

**Minutes of Air Quality Task Force Meeting
Mexicali/Imperial
November 9th, 2017
UABC, Mexicali**

Co – chairs: Reyes Romero; Margarito Quintero

I. Attendance:

Reyes Romero, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Margarito Quintero**, SPA; **Jeremy Bauer**, EPA; **Ray Askins**, environmentalist; **Arturo Jimenez Trejo**, Secretariat of Agricultural Development; **Belen Leon**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Rebeca Coreya**, certified translator; **Fernando Amador**, CARB; **Meosotiz Torres**, SPA; **Jesus Jimenez Payan**, citizen; **David Flores**, UABC School of Engineering; **Valente Merida**, OBSERBC; **Gabriela Ruiz**, OBSERBC; **Juan Serrato**, CESP; **Oscar Romo**, Environmental Protection Management; **Raquel Espiritu**, doctorate student; **Leticia Ramirez**, UABC School of Engineering

II. Welcome and Initial Comments

Reyes Romero and **Margarito Quintero** welcomed everyone and thanked them for having taken the time to be at the meeting.

III. Review of Minutes from Prior Meeting

Margarito Quintero asked if anyone had any questions or comments with regards to the minutes from the prior meeting. No one had any comments so the minutes were approved.

IV. Presentations / Questions and Answers

Agricultural Burns in Mexicali; Arturo Jimenez Trejo, Agricultural Development Department

Ray Askins said he has always asked since 2007, when norm 15 was invented the reason why there has not been enforcement to the norm.

Arturo Jimenez Trejo said that they needed to advance more on what they are doing and that in order to do so institutions; farmers and technicians had to be organized. He said that the will of all the parties involved is needed in order to establish a mechanism that will lead to taking the actions needed to solve this issue. He mentioned that unfortunately they lack funding, but despite that, will was greatly needed.

Ray Askins asked if he had a chart where they could see how schools are affected by these agricultural burnings.

Arturo Jiménez Trejo said they did not have a chart like that at the moment, but that they are currently working on it., especially for the towns in the Valley.

Ray Askins asked why they did not include cotton on the presentation. He also mentioned that a lot of the water coming from the All American canal had been cut off, and they do not have been digging wells creating even dryer conditions.

Arturo Jiménez Trejo said that his presentation was indeed focused on wheat only because it is the most grown crop in the region. He mentioned that cotton growers are better organized than the wheat growers as far as environmental issues and rules go. Regarding the water issues, he said they should work closer together at the federal level so they

can control water extraction because the aquifer requires an extensive study in order to find out the level of extraction it is currently at.

Jesus Jimenez Payan mentioned that agricultural burning began with wheat crop. He explained that some years back, crops were invaded by a plague, which was eradicated by burning and that it was adopted permanently ever since. He also mentioned that since then 2 articles prohibiting agricultural burning were overturned from the State Environmental Regulations. However, he said they are currently proposing for the article that prohibits open burning to be included again on the State Regulations. He said authorities are responsible of doing what it takes so that at least in the state of Baja California this kind of burning is banned.

Fernando Amador asked if there was some kind of international regulation that would allow them to regulate agricultural burning in Baja California in the same way it is done in the States, and if they currently have any kind of control of these burnings.

Arturo Jiménez Trejo said that as far as agricultural burning goes, there is a lot to do, but that this forum is allowing them to get to the competent authorities to address this issue.

Reyes Romero said that agricultural burnings are indeed a very serious problem, and that in the Imperial Valley back in the 70s, when the wheat market was profitable they would plant and grow around 100,000 hectares and that during the months of May and June the problem would get worse. He explained that from that time on is when they started regulating agricultural burning. He also mentioned that their laws do not allow them to ban it completely. However, he said that having regulations and programs through which mediate with the growers, who depend on this product, improves the problem. He added that Imperial Valley has a program through which credits are given to growers to incentivize them not to practice burning and that there are also specific days and times on which they cannot burn at all. He finished saying they are willing to share these techniques and practices, which by no means are perfect with the agency that will be in charge of regulating agricultural burning in México if they feel they would be useful.

Juan Serrato asked if there were studies on the use of wheat waste because that waste contains protein and it could be used as animal feed. He said it would be worthwhile exploring that possibility.

Reyes Romero asked who would be the agency in charge of regulating agricultural burning in México.

Arturo Jimenez Trejo said that agricultural burning is the responsibility of the federal government, but that just as **Jesus Jiménez Payán** had already mentioned, they are currently trying to implement a state regulation in Baja California through Congress.

Reyes Romero asked who has the authority to propose such regulation.

Arturo Jiménez Trejo said he was under the understanding that the Secretariat of Environmental Protection together with the Secretariat of Agricultural Development would be the agencies with the authority to do so.

Reyes Romero said that it was extremely important to have that regulation in México because even though it is very difficult to completely eliminate e agricultural burning, having regulations and educating growers play a key role in reducing its impact on the environment.

Margarito Quintero said that Congress urged the municipality as well as SPA to take on this process of regulating agricultural burning. He said this is a problem at a national level that has to be solved locally, and that an appropriate leader to do so would be the municipality of Mexicali, obviously supported by the other agencies. He added that it was important to follow up on this urge from Congress and that it was the right time to work together with the support from their colleagues from Imperial valley so that for the next meeting they could present the advances on this matter.

An Attendee mentioned that the municipality lacks funding to implement patrolling programs. Therefore, he considers that the state government through SPA is the ones who have to regulate agricultural burning and that they can count on the municipality to perform other functions.

V. Border 2020 Program Updates; Jeremy Bauer

Jeremy Bauer mentioned they had had a successful campaign focused on the prevention of fireworks and open burning for the past 7, which has had an impact in changing culture and raising awareness of the impact of these practices on air quality. He informed that the presentations from the Tijuana/San Diego Air Quality Task Force meeting held in September had been posted online for those who were interested. He also mentioned that a table of all the Border 2020 projects had been published and that they would be sharing it soon with this group.

Margarito Quintero mentioned with regards to the campaign he mentioned that the Mexicali Pro Aire 2011-2020 had urged the municipality to prohibit fire work sales. However, he explained that this will not be possible because National Defense argued that if there are not local fire work sales, importing of Chinese fireworks will increase, and these are more harmful to human health as well as to the environment. Thus, it was agreed that sales will only be made through a single factory outside the city avoiding sales within the city.

An Attendee mentioned that last year about 400 kilograms of fireworks had been seized as well as 12 tons of wood that was then used as compost in the municipal nurseries.

VI. Federal State, and Local Governments Updates

Fernando Amador said he wanted to give an update on the Mexicali PM 2.5 study. He mentioned that through funding from EPA they are having some monitors placed at the COBACH and UABC air quality monitoring stations. He read some of the points they gave him on the study and he said that these monitors are registering very high levels of PM 2.5, and said that Calexico levels are lower compared to Mexicali and typically increase only when Mexicali experiences a high PM 2.5 episode. UABC and COBACH PM 2.5 levels are 33% and 64% higher on average respectively when compared to Calexico. From April 2016 through January 2017, Calexico exceeded the 24 hour PM 2.5 U.S. standard on 3 days with a maximum of 39.5 micrograms per meter cubed, while UABC experienced 15 days over the 24 hour PM 2.5 standard with a maximum of 64 micrograms and COBACH experienced 35 days over the U.S. 24 hour standard with a maximum of 78 micrograms per meter cubed. Speciation data shows levels of secondary PM 2.5 components on average to be very similar between Mexicali and Calexico. However, the increase in Mexicali concentrations is primarily due to carbon compounds and elemental species, which are indicators of industrial emissions and burning activity. He said that this study might be helpful in what they were talking about at the meeting. He said this study will conclude in April and that the data would be made available so they could share it with this group if they were interested. He said that he also wanted to inform that by the end of November INEC was going to do an audit of SPA's monitoring stations in the state of Baja California.

Reyes Romero said that the Air Pollution Control District has been presenting their State Implementation Plans for ozone and PM 2.5 to their board of supervisors, and that in both cases, it has been determined that the standards have been exceeded due to the ozone and PM 2.5 transported from Mexicali into Imperial Valley. He said that because of this, there is a great interest at a state and federal level to collaborate on projects in Mexicali that would improve these conditions. Therefore, he said it was the perfect time for this Group make proposals and try to get funding for them. He mentioned that the project that **Margarito Quintero** had proposed to upload the monitor's data on real time in order to prevent people on any air quality risk should be considered and proposed again.

Margarito Quintero informed that the Environmental Expo organized by SPA was being held at that time in the City Forest, and that it would conclude at three for those who were interested in attending. He also mentioned that the First State Health and Climate Change Forum organized by ISSSALUD would be held at the Los Angeles Hospital auditorium in Tijuana on November 30th. He announced that the State of Baja California Pro Aire 2017-2026 was

about to be concluded and that he hoped that the official presentation of the document would be at the beginning of January.

Belen Leon informed that the media campaign for preventing fireworks burning as well as open air burning *Ambientalizate* had begun on November 6th, and would conclude on January 6th.

VII. Wrap Up / Date of Next Meeting

Belen Leon informed that the programmed date for the next meeting is February 8th, 2018.

Margarito Quintero thanked everyone for being at the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned.