U.S. Customs and Border Protection

The PLLA Tracker

November 2009 Volume 1, Issue 2

Public Lands Liaison Agents Convene in Denver

National training session participants discuss how to further strengthen the PLLA Program at this year's meeting in Denver.

Topics ranging from the Endangered Species Act to multi-agency law enforcement partnerships were featured on the agenda at this year's National PLLA Meeting and Training Session. The event was held June 9-11 in Denver, Colorado. Approximately 25 participants from the U.S. Border Patrol's PLLA program were joined by inter-agency partners from the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the U.S. Forest Service, as well as from the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center and the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution for this event.

The initial day, June 9, was set aside for an internal PLLA administrative meeting. **David R. Hoffman, Chief of the Border Patrol's Strategic Planning, Policy & Analysis (SPPA) Division**, welcomed participants and charged everyone with taking responsibility for a productive session.

PLLAs then spent the remainder of the day discussing recent developments. Examples included the release of the official PLLA Policy, recent environmental and cultural stewardship training, and strategic approaches for strengthening the PLLA program including duplicating best management practices.

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Message from Retired Deputy Chief Colburn

Recent months have proven to be a time for reflection as I have prepared to transition from full time Federal service to continued involvement, but with more time for family. One thing that stands out in my mind is how we in the Border Patrol have strategically shifted the way we do business. And I think the creation of the Public Lands Liaison Agent (PLLA) program is a good example of this shift.

Maintaining good liaison with other agencies has always been important to me. So I was very pleased when Chief Aguilar formally nationalized the PLLA program almost four years ago as a tool to further strengthen our existing environmental stewardship collaboration with land managers from the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service.

Now, four years later, the PLLA program is bearing visible fruit in a large number of our sectors, and The Tracker has been created to showcase these examples of cross-agency collaboration. I am pleased to point out that this issue of the newsletter contains an article written by one of our land management partners that provides just one example of the benefits of the program. I am certain that future issues will continue to demonstrate the valuable partnerships we enjoy with the fine representatives of the DOI and USFS.

The PLLA program, and the increased liaison engendered by such liaison efforts can only be as strong as the willingness of the participants to engage with each other and remain engaged. We are extremely grateful to our land management partners for their continued partnership at all levels, and I look forward to reading about additional examples of collaboration to our Nation's benefit in the years ahead.

Ronald S. Colburn, Deputy Chief (Retired), U.S. Border Patrol

Deputy Chief Colburn retired November 3, 2009, after 31 years of dedicated Federal service.

Achieving both border security and wilderness objectives was on the agenda during joint training at Organ Pipe National Monument.

Organ Pipe, Border Patrol Officials Talk Wilderness

On August 19 and 20, 2009, Tucson Sector and Yuma Sector agents sat alongside employees of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument at a wilderness training session conducted by the Arthur Carhart National Training Center. The training took place at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Arizona conference center.

ARTHUR CARHART
NATIONAL WILDERNESS TRAINING CENTER
"Fostering interagency excellence in wilderness stewardship"

One of the underlying themes for the training was how to most effectively accomplish both wilderness and border security objectives. Carhart Training Center official Tim Devine covered the basics of wilderness law, its application to local decision-making, and wilderness training opportunities (see box). PLLA National Coordinator Roy Dahlstrom discussed the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding on interagency collaboration on public lands. In addition, PLLAs Wayne Lackner from Tucson Sector and Paul Merkley from Yuma Sector gave an overview of the PLLA program. Other speakers included representatives from Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge (also designated wilderness), Luke Air Force Base, Barry M. Goldwater Range; and the Tohono O'odham Nation.

Wilderness.net - One Stop Shop for Wilderness Information

If you've ever wondered what exactly wilderness is, the history behind wilderness, the Wilderness Act and other wilderness related laws, agency policies, the benefit of and threats to wilderness, the minimum requirements decisions process, research and monitoring, and links to beneficial wilderness training opportunities, simply go to <wilderness.net> and find the answers.

This Federal government website houses the only publicly-accessible, comprehensive, national database of Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U. S. Forest Service and National Park Service wilderness areas. In total, these four agencies manage over 109 million acres of designated wilderness. Besides the legislative and scientific information, the website also includes searchable wilderness image and multimedia libraries, blogs, news, interactive GIS-based wilderness maps and statistics about the National Wilderness Preservation System. Established in 1998, <wilderness.net> is a collaborative partnership between the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, and the College of Forestry and Conservation's Wilderness Institute at The University of Montana. To reach the website, go to <www.wilderness.net>.

Forest Service Names Liaison to Border Patrol

Nora Rasure is the new Forest Service Headquarters Natural Resource Liaison to the Border Patrol. In July 2009, she began a new assignment in Washington, DC as the Deputy Director for Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources. She recently acquired the liaison role to the Border Patrol.

Ms. Rasure began her career with the Forest Service in 1980. Her previous assignments include: Forest Supervisor on the Coconino National Forest in Flagstaff, AZ from 2003-2009; Forest Supervisor on the Colville National Forest in Colville, WA from 2000-2003; and Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Coronado National Forest in Tucson, AZ from 1997-2000. She also has worked in Montana and Nevada. She received a BS in Forest Management from the University of Illinois.

"The knowledge and experience I gained while working as a Forest Supervisor on both a southern and northern border forest will be beneficial to me in my new role as liaison to the Border Patrol," said Ms. Rasure. "I plan to focus my field contacts with the Forest Supervisors on border forests - many of whom I know and have worked with previously. I also will work closely with our Law Enforcement staff. My location at Forest Service Headquarters will position me well to coordinate with agency leadership."

In her role as liaison, says Ms. Rasure, she will work to increase knowledge and understanding of the interagency 2006 MOU on collaboration at all four levels of the Forest Service. Her other objectives include supporting and encouraging efforts at the local level to develop good interagency working relationships through opportunities like the Border Management Task Forces; and working closely with Department of Interior and Border Patrol staff in Washington, DC to improve interagency coordination efforts.

Nora B. Rasure,
Deputy Director, Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources
U.S. Forest Service

"I look forward to developing productive relationships that will support the mission of all of our agencies," said Rasure.

Guest Article:

RGV Sector, Refuge Officials Collaborate for Conservation

By Bryan Winton, Refuge Manager, Lower Rio Grande Valley NWR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in South Texas are coordinating, collaborating and conserving.

In May 2007, federal funding was approved to address border security infrastructure needs in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Sector. As part of this process, the need for border infrastructure on, through, and adjacent to, the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was identified as critical due to the Refuge's ability to provide cover and concealment to illegal activities. At the same time, it also was recognized that many of the Refuge sites to be impacted by the new Homeland Security measures were important wildlife areas. Thus, the cooperation began.

Since then, CBP and the Service have continued to work together to try and meet the mission of both agencies: securing the border, and protecting wildlife. This challenge, in part, has led to the establishment of a Border Management Task Force (BMTF). BMTFs are intergovernmental forums that have been set up in a number of locations along the nation's borders. Meetings enable members to have a platform to communicate agency-specific needs. The Sector's Public Lands Liaison Agent (PLLA) plays a key role in this group.

These developments have led to highly productive and improved levels of communication and awareness between agencies and employees. Examples of how this improved coordination has served the American people well include:

During the planning of fencing Segment O-18, near the City of Brownsville, the proposed access would have required the contractor and heavy equipment to cut through the tract, which would have had significant impacts on wildlife. Numerous alternatives existed, including moving the access along the refuge boundary. After cross-agency dialogue,CBP agreed to the change, which significantly reduced the traffic, noise, lighting, dust and overall disturbance to wildlife.

A video that highlights opportunities for CBP agents to assist the LRGV NWR when working on refuge lands is in the final stages of production. CBP and FWS coordinated on, and supplied funding for, the video. It will be made available at CBP musters and thus provide an invaluable educational tool in that six of the nine stations in the RGV Sector operate on, or near, LRGV. The joint project shows the willingness of CBP and DHS to openly consider and promote conservation issues of concern to land manager agency employees.

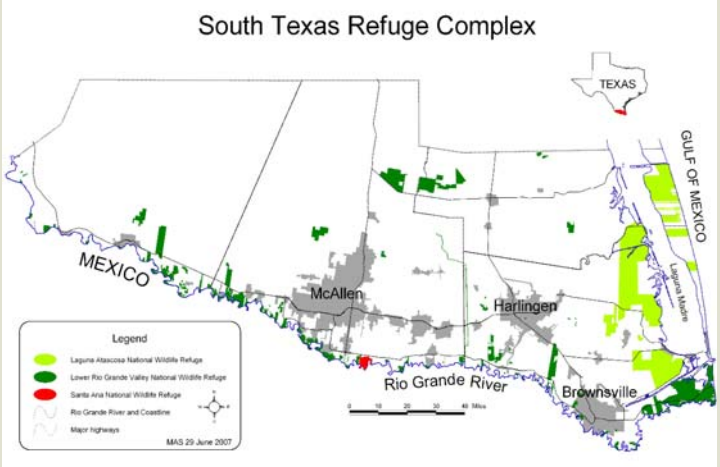
Lastly, of significant value to the Service and the Refuge has been the establishment of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) related to access to the Refuge. This SOP contains provisions to address road maintenance and vegetation management needs in a manner that also addresses plant and wildlife conservation. It calls for proper speeds to be maintained on refuge lands to minimize wildlife mortality associated with vehicle traffic. It also calls for roads to be trimmed and maintained consistently on and off Refuge lands. Using this SOP mechanism, CBP will be able to identify and maintain important access routes through the refuge to address illegal activities and conduct patrols adjacent to the Rio Grande, while carrying out these activities in a manner, and during a time of year, that has a minimum direct impact on the resident vegetation and wildlife.

The accomplishments mentioned above, as well as others, represent balanced solutions to extremely difficult challenges. The vegetation and habitat the Refuge protects for the conservation of wildlife for future generations can at times pose a safety and response concern for CBP. Both agencies have a mandate from the people, and it is important we cooperate. Working together through the BMTF, the PLLAs and, at times, individually, CBP and the Service have demonstrated in the RGV Sector that it is possible to address the needs of wildlife while also securing the borders for the protection of the citizens of the United States.

Refuge contains a wealth of biodiversity

The southern tip of Texas is considered to be one of the most biologically diverse regions in North America. The convergence of four climates and the rich Rio Grande delta have produced a diversity of plant communities. In addition, two migratory flyways (Central and Mississippi) funnel through the four most southern counties of Texas, creating a birder's paradise. Moreover, there are 20 federally-listed threatened and endangered species in deep South Texas. Of particular interest to Service biologists are two very rare cats, the ocelot and the jaguarundi.

The LRGV NWR was established in 1979 to protect this biodiversity. Since that time, this 'wildlife corridor' refuge has been working to protect and restore habitat along the last 275 miles of the Rio Grande. Because 95% of the habitat in this area is gone, the Refuge plays a particularly critical role.



Map Source: U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Day 1

On the first day of the training session, June 10, **Gerald B. Martino, Jr., Director of the SPPA Planning Branch**, opened the session by extending a special welcome to land management partners and others who were present. He stressed the value of collaboration and constructive dialogue across agencies, and reiterated the Border Patrol's commitment to this process.

The PLLA training session included a discussion of how environmental stewardship efforts have been incorporated into fence construction. Above: Small openings were added to fence segments in the Rio Grande Valley Sector to allow endangered species like the ocelot and the jagarundi to pass through.
Photo: e2M under contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Wilderness

Next, **Tim Devine, National Park Service Representative at the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center**, gave a session on wilderness law and compliance in relation to Border Patrol activities. One of the key provisions of the Wilderness Act, explained Mr. Devine, is the definition of wilderness. It is defined as an area of untrammeled, undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, meaning without structures and the use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport that increase human ability to occupy or modify the environment.

Another issue he explained was the provision that allows necessary administrative actions, which is where the Act intersects with Border Patrol operations. He explained that the Minimum Requirements Analysis is a process to help the Border Patrol make informed decisions so it can carry out its mission within wilderness areas in an appropriate manner, minimizing the impacts to wilderness by using the least amount of an otherwise prohibited use such as use of motor vehicles.

Endangered Species Consultation

Janice Engle, CBP Liaison for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), was the next presenter. She discussed the Information, Planning, and Consultation System (IPaC). The System is a website-based tool funded by the Border Patrol and developed by FWS in partnership with DHS and several other agencies. Its purpose is to streamline the environmental review and consultation process under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and encourage environmental stewardship.

Ms. Engle also described the Structured Coordination Process, which involves using IPaC as one component of the broader Section 7 strategic planning process that is based on early communication across agencies. She explained that the IPaC system will continue to be developed, and will eventually include a monitoring and reporting module as well as incorporate the role of state agencies. For more information on IPaC, see <ecos.fws.gov/ipac>.

Skillful Dialogue

Afternoon discussion on June 10 featured a presentation called Skillful Dialogue from **Joan Calcagno, Senior Program Manager for the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution**. Ms. Calcagno said that productive problem-solving was based on three elements: careful planning to set a constructive tone and prioritize goals; looking beyond negotiating positions to identifying common interests; and being open to generating a range of feasible options that result in mutual gain. She made a distinction between discussion and dialogue, saying that dialogue creates options rather than the answer.

Following her presentation, Ms. Calcagno asked participants to take part in a communication skills break-out session. When participants reconvened, Ms. Calcagno provided a set of reminders for achieving skillful dialogue. Examples were understanding others' interests as well as your own; being firm but flexible about meeting your interests; and taking personal responsibility for helping to solve the problem.

Day 2

Day 2 of the Session on June 11th featured presentations from land management agency partners, a representative from Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and each of the PLLAs.

DOI Coordination/ BMTF Overview

Daniel Wirth, Southwest Border Coordinator for DOI, gave an overview of the law enforcement responsibilities carried out by his agency, including its border work. He pointed out that on the southwest border, DOI land totals 782 border miles of the total 1,949, approximately 40 percent. Along the Canadian border, DOI land occupies a total of 523 border miles plus additional water boundary that contains small islands.

SSA Wirth explained that the law enforcement components of DOI have numerous responsibilities, one of which is close coordination with the Border Patrol's PLLA Program. He also discussed the role of the Borderlands Management Task Forces (BMTFs). The first BMTF was formed in the BP Tucson Sector almost a decade ago, he said. Since that time, BMTFs have played a critical role in opening lines of communication between agencies. They also maximize opportuni-

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ties for joint problem-solving as well as early and frequent information exchange.

Mr. Wirth is co-located at the USBP Tucson Sector Headquarters.

Curtis Oman, Northern Border Coordinator for DOI, who spoke next, is the northern border counterpart to Daniel Wirth. He is co-located at the USBP Spokane Sector headquarters.

During his presentation, SSA Oman echoed his counterpart's testimony to the benefits of co-location. and explained that he had been assigned to his position about six months earlier. He described the progress being made in working with PLLA headquarters to set up BMTFs within the northern border sectors. Although the goal is the same as for BMTFs on the southwest border, he said, northern border taskforces may well involve additional types of governmental groups. They may also entail especially close coordination within CBP given large water boundaries in some of the sectors and other factors.

U.S. Forest Service Recommendations

Following the DOI presentations, **Richard Glodowski, Special Agent in Charge for the USDA Forest Service Eastern Region**, talked about the responsibilities of the Forest Service for managing borderlands. He said that the Forest Service manages a total of 998 miles of lands along the U.S.'s international borders. As a result, hundreds of thousands of square miles of Forest Service lands are impacted by border activities.

Special Agent Glodowski also discussed the significance of the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Secretaries of DHS, DOI, and USDA, saying it means a lot to Forest Service resource managers and they expect the terms of the agreement to be lived up to. To strengthen collaboration with the Forest Service, he recommended the following approaches: coordinate with Forest Service law enforcement and land managers at the appropriate level; maintain regularly scheduled meetings to address emerging issues; and share information as appropriate, including working joint operations.

CBP Environmental Stewardship Efforts

The training session also included a presentation from **David Guzewich, CBP Office of Facilities Management & Engineering, Environmental Planning Office**. Mr. Guzewich discussed the environmental stewardship that was incorporated into the fence construction process along the southwest border. He explained that in the early stages of construction, under NEPA, CBP completed 8 Environmental Assessments (EAs) for Phase I projects and 10 draft Enviromental Impact Statements (EISs) and draft EAs for Phase II projects.

The DHS Secretarial waiver was signed on April 1, 2008. Despite the waiver, said Guzewich, the agency voluntarily developed more than 20 Environmental Stewardship Plans (ESPs) to evaluate potential impacts in specific locations, and also identified Best Management Practices (BMPs) to avoid or minimize any negative impacts. In the process, CBP evaluated its potential impacts to more than 75 threatened and endangered species and 25 critical habitats. It also identified and evaluated potential impacts to more than 600 archeological and cultural resource sites. Some ESPs include Biological Resources Plans (BRPs) to address issues associated with threatened and endangered species. In addition, environmental and cultural resource monitors were hired to monitor construction sites, and environmental awareness training was developed for all construction crews.

Another example of special features in fence construction discussed in Denver: removable panels to facilitate the flow of water in flood-prone areas such as the Sonoran Desert in Tucson Sector.
Photo: CBP Office of Finance, Facilities Management & Engineering

The other major commitment DHS made under the waiver was to solicit and respond to needs of state and local governments, Native American Nations, other agencies of the Federal government, and local residents. Public meetings were held with stakeholders, landowners, and affected tribes, and a public website <BorderFencePlanning.com> was developed. And as a result of the input it received, CBP made changes to the fencing style and footprint such as installing wildlife panels in New Mexico, animal passages in the Rio Grande Valley, and removable panels in flood-prone areas (see photos).

Mr. Guzewich concluded by saying that several additional activities are under way. One is discussions with land managers on appropriate mitigations for negative impacts that could not be avoided during construction. Another is upcoming awarding of contracts for maintenance and repair that incorporate BMPs; and contracts to develop northern border Programmatic Environmental Impact Statements.

The three-day event concluded with report-outs from each of the sector PLLAs. They described recent examples of their sector's collaboration with land managers on public land where both agencies have responsibilities to carry out their respective missions (see Collaboration Round Up, page 6).

Collaboration Round Up

A sector-by-sector snapshot showing recent examples of Border Patrol partnership efforts with Department of the Interior agencies, the U.S. Forest Service and other organizations.

Southwest Border Sectors

- El Centro Sector (California) reports that agents and the local Explorers Post worked with BLM to conduct trash clean-ups.

- El Paso Sector (Texas/ New Mexico) gave tours of the Santa Teresa, Deming, and Lordsburg Stations to BLM officials; in addition, the sector PLLA met with the New Mexico State Land Office and cattle pens manager in Santa Teresa to resolve sand build-up due to driving.

- Laredo Sector (Texas) briefed U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on the status of Carrizo Cane removal and control project.

- Marfa Sector (Texas) staff accompanied DHS Assistant Secretary Alan Bersin to Big Bend National Park as part of his sector tour (see back page photo and story).

- Rio Grande Valley Sector (Texas) has created a "Common Names Map" to help match FWS location names with commonly used Border Patrol names for the same areas; also, weekly talks continue with Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) managers on brush and road clearing in the McAllen Station area.

- San Diego Sector (California) met with California Game and Fish on appropriate routes for off-road vehicles in an area affected by fires.

- Tucson Sector (Arizona) and Buenos Aires NWR officials toured Brown Canyon and discussed patrol and interdiction techniques that would minimize impacts to endangered plants; Sector also attended meeting of ranching conservation group called Malpai Borderlands where other participants included Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, FWS, State Forestry officials, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Nature Conservancy, and local ranchers.

Del Rio Sector: National Park Service Chief Ranger Regina Klein-Dissler (left) gives new Agent Interns at Comstock Station an overview of Amistad National Recreation Area.
Photo provided by Del Rio Sector

- Yuma Sector (Arizona) and partners have developed environmental stewardship training on the Barry Goldwater Range; in addition, Sector was on-board during aerial surveys of the Cabeza Prieta NWR as part of an ongoing collaborative effort between Sector and FWS to identify methods, routes, and locations for Border Patrol operations within the Refuge, as well as any potential future tactical infrastructure projects, that will achieve environmental protection while facilitating needed Border Patrol access; finally, Sector attended Sonoran Pronghorn Recovery Team meeting as well as Lower Colorado River Partnership Initiative kick-off meeting.

Northern Border Sectors

- Buffalo Sector (New York/ Pennsylvania) reports that it held discussions with New York State Parks regarding the height of an SBI*net* tower as well as the related relocation of a picnic area in Beaver Island State Park; earlier in the year, the Erie Border Patrol Station participated in the 53rd Annual Presque Isle State Park Spring Clean-Up.

Swanton Sector staff received training about the Missisquoi NWR from Refuge officials.
Photo provided by Swanton Sector

- Detroit Sector (Michigan/Ohio) continues to work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and the State Historic Preservation Office on SBI*net* tower placement; improvements requested by MDNR include a bike path, benches, and erosion control along the St. Clair River.

- Havre Sector (Montana) says several of its agents attended a Glacier National Park Bear Management Orientation and Awareness Training Course; also, the Sector held its first BMTF meeting in October.

- Houlton Sector (Maine) held its second BMTF meeting this summer with representatives from the following groups: Penobscot Nation, Maliseet Tribe, Micmac Tribe, Moosehorn NWR, and the National Park Service; in addition, the Sector held discussions with the Natural Resources Director of the Maliseet Tribe regarding Cadillac Mountain.

- Spokane Sector (Washington/Idaho/ Montana) continues to engage in discussions with FWS regarding road access in Glacier National Park.

Editorial:

BMTFs Continue to Demonstrate Good Government

Border Patrol PLLA National Coordinator traces recent BMTF developments and calls on all sector PLLAs to develop and make effective use of them.

By Roy G. Dahlstrom, Assistant Chief, Border Patrol Headquarters

The concept of the Borderlands Management Task Force (BMTF) began almost a decade ago, and over the course of the past two years it has expanded significantly. For example, the Spokane BMTF was initiated fall of 2007, and productive working relationships have developed there. In addition, the Rio Grande Valley/ Laredo BMTF, as well as the Del Rio/Marfa BMTF—both initiated during the spring of 2008—have seen significant accomplishment as they have matured (see guest article page 3).

The newest (first meeting held October 29th of this year) is the BMTF in North-Central Montana. The meeting was held at the Sweetgrass Border Patrol Station in Havre Sector and was attended by representatives from the Department of the Interior (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service) as well as the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the International Boundary Commission, and the CBP Office of Field Operations. And by the time you read this, the Blaine Sector (Western Washington State) will also have implemented the BMTF concept in cooperation with its resource management partners in the Cascades region.

One could easily fill pages with accomplishments of the existing BMTFs, as the forum is very productive. Instead, let's look at the mission of the BMTF, and then let's further the concept in the remaining sectors. The standardized BMTF charter states that:

"The mission of the Borderland Management Task Force (BMTF) is to facilitate an intergovernmental forum for cooperative problem-solving on common issues related to the United States international border. The primary mission is to address border security, human safety, and natural and cultural resource protection through shared resources, information, communication, problem-solving, standardization, and training."

This is exactly where this forum has excelled. Many local issues have been resolved within the authorities of those in attendance. The value added by local resolution of local issues is probably not fully recognized in most cases, but then we don't fully recognize the benefit of avoiding an automobile accident when we do that successfully. It is very difficult to gauge the benefits of calamity avoided, but still we know it is good.

> ***"Many local issues have been resolved within the authorities of those in attendance."***

It is sufficient to say, nobody knows your issues like you do. Where mission overlap exists, we should find it and work to assist one another. When problems arise, it is simply good government to resolve issues, rather than to allow them to be addressed by others (with less understanding of the particular situation) from a distance. We, as public servants, owe this to the taxpayer whenever it can be accomplished. If your sector does not yet meet with other governmental entities in the form of a Borderlands Management Task Force, please discuss the concept with your sector leadership. Each sector can, and should, benefit from liaison built through regular discussion with other agencies on our borders.

Cultural Awareness Training Recognized

Swanton Sector Chief Patrol Agent Daniel B. Doty presented Cheryl Jacobs, District Chief for the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, with an award for fostering the relationship between CBP and the Akwesasne community on behalf of U.S. Border Patrol Chief David V. Aguilar.

In his letter of recognition, Chief Aguilar emphasized her active involvement in the formation and implementation of a cultural awareness training program. That program is now mandated for all agents who are assigned to the Burke, Massena and Ogdensburg Border Patrol Stations within the Swanton Sector, which encompasses northern New York, Vermont and New Hampshire.

The Akwesasne's tribal lands lie along the St. Lawrence River, straddling the international border between the U.S. and Canada. Although partitioned by the international boundary, members of the Akwesasne Nation view it as one Nation and one community.

Cheryl Jacobs (second from right), District Chief for the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, receives an award from the Border Patrol for fostering the relationship between CBP and the Akwesasne.
Photo provided by Swanton Sector

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National News Clips

Each issue of The Tracker will contain snapshots of recent policies and agreements that are relevant to the PLLA Program. Please help us stay on top of emerging issues by sending us a heads up on programs and policies you think may be of interest.

DHS and Tohono O'odham Nation Agree to Develop Enhanced Tribal Card

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Tohono O'odham Nation of Arizona have formalized an agreement to develop a Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI)-compliant Enhanced Tribal Card (ETC). The ETC verifies tribal citizenship and identity for the purpose of entering the U.S. by land or sea, enhancing safety and security of U.S. borders while facilitating legitimate travel and trade. Secretary Napolitano said DHS will continue to build upon these efforts—from secure identification to preparing for emergencies—with tribal partners across the country. Tohono O'odham Nation Chairperson Ned Norris, Jr., said the Tohono O'odham Nation is committed to doing its part by working with federal authorities to protect the U.S. homeland.

Since January, CBP also has signed agreements with the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, the Pascua Yaqui of Arizona and the Seneca Nation of New York. WHTI is a joint initiative between DHS and the Department of State. For more information, visit <www.dhs.gov> or <www.getyouhome.gov>.

CBP Increases Transparency Via Electronic Reading Room

To increase public access to agency records and documents, CBP has upgraded its Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Electronic Reading Room.

The upgraded site includes information such as policies and procedures, awarded contracts and grants, manuals and instructions, final opinions, and common FOIA requests. For more information on the FOIA Electronic Reading Room, see <www.cbp.gov>.

Marfa Sector PLLA Accompanies DHS Assistant Secretary on Tour of Big Bend National Park

When DHS Assistant Secretary for International Affairs Alan Bersin received word that President Obama had nominated him to be the third Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), he was in the midst of a two-day tour of Big Bend National Park in Texas. And Marfa Sector PLLA Thomas Munn was one of his tour guides.

On September 22, 2009, Marfa Sector staff accompanied Assistant Secretary Bersin to Big Bend National Park where they met with Park Superintendent Bill Wellman over a working lunch. The ongoing partnership between CBP and the National Park Service was the main topic of discussion. In addition, the group discussed progress of creating Border Patrol agent housing within the park as well as a Joint Law Enforcement Center.

DHS Assistant Secretary Alan Bersin received a tour of Big Bend National Park from Border Patrol and National Park Service personnel. Shown (L-R): Marfa Sector Chief Patrol Agent John J. Smietana, BBNP Superintendent Bill Wellman, Assistant Secretary Bersin, and Marfa Sector PLLA Thomas Munn. *Photo provided by Marfa Sector*

Ongoing collaboration between the two agencies in this location reflects their mutual understanding of the unique challenges the Park presents. Situated along 118 miles of the Rio Grande in southwest Texas, Big Bend National Park encompasses more than 800,000 acres and accounts for more than 20 percent of Marfa Sector's assigned border mileage.

Within this vast expanse, the Alpine Border Patrol Station—one of several within the Marfa Sector—operates a substation to which agents can be detailed. On the first day of their detail, these agents receive an orientation from park personnel as well as an overview of park policies, rules and laws. This same training also is covered at Alpine Station musters.

Did you miss out on the first issue of *The Tracker*?

Just in case you weren't aware, our inaugural issue was published in May 2009. It included articles on topics like how the PLLA program got started, why documents called Environmental Stewardship Plans were created, updates on Border Patrol and land manager collaboration in the field, and a message from Border Patrol Chief David Aguilar expressing his continued support for the program and its benefits.

To obtain a copy of the first issue, contact the PLLA in your local Border Patrol sector or send a request to <Elaine.Koerner@dhs.gov>.