

ANNEX 10

ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN FOR THE MEXICAN-U.S. BORDER AREA: U.S. GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY⁷⁰

On November 27, 1990, the Presidents of Mexico and the United States met in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, to discuss a range of issues affecting the two countries. Of particular importance were questions of international trade. Both Presidents recognized that the liberalization of trade between the two countries is vitally important to the future economic health of both Mexico and the United States. Consequently, in Monterrey both Presidents reaffirmed their commitment to a free trade agreement that would reduce barriers to the flow of goods and services across the Mexican-U.S. border.

While a free trade agreement would bring extensive economic benefits to people living in both countries, both Presidents realized it could have environmental consequences as well. Over the past decade hundreds of thousands of people have been drawn to cities on both sides of the border in search of better jobs and a higher standard of living. The industrial base has expanded sharply, particularly on the Mexican side of the border. Growing populations and expanding industries along the Mexican-U.S. border already are posing an environmental challenge to both countries, and that challenge will intensify unless met by a comprehensive environmental protection program supported by the two countries.

At the same time, the economic benefits of free trade offer both nations their best hope for generating the economic resources needed to protect the border environment. New jobs expand the tax base, thus providing the capital needed for municipal services like paved roads, safe drinking water, and wastewater treatment. Successful businesses are better prepared to invest the capital and technical skills needed to manage their wastes in environmentally responsible ways.

The challenge thus facing Mexico and the United States is not simply to nurture flourishing, mutually-beneficial trade, but to reap the economic benefits of free trade in ways that are environmentally sustainable. To this end, the Presidents of Mexico and the United States emphasized in their Monterrey meeting the need for ongoing environmental cooperation. In particular, they "instructed the authorities responsible for environmental affairs in their countries to prepare a comprehensive plan designed to periodically examine ways and means to reinforce border cooperation ... with a view to solving the problems of air, soil, and water quality and of hazardous wastes."

This plan presents the first stage of a binational border environmental protection program. It has been prepared jointly by Mexico's Secretaria de Desarrollo Urbano y Ecologia (SEDUE) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and it will be implemented jointly as well.

70. United States Environmental Protection Agency, Summary: Environmental Plan.