

**Air Quality Task Force Meeting
Mexicali / Imperial
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
September 10th, 2020**

Co-chairs: Belen Leon; Saul Guzmán

I. Attendance:

Isadora Clark Ordoñez, SPA; **Lilian García**, National Border Patrol Council; **Margarito Quintero**, air quality concerned citizen **Oscar Romo**, PERSIS; **Raúl Tovar** AQTF, **Iván Martínez**, REDSPIRA; **Alberto Mejia**, REDSPIRA; **Patricia Torres**, RESPIRA; **Fernando Amador**, CARB; **Ryan Atencio**, CARB; **Juan Serrato**, Mexicali CESP; **Marco Antonio Vargas**, agricultural producer; **Alicia Botello**, Mexicali Environmental and Ecology Citizen Committee; **Oswaldo Leyva**, UABC Design and Architecture School; **Adriana Arias Vallejo**, UABC Design and Architecture School; **Alejandra Álvarez**, OBSERBC; **Daniel Yáñez**, PROFEPA; **Laura Lawrence**, EPA; **Lizzy Melgoza**, CARB; **Reyes Romero**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Marlene Flores**, Imperial County Transportation Commission; **Meosotis Torres**, Environmental Protection Administration; **Luis Olmedo**, Comité Cívico del Valle; **Sandy Ian**, U.S. Consulate in Tijuana; **Arturo Castro**, Environmental Control Engineering; **Rodolfo Castro**, Environmental Control Engineering; **Ray Askins**, Environmentalist; **Amy Zimpfer**, EPA; **Ben Gibson**, EPA; **Christine Vineyard**, EPA; **Monica Soucier**, APCD.

II. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The public was reminded about the interpretation services available and how to activate them through the Zoom platform.

Belen León welcomed everyone to the tasks force first Zoom meeting. She mentioned they have **Saul Guzmán** as the Mexico co-chair.

Saul Guzmán welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance. He mentioned that it will be remarkably interesting to have the meeting through Zoom.

Belen León mentioned they did not have a May meeting because of the pandemic. She mentioned both nations need to work together to reduce the spread of COVID and being more conscious of their actions. She commented that they typically do introductions at this time but because it is a virtual meeting when they ask a question or are about to present please introduce themselves and what agency they are from.

III. Revision of Minutes from Prior Meeting

The previous minute is reviewed and there are no observations.

IV. Presentations / Questions and Answers

Border Updates; Lorena Powers, Ben Gibson, and Christine Vineyard, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Luis Olmedo asked what the best example in US history was where the US EPA has taken an active role and in this new effort a higher active role. He asked if they could describe how a more active role is measured.

Ben Gibson mentioned that a few years ago they did not have someone in their office devoting a significant amount of time to figure out how to leverage resources that could help the collaborative efforts along the border. He said they devoted a significant amount of to learn about these issues and see if there are ways where they can fortify ongoing efforts or kick start new ones. He mentioned these activities would not have had their involvement in the recent past.

Christine Vineyard commented that the distinction here is that the national office of the EPA getting involved. In terms of how the active role measures, she said she looks at it from the expertise and staff hours that are being contributed by their colleagues. She mentioned the funding that **Ben Gibson** was able to bring to the effort for some special studies and other types of work is also a part of the more active role they are taking. She commented about the training that Ben and his staff have organized also fits into this role.

Alberto Mejia mentioned on behalf of RESPIRA they would like to acknowledge the supports specifically in training, advice, and support offered by the EPA team, CARB, and the Imperial Valley. He mentioned the professionalization of civil society organizations by experts is part of the process of evolution and a way to improve air quality.

Border Updates; Ryan Atencio and Fernando Amador, CARB.

Belen Leon thanked **Ryan Atencio** for the presentation and for mentioning AB 617's CERP and their Community Air Program. She also thanked him for mentioning the working groups because some of the members from AQTF have been involved in those.

Alberto Mejia mentioned RESPIRA is interested in collaborating and learning about emissions monitoring projects at the border.

Ryan Atencio said he will send **Alberto Mejia** an email so they can get in touch.

City of Mexicali Air Quality Updates; Efrain Nieblas, Director of Environmental Protection.

Belen León thanked **Isadora Clark** for her presentation and reminded her that they have their support in terms of reforestation and air quality management. She commented that environmental education will be remarkably interesting in these times of virtual education. She asked if she could share her presentation to make it available to AQTF members.

Mexicali Air Quality Project Updates; Alberto Mejia, Environmental Civic Committee for the Involvement of the Society

Belen León thanked **Alberto Mejia** for his efforts in Mexicali and all the projects carried out together with the city council and with AQTF. She reiterated that virtual education is of utmost importance for the times in which they are living.

Baja California State Government Air Quality Updates; Saul Guzman, Director of Environmental Management.

This presentation could not be made as there were technical problems with **Saul Guzmán's** connection.

V. Border 2020 Project and Updates

Belen Leon wanted to emphasize more on EPA's presentation. She mentioned every year EPA requests projects to do under Border 2020 which they mentioned in their presentation. She said APCD has approved a grant of about \$445,000 and it will be used to continue AQTF's efforts. She mentioned this grant includes a year-round media campaign in Mexicali that includes the Ambientalízate program. She said they wanted to upgrade that type of education in Mexicali and invited everyone to help. She commented that it also includes a few air-burning commercials that will be upgraded so they can mention the new regulations Mexicali has. She added that they are working with Alberto Mejia and the municipality so they can have more outreach via virtual education. She mentioned they are thinking about doing a binational summit but because of COVID, they do not know how this will pan out. She said that **Alberto Mejia** mentioned creating either a Facebook or Instagram page to distribute information about the AQTF, she added that they do plan in doing either of these just for AQTF or they could include other agencies like Respira, SEMARNAT, etc. She commented they will start working on this and welcomed everyone's input. She commented the task force has a new logo. She mentioned that they will continue with the air quality index media advertisement they are doing with a local station and that they added 2 new channels on the US side. She also mentioned they will continue the AQI advertisements on a digital billboard in Dogwood and they will expand this to a billboard on Calexico. She invited anyone to add comments or ideas for future projects.

Luis Olmedo asked what is happening with the maintenance of the New River in Mexicali.

Isadora Clark Ordoñez commented that they currently have a project to clean the entire New River and that for this reason an impact is being seen on the water level in the lagoons.

Luis Olmedo asked if an evaluation of the impacts on air quality has already been made and to see how to keep dust under control. He commented that this is not only a problem for the water levels but the flora and fauna including the path of the river in the imperial valley and up to Lake Salton.

Isadora Clark Ordoñez commented that they did some tests in which they realized the immediate impact of the effects such as the death of fish. She added that alerts were issued to find out what was happening and that now there is a work pause in the area to clean the pipelines.

Belen Leon mentioned AQTF is based on air quality issues, but they can investigate how they can talk about the New River and the Salton Sea. She added that EPA and CARB already have groups dedicated to that.

Luis Olmedo clarified that he was specifically referring to the reduction in water flow that creates more exposed canal banks.

VI. Updates from Federal, State, Local Governments, and Others.

Mónica Soucier from APCD mentioned that of the last 3 SIP's that were submitted to CARB and US EPA the PM 2.5 SIP is currently under review by US EPA and the Ozone SIP has been approved and is going through discussion between environmental groups and the PM10 SIP has been proposed for approval. She mentioned they will continue to do programs that are required in the SIP's for example they will continue to adopt new regulations like wood-burning regulations for the city of Calexico. She said they are preparing to do their contingency report on the PM10 SIP.

Raúl mentioned that **Saul Guzmán** sent him some comments since he had connection problems. He commented that the group formed on August 14 on actors and participants in the monitoring of air quality is being followed up by the undersecretary of sustainable development and the secretary of sustainable economy and tourism, along with other actors. He said they committed to creating a joint monitoring scheme to share experiences and capacities and ways of communicating air quality to the population. He commented that on

September 8, an agreement was signed between the secretary of sustainable economy and tourism and the Mexicali city hall to work on various issues that include the distribution of competencies in the regulation of tire management activities, construction waste, and crematoriums. He said that to address air quality as a central issue, a core pro-air committee is needed, which was put on hold with the change of administration. He commented that additional resources were managed to install two new monitoring stations in Mexicali for the eastern zone. He mentioned they are recovering the investment of the monitoring sensors of the Fomex project to be able to use them in the existing monitoring network.

Ray Askins asked what was going to be done against the bad actors with all the available information. He mentioned that nothing is being done against the companies that pollute daily.

Fernando Flores congratulated **Belen León** for giving continuity to these projects. He commented that he knows that there were problems with previous administrations, but now they can assess what is happening. He congratulated civil organizations in Mexico and those in the US because progress is being made. He said there have been people approaching his organization to request some places to place monitors. He asked how many more monitors are available.

Belen León thanked **Fernando Flores** for his comment and mentioned talking about it in a private meeting, in which she also invited **Alberto Mejia** and **Fernando Amador**.

Alberto Mejia commented that in his opinion there are already enough PM2.5 monitors and suggested implementing a project with other types of monitors for other pollutants. He mentioned that they have not paid enough attention to emissions like sulfur oxide. He said that there are no low-cost monitors of this type and it will be a great challenge for its price of around 15 thousand pesos.

Amy Zimpfer thanked the comments that came through the chat. About **Luis Olmedo's** comment about the New River, she said she could offer a presentation for the next meeting about the wastewater issues and efforts being done to address the issues with sewage. She thanked him for bringing attention to the reduced water flows and the potential concerns about air quality problems associated with that. She said **Ray Askin's** comments are important. She mentioned they are trying to do what they can to bring resources to the problems. She asked if they could have a presentation about the Salton Sea for the next meeting. She said the Pro Aire WAS mentioned and asked if they have any more detailed updates about them that could be useful information. She mentioned to think about the work being done through the AB 617 efforts and see if there are any lessons they could learn from and bring them to the Border 2025 program. She mentioned she is interested in additional engagement and perhaps considering a co-leadership of the groups because none of the work they do is of value if does not result in cleaner air.

Belen León thanked everyone for their comments. She said these are good topics to be had in the next AQTF meeting.

VII. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

VIII. Closing Remarks / Adjournment

Belen Leon mentioned that the to-do list would include getting speakers for **Amy Zimpfer** proposal and Pro Aire's update. She asked if November 4th could work as a date for the next meeting. The meeting was set for that day.

Meeting adjourned.