

Minutes of the Air Quality Task Force Meeting

Mexicali/Imperial

May 17th, 2012

Calexico

Co-Chairs: Efrain Nieblas; Reyes Romero

Attendance:

Reyes Romero, Imperial Valley Air Pollution Control District; Luis Alberto Ocampo on behalf of Efrain Nieblas, Baja California Secretariat of Environmental Protection; Ray Askins, environmentalist; Aurelio Dueñas, Ecology Management in Mexicali; Miguel Shore, UABC Engineering Institute; Margarito Quintero, UABC Engineering Institute in Mexicali; Meozotis Torres, Ecology Management in Mexicali; Dave Fege, US Environmental Protection Agency in San Diego; Claudia Cristerna, citizen, Meozotis Torres Garcia, Ecology Department, Baudelio Dueñas, Ecology Department

I. Welcome and Initial Comments

Reyes Romero welcomed everybody to the meeting and Luis Alberto Ocampo thanked everybody for being there and said it was important to keep participating because very important initiatives have resulted from these meetings, and he hoped they could keep on building a better air quality for both sheds.

II. Revision of Minutes of Prior Meeting

Reyes Romero asked if there were any comments or suggestions on the minutes; there were none so the minutes from the prior meeting were approved.

III. Presentations; questions and answers

Reducing Pollution at Border Crossings; Ray Askins

Reyes Romero explained that since Jesus Jimenez Payan, their presenter for that meeting had not arrived yet; they were going to have Ray Askins do a presentation on reducing pollution at border crossings.

Air Quality Aspects in Mexicali; Jesus Jimenez Payan

Ray Askins suggested issuing face masks to everybody since that would solve all our problems concerning air pollution.

Miguel Shore asked if the chemical composition of the different tires was known.

Jesus Jimenez Payan responded saying they have some documentation regarding the composition of some kinds of tires. He mentioned they had done a scanning on organic components, which are a lot, and explained that the majority of them are toxic. Therefore, a series of studies should be done to corroborate their existence and the urgency to legislate this matter.

Miguel Shore asked how the samples were taken to determine if they were testing ground and not ashes from the tires. He said he had observed that one of the analysis indicated there were 10 grams of aluminum per kilogram, which corresponds to 1% and that in his opinion, tires do not contain 1% aluminum. He also said that the analysis taken had to be congruent because the numbers they were giving did not correspond to the local ground, but to the ashes from the tires.

Jesus Jimenez Payan said they had found manganese, which is not found in the Mexicali grounds in the proportions found and that had called his attention. He explained that they had taken superficial samples from 0 to 20 centimeters to determine if an infiltration existed and that those had been the results they had found. He finished saying that congruence is found through group participation, and that that was precisely what they were promoting in PROFEPA so that everyone participates because it is very important to work altogether.

Luis Alberto Ocampo said he agreed with **Jesus Jimenez Payan** as far as issuing hard sanctions to enforce the law. However, he said it was important to mention that things had been done to accomplish these goals. He mentioned that they had already generated the environmental infrastructure for managing tires by giving citizens an option of a place to dispose them to be given a final treatment. He said that these conditions, which they currently have allows them to propose to strongly sanction those who do not dispose of the tires properly, and that this has been accomplished through the Border 2012 Program. He finished saying that they might not be advancing as fast as everyone would like them to, but that they are taking the necessary steps to reach this and other goals as well.

Ray Askins asked if they had been following the trail of the metal from tires with which, a lot of people make a profit from.

Jesus Jimenez Payan explained that when tires are burned, these are sent to the dumps and that an operation by the State General Justice Attorney's Office is in force to sanction those found in possession of these kinds of waste.

Miguel Shore mentioned that the UABC Engineering Institute has developed many studies on environmental quality, and has been acquiring modern chemical analysis equipment in the past years, and that they could contribute with PROFEPA to advance in the task of improving the environment; he said he thought it was important to take this into account.

Margarito Quintero asked **Jesus Jimenez Payan** if the laboratories with a lot of instrumentation that he mentioned in his presentation were the ones in Guanajuato or if they were the ones in his working zone.

Jesus Jimenez Payan explained that the laboratory that they had in this zone had been closed, and that out of five labs that they used to have, they now only have two.

Margarito Quintero asked what his opinion was with regards to the results published by UNAM on the Cerro Prieto geo thermal plant in Baja California. He said he was asking him this question because he knew he had been involved in a very intensive exam on pollution caused by heavy metals.

Jesus Jimenez Payan said that no one doubts UNAM to be a well accredited institution. However, he said they are not aware of the problem in Baja California, and when comparing heavy metal concentrations with regards to the size of the pond, they do not consider the amount of pollution to be important. H explained that if the problem was projected to the future, considering the number of years of infiltration, and the accumulated pollutions, the results would be different, but that UNAM had not interconnected all the data. He also mentioned that the studies done by the UNAM would have to be corroborated by PROFEPA

Reyes Romero mentioned that when doing studies on industrial pollution, you must focus on looking for a specific pollutant.

IV. Border 2012 Program Updates; Dave Fege

Dave Fege said that they had already had several public meetings starting over a year ago; they had a draft out for comment and these comments were considered by EPA, SEMARNAT and the states. He said they had scheduled to release the final document for Border 2020 at the National Coordinators meeting, which would be held in Tijuana in August, and that the Border 2020 Program would technically start on January 1st. He also said that EPA, SEMARNAT, ARB and the districts are working together to develop an action plan for the Northern Baja air quality monitoring network, and that they plan to release that also at the National Coordinators Meeting in Tijuana. He also mentioned that EPA has been able to find some funding for this season to extend the educational campaign one more year in Mexicali, and said that considering this is a year where there is not a lot of funding available in EPA, they should all feel fortunate in that respect.

Margarito Quintero asked if they had an answer for the project proposals on air quality.

Belen Leon said that the media campaign was one of the projects they had submitted and got approved, and that she was told that this was the only project approved this time around because it was the most direct one to reduce emissions compared to doing studies or other types of projects. However, she said that she had requested to have the Air Quality Task Force submit more projects next year and see if they could get funding for that.

Dave Fege mentioned that they were really looking for projects that can reduce emissions; he said all the other projects that Belen submitted related more to finding more information and doing studies, and that they are looking for projects that have a more direct effect in reducing emissions and the media campaign proved to be successful at that.

Dave Fege offered to work together with the group to gather ideas to submit projects for next year around the months of January or February, and **Belen Leon** said they would have an update on this at the task force meeting in February.

V. Updates on Federal State and Local Governments

Reyes Romero said that the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District was going to be very busy working on two State Implementation Plans. He mentioned that EPA just approved a new 8 hour ozone standard, that Imperial Valley is on nonattainment on this standard, and they have until 2015 to be on attainment. As far as PM 2.5, he said that in December, 2008 EPA had published that Imperial Valley was under nonattainment for this standard as well. He explained that this was caused in part by the transport of this kind of particular matter, especially during the months of December and January from Mexicali to Calexico. He mentioned that by December of this year, they had to develop a PM 2.5 level reduction plan to submit to EPA to put it into action to be under attainment of this standard. He said they would be very busy since a big effort from the agencies is required to obtain attainment on both standards.

Margarito Quintero asked if they had been any pollution alarms in the Imperial Valley area due to the burning of prairies that has been going on lately. He also asked how many PM 2.5 exceedances were registered annually in the Imperial Valley.

Reyes Romero said that there had not been any pollution alarms in the Imperial Valley apparently. However, he explained that they were not the ones who issue those alarms; the monitoring data is sent to Sonoma County, and they are the ones in charge of issuing any warnings. With regards to the PM 2.5, he said that two or three violations were registered a year, generally during the months of December and January.

Luis Alberto Ocampo mentioned that they were still giving priority to the smog check program, which would start its mandatory period in the month of July. He said that the Mexicali Air Quality Improvement Program Committee would meet on May 29th; he said they had identified five basic aspects that needed attention, and are working on measures to address them.

Dave Fege asked with regards to the smog check program if during this non-mandatory period, they were keeping any record on how many vehicles are passing and how many need repairs.

Luis Alberto Ocampo said that 60% of the vehicles checked were passing the smog check so far.

Margarito Quintero what the expectations were for the air quality lab in Tijuana to be under operation so that they would not depend on Sacramento as far as PM 10 filter analysis.

Luis Alberto Ocampo said that according to the action plan they have with EPA, SEMARNAT and SPA, there is a commitment for the filter analysis to continue to be carried on by EPA until the year 2014, and that in the meantime they would be working so that the lab can reach the quality standards by then.

Ray Askins mentioned that a lot of these emissions are caused by the cars waiting to get across into Mexico; and that in his opinion, with this information they could put pressure into the Department of Homeland Security.

Miguel Shore offered to give a presentation on the influence of hydrogen sulfide in the air, ground, and water, if they were interested.

Reyes Romero said they would be more than happy to schedule his presentation in one of their following meetings.

VI. Wrap Up/Date of the next meeting

Reyes Romero thanked everyone for attending this meeting and informed that the next meeting would be on September 13th, in UABC Mexicali.

Luis Alberto Ocampo thanked everyone for their participation and encouraged them to keep on working to improve air quality in the region.

Meeting Adjourned