



The PLLA Tracker

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New Border Patrol Chief Cites Program as Key Bridge-Builder



Michael J. Fisher
Chief, U.S. Border Patrol

“The Public Lands Liaison Agent (PLLA) is

one of our most valuable tools for increasing our collaboration with federal land managers,” says Michael J. Fisher, recently-appointed Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol.

Chief Fisher was selected by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Commissioner Alan Bersin, effective May 9, 2010. He succeeds David V. Aguilar, who has become Deputy Commissioner of CBP.

Prior to his selection,

Chief Fisher served in a number of strategic positions within the organization. They included Field Operations Supervisor for the Border Patrol Tactical Unit (BORTAC), Deputy Chief Patrol Agent in the Detroit Sector, and Assistant Chief Patrol Agent in the Tucson Sector. He also served as Deputy Director for CBP’s Office of Anti-Terrorism, as well as Associate Chief and Senior Associate Chief for the Border Patrol’s Intelligence Division. In 2006, he

was assigned back to the field as the Deputy Chief Patrol Agent for San Diego Sector. He was promoted to Chief Patrol Agent San Diego Sector in 2007.

“My position as Chief Patrol Agent in our San Diego Sector provided me opportunities to see the PLLA Program in action in the field, so I can attest to its value,” Chief Fisher says. “I look forward to supporting the Program at Headquarters in order to advance our mission of protecting America.”

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Alphabet Soup: Acronyms Frame PLLA Dialogue with Land Managers

Whether it be the southwest, the northern, or the coastal borders, PLLAs are stepping up as key points of contact on numerous projects that call for constant, clear dialogue with natural resources managers. Learning and using new acronyms is an essential part of that communications process.

CTIMR

Take CTIMR, for example. CTIMR stands for Comprehensive Tactical Infrastructure Maintenance and Repair. As of July 1, 2010, nearly all of the fencing that Congress mandated be built was

completed – 646 miles along the southwest border, with about five miles to be completed before the end of the year. Under CTIMR, fence that has been installed along the southwest border over the past several years will be repaired and maintained as the need arises. Most of the fence is on federal land. The project also includes patrol roads along the border and border access roads.

PLLAs along the southwest border have taken the lead in setting up a series of meetings involving headquarters offi-

cial, sector officials, and their local land managers to explain the process and answer questions. The work will include fences and gates, vegetation and debris removal, staging site rehabilitation, re-vegetation, drainage and grates, lighting and electrical, and roads and bridges. Mechanical gates that can be raised during flood events are being installed at designated washes.

Contractors will be hired to carry out the work and, as was done with the contractors who constructed the fence, they

will receive environmental and cultural resources stewardship training beforehand. Environmentally sensitive areas will be identified in advance, including any drainage issues. In addition, environment-sensitive best management practices will be embedded in the contract language and occasionally, if needed, environmental monitors may be on site while the work is being carried out.

DIP

DIP has become another familiar term in the vocabulary of the south-

west border PLLAs. DIP stands for Drainage Improvement Project. The goal of the project is to ensure that the newly constructed fence is sustainable by improving surface water drainage along, and through, the fence at selected locations. In advance of each action, PLLAs reached out to their local land managers.

Approximately 100 low water crossings were rebuilt over the past several months, with 61 of the sites in Arizona. As of August 1, 2010, approximately 70 percent of the work had

Acronyms Frame PLLA Dialogue *(Continued from Page 1)*

been completed. One example of the restoration work: strategic placement of a slab of concrete and rocks that, together, help disperse any drainage flow evenly. This solution constitutes a win-win in that it also enables continuous patrol of the area.

ESSRs

Yet another acronym southwest border PLLAs are beginning to use is ESSR. In this case, the acronym is shorthand for Environmental Stewardship Summary Report. These reports will document the final "as built" footprint for the Congressionally-mandated fence in contrast to the original series of earlier documents, the Environmental Stewardship Plans (ESPs) that were prepared as planning documents for each section of fence prior to construction. While the ESPs were developed on a section or project basis, because they were construction planning documents, the ESSRs are being prepared on a Sector, summary level basis.

The ESSRs will serve several useful purposes: provide a comprehensive summary of tactical infrastructure (TI) installation;

compare projected impacts to actual impacts so that a new baseline is established for any potential future maintenance and/or actions; document the success of best management practices and any improvements that might be applicable for future initiatives; and document any changes to the planned location of type of TI. Once the ESSRs have been completed, they will be posted to a public website.

PLLAs have been included in the review loop for these ESSRs to help ensure the information is accurate and operationally appropriate.

Northern Border PEIS

Northern border PLLAs and their local land managers are not immune to the need for incorporating new acronyms into their conversation. Witness northern border PEISs, which stands for Programmatic Environmental Impact Statements.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), which includes the Border Patrol, is preparing these PEISs under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The intent is to en-



To prepare the way for long-term maintenance and repair of Tactical Infrastructure (through CTIMR), PLLAs are setting up meetings with land managers to explain the process and answer questions. The work will include fences and gates, vegetation and debris removal, staging site rehabilitation, re-vegetation, drainage and grates, lighting and electrical, and roads (like the one shown) and bridges. Photo courtesy of CBP Office of Administration, Facilities Management & Engineering

hance planning for security activities along the northern border and ensure public input into this process.

CBP coordinated public scoping meetings in four geographic areas along the northern border: West of Rockies; East of Rockies; Great Lakes; and New England. The goal is to establish a baseline evaluation of potential environmental impacts associated with any possible activities that may be pursued in the future to enhance border security. Examples of potential actions might include construction, maritime activi-

ties, air operations, ground patrols, ports of entry operations, remote surveillance, firing ranges and armories, and canine units.

In the future, this baseline analysis will provide valuable background information when specific actions are being planned. More site-specific information will need to be gathered and documented that reflects particular actions and locales, but supporting rationale, need, context, and general impacts for the action can be referenced back to the PEISs.

In addition, a Programmatic Agreement (PA) will be developed under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

The project is still in its early phase, but northern border PLLAs already have stepped up as information liaisons. They gave a heads up to land managers during recent Borderlands Management Task Force (BMTF) meetings, and they also were briefed in advance on a series of public scoping meetings that recently took place. PLLAs will continue to be information points of contact as the project moves forward.



NEPA Training at Duke University Bolsters PLLA Expertise

To supplement their sector-based environmental training, more and more PLLAs are participating in a one-week intensive training class at Duke University on implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). During the course, participants first learn about the history of land use, conservation and regulation. Then they move on to the legislative history and intent of NEPA. Once the background is covered, they learn about specific regulations within the Act and how to carry out the NEPA process. Finally, to round out their learning, they break out into workgroups that analyze case studies and discuss how the NEPA process should be carried out in each instance. Four agents took part in the most recent class, held in July.

Participants (left to right): Lee Allbee, Del Rio Sector; Bruce Drake, Del Rio Sector; Robert Swathwood, Miami Sector; and Marc Guerrier, Rio Grande Valley Sector.

Guest Article:**DOI and Border Patrol Missions Closely Linked**

By Ernest F. "Fred" Patton, Special Agent (Retired),

Department of the Interior, Office of the Secretary, Law Enforcement & Security

By the time this issue of The Tracker is published, I will have retired after 33 years in federal law enforcement protecting lands which have been set aside by Congress as special places of importance for all Americans.

Most of those years have been with the National Park Service. For the last eight years I have focused on what, I think, is the most salient issue in land management: addressing threats to public lands along the Southwest Border from illegal cross-border traffic.

This is not just a passing interest. For the last two years, I have been co-located in the Office of the Border Patrol as the DOI/DHS Law Enforcement Liaison Agent. Prior to that, I worked the border and have spent hundreds of hours tracking smugglers across the desert, conducting operations to ensure the safety of visitors, and mitigating the direct and indirect impacts to fragile desert resources.

I have watched relatively pristine desert mountain passes become garbage dumps in less than a decade and I have struggled along with land managers to make appropriate and responsible decisions regarding the safety of their employees and the visiting public. I lost a good friend with a bright future who was trying to apprehend murderers fleeing Mexican law enforcement by crossing into the U.S. through public land. This problem could not be more serious or more personal to me.

Impacts come with more agents from both Border Patrol and Interior just doing their jobs. Some are all but unavoidable. Driving, dragging, and parking along roads comes with the efforts to meet the illegal traffic head on. Chasing fleeing felons is the necessary response to protect the public and the agents. The use of aircraft is

often the only way to provide for the safety of agents and suspects, as well as the only way to get contraband out of remote locations.

The old saw has it where the surgeon comes out of the operating room and proudly announces "the surgery was a success". The question then follows "how's the patient?" The doctor answers "Oh, the patient, well they didn't make it."

"For the last eight years I have focused on what, I think, is the most salient issue in land management: addressing threats to public lands along the Southwest Border from illegal cross-border traffic."

This is the challenge facing DOI land managers; to balance the efforts required to control illegal activity and meet critical national security interests, while maintaining resources at a level where there is something of value left to protect. This is especially critical for many species which are already seriously at risk and in desert habitats which do not heal in our lifetimes.

The relationship between DOI and the Border Patrol has been accurately described as a partnership. The Border Patrol is mandated to control the border. The Department of the Interior and the land management bureaus (NPS, BLM, FWS) are mandated to protect the resources under their charge and to enforce federal laws like NEPA, ESA, and Wilderness. DOI manages lands along 40% of the Southwest Border, lands on which the Border Patrol agents work to fulfill their mission. DOI understands that the only way to reduce the impacts and the threats from the illegal activity is to stop it. Therefore, the ability of the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Border Patrol to fulfill our mission requirements depends on each other. We are true partners

whether you look at this from the local resource protection and public safety perspective or the larger national homeland security perspective. We are in this for the long haul.

The PLLA program plays a critical role in this partnership and is just one example of how the relationship between DOI and the Border Patrol has matured professionally over the years. Public Lands Liaison Agents form the keystone in the engagement between the two departments and are influential in the success of both.

It falls to the agents on the ground to make the real difference day in and day out.

What you and your agents do every single day is just as important, some would argue more important, than anything else. Your efforts deter the illegal activity and decisions you make every day have a tremendous impact in determining the quality of the resource left as we all work to control the illegal threats. What may seem like insignificant patrol decisions which agents make every shift about parking off road, patrol speed, and turning vehicles around are very significant when

multiplied by hundreds of agents over months and years. Once the decision is made that an off road pursuit is the best course to apprehensions, the route chosen and the driving behavior can have significant benefit in mitigating the impacts. The reduction of these impacts is just another example of the professionalism which the Border Patrol should be proud of.

As both Departments look ahead into the next decade, the roles of land management and border management will continue to run on the same track and the measurements of long term success will be closely dependent on each other. Arguably, the future of special protected places, species, and habitat along the Southwest Border lies as much with the Border Patrol as it does with the DOI land management bureaus.

The surgery needs to be successful and the patient needs to thrive. In the long run, the influence which the PLLA program has in achieving this result will be just another example of this program's growing history of success.



USBP Strategic Planning, Policy and Analysis Division Chief David R. Hoffman (left) presents Special Agent (Retired) Fred Patton (right) with a one-of-a-kind shadow box at his retirement ceremony.

Photo provided by DOI Office of Law Enforcement & Security

Agent Patton retired July 2, 2010, after 33 years of dedicated Federal service.

Northern Border Borderlands Management Task Forces Take Root

While partnerships are a cornerstone of operations on all borders, they are especially important to the northern border. Partnerships are force multipliers. They provide the opportunity to leverage resources, promote cross-institutional learning, and together develop solutions that reflect both law enforcement and natural resources concerns.

Northern border Borderlands Management Task Forces (BMTFs) are a prime example of partnerships in action. By contrast, with the southwest border, they have come into being only in recent years. The earliest one was set up in 2008, and the most recent one held its first meeting in March of this year. As of August 1, all but one sector (whose border with Canada is entirely water) had created a BMTF.

Membership varies according to the land management agencies in the area. However, they all rely on partnerships as their key strategic

approach. In some cases, they already are working on specific issues. In others, they are laying the foundation for future collaboration and any problem-solving that may be required. In the meantime, they are exchanging

The terrain of the northern border is vastly different from that of the southwest border. It ranges from densely forested land on the west and east coasts to open plains in the middle of the country. Surface water resources are abundant. It includes many sparsely populated areas on the U.S. side of the border, while 90 percent of Canada's population lives within 100 miles of the border.

information on resources available and exploring new ways to work together.

The Blaine Sector BMTF, in Washington State, is a good example of how each northern border BMTF reflects participants' priorities. Major federal lands within the sector include Mt Baker/Snoqualmie National Forest and North Cascades National Park. Essentially, there are two primary public land segments within the sector: the Olympic Peninsula and the Cascades area. After holding meetings first in one segment and

then the other, participants decided to hold their meetings at a halfway point. According to DOI officials, participating land managers are extremely appreciative of the initiative that has been taken by Sector to build a strong foundation for the taskforce and move it forward.

The Spokane Sector BMTF, just to the east, began in 2008, and has been meeting regularly since the summer of

2009. Spokane Sector public lands are dominated by Forest Service lands. A total of 205 miles of the sector's 308 border miles are managed by five different National Forests: Glacier National Park, Okanagon National Forest, Colville National Forest, Idaho Panhandle National Forest, and Flathead National Forest. One of the major issues this BMTF continues to discuss is the need for Border Patrol access in grizzly bear habitat. And at least one success story already has emerged: Whitefish Station has worked with the Forest Service to place a repeater in the Flathead

National Forest. Site selection, permitting, and placement all were well coordinated, according to participants.

Moving further east along the border is Havre Sector. Public lands here include the eastern portion of Glacier National Park, Bureau of Land Management Public Lands, and the Blackfeet Reservation. Much of the eastern portion of the sector is private farmland. One highlight of this BMTF is strong involvement from state agencies.

Still further east is the Grand Forks Sector, which has the newest BMTF. One of the most significant pieces of public land in this sector is the International Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, part of Superior National Forest. Participants quickly realized that it would be beneficial to bring the Detroit Sector into the BMTF since the majority of public lands in this region are located in and around the Lake Superior area. With Detroit Sector now participating, the upper peninsula of Michigan has been brought into the discussions. Participants are planning a field trip to Superior National Forest.

East of the Great Lakes, there is not as much public land and the tracts tend to be smaller. Therefore, the BMTFs that have been created in these sectors tend to focus especially on land managers such as state agencies and tribes.

The Swanton Sector BMTF, for example, meets regularly at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. More informal collaboration with the Refuge was already under way when the BMTF was created and the Taskforce builds on this foundation plus also brings in other organizations such as the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. Finally, Houlton Sector is located at the eastern edge of the U.S.-Canadian border. Its BMTF participants include officials from the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge, the U.S. Coast Guard, tribal organizations, Maine Conservation Department, and other agencies.

IBWC Appoints New Special Assistant

Mr. Russell Frisbie, senior foreign policy advisor, has been appointed as Special Assistant to the U.S. Commissioner of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), Edward Drusina, P.E. Mr. Frisbie is based in the Department of State's Office of Mexican Affairs in Washington, D.C.

"In my new position, I look forward to helping the IBWC accomplish its important work and ensuring that the Washington policy community is aware of the Commission's exercise of its duties, as well as exploring other potential avenues for projecting and protecting U.S. water management interests in the drought-affected U.S. border region," says Special Assistant Frisbie.



Russell Frisbie, Special Assistant to the U.S. Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission

He is a former Senior Foreign Service Officer who has extensive experience in Latin America (including two tours of duty in Mexico), the Washington policy environment, and economic policy issues. His final assignment

with the Department of State was as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica.

"Despite the Border Patrol's and the IBWC's very different areas of responsibility, our common focus on the U.S.-Mexican frontier means that our work arenas naturally do overlap; our specific objectives may occasionally diverge," Mr. Frisbie says. "But open communication and close cooperation will help our organizations find points of agreement that will allow us both to accomplish our important missions. Certainly, given the aims of the Border Patrol's Public Lands Liaison Program, it is clear that we share the objective of maximizing the environmental sustainability of our work."

National Training Session Participants Attest to Program Value, Agree to Raise Visibility

One irrefutable message emerged at this year's National Public Lands Liaison Agent (PLLA) Training Session: the PLLA Program continues to support the Border Patrol mission as it strengthens interagency collaboration with federal land managers and other stakeholder groups.

Water Commission (IBWC), and the International Boundary Commission (IBC).

Administrative Day

David R. Hoffman, Division Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol Strategic Planning, Policy and Analysis

Topics covered during the remainder of the day included U.S. Border Patrol Chief Fisher's vision, how to review environmental documents, and other more specific training.

Meeting and Training Session

Land management agency partners joined the discussion on June 23 and 24.

The Forest Service was well represented. Nora B. Rasure, U.S. Forest Service Natural Resources Liaison to Border Patrol Headquarters, discussed the mission of the Forest Service and how working together can provide mutual benefit to all. Also participating were Tracy Perry, Deputy Director, Law Enforcement & Investigations and Richard R. Glodowski, Special Agent-In-Charge for the Eastern Region. Jim Sanders, Forest Supervisor for the Superior National Forest, described the unique challenges of law enforcement in wilderness areas.

within the DOI Office of the Secretary, discussed approaches for keeping cross-agency communication strong at the headquarters level. From the field perspective, Daniel E. Wirth and Curtis Oman described how Borderlands Management Task Forces (BMTFs) are helping to solve potential issues on a local level. Both are Department of Interior (DOI) Law Enforcement & Security Supervisory Agents who serve in a valuable liaison role. Agent Wirth is co-located in the Border Patrol Southwest Border Tucson Sector, and Agent Oman is co-located in the Border Patrol Northern Border Spokane Sector.

Training topics included several key pieces of federal legislation. For example, Dr. Larisa Ford, Senior Fish & Wildlife Specialist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, discussed the Endangered Species Act as it relates to PLLA responsibilities. And Customs and Border Protection officials provided an overview of the National Environmental Policy



Superior National Forest Supervisor Jim Sanders of the U.S. Forest Service discusses Wilderness Law during the first day of the Training Session

The event took place from June 22-24 in Minneapolis. Prior to the two-day session with external partners, sector PLLAs met on their own on June 22 with BP officials responsible for headquarters oversight of the program. Approximately 65 percent of the PLLAs attending this year's session were new to the position within the last year, so the internal administrative day was especially valuable.

On June 23 and 24, external partners joined attendees to provide training on environmental and cultural resources stewardship topics and discuss progress as well as any remaining challenges in working together. They included officials from the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Forest Service), the International Boundary and

Division, opened the internal discussion on June 22. He said that although the Border Patrol's operations drive everything in terms of fulfilling its mission, ultimately, all federal agencies are on the same page in keeping the interests of the nation at the forefront. Gerald B. Martino, Jr., Director of the Planning Branch within the Division, described how the PLLA in each of the Border Patrol's 20 sectors serves a critical liaison role within the sector. Assistant Chief Roy G. Dahlstrom, PLLA National Program Manager, spoke of the need to remain thoughtful while carrying out responsibilities, saying the goal remained to achieve the Border Patrol mission while creating the least negative impact possible. It all can be accomplished, he said, if we understand each other's mission better and thereby reduce conflict.



National PLLA Program Manager/Assistant Chief Roy Dahlstrom (right) expresses appreciation to Acting Commissioner Kyle K. Hipsley of the International Boundary Commission (left) for his participation in the Session and his support of the program

DOI participation also was strong. Bruce Marto, Supervisory Special Agent and Chief of the Border Management Branch

Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Collaboration Round-Up: A Sector-by-Sector Snapshot

Southwest Border

San Diego (Calif.) - Collaborated with DOI U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and California State Parks to install chain link fencing on bollard fencing to keep Mexican dogs from entering between the bollards and eating the chicks and eggs of nesting birds in the Tijuana River Valley Estuary.

El Centro (Calif.) - Sector agent escorted cultural resources experts into the Jacumba Wilderness in order to locate and document what was described as a petroglyph of a Spanish Galleon created by Native American Tribes approximately 400 years ago. Group included U.S. Park Service employees as well as members of the San Diego Maritime Museum.

Yuma (Calif./Ariz.) - Sector has come to agreement with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on the most appropriate location for a Border Patrol staging area within the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreational Area. The staging area will be used to store equipment and carry out other

activities, including assisting BLM with responding to any emergency incidents during peak public recreational use of the area. Sand temperatures can soar to higher than 130 degrees Fahrenheit.

Tucson (Ariz.) - In the Douglas area, old barbed wire fencing that was behind vehicle fencing and served no operations purpose was removed to make the vehicle barrier more wildlife-friendly. Coordination effort included sector agents, BLM, and volunteer groups including the Douglas Station Explorers.

El Paso (N. Mex./Tex.) - Within Wilderness Study Areas, BLM continues to forward any sightings of illegal alien traffic captured on their game cameras; Agents on duty report any sightings of endangered species.

Marfa (Tex.) - National Park Service (NPS) rangers are continuing to conduct monthly orientation briefings discussing resource protection and environmental concerns for newly-assigned agents who patrol within the Park.



Laredo Sector (Tex.) was recognized by the Webb County Heritage Foundation with an Environmental Preservation Award. The award was given for collaboration with Laredo Community College professors in preserving the Paseo Del Indio Trail while constructing an all-weather-road on College property. Pictured (from left to right) are: Rosanne Palacios, Webb County Heritage Foundation Board Member; Supervisory Border Patrol Agent David Dimas; Special Operations Supervisor Marcus Saucedo; Assistant Chief Patrol Agent Austin Skero; Tom Miller, Director of the Lamar Bruni Vergara Environmental Science Center; and James E. Moore, President of the Webb County Heritage Foundation Board. *Photo courtesy of Laredo Sector*

Del Rio (Tex.) - A joint NPS-Border Patrol operational facility has been proposed for construction at the Amistad National Recreation Area.

Rio Grande Valley (Tex.) - Sector co-produced a training video with FWS that outlines how agents should comply with refuge regulations as they conduct operations within FWS Refuge tracts.

Northern and Coastal Borders

Blaine (Wash.) - Washington State Department of Natural Resources provided Border Patrol Agents with an overview of environmental awareness on Washington State Trust Lands.

Spokane (Wash./Idaho/Mont.) - Sector is working with FWS and the Forest Service to strategically install gates in locations that reflect both security goals and grizzly bear habitat protection goals.

Havre (Mont.) - Border Patrol conducted a Search and Rescue practical exercise on Glacier National Park involving Blackfeet Tribal Law Enforcement, Tribal

Fish and Game, Glacier County Sheriff's Office, NPS, and Customs and Border Protection Office of Air and Marine.

Grand Forks (N. Dak./Minn.) - Sector is in discussions with the Forest Service about conducting joint ride-alongs on Forest Service aircraft above the Kawishiwi District of Superior National Forest so that both agencies can better understand each other's work in the area.

Detroit (Mich./Ohio) - Sector conducts joint marine patrols with the Michigan and Ohio Departments of Natural Resources by having agents ride along on

their vessels.

Buffalo (N.Y./Pa.) - Sector agents and their families participated in annual Beach Sweeps events, during which community members pick up broken glass, old tires, trash, and other debris that has washed up on the shores of the lakes or waterways.

Swanton (N.Y./Vt./N.H.) - All Swanton Station Agents attend a training session and tour at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. Agents learn what areas to avoid during certain times of the year to prevent disturbing sensitive habitat and wildlife species.

Houlton (Maine) - Sector reached out to tribal nations and other stakeholders in the area to keep them informed about developments related to the sector's Radio Modernization Project.

Miami (Fla.) - Sector is discussing ride-alongs with the NPS.

Ramey (P.R./U.S. Virgin Islands) - Collaborated with Fideicomiso de Conservacion de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Conservation Trust) to gain access to their public lands for sensor placement and patrol. In return, agents report any unauthorized use or damage noticed while on the property.

Endangered, but Not Anonymous: Rio Grande Valley Sector Agents Get to Know the Ocelot



In conjunction with the Annual Ocelot Festival held in Harlingen, Texas, RGV get a closer look during a muster. Photo courtesy of Rio Grande Valley Sector

Border Patrol agents in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Sector, and especially the PLLA team there, are very familiar with what an ocelot is and what it looks like. In fact, it is only a matter of days or weeks until agents assigned to the sector are trained on how to identify, and report, the sighting of an ocelot should they have the extremely rare opportunity to see one while on patrol.

The Sector continues to take extra steps to help increase educational awareness of the ocelot among all its agents. Furthermore, in the spirit of interagency collaboration, the Sector is assisting with helping to educate the public at large. One example: Sector officials assisted the local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Outreach Specialist with promotion of the agency's annual Ocelot Festival, which this year took

place on Saturday, February 13, 2010 and was held at the Marine Military Academy in Harlingen, Texas. Activities at the Conservation Festival included educational programs on fishing, hunting, and bird watching, as well as puppet shows, a silent auction, and the opportunity to view some wildlife species on-site. An event poster was sent out beforehand to all sector agents via e-mail, resulting in considerable interest and attendance.

plus support personnel learned about its habitat needs and the role everyone can play in conserving the species. Yet another example of community involvement: Sector PLLA Marc Guerrier and PLLA Oversight Official Mario Villarreal were invited to, and attended, this year's Ocelot Gala hosted by the Rio Bravo Wildlife Institute.

Finally, the Sector and FWS have co-produced an ocelot poster that details the differ-

Ocelots, smaller cousins of leopards, are native to south Texas and northeastern Mexico. They are highly endangered on both sides of the Rio Grande and are threatened by development, habitat loss and inbreeding. Only about 50 ocelots are thought to be left in the United States, all of which are found in South Texas. Most of those remaining hold out on a wildlife refuge and small patches of private lands in Texas's Lower Rio Grande Valley, where they live in dense thickets of thorn scrub that thrive in the area's loamy clay soil.

In addition, just prior to its appearance at the Festival, an ocelot from the Cincinnati Zoo was brought by its trainers to the Fort Brown Station muster. Here, approximately 40 agents

ences between an ocelot and a bobcat. The plan is to hang the poster in each of the sector's stations to continue the ongoing education and environmental stewardship process.

Marfa Sector Adds New Tool To Collaboration Arsenal: Mustangs

The Border Patrol's Marfa Sector recently put together a win-win agreement with officials from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Actually, the decision was a three-way win that also involved the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Under the agreement, the Marfa Sector will be allowed to station mustangs in the Big Bend Ranch State Park. Initially, four horses will be stationed there. They will be used primarily to patrol in the park's environmentally sensitive areas where motor vehicle use is discouraged or forbidden. Pre-positioning them within the park will allow agents to more efficiently

patrol the area. As a result, both the Border Patrol mission and environmental protection will be strengthened.

BLM comes into the picture because the Bureau is supplying the mustangs. Under its Wild Horse Inmate Program, wild horses are captured from herds on public lands in the western United States. Then, they are trained by inmates under the supervision of professional horse trainers, providing the inmates with technical skills and enabling the horses to be readied for use by numerous organizations including the Border Patrol.



For Marfa Sector, patrolling on mustangs is a solution for getting the job done in environmentally sensitive areas of a local state park. Chief Patrol Agent John J. Smietana, Jr., (far left) Marfa Sector Border Patrol and Lieutenant Ken Watson, State Park Police, Texas Parks and Wildlife (far right), executed a memorandum of understanding Monday, July 26, 2010, that will allow Border Patrol mustangs to be stationed in the Big Bend Ranch State Park. Border Patrol wranglers on the mustangs are (left to right): Margaret Mondragon, Garrett Dunning, Supervisory Border Patrol Agent Juan Munoz and Ivan Bitar. All are agents assigned to the Sierra Blanca Station. Photo courtesy of Marfa Sector

On-Line Environmental Training Gets Green Light

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National Training Session

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New this year among the roster of presenters were officials from the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) and the International Boundary Commission (IBC). Gabriel Duran, IBWC Civil Engineer, Planning and Design Department for the U.S. Section of the Commission, explained that, together with the Mexican Section of the Commission, his agency is responsible for applying both the boundary and the water treaties between the U.S. and Mexico. And Kyle K. Hipsley, Acting Commissioner for IBC, conveyed that his agency is mandated by treaty to maintain an effective boundary between the U.S. and Canada, including maintaining a vista by keeping a 20-foot swath of land clear.

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The official go-ahead has been given. Officials from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of the Interior (DOI), and Department of Agriculture (USDA) have together begun to develop a two-hour national on-line training module. The module will provide basic training to all border patrol agents on how to incorporate key environmental and cultural resources stewardship practices into their day-to-day work. It also may be offered to other components of Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

When completed, the module will represent a milestone, a pivotal step in implementing the training provisions contained in a 2006 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Secretaries of all three agencies. This provision calls for DOI and

Training already a feature

But in other ways the module is by no means a first. Developing and providing training for Bor-

Added value of module

What makes the module different from existing training is that it will contain the basic information every agent needs to know regardless of location. It will complement the existing body of training materials and fill in any gaps. And it will be made available to all agents at an early point in their career. Perhaps most significantly, the contents will be the result of discussions among subject matter experts and policy makers from all three agencies: DHS, DOI, and USDA.

The decision to jointly develop the module came after months of discussions.

The headquarters tri-agency taskforce behind the work, called the Environmental and Cultural Stewardship Training (ECST) Taskforce, met for more than a year before the concept was raised and began to take shape. Initial funding for the module is being provided by the Planning Branch of the Border Patrol.

To begin the process, the group gathered in existing training materials to determine what already was in hand. They also reached out to their respective field office to ask for input on

which topics were priority for inclusion and where any gaps in training may be. During the PLLA National Training

Session in Minneapolis, PLLAs were themselves asked to name their priority topics for training.

In the coming months, a subset of the ECST Taskforce will work with the CBP Office of Training and Development to develop the module's format and contents. Subject matter experts from both headquarters and the field will provide input into the process. Estimated time for completion is six to eight months.



Environmental stewardship efforts on public lands, such as Montana's Glacier National Park (above) and Arizona's Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (right) will be featured prominently in the ECST Module.

Photos courtesy of National Park Service website



USDA to provide CBP-BP agents with "appropriate environmental and cultural awareness training formatted to meet CBP-BP operational constraints." The module also will provide yet another example of productive collaboration between CBP and federal land management agencies, increasingly the way all concerned are choosing to do business.

Other sectors invite land management agency experts to come to individual Border Patrol stations and brief the agents there. And in still other cases, the agents are trained at local wildlife refuges, or are sent to specialty classroom training on topics such as wilderness law. Overall, the training already under way is extensive.