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Busiest U.S. Border Crossing Gets Community Air Monitoring Network
Network of low-cost sensors will study cross-border air pollution impacts

SAN DIEGO – The first air monitor in a network of low-cost air-quality monitors was unveiled today in the border community of San Ysidro. It is part of an innovative, community-led collaboration with scientists and state agencies to better understand and address cross-border air pollution impacts.

San Ysidro, part of the city of San Diego, is the nation’s busiest border crossing with more than 50,000 vehicles passing through the port of entry each day. The network of 13 air monitors will help the local community track changes in air quality and inform state efforts to identify communities that are disproportionately affected by pollution.

“Border communities are impacted by pollution sources from both sides of the California-Mexico border,” said California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) Secretary Matthew Rodriguez. “This community-led project will improve our understanding of the pollution burdens faced by the residents of San Ysidro.”

He spoke at an unveiling ceremony today in San Ysidro that included community representatives from Casa Familiar, a nonprofit organization that is facilitating local participation in the effort. Mayor Serge Dedina of Imperial Beach also participated, as a control air monitor is being placed there.

The community-led effort is being funded by CalEPA’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. It is part of the office’s ongoing effort to acquire additional data on the border region. The data will enhance OEHHA’s community environmental screening tool, [CalEnviroScreen](#), which will help assess environmental conditions in the area.

“We are committed to ensuring that CalEnviroScreen makes use of the best available data in identifying communities burdened by pollution and vulnerable to its effects,” said OEHHA Acting Director Dr. Lauren Zeise. “This effort will allow CalEnviroScreen to better reflect pollution burdens in border communities.”

In coordination with university scientists at San Diego State University and the University of Washington, a group of San Ysidro residents are being trained so that they can maintain the air monitors and examine the results for themselves. They selected the

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locations of the monitors and will work together to disseminate study results, identify mitigation strategies, and lead future efforts to reduce air pollution impacts in the San Ysidro area.

“For many years, Casa Familiar has been fighting for clean air in our border community of San Ysidro, but we can’t improve air quality if we can’t measure it,” said David Flores, Community Development Director of Casa Familiar. “We thank OEHHA and CalEPA for committing resources to help fill this data gap and eventually lead to finding solutions for air quality for the people of San Ysidro.”

Data from these low-cost sensors will complement the existing air monitoring network operated by the San Diego Air Pollution Control District. The study will provide valuable information for government agencies on where to deploy community-based sensor networks and how to expand these networks to more communities.

The network of 13 low-cost air monitors will track how concentrations of fine particulate matter and other pollutants change over time and within the San Ysidro community. Specifically, it will monitor in real time air concentrations of particulate matter (PM 2.5), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NOx, both NO and NO₂), and ozone (O₃), as well as relative humidity (RH) and temperature. The first air monitor installation was unveiled today, with the rest of the air monitors in the network are expected to be in place by Oct. 1.

The team is developing a webpage to display the results once a month’s worth of data has been collected and verified. Thereafter, the air monitors will send results to the webpage automatically with regular updates.

CalEPA and OEHHA will use the data to enhance CalEnviroScreen, the nation’s first comprehensive, statewide environmental health screening tool. The tool uses data on indicators of pollution and environmental quality, and indicators of socioeconomic and public health conditions, to calculate a score for each of the state’s 8,000 census tracts based on their overall pollution burdens and vulnerabilities. These indicators include ozone, particulate matter, drinking water contaminants, pesticide use, asthma rates, educational attainment and poverty, among others. The tool is available in both English (<http://arcg.is/1HOROV3>) and Spanish (<http://arcg.is/1Qs1Hkn>).

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