.

With an international border stretching 1,250 miles, TCEQ leadership strives to ensure Texas' environmental interests are served locally, federally, and internationally. TCEQ works with institutions such as the North American Development Bank to ensure grants and loans for environmental infrastructure projects along the border achieve state priorities. In 2020, Commissioner Janecka was appointed to the Governmental Advisory Committee to advise the EPA administrator on

Executive Director Toby Baker surveys the Rio Grande at the World Trade Bridge in Laredo with TCEQ management.

The U.S.-Mexico border region is defined by the La Paz Agreement as 100 kilometers on either side of the international border.

Statues of a golden eagle and a bald eagle mark the international border at the Amistad Dam in West Texas, the largest of the two binational reservoirs on the Rio Grande.

environmental issues under the USMCA. Commissioner Emily Lindley represents state priorities to the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC). And Chairman Jon Niermann was appointed to represent Texas on the Good Neighbor Environmental Board, a federal committee that advises the president and Congress on environmental and infrastructure issues along the border. Through teamwork, leadership, and continuous effort, TCEQ's Border Initiative demonstrates a shared commitment to a thriving border environment.

Water Quality Protection in the Rio Grande

The Lower Rio Grande/Río Bravo Water Quality Initiative (LRGWQI) is a binational watershed protection partnership between TCEQ, EPA, Mexico's National Water Commission, and both the U.S. and Mexican sections of the IBWC (CILA, in Spanish). The LRGWQI's goals are to restore and protect water quality, improve water quality monitoring, and reduce water pollution in the shared river and its tributaries downstream of the Falcon Dam.

Air Quality in the Paso del Norte

The Joint Advisory Committee for the Improvement of Air Quality in the Paso del Norte (cccjac.org) facilitates collaboration between the U.S., Mexico, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo (a federally recognized Native American tribe), Texas, New Mexico, Chihuahua, and multiple local jurisdictions. TCEQ plays a lead role in the JAC by meeting with stakeholders three times annually to discuss air quality monitoring, modeling, and policy in order to track and reduce air pollution.

The TCEQ Air Grants Division, through the Texas Emissions Reduction Program and the Volkswagen Emissions Mitigation Program (TxVEMP), provides grant opportunities to eligible schools, local governments, small businesses, and individuals to reduce emissions from polluting vehicles and equipment.

In 2019, the Texas Legislature broadened eligibility requirements for the Diesel Emissions Reduction Incentive programs by reducing the amount of time a grant-funded replacement must spend in the eligible area, such as El Paso County, from 75% to 55%. Learn more and apply for air grants at terpgrants.org.

Technical Exchange: Best Practices for Solid Waste Management

Safe waste management along the border is a priority for TCEQ. The Border Initiative strives to decrease illegal dumping, protect water quality, prevent scrap tire fires and flooding caused by tires and waste blocking drainage, and support economic development via recycling. TCEQ's Border Affairs team hosts regular technical exchange events with officials from Mexican border states and sister cities to share best management practices. In 2019, Tamaulipas officials toured the City of McAllen Recycling Center. Coahuila officials participated in two workshops on construction and demolition debris management and recycling. Improved scrap tire management is a TCEQ priority and will include promoting markets for recycling, supporting compliance and fair enforcement, providing environmental education, and facilitating the cleanup of legacy scrap tire piles.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

TCEQ Border Affairs staff in Harlingen, Laredo, and El Paso regularly organize meetings, participate in binational drills, and work closely with the EPA and state and federal counterparts in Mexico to share emergency response equipment, develop contingency plans, and hold simulated training events for first responders on both sides of the border. Emergency response plans increase preparedness for all hazards, from natural disasters like floods and hurricanes to events such as explosions, fires, and chemical releases. TCEQ supports binational emergency response planning for sister cities by facilitating communication and partnerships between fire departments in Texas and Mexico. Emergency preparedness and response is one of the Border 2025 program's key priorities.

For more information: Contact TCEQ Border Affairs by phone at 512-239-3500 or by e-mail at ba@tceq.texas.gov.

Visit our annual "Border Track" at TCEQ's Environmental Trade Fair and Conference

How is our customer service? Fill out our online customer-satisfaction survey at www.tceq.texas.gov/customersurvey.

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