

## **U.S.-Mexico Border Scrap Tire Integrated Management Initiative Border 2012 Waste Program**

### **I. Introduction**

The U.S.-Mexico border region has a history of health and environmental problems concerning the management and disposal of scrap tires. With population rates continuing to accelerate in the region, the generation of scrap tires is expected to increase. To address this growing issue, at a November 2004 Binational Commission (BNC) meeting, the Mexican Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) signed a Letter of Intent to develop a U.S.-Mexico Border Scrap Tire Management Initiative (henceforth called the Initiative). In response to the Letter of Intent, this document was prepared by the U.S.-Mexico Border 2012 Hazardous and Solid Waste Policy Forum.

Scrap tire piles present serious environmental and health problems. For this reason, addressing the tire pile issues along the U.S.-Mexico border has been identified as a priority by the Border 2012 Program. Tire pile fires can burn for weeks to months causing severe air quality problems from the dense smoke and noxious fumes that are emitted. Furthermore, tire pile fires generate large amounts of liquid wastes which can contaminate soil, and ground and surface water. Tire piles also serve as breeding ground for mosquitoes, rodents and other disease vectors. The West Nile virus, dengue fever and malaria have already been associated with tire piles.

Throughout the border region, numerous scrap tire piles exist holding millions of scrap tires. Some Border states have established scrap tire pile management programs, but they must continue to take action to reduce their scrap tire piles and ensure that newly generated scrap tires are properly managed. Additional scrap tire management capacity building is necessary on both sides of the border.

In June 2004, SEMARNAT began a concerted effort to clean-up scrap tire piles in the U.S.-Mexico border area. Clean-ups have been initiated, and in some cases completed, in Tijuana, Mexicali, Piedras Negras and Ciudad Juarez. After these joint activities with local governments and the private sector, more than 2.7 millions scrap tires has been properly disposed. EPA and SEMARNAT are hopeful that this Initiative will provide guidance for the continuation of these clean-up efforts on both sides of the border and beyond.

### **II. U.S.-Mexico Border and Scrap Tire Management**

The main program addressing the scrap tire problems along the U.S.-Mexico region is the Border 2012: U.S.-Mexico Environmental Program. In carrying out

the 1983 Agreement on Cooperation for the Protection and Improvement of the Environment in the Border Area (La Paz Agreement), the ten-year binational Border 2012 Program aims to improve the environment and reduce the highest public health risks along the U.S-Mexico border.

Under the Border 2012 Program, the U.S. and Mexico are working jointly to reduce land contamination along their shared borders. One aspect of this program is addressing scrap tires. The overall long-term goals for scrap tires on both sides of the border are to reduce and eliminate scrap tire piles, and to ensure that newly generated scrap tires are managed in an environmentally sound manner. More specifically:

Goal #3 of the Border 2012 Program is to "Reduce Land Contamination" by implementing four objectives. Two of the four objectives are relevant to scrap tire management:

- Objective 1: "By 2004, identify needs and develop an action plan to **improve institutional and Infrastructure capacity for waste management and pollution prevention** as they pertain to hazardous and solid waste and toxic substances along the U.S.-Mexico border. Starting in 2005, the plan will be implemented and concluded by 2012."
- Objective 3: "**By 2010, clean up three of the largest sites that contain abandoned waste tires in the U.S.-Mexico border region**, based on policies and programs developed in partnership with local governments."

### **III. Purpose of the Integrated Initiative**

The purpose of this Initiative is to create the conditions for an integrated approach to scrap tire management within a sustainable development vision where waste prevention, reduction of resource depletion and energy consumption, and minimization of emissions are given high priority.

The Initiative consists of proposed actions that lead to the Border 2012 Program tire objectives. In some cases, the proposed actions involve activities that both countries are already implementing, independently or jointly under the Border 2012 Program.

The intent in developing this binational Initiative is so that both countries will have a clear and consistent understanding of the shared principles, and the program actions that are necessary to properly manage scrap tires. Further, the Initiative is broad enough to allow both countries to leverage their existing resources to implement its proposed actions while maintaining consistency with each country's waste management policies.

#### **IV. Basic Principles**

The U.S. and Mexico agree that implementation of the following four basic principles is necessary for proper management of scrap tires in the U.S.-Mexico border region:

- Better understand the problems contributing to scrap tire generation
- Prevent new tire piles
- Clean-up "legacy" (existing) tire piles using environmentally sound and cost effective solutions
- Involve stakeholders and communities in creating solutions.

#### **V. Implementation**

**Action 1:** Gather information to better understand scrap tire generation (including sources of substandard tires and illegal tire entry into Mexico), illegal scrap tire dumping, and methods for effective management of scrap tires.

**Action 2:** Consider federal, state, and local-level regulatory options to administer scrap tire management programs.

**Action 3:** Encourage development and implementation of a variety of environmentally acceptable and economically promising end-use markets for scrap tires to increase recycling and reuse. (Our plan is that this will be done through economic, regulatory, and technology development incentives.)

**Action 4:** Abate tire piles by seeking funding to eliminate legacy scrap tire piles, and invest in and adequately manage temporary storage and transfer stations to facilitate recycling and/or reuse of scrap tires.

**Action 5:** Involve the U.S. and Mexican governments, the private-sector, academics, and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Scrap Tire Integrated Management Initiative.

**Action 6:** Establish and implement educational outreach programs on scrap tire recycling and reuse opportunities geared towards a diverse audience of stakeholders.

The proposed actions are general enough to allow each country the flexibility to develop them into more specific action items suited to their country's programs as well as to implement joint programs.

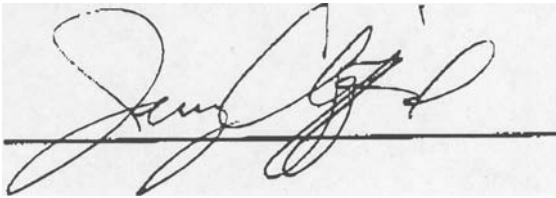
**VIII. Next Steps**

One of the first steps for the U.S. and Mexico, after signing the Management Initiative is to seek funding for its implementation. Upon availability of funding, both countries will develop a process to implement the Initiative.

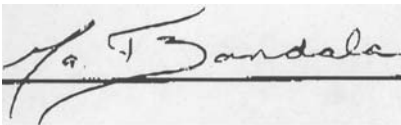
**IX. Annex**

**Annex A:** U.S.-Mexico Binational, Commission Letter of Intent

Jerry Clifford  
Border 2012 U.S. National Coordinator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Clifford", written over a horizontal line.

Ms. Teresa Bandala  
Border 2012 México National Coordinator  
Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Bandala", written over a horizontal line.