

WATER RESOURCES ALONG U.S.-MEXICO BORDER AT CRITICAL JUNCTURE, REQUIRE ASTUTE MANAGEMENT

**New bilingual report from Presidential advisory committee
calls for change, applauds community progress**

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Those who decide the fate of the U.S.-Mexico border region's scarce water resources must seize every opportunity to think and act strategically, according to the Good Neighbor Environmental Board in its latest report, *Water Resources Management on the U.S.-Mexico Border*. The Board advises the U.S. President and Congress on environmental conditions in the region and is managed by the Environmental Protection Agency.

"Limited supplies, pockets of poverty, a combination of jurisdictional gaps and overlaps, and a host of other thorny issues all conspire to make water resources management here a daunting task," says Paul Ganster, Chair of the Board. "At the same time, more and more communities are working together creatively to make the best of it. Our report shines the spotlight on this good work, while also calling for specific, sometimes small, changes that will help the current system function better."

Opportunities exist, even within what sometimes clearly are outmoded current institutional arrangements, to work together better, according to the new bilingual report. "For example, we need more data, and data that are more compatible, so that the most informed decisions can be made. In addition, we need to learn more about underground supplies, particularly those that span the border," according to Ganster. "The federal government can make an enormous contribution toward moving forward in particular areas in particular ways."

To better manage the region's water resources, the Board recommends three key actions:

Institutions - Clarify current responsibilities held by U.S.-Mexico border-region institutions responsible for managing water resources. Identify jurisdictional gaps and overlaps, interpret missions to reflect changing circumstances, and leverage opportunities for stronger cross-institutional collaboration.

Data - Develop and sign formal U.S.-Mexico border-region water resources data agreements. Such agreements should support the collection, analysis and sharing of compatible data across a wide range of uses so that border-region water resources can be more effectively managed.

Strategic Planning - Implement a 5-year U.S.-Mexico border-region integrated water resources planning process. Using a stakeholder-driven watershed approach, address immediate concerns in critical areas while pursuing collaborative longer-term strategies.

<> "We are providing advice on this topic because the situation is becoming dire, and because our collective voice incorporates the perspectives of virtually everyone who needs to be at the decision table, especially those who are most affected," Ganster says. Board members

include representatives from U.S. border states who are senior officials in business and industry, state and local government, federal agencies, the ranching and grazing sector, non-profit groups, tribes, and the academic community. Each year, they meet several times in different communities along the U.S. side of the border. Members also have extensive networks across the border that include families, friends and professional contacts.

To obtain a copy of the new report, call 1-800-490-9198 and request the document by number, EPA 130-R-05-001. To view an electronic copy of the report or to obtain more information about the Board, go to its web site at www.epa.gov/ocem/gneb . Contacts: Paul Ganster, Chair, (619) 594-5423, pganster@mail.sdsu.edu; or Elaine Koerner, Designated Federal Officer, 202-233-0069, koerner.elaine@epamail.epa.gov.