

## EPA and Mexico



On June 6, 1978, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Douglas M. Costle and his Mexican counterpart, Ing. Humberto Romero Alvarez of the Subsecretariat for Environmental Improvement of Mexico (SMA), signed a Memorandum of Understanding pledging mutual cooperation on environmental problems, including air and water pollution problems along the U.S.—Mexican border. This agreement supplements the 1944 Boundary Waters Treaty between the two countries, which dealt with water allocation and water quality issues. The International Boundary and Water Commission—a bilateral commission established to implement the 1944 Treaty—is working to make the Treaty's water quality and sanitation objectives more explicit.

Under the new Memorandum, the United States and Mexico are making an inventory of environmental problems along their border and setting priorities for dealing with them. Issues include pollution of coastal waters, pollution of border waters, and air pollution in urban regions along the border. The Memorandum provides for annual meetings between high-level environmental officials of the two countries to oversee the work and to discuss environmental issues common to both countries.

EPA is also involved with Mexico under the Consultative Mechanism established by President Carter and President Lopez Portillo in 1977, and strengthened during President Carter's trip to Mexico City in 1979. The Consultative Mechanism provides for frequent meetings of high-level officials on issues of mutual interest, in-

cluding pollution problems along the border and contingency planning for oil spills.

EPA provides technical assistance to Mexico on environmental problems through direct contacts between EPA and SMA, but more often under the auspices of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), which serves as the Regional Office for the Americas of the U.N.-affiliated World Health Organization. Since 1969, U.S. environmental officials have worked with Mexican officials through PAHO on all phases of pollution control programs. Many of these contacts take place through the PAHO regional office in El Paso, Texas.



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