

Communiqué of the US Tribes and Mexico Indigenous Peoples
Tribal Joint Communiqué
U.S.-Mexico Border 2012 Program
National Coordinators' Meeting
June 2005
(California, Arizona, Texas and México Tribal Participants)

We, the U.S. Tribes and Mexico Indigenous Peoples, participated in the second meeting of the Border 2012 Program on March 8 through 10, 2005, in Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A., where we shared our environmental accomplishments and concerns with the program's National Coordinators.

Although we actively voiced our concerns for the value of cleaner air, purer water and the proper disposal of solid and hazardous waste; our tribal accomplishments and concerns were not clearly illustrated in the U.S. / Mexico Joint Communiqué signed at the National Coordinators' Meeting. Therefore, we are taking this opportunity to express the critical challenges we face as sovereign tribal nations and indigenous communities along the 2,000-mile U.S. and Mexico border region.

This was the first year U.S. Tribes and Mexico Indigenous Peoples were comprehensively represented at the National Coordinators' Meeting. We are proud to be a part of the Border 2012 Program and will continue to participate, voicing our support and concerns in future meetings and communiqués.

Arizona and California both have grant-funded Tribal Liaisons that provide coordination and outreach to tribes in Arizona, California and Texas. The aim of the Tribal Liaisons is to increase understanding of the Border 2012 Program and the benefits that may be derived from the Program's network of participants, problem resolution and funding opportunities. Through three Tribal Caucuses (two held in California and one held in Arizona), U.S. tribes and Mexican indigenous communities have had an opportunity to voice their concerns and identify priority issues. Having Tribal Liaisons as a conduit between EPA and the tribes has proven effective. Through these caucus meetings, the U.S. tribes and Mexican indigenous communities, for the first time, collaborated on a tribal border report and presentation for the National Coordinators' Meeting. This collaboration re-affirmed our need, as tribes and indigenous communities, to continue to work towards greater tribal participation in the Border 2012 Program.

Both U.S. tribes and Mexican indigenous communities are working to improve air quality on their reservations and in their communities. U.S. tribes and Mexican indigenous communities are faced with air pollution problems due to agricultural and metropolitan impacts near or on their reservations and communities. The Cocopah Tribe, in Arizona, is conducting a demonstration project to study improved tilling of farmlands on the Tribes' reservation to decrease the exposure of tribal members to dust emissions. The Ysleta del Sur Pueblo Tribe in Texas, which is located in an urban environment along the border, is sampling ambient air for volatile organic compounds and hazardous air pollutants, in partnership with EPA Region 6 and the University of Texas School of Public Health, to provide baseline assessment of exposure and to identify potential health risks to the tribal community members. The Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla Indians is paving dirt roads on its reservation to reduce air pollution. U.S. Tribes with monitoring stations will continue to monitor for ozone and particulate matter (which are largely produced by the off-reservation activities) to further define concerns of their communities and will continue to seek funds to reduce emissions that affect their communities.

The ability to provide access to safe drinking water and basic wastewater sanitation with is another high priority for tribal and indigenous communities in the U.S. and Mexico. Quitovac, a small O'odham indigenous community in Mexico, received funding for a potable water system for the community and boarding school for 100 children (funding coordinated through the Tohono O'odham Nation). Nearly all the indigenous communities in the Mexico border region do not have access to safe drinking water

and basic sanitation, and these communities will be severely impacted by the proposed new water usage fees. EPA's tribal border infrastructure program has funded 39 projects for 15 Tribes in the California and Arizona Border Region, providing access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation for over 8,000 homes. Despite these successes, there is still an estimated \$60 million in unmet tribal infrastructure needs. Tribes are also concerned about protecting shared aquifers which are threatened by overdraft and contamination from off-reservation activities.

Tribal communities are significantly impacted by illegal dumping. On the Tohono O'odham Nation in Arizona and the Campo Indian Reservation in California, there is an ongoing battle to remove waste left behind by undocumented aliens and Border Patrol agents. In other areas near the border, tribes and indigenous communities are struggling to halt the illegal burning of trash, dumping of cars, and the increase of illegal drug labs. With the increase in traffic across Tribal lands and communities, it is imperative that we be prepared for environmental accidents and strive to put preventative measures in place. Indigenous communities in the border area lack community solid waste disposal programs. In 2004, the Pala Band of Mission Indians removed 34,000 tires from its reservation, and started a recycling program for waste oil and consumer recyclable items. The Tohono O'odham Nation has estimated over 300 wildcat dumps on its reservation and it is estimated that 1,500 undocumented migrants dump 6 tons of trash on the reservation every day.

As we move forward into this next year, our immediate tribal priorities are:

- Improve the air quality on reservations and in indigenous communities;
- Increase access to and improve infrastructure for safe drinking water and wastewater by seeking continued funding of the Tribal Border Infrastructure Program including Tribal allocations and funding for Mexican indigenous communities;
- Reduce the amount of contamination left behind by undocumented immigrants, Border Patrol officials, and other contributors;
- Promote emergency preparedness along the border region; and
- Establish a Lower Colorado River Task Force under the Border 2012 program.

The United States and Mexico both acknowledge a special relationship with tribes and indigenous communities. Within the context of their respective governments, tribes and indigenous communities continue to strive to improve the environmental health of their lands. This partnership between governments, tribes and indigenous communities within each country depends on continued participation and funding.

Respectfully,

U.S. Border Tribes and Mexican Indigenous Communities