

Callexico Public Workshop on the draft CalEnviroScreen 3.0

September 14, 2016

Carmen Durazo Cultural Arts Center
421 Heffernan St. Callexico, CA 92231



The fourth regional workshop on the CalEnviroScreen 3.0 draft in Callexico was an opportunity for the public to learn about updates to the tool and provide comments on these updates. The workshop attracted over 30 participants from community organizations, local and state government, as well as local residents.

Staff sought comments and suggestions related to the four major components of CalEnviroScreen—exposures, environmental effects, sensitive populations and socioeconomic factors. Comments from workshop participants are listed below. Similar or related comments were consolidated and placed in the most appropriate category.

New Indicator Ideas

- Include access to transportation / car ownership / availability of public transportation.
- Children who miss a lot of school should be considered.
- Homelessness.
- Access to food / food desserts / quality of agricultural and food.
- Methane from cattle yards. This would include soil contamination and air contamination.
- Agricultural burning. This would include PM10.
- Fertilizer use due to runoff and air quality.
- Incidence of diabetes as a data overlay.

Comments regarding changes to the US-Mexico border

- Concerns about crossing the border:
 - For pedestrians, wait times up to 6 hours to cross the border.
 - There is a queue of cars of 1.5-2 miles in downtown port of entry to go back to Mexico in the afternoon.
- Review the two studies regarding air quality at the border. One was finished in April 2015 and is publically available. The other one is ongoing and with economic impact integrated and done with Caltrans.
- Truck traffic impacts—Hwy 98 go through areas with kids and schools and downtown.
- Road distance from border: 1 mile was used in local studies. ARB uses 350 feet from each side of centerline.
- Will connect OEHHA with Caltrans model that uses Mexico data.
- Planes are flying very low spraying pesticides all over at any time of the day even when schools are open. This happens on both sides of the border.
- Facilities in Mexico:

- 150 meters is not enough to consider impacts on the other side of the border.
 - We think there are more facilities that release toxics on the other side.
 - Department of Energy looks at a 6-mile radius from facilities, should consider.
 - Check 2 miles from border which facilities are not reporting.
 - Consider the two power plants that produce electricity for US side but located on Mexican side.
- US side has a lot of controlled burns for soil fertility all through Imperial County farmlands. What is released?

Comments regarding the removal of the Age indicator

- Would like older people to be captured. We have elderly people that may not be captured by the cardiovascular disease indicator because they go to Mexico for care.
- It is important to have the elderly captured, this area had a large population over 65. People come here to live with whatever Social Security they have and are vulnerable.

Cardiovascular Disease Indicator

- If you do not make it to the emergency room, then you don't get counted? Need to make sure these people are counted.
- Are community health facilities captured? They should be included.
- Calexico has a lot of issues with heart disease – those that live on the west side of Calexico near the contamination of the New River are the ones that suffer the most. Most of us that live on the west side have heart disease or high blood pressure.

Exposures

- Air monitoring for PM10 should be incorporated in the tool.
- Lots of concern over the tap water that is not drinkable here.
- Pesticide/ fertilizer use
 - Aerial spraying of fertilizers contributes to community impacts (day and night) and gets into schools.
 - Field/agricultural burning reduces air quality and occurs throughout the year.
 - Consider agricultural pesticides used across the border in Mexico in pesticide indicator.
- Lots of dust and sand in the air after any construction (example: solar panels installation). Outdoor mall gets a lot of dust pollution.
- Traffic and diesel are not represented properly in this area. Trucks come this way from Los Angeles and idle at West Brawley. Truck idling should be considered.
- There have been changes in air quality in the area from the use of California-grade gasoline.

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Environmental Effects

- Sites or locations of concern:
 - Impacts from the CalEnergy facility should be included.
 - The Ormat geothermal facility south of Heber should be included.
 - A chemical facility in Calipatria is located near schools and residences.
 - The community of Seeley is impacted. Nearby solar panels.
 - There is a cattle ranch near Heber that contributes to local impacts.
 - Two geothermal facilities: only one is compliant.
 - At least four big feedlots (cattle) that release greenhouse gases (methane).
 - Leakage from the power generation plants.
 - Semptra and InterGen power generation plants in Mexicali affect California communities.
 - There is a site of concern on Dogwood Road, between Keystone and Harris Roads. Is this included in CalEnviroScreen as a Superfund site or brownfield?
 - Illegal dumping on Dogwood Road near Worthington. Former dog pound and pet cemetery.
- CalEnviroScreen does not take into consideration the other half of the urban community in Mexicali.

Concerns regarding the New River

- Have been living for 45 years in the area – not much has changed and New River continues to be major problem.
- The New River is extremely polluted and need to make sure we are capturing issues around it.
- Near the river, people are suffering from asthma more than the map shows. People here suffer from allergies, rashes, and are exposed to many pollutants from the New River.
- Beef plants in Brawley: previous owner fined for runoff of blood into river water, also smell problem. Might re-open but still permitting issue.
- We have more concern about the New River than emissions from gasoline use.
- The New River has gotten worse. Nearby residents experience rashes, asthma, pneumonia, heart problems and cancer. There are schools near the river.

Sensitive Populations

- Concerned that the low birth weight indicator is not represented accurately because there are only two hospitals.
- Concern that many residents go to Mexico for medical needs:

- A lot of people go to Mexico to see a doctor and the asthma indicator does not capture that. Look at people going to Mexico for asthma attacks.
- Not many hospitals here, so asthma rates appear less than they should be.
- People may go to Mexico to get medicine, but people are treated better here (in Calexico).

Socioeconomic Factors

- Census ACS data is not accurate for the area – explore further options.
- Look into data from social service agencies on seniors.
- Lack of wealth and professionals living in local communities creates a disconnect between communities and where the wealth and power reside.
- Problems getting access to city resources. Lack of access and ability to go after available funds for disadvantaged communities meaning that funding and resources keep going to areas that have the ability to apply for and seek out these resources.
- Due to the sparsely populated rural areas, lack of English speaking, and transient nature of the populations living in the Imperial area – worries about the reliability of the ACS exist. Might have big margin of errors for estimates, but don't know of better source to use for data.
- Calexico is very disadvantaged. Someone needs to look at statistics from Calexico for illnesses and incorporate into the tool.