



Fiscal Year 2020
Laredo Border Wall Projects
Stakeholder Feedback Report

Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Background 2

 1.1 About Environmental Stewardship Plans 2

 1.2 Purpose of this Report 2

2. Public Input Process 2

 2.1 Public Feedback Review 3

3. Summary of Public Feedback 3

 3.1 Project Cost 3

 3.2 Ecosystem/Wildlife/Habitat 3

 3.3 Immigration/Policy Reform 4

 3.4 Landscape/Views/Visual Impacts 4

 3.5 Impacts to Landowners and Local Businesses 4

 3.6 Historic and Cultural Preservation 4

 3.7 Border Security 4

 3.8 Water and Flood Impacts 5

 3.9 Humanitarian Impacts 5

 3.10 Need For/Effectiveness of the Border Wall 5

 3.11 Economic Impacts 5

 3.12 Hazardous and Solid Waste 5

4. Review Next Steps 5



1. Introduction and Background

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is constructing approximately 51 miles of new border wall in Webb County, Texas and approximately 18 miles of new border wall in Zapata County, Texas. The project also includes the installation of a linear ground detection system, road construction or refurbishment, and the installation of a lighting and camera surveillance system supported by grid power.

As part of the planning process for the border wall project, CBP sought input from the public and other stakeholders on potential impacts to the environment, culture, commerce, and quality of life, including socioeconomic impacts. This input will be used to inform the development of an Environmental Stewardship Plan (ESP). It will also inform project planning and execution.

1.1 About Environmental Stewardship Plans

On March 16, 2020, the Secretary of Homeland Security determined that it was necessary to waive certain laws in order to expedite the construction of border infrastructure in areas of high illegal entry to deter illegal crossing of people and prevent drug smuggling into the United States.

The waiver includes various environmental, natural resource, and land management laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act. The Secretary of Homeland Security's waiver authority is set out in section 102(c) of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, as amended ("IIRIRA").

Though certain laws have been waived, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) remains committed to environmental and cultural stewardship. One of the ways CBP honors this commitment is through the development of the ESP, which, among other things, identifies potential impacts and outlines construction Best Management Practices to eliminate or minimize environmental impacts to the greatest extent possible.

1.2 Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to summarize the input received during the public comment process in order to provide stakeholders and the public transparency into the environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic issues that will be considered during the development of the ESP. It does not present individual comments received or provide responses to those comments.

2. Public Input Process

From March 16, 2020 to May 15, 2020, input was collected regarding the potential impacts to the environment, culture, commerce, and quality of life, including socioeconomic impacts. CBP sent informational materials to federal, state, and local agencies, landowners, environmental non-governmental organizations, local tribes, and educational institutions and



solicited input on potential impacts. CBP also solicited input from the general public. The notification and informational materials are included as an appendix to this report.

Comments were collected through email and mail. In addition, CBP staff held virtual site visits, webinars, and phone meetings with landowners, environmental experts, tribal leaders, and other stakeholders. CBP staff plan to continue meeting with impacted stakeholders and knowledgeable individuals throughout the process to ensure environmental impacts are eliminated or minimized.

2.1 Public Feedback Review

All comments received by CBP were reviewed and categorized. A total of 54 comments were received and all comments were determined to be unique. As the comments were received, they were reviewed and categorized by their primary topic of concern: environmental, economic, cultural, or quality of life. If a comment included substantive information on multiple topics, it was included in each relevant category.

The Infrastructure Portfolio outreach team reviewed all comments received during the comment period, responded to comments as appropriate, and prepared this report to summarize public input. The comment review was conducted based on explicit concerns; comments that were not specific or contained vague statements were not interpreted by the reviewers. Comments that provided substantive information were further assessed by CBP, often contacting that specific stakeholder to address specific questions or concerns. In some instances, the Infrastructure Portfolio outreach team contacted specific stakeholders to determine the validity of data provided for use in the assessment of environmental impacts.

As a next step, CBP will develop an ESP that will utilize new and existing environmental field survey data, as well as incorporate relevant information and data obtained from the public feedback process.

3. Summary of Public Feedback

The following sections summarize important considerations for CBP's review of impacts provided by the public during the public comment period. CBP identified twelve categories of primary feedback received.

3.1 Project Cost

One (1) commenter stated their opposition to the border wall due to its cost. The commenter recommended repurposing border wall funds to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2 Ecosystem/Wildlife/Habitat

A total of 22 commenters expressed concern that the border wall would damage the unique wildlife and habitat in the area. Comments suggested that the wall would have a negative effect on various endangered species, including Morelet's Seedeater, Interior least tern, Texas



hornshell, ocelot, jaguarundi, Texas Tortoise, Texas horned lizard, Indigo snake, Mexican fawnsfoot mussel, Reticulate collared lizard, Amazon kingfisher, blue bunting, and Monarch butterfly. Commenters also stated that building a 150-foot enforcement zone could negatively impact wildlife and their habitats.

Many commenters noted that building a border wall could reduce the area's quality and connectivity of plant and animal habitats. They noted that the border wall could prevent the migration of animals, cause fragmentation and destruction of habitat or fragmentation of available mates from Mexican and American animal populations, as well as increase the probability of large losses of life during a flood.

3.3 Immigration/Policy Reform

One (1) commenter expressed support for the border wall projects and urged the consideration of additional means to regulate illegal immigration, including strict policy reform.

3.4 Landscape/Views/Visual Impacts

A total of four (4) commenters expressed their belief that the border wall would obstruct views and damage the beauty of the natural landscapes within their community.

3.5 Impacts to Landowners and Local Businesses

A total of 22 comments expressed concern over potential impacts to landowner property and local businesses. Multiple commenters stated that the border wall could deprive businesses of access to the southern side of the border for agricultural purposes, including access to water pumps and wells as well as access for livestock. Commenters also expressed concern for potential impacts to a nearby bird and butterfly sanctuary in San Ygnacio. Possible disruptions to recreational activities and tourism were also mentioned, including fishing, swimming, tubing, birding, hunting, and kayaking.

3.6 Historic and Cultural Preservation

A total of 14 comments referenced historic and cultural resources that could be impacted due to the construction of a border wall. San Ygnacio, Treviño-Urbe Rancho, Rancho San Francisco, Dolores Viejo and Dolores Nuevo ruins, Los Corralitos, Fort McIntosh, Paso del Indio Trail, Las Minas Areas, Drexel Rio Grande Picnic Area, and First Peoples' Sacred Lands were all specifically mentioned as historic and/or cultural resources that could potentially be damaged due to border wall construction. Commenters recommended having historic and cultural surveyors present during construction.

3.7 Border Security

A total of six (6) comments focused on border security. One commenter noted their support of the new border wall, stating that CBP must do what it can to ensure the safety of U.S. citizens living near the border. Other commenters stated their belief that USBP has been



successful enough with apprehensions in the past that they did not see a need for the border wall. Other comments mentioned that the border could be secured using alternatives to the border wall, such as increasing boots on the ground or implementing more surveillance technology.

3.8 Water and Flood Impacts

There were a total of five (5) comments regarding potential flooding and possible impacts to water resources due to the construction projects. Comments indicated that the border wall projects would likely require a significant amount of water consumption that could deplete aquifers. Other commenters stated their belief that the proposed border wall could exacerbate catastrophic events, such as floods, and leave terrestrial wildlife trapped.

3.9 Humanitarian Impacts

One (1) commenter focused on humanitarian impacts due to the border wall projects. The commenter expressed concern for the well-being of U.S. citizens in border communities and noted that the border wall would effectively “cage them in.”

3.10 Need For/Effectiveness of the Border Wall System

A total of eight (8) commenters questioned the effectiveness of the border wall in general. Multiple commenters stated that they believed that USBP agents alone have been successful in securing the border in the past. One commenter shared their belief that border barriers of different designs have proven surmountable by people in a number of ways, including with tunnels, saws, torches, ladders, and rope.

3.11 Economic Impacts

A total of three (3) comments addressed possible economic impacts due to the border wall projects. Concerns included impacts to tourism, specifically those traveling to the area in search of outdoor recreational activities such as hiking and kayaking as well as those traveling to visit a nearby bird and butterfly sanctuary in San Ygnacio.

3.12 Hazardous and Solid Waste

One (1) commenter discussed the need for the proper handling and disposal of hazardous and solid wastes. The commenter specifically urged CBP to address potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of solid and hazardous waste from any construction of roads, clearance of the enforcement zone, and maintenance and operation of the border wall project.

4. Review Next Steps

Stakeholder feedback, along with information from surveys of the project area, will inform project planning and execution. Stakeholder feedback will also inform the development of the ESP. The ESP will include a summary of the comments received and how they were addressed. The ESP will be released to the public through CBP.gov upon completion.