

---

**CALIFORNIA—MEXICO BORDER RELATIONS COUNCIL**

**BORDER REGION SOLID WASTE WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

**JULY 2016**

---

**BACKGROUND**

The 2015 Budget Act's accompanying trailer bill (SB 83) establishes the Border Region Solid Waste Working Group (Working Group) within the Border Relations Council. The group is tasked with developing and coordinating long-term solutions to address and remediate problems associated with waste tires, solid waste, and excessive sedimentation along the border that result in degraded valuable estuarine and riparian habitats, and threaten water quality and public health in California. (Government Code §99523(c))

Additionally, the trailer bill:

- Modifies CalRecycle's waste tire abatement plan requirements, vis-à-vis border region activities conducted in coordination with CalEPA, to include coordination with the Border Relations Council, and also to provide for the abatement of solid waste. (Public Resources Code §42885.5(b)(8)(C))
- Appropriates \$300,000 from the California Tire Recycling Management Fund to CalEPA to support the Council. (SB 83, Section 48)

At the Border Relations Council's July 2015 meeting, CalRecycle presented a Waste Tire Strategic Plan (Plan) proposal. The proposal identified specific areas the Plan will address, including:

- An update to CalRecycle's 2009 Tire Flow and 2012 Tire Management Plan studies.
- A review and status evaluation of the recommendations provided in the 2009 Tire Flow and 2012 Tire Management Plan studies.

- A revised or renewed set of recommendations on concrete actions that CalRecycle and other responsible agencies can take to address border tire issues. These recommendations will address the fundamental drivers of the used tire and solid waste issues at the border and will include a consideration of alternative and economically viable uses of waste and used tires at the border.
- Short and longer-term clean-up needs, projects, and opportunities.
- Recommendations on how to leverage and enhance cooperation between and amongst entities including US and Mexican state and federal governments, the Border 2020 Program, the Border Environmental Cooperation Commission and non-governmental entities.

The Working Group was also tasked with developing spending recommendations for the \$300,000 appropriation for the Border Council's consideration.

## **WORKING GROUP PROGRESS REPORTS**

The Working Group began meeting in October 2015, and has prepared the following updates for the Council.

### **1. PILOT PROJECTS – WILD Coast AND THE SONORAN INSTITUTE**

On February 1, 2016, the Council approved the Working Group's recommendations to award two grants to WILD Coast and the Sonoran Institute, authorizing those organizations to conduct waste tire and waste management pilot projects in specified regions along the California-Mexico border.

**WILD Coast** received \$100,000 to conduct a one-year demonstration pilot project to clean up tires in Tijuana in order to: a) demonstrate the financial effectiveness of investing resources in Mexico, and; b) to prevent tires from crossing the border and impacting the sensitive riparian and estuarine habitat of the Tijuana River Watershed. The project began in May 2016 and will conclude May 2017. A final report detailing the project's accomplishments and recommendations will be developed.

**The Sonoran Institute** received \$200,000 to conduct a one-year pilot project with the objective to reduce the illegal disposal of solid waste in drains in the City of Mexicali contributing to the pollution of the New River.

Both WILD Coast and the Sonoran Institute will deliver project updates at the July 12, 2016, Council meeting.

## **2. TIRE FLOW STUDY UPDATE – DR. PAUL GANSTER, SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY**

As noted in previous reports, CalRecycle is updating the 2009 Tire Flow and 2012 Tire Management Plan studies. A contract with San Diego State University (SDSU) was executed on December 15, 2015, and the university has begun its work.

Among the university's deliverables are the following:

- Determining the ultimate disposition of all used tires that are being transported from California into Baja California.
- Estimating the flow and number of used and waste tires transported into the border area since 2009 (i.e., the last year of data in the 2009 study).
- Determining and quantifying the collection, processing, and manufacturing avenues currently handling tires.
- Providing a revised/renewed set of recommendations to address used tire and solid waste issues, including specific recommendations on the use of tire fee funds to address persistent drivers of used tire and solid waste challenges.
- Providing a draft report to CalRecycle (by June 30, 2017), with a final report due on November 1, 2017.

Dr. Paul Ganster, SDSU's research lead on this project, will deliver a more in-depth update at the July 12, 2016, Council meeting.

## **3. STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE**

One of the Working Group's critical deliverables is incomplete: the Waste Tire Strategic Plan (Plan) outlined at the July 2015 Council meeting.

As noted in the Plan proposal, waste tires, solid waste, and sediment present a significant and persistent environmental issue along the California-Mexico border. This problem is pronounced within the Tijuana River Estuary and the New River.

Market demand for California's used tires in Mexico (i.e., imported tires suitable for reuse in passenger or freight vehicles), which move through formal and legitimate commerce, as well as an informal flow via scrap vehicles and the illegitimate disposal of waste tires all contribute to the problem. The situation is further complicated by limited disposal and recycling program infrastructure, or other forms of source management in Mexican border communities.

Addressing this problem requires multi-media and multi-agency short-term and long-term cleanup and restoration efforts to address the presence of waste tires and solid waste in the environment. Moreover, fully addressing the problem requires a collaborative cross-border effort, in partnership with regional entities to develop viable and lasting regulatory programs that effectively manage the flow, collection, and appropriate disposition of waste tires and solid waste. This scope will guide the Plan's development and implementation.

The Plan will outline how agencies, designated by the Council to formally participate, and regional partners can identify and implement solutions for the management of waste tires, solid waste, and excessive sediment along the California-Mexico border.

Some preliminary and developmental work towards this Plan has begun. For example, late in 2015, the Working Group identified the Principles that will guide its Strategic Plan development. Specifically, the Plan's goals and objectives should reflect:

- Cross-border benefits to facilitate cross-border collaboration.
- The inclusion of local and regional government in California and Mexico, ensuring they have a role in the Plan's goals.
- Environmental justice.
- A consideration of natural ecosystems restoration.
- An awareness of market conditions driving solid waste and waste tire issues at the border, and long-term solutions to these issues.

Additionally, CalRecycle presented several conceptual goals for the Working Group's consideration. These include assessing long-term funding opportunities and mechanisms, and waste stream examinations.

Notwithstanding this preliminary work, the Working Group has been unable to maintain its momentum, and membership and participation have declined over the course of the last several months.

In consultation with CalEPA, CalRecycle submits the following recommendations,

including membership suggestions, for reconstituting the Working Group and the next steps it will undertake to complete the Plan.

#### 4. WORKING GROUP NEXT STEPS

The Working Group's next phase is decidedly more technical. While the group has fulfilled its responsibilities on the funding recommendations (i.e., the \$300,000 grant awards), this action required full representation of all Council members. Given the technical work and collaboration necessary to develop the Plan, it is recommended that the composition of the SWWG be revised.

Based on the technical expertise required to complete the second phase of the Group's work, the following revised membership is recommended:

#### Regional Solid Waste Working Group

##### Leads

Name	Agency	Title
1. Alex Rodarte	CalEPA	Assistant Secretary Border Affairs
2. Ken DaRosa	CalRecycle	Chief Deputy Director
3. Jose Angel	Regional Water Quality Control Board, Colorado River Basin	Executive Officer
4. David Gibson	Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego	Executive Officer
5. Chris Peregrin	Natural Resources Agency	Reserve Manager
<b>Coordinators</b> <i>(not official members of the WG for purposes of quorum, etc.)</i>		
Heather Hickerson	CalEPA	Border Affairs Program Manager
Jessica Sankus	CalRecycle	Executive Fellow

Additionally, and to ensure the Working Group benefits from regional and multi-agency perspectives, we recommend the agencies represented by the original membership of the Working Group (and by extension, of the Council), be included as key stakeholders to the group:

- California Department of Public Health
- US Environmental Protection Agency

- The cities of San Diego and Calexico
- The cities of Tijuana and Mexicali
- The Mexican State of Baja California
- Imperial County
- US Customs and Border Protection

As key stakeholders, these organizations' representatives will be included on the email distribution list for all Working Group meetings, and will be directly invited to provide input into Plan drafts, but their participation will not be required in meetings for a quorum or other purposes.

In addition to revising the group's membership, we propose the Working Group prepare and conduct a series of approximately four to six workshops between now and the end of the year, to promote more detailed discussion of key issues to be included in the Plan.

Possible topics could include:

- Fundamental market drivers of waste tires and other solid waste streams at the border.
- Sedimentation: drivers, interactions with other waste streams, and possible solutions.
- Policy and enforcement best-practices to address waste tires and solid waste.
- Viable and productive uses for end products and their market development.
- Leveraging and enhancing cooperation across borders and levels of government.
- Sustainable funding mechanisms for addressing waste tires and solid waste.

These workshop topics and their relevant discussions will inform the Plan's goals and objectives, and potentially supplement the update work being done by SDSU to the tire flow study.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In summary, we recommend the Council do the following:

- Confirm the revised Working Group membership and list of key stakeholders.
- Direct CalRecycle as the Working Group's lead coordinator to update information on the Working Group and email distribution lists accordingly.
- Direct CalRecycle, in partnership with CalEPA, to prepare the aforementioned workshops over the next six months to support the Plan's development and content for long-term solutions to solid waste challenges at the California-Mexico border.