

This report provides the first comprehensive account of the efforts over the past five years of the U.S.-Mexico Border XXI Program to improve environmental, health, and natural resource conditions and promote sustainable development in the U.S.-Mexico border region. By providing an evaluation of the progress and the limitations of the Border XXI Program, the federal governments of the United States and Mexico hope that the reader will learn more about not only the strengths and weaknesses of the Border XXI Program, but also the complexity of the endeavor and the scale of the challenges that remain. While this report is retrospective, it also marks the beginning of a forward-looking process for augmenting the participation of border residents, increasing local-level capacity, and creating additional public and private partnerships to meet the needs of the border region.

The Border XXI partnership has achieved notable successes, among them a vastly increased level of infrastructure development, innovative and wide-reaching mechanisms for addressing border cleanup, accords with border states and tribes, and an ambitious agenda for work with the private sector. The indicators project, updated in this report, provides the public with qualitative and quantitative assessments of those and other aspects of the program. In addition, the Border XXI Program has provided an important mechanism for increasing the depth of public involvement in environmental protection and has provided more infor-

mation and better tools for doing so than existed before the program began.

Despite substantial efforts and important advances, serious environmental problems remain. Water pollution, poor air quality, lack of infrastructure, exposure to toxics, outbreaks of infectious diseases, and problems related to the transboundary shipment of hazardous material are just some of the issues that the border communities continue to face. Many of the difficulties in addressing those problems are attributable to the area's staggering growth, a growth that, even by the most conservative projections, will result in the near doubling of the region's population to 19 million people by 2020. This explosive population growth, coupled with unplanned development, has challenged both institutional and infrastructural capacity. Responding to various environmental and health concerns in a vast area experiencing almost limitless growth and having very limited resources, and across cultures, languages, and political systems, has proven to be among the most challenging aspects of the implementation of the program.

The two federal governments acknowledge the seriousness and magnitude of the work that lies ahead and hope that this report helps to spur further dialogue about not only the design and scope of the next border cooperation framework, but also the form and function of future collaborative opportunities.

Closing Remarks