



International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

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BINATIONAL BORDER WATER RESOURCES SUMMIT CONCLUDES WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS

A total of 160 water managers, scientists, government officials, academics, and representatives from nongovernmental organizations in the United States and Mexico gathered in El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua on September 27-28, 2012 for the Binational Border Water Resources Summit sponsored by the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC), with support from the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the El Paso Water Utilities, the Southwest Consortium for Environmental Research & Policy, the North American Development Bank, the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juarez (UACJ), and the Municipal Water and Sanitation Board of Ciudad Juarez (JMAS). The Summit was held September 27 at the UACJ and on September 28 at UTEP.

The purpose of the Summit was to bring together experts from the United States and Mexico to share information and enhance U.S.-Mexico cooperation on border water issues. The theme of this year's Summit was *Border Water Resources: Past, Present, and Future*. Panelists addressed issues in four different work groups: Water Supply, Innovation and Water Technology, Water Quality and the Environment, and Watershed Planning.

At the conclusion of the Summit, each of the four work groups presented the principal recommendations. Some of the recommendations were:

- With rapid population growth, climate change, and scarce water resources, the U.S.-Mexico border region needs to look to alternative water strategies such as conservation, reuse, and desalination.
- The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, should be proactive in working along the border to develop strategies to cope with the impacts of climate change.
- New and better ways to collaborate at all levels, including binationally, must be explored.
- In order to improve dialogue and cooperation between both countries, binational watershed forums should be established for transboundary watersheds.
- A clearinghouse to facilitate the creation and exchange of binational watershed data should be established. Harmonizing and sharing of U.S. and Mexican water data should be a priority.
- Research and analysis of possible and best case practices of adaptive management and mitigation strategies will support sound policy decisions.
- Long-term planning and forecasts based on scientific research are needed to inform and provide alternatives for policy decisions regarding adaptations.

- Develop new approaches to watershed analysis and management across the border that should include criteria such as water availability and quality, ecosystem health, population characteristics, and legal, social, and political aspects.
- Encourage infrastructure investment.
- The Transboundary Aquifer Assessment Program needs to have other local partners to share in the funding.
- Government decision makers need to recognize more and more that U.S. and Mexican border citizens are asking for and demanding more environmental restoration projects in addition to traditional water supply projects.
- Promote technical improvements of irrigation districts to achieve water savings.
- IBWC should strengthen its public participation processes in the projects that it develops.
- IBWC should promote decreased water consumption through efficiencies that result in greater production yield using economic incentives.
- IBWC should consider increasing the reuse of effluent from its binational plants.
- Hydrological variables including the various land uses and environments need to be monitored throughout the entire watershed.
- The relationship between groundwater quality and quantity should be identified, and issues related to aquifer overexploitation need to be evaluated, as well as soil and surface water quality.
- There is concern over the availability of resources to continue environmental monitoring and education programs, as well as to continue with environmental education programs and economic benefits associated with environmental values.

U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina said, "The Summit brought together water leaders from both countries to discuss what border water managers have done in the past, what they are currently doing, and how we can all work together in the future to address challenges such as climate change, drought, and population growth. The International Boundary and Water Commission looks forward to fostering ongoing dialogue and cooperation to address these challenges."

Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon expressed that the Summit had fully met all of its expectations and objectives. He highlighted the deep level of knowledge and experience of the Summit participants, noting that all of the contributions made will help the IBWC prepare initiatives that further address water issues on the border. He reiterated the IBWC's commitment to continue working together with authorities at all levels of government, academics and researchers, and non-governmental organizations to address water challenges along the border.

Summit presentations and recommendations will be made available online through the International Boundary and Water Commission in the near future.

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