



GOOD NEIGHBOR ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD

*Presidential advisory committee on environmental and infrastructure issues
along the U.S. border with Mexico*

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September 21, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Mr. President:

As your advisory committee on environmental issues along the U.S.-Mexico border, the Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB) writes to urge the United States, as a party to the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, to work with the other signatories, Mexico and Canada, and finally conclude an agreement on Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment (TEIA). TEIA matters tremendously to border residents and stakeholders.

We have previously written about the urgent need to finalize an agreement on TEIA, most recently in our 13th annual report, released in June 2010. We also raised the issue in our May 2009 advice letter, as well as in our 4th, 5th, and 6th annual reports. And in September 2009, the ten U.S.-Mexico Border Governors agreed in their joint declaration that finalizing TEIA was important. The three parties have missed the deadline for finalizing an agreement by more than 14 years—a delay which has led to innumerable instances of nonexistent or poor notification, assessment, or mitigation of environmental projects with a cross-border impact.

Some examples of transboundary environmental impacts which have not been addressed since 1994 due to the failure to conclude a TEIA agreement: water quality impacts on shared rivers between the U.S. and Mexico; elevated ozone levels in remote rural areas; and use of shared aquifers, which the Congressionally-mandated Transboundary Aquifer Assessment Program (TAAP) seeks to address. Managed by the U.S. Geological Survey in our country, the TAAP is of crucial importance to the border region, where water is becoming a limiting resource.

Once again, we urge you to renew efforts to conclude this agreement that is so vital to residents and the environment of the border region.

Sincerely yours,

/Signed/

Diane E. Austin, Chair
Good Neighbor Environmental Board

NOTE: Good Neighbor Environmental Board representatives from Federal Departments and Agencies have recused their organizations from this Comment Letter.

cc: The Honorable Joe Biden
The Vice President of the United States

The Honorable Nancy Sutley
Chair, Council on Environmental Quality

The Honorable Lisa P. Jackson
Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency