



EPA provides 30% of all funding destined for water development

Water

Infrastructure Needs

Border Challenge:

More than 10 million people live in 14 sister cities in the border region. Unreliable potable water supplies and the discharge of untreated wastewater are persistent environmental and public health problems. When EPA began its border program, in most cities, the sewer systems were beyond their operating design capacity and projected life spans—in some cases 50 years beyond. Cities across the border were, and some still are, discharging raw waste into the Rio Grande River. In addition, in Texas and New Mexico, unincorporated settlements not served by public utilities, known as *colonias*, were without potable water, sewers and wastewater treatment systems.

EPA Accepts the Challenge:

Many federal, state and local institutions and agencies have come together to work on the environmental challenges along the U.S.-Mexico border. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Mexico's Secretaria de Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales y Pesca (SEMARNAT), in cooperation with other federal, state, and local participants, have provided funding and technical assistance for project planning and construction of infrastructure.

Four major Region 6 projects in the last two years will be providing better water quality to an estimated 655,000 people along the border at a cost of over 245 million U.S. dollars.

The first of the four projects, in Eagle Pass, Texas, involved constructing a 19 million gallon a day regional water treatment plant. This plant provides much needed water treatment to 36 *colonias*, the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe, as well as the surrounding Eagle Pass area.

The remaining three projects provided communities in Mexico with water infrastructure that virtually eliminates their discharge of raw wastewater into the Rio Grande River. This reduces the potential for human contact with wastewater and organisms that transmit disease. Just last month, EPA through the Border Environment Infrastructure fund (BEIF) contributed \$20 million towards the total project cost of \$57.8 million for improvements to the water and wastewater collection and treatment systems in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. This project, benefiting 308,000 people, includes, among other things, rehabilitating water distribution lines, eliminating cross-connections which cause raw wastewater discharges to the Rio Grande, constructing a new wastewater



treatment plant to treat raw wastewater and detecting and controlling water leaks which will ensure future water supply.