

December 8th, 2009

Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords,  
Ms. Deanna Archuleta, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, DOI,  
Dr. Charles Van Riper, USGS Scientist, SDRS, and  
Ron Barber, District Director of Congresswoman Giffords,

Dear Congresswoman Giffords (and other distinguished officials/scientists at the Tucson “border meeting” of Dec. 7, 2009),

First off, I would like to thank you, Representative Giffords, for inviting our organization to this listening meeting of environmental groups in Tucson. Also, our organization wishes to thank you for your effort in getting this DOI funding secured for the upcoming border studies. Thank you sincerely.

After our videoconference meeting in Tucson yesterday, a few additional thoughts on monitoring and mitigation project for border infrastructure and activities came to mind.

- 1) Restricting the monitoring to just DOI held public lands, severely limits a comprehensive evaluation of impacts to borderland ecosystems because so much of the natural functioning ecosystems of concern occur in forest ecosystems within the Coronado National Forest under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture. By not including these lands, studies potentially conducted only on DOI lands will not allow the evaluation of many impacts to forest, grassland, and canyon habitats that many of our species of the Sierra Madre Occidental occur within, use, and depend on in the border region. We need to find a way to allow and use DOI funds across all ecosystems of the Arizona borderland region.
- 2) Indirect ecosystem effects within at least 25 miles of the border may be appropriate to study, as many species and species interactions occur well beyond the immediate border barrier and border road’s direct physical footprint.
- 3) Ecosystems on both sides of the border need to be included in the study, and the involvement of Mexican and qualified NGO scientists and organizations should be included in data gathering to assist study plans and scientists involved in the multitude of projects undertaken.
- 4) Studies should be designed to elucidate cause and effect of infrastructure and border patrol activities to discern potential direct impacts on species, and potential secondary impacts on associated secondary affected species, and particularly ecosystem functions.

5) Hydrology and geomorphology, and other physical (abiotic) potential impacts to ecosystems needs to be included in study plans, and should occur on both sides of the border.

6) Mitigation should involve looking at all the various border infrastructure presently employed along the border (types of fencing, walls, barriers, and lights, and especially the options related to road width, road presence, and border patrol travel use, type of vehicles used by border patrol, and speed and noise of vehicles using roads).

Again, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to give comment, and look forward to reviewing the complete proposal of the border infrastructure and activities monitoring and mitigation project study goals, objectives, geographic scope, and time frame, and particular study designs.

My best wishes to you Congresswoman Giffords and your very helpful staff for a Happy Holiday season.

Sincerely,

Scott Wilbor

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