



Border Barrier Remediation
San Diego County, CA; Imperial County, CA;
Yuma County, AZ; Hidalgo County, NM; and Luna County, NM
Stakeholder Feedback Report

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1. Introduction and Background

In December 2022, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas authorized U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to move forward with activities necessary to address life, safety, environmental, and remediation requirements for border barrier projects previously undertaken by the Department of Defense (DoD) pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 2808. The Department of Homeland Security Border Wall Plan Pursuant to Presidential Proclamation 10142 and associated Plan Amendment authorized the use of prior year border barrier funds for remediation work at the former DoD § 2808 project sites.

The current conditions at these locations create potential safety risks to migrants, U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) agents, and surrounding communities. There is also potential risk of further environmental degradation absent remediation. The proposed remediation projects being considered by CBP include:

- Completing or installing drainage to prevent flooding;
- Installing and completing permanent erosion control and slope stabilization measures;
- Completing prior construction of patrol, maintenance, and access roads by adding guardrails, signage, and integrating existing roadways to address safety concerns;
- Remediating temporary use areas such as staging areas, haul roads, and project areas impacted by construction;
- Disposing of residual materials;
- Closing small gaps and installing gates that were only partially installed or incomplete;
- Completing Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and Best Management Practices (BMP) repairs;
- Installing small wildlife passages;
- Completing and repairing electrical systems and fiber optic concrete boxes to ensure they are at grade or marked to prevent accidents; and,
- Installing and completing fiber optic cable, power, light poles infrastructure (to exclude operational lighting), electrical equipment enclosures, and cameras.

CBP is engaged in the environmental planning process for the proposed remediation projects, including planning under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As part of the environmental planning process, CBP sought input from the public and respective stakeholders on potential impacts to four primary areas of concern: environment, culture, commerce, and quality of life.

This input will be used to inform the environmental review, as well as project planning and execution. The most helpful comments were those that included data or information that could inform CBP's analysis of potential impacts.



1.1 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 environmental review. It does not present individual comments received or provide responses to those comments.

2. Public Input Process

From May to June, 2023, CBP sought public input on potential impacts to the environment, culture, and commerce, including potential socioeconomic impacts, and quality of life within USBP San Diego, Yuma, and El Paso Sectors in San Diego and Imperial Counties, CA; Yuma County, AZ; and Hidalgo and Luna Counties, NM.

The comment period closed June 22, 2023. The information provided will inform the development of an environmental review consistent with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. The action to be analyzed involves the undertaking of various proposed remediation projects currently under consideration by CBP.

CBP sent informational materials to federal, state, and local agencies, landowners, environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local Tribes, and academics, and solicited input on potential impacts. CBP also solicited input from the general public. Comments were collected through e-mail and mail. The public was also invited to submit comments via the StoryMap project reporting tool, but no comments were received through this service. In addition, CBP staff participated in site visits, webinars, and phone meetings with land managers, environmental experts, Tribal leaders, and other stakeholders. CBP staff plan to continue meeting with potentially impacted stakeholders and knowledgeable individuals throughout the process to ensure environmental impacts are avoided or minimized to the extent practicable.

2.1 Public Feedback Review

All comments received by CBP were reviewed and categorized. A total of 20 commenters submitted input to CBP and all comments were determined to be unique. In some instances, one comment was co-signed by as many as four (4) individuals. Although outside the scope of the projects being analyzed for this request, one comment provided concerns for the Tijuana River Barrier Crossing project. That comment's concerns were not categorized in this report.

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, they were 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 stakeholder to address 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 conduct an environmental review that will utilize new and existing environmental field survey data, as well as incorporate relevant information and data obtained during 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 comment period. CBP identified four (4) key categories of primary feedback received.

3.1 Topics

3.1.1 Wildlife Migration and Conservation

A total of nine (9) commenters expressed concern about small and large wildlife migration and conservation within the project areas. Commenters noted potential impacts to wolves, bears, mountain lions, mule deer, migratory birds, and bats. Two (2) commenters detailed potential adverse impacts on the Sonoran pronghorn; one (1) commenter mentioned the Yuma desert fringe-toed lizard; and one (1) commenter advised ongoing conservation of the flat-tailed horned lizard.

Four (4) commenters explained the importance of sustaining or improving wildlife passages where possible, both for small wildlife and larger animals. These comments also suggested leaving existing gaps open permanently.

The adverse effects of artificial lighting on various species, both nocturnal and otherwise, were cited by four (4) commenters. Alternative measures, such as employing sensor technology, were suggested in order to mitigate possible harm brought about by artificial lighting.

3.1.2 Flooding and Erosion Control

A total of seven (7) commenters expressed concern over flooding and erosion damage, with three (3) commenters highlighting the dangers and adverse impacts of flooding. Four (4) commenters spoke about both existing and potential habitat damage caused by unmitigated soil erosion.

One (1) commenter noted that pollution can occur through various means, such as trash being dumped into bodies of water, as well as sewage, industrial spillage, and stormwater runoff.



Erosion control and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) measures were repeatedly cited throughout these comments as necessary courses of action.

3.1.3 Cultural History and Resources/Tribal Coordination

A total of six (6) commenters noted the importance of mitigating any adverse effects to cultural and historical resources in the project areas, with two (2) commenters encouraging and/or suggesting continued Section 106 consultation with relevant State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO).

One (1) commenter underscored restoration in addition to consultation and mitigation efforts. Another commenter provided a comprehensive list of construction activities, such as drainage installation and road maintenance, that have a high potential of adversely affecting historic artifacts and properties.

One (1) commenter requested formal government-to-government consultation with CBP. Another commenter urged proactive consultation with Tribal leaders and Indigenous communities whose ancestral lands fall within the designated project areas.

3.1.4 Soil and Revegetation

A total of five (5) commenters spoke to soil and revegetation issues within the project areas, with two (2) commenters stressing the need for remediating or minimizing existing soil damage. Among the suggested mitigation measures were decompaction, which can improve water filtration, and reusing previously excavated soil.

Three (3) commenters highlighted the need for revegetation using native plant species, as this can reduce the presence of non-native invasive species and reduce runoff.

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 an environmental review consistent with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.