EHC's Diane Takvorian Is Featured Speaker at Today's Border 2020 Event in Tijuana

Environmental justice leader requests action to protect Arroyo Alamar

San Diego, Calif. – August 8, 2012 – Today Environmental Health Coalition’s Executive Director Diane Takvorian joined U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, Mexico’s Environmental Secretary Juan Rafael Elvira Quesada, Governor of Baja California José Osuna Millán and Mayor of Tijuana Carlos Bustamante to celebrate the closure of U.S.-Mexico Border 2012 and signing of the new U.S.-Mexico Border 2020.

As the leader of one of the nation’s top environmental justice organizations, Takvorian shared examples to highlight how this bi-national partnership protects human and environmental health while issuing an immediate call to action to protect Arroyo Alamar from channelization.

"Border 2020 is an ambitious program that seeks to address complex problems through cooperation and community participation," said Takvorian about the agreement that helped EHC’s community members get a toxic waste site cleaned up in Tijuana. "We achieved some powerful results because of the contributions of Border 2012 and right now, families who live in Tijuana need our leadership to stop the channelization of Arroyo Alamar, one of the last natural places in their community."

The Border 2020 agreement between border tribes and local, state and federal governments in the U.S. and Mexico aims to protect the environment and public health along both countries' border regions utilizing principles of sustainable development. With one of its guiding principles to address disproportionate environmental impacts, Border 2020 focuses on five fundamental strategies including climate change, underserved communities, children’s health, environmental education and strengthening tribal, state, federal and international partnerships.

According to Takvorian, two shining accomplishments that benefited from cross-border participation include clean up of Metales y Derivados, a U.S.-owned battery recycler abandoned in Tijuana's neighborhood of Colonia Chilpancingo. It also helped the same community to get government action to prohibit maquiladora trucks, which produce toxic diesel emissions, from taking shortcuts through family neighborhoods where up to 2,000 school children breathed the harmful fumes.
"We are focused on solutions," said Takvorian. "These triumphs show how respectful collaborative efforts that include community voices can reach solutions to improve all of our communities."

In regards to her call to action to save Arroyo Alamar, Takvorian noted that the Tijuana River tributary flows from Tecate through Tijuana into the U.S. She added, it's a natural space that represents up to 30 percent of the bi-national Tijuana River Watershed and acts as a natural filter for pollution.

"Nearly two-thirds has been paved, but the community members are fighting to retain the native plants and animals and the green space that is sorely lacking in their neighborhoods," said Takvorian. "The community asks to halt the project and embark on the collaborative approach that proved successful for Metales to create a sustainable development plan that benefits everyone."

As part of her role leading the fight for environmental justice, Takvorian is also a U.S. representative on the Joint Public Advisory Committee of the Commission on Environmental Cooperation.

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