

11-5-1997

## Environment Briefs: Nuclear Waste Dump, Maritime Boundaries, Border Projects

LADB Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex>

---

### Recommended Citation

LADB Staff. "Environment Briefs: Nuclear Waste Dump, Maritime Boundaries, Border Projects." (1997).  
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex/3818>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in SourceMex by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [amywinter@unm.edu](mailto:amywinter@unm.edu).

## **Environment Briefs: Nuclear Waste Dump, Maritime Boundaries, Border Projects**

by LADB Staff

Category/Department: Mexico

Published: 1997-11-05

### ***Binational group launches campaign against nuclear-waste site***

In late October, a binational group of US and Mexican legislators and environmental organizations launched a campaign to block the construction of a nuclear-waste site in Texas a few miles north of the Rio Grande. The coalition which includes US Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D- TX), Mexican federal senator Luis Alvarez, Mexican federal Deputy Clara Torres, and El Paso Mayor Carlos Ramirez is putting pressure on the US federal government to stop the nuclear-waste dump near the community of Sierra Blanca, Texas.

According to Texas state legislator Gilbert Serna, who is coordinating the campaign, the dump will be located only a few miles from aquifers that serve the metropolitan area of Ciudad Juarez-El Paso. The US government intends to use the Sierra Blanca site to store "low intensity" radioactive waste generated by nuclear power plants, hospitals, laboratories, and the US military. The coalition which includes environmental groups such as Greenpeace, Southwest ToxicWatch, and Alianza Ecologista del Rio Bravo said the waste contains materials such as plutonium and iodine, which remain radioactive for thousands of years.

Representatives of the Alianza Ecologista Rio Bravo also criticized President Ernesto Zedillo's administration for not protesting more strongly against the nuclear-waste dump. "We find it strange that the Mexican government has yet to make any official statements opposing the facility," said group spokesman Richard Boren. "Mexico has vigorously opposed similar projects in the US-Mexico border region

### ***US Senate approves maritime boundaries agreement***

In late October, the US Senate approved the Maritime Boundaries Agreement between Mexico and the US, which establishes the bilateral sea borders. The Mexican Senate ratified the agreement in 1978, but the US Senate failed to take similar action until now. According to a US Senate spokesperson, the agreement will go into effect once both countries make an official exchange of ratification instruments.

The agreement sets the exact boundaries separating the US and Mexican economic zones in the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean. Those boundaries had been defined under provisional notes signed by the two countries in 1976. However, the boundaries were not enforceable because of the lack of a formal treaty.

### ***NAFTA environmental commission to fund 25 projects***

In late October, the Environmental Cooperation Committee (ECC) an agency created under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) approved US\$1.4 billion to finance 25 projects

in the US, Canada, and Mexico. The financing, which will be allocated through the ECC's North American Fund for Environmental Cooperation (NAFEC), will fund 18 projects in Mexico. According to Julia Carabias Lillo, who head's Mexico's Secretaria del Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales y Pesca (SEMARNAP), the projects in Mexico include massive reforestation efforts and support for indigenous communities that depend on agriculture. Carabias is also involved in a campaign to convince multilateral organizations to increase funding for environmental programs in Latin America. At a recent meeting of environmental ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean, Carabias said the US, Canada, Japan, and Europe have reduced their donations for environmental programs in Latin America to just US\$16 million this year, compared with previous levels of US \$25 million. According to Aresenio Rodriguez, director of the UN Environmental Program, the reductions could eliminate programs to promote regional environmental cooperation and to develop environmental legislation. (Sources: Novedades, 10/22/97; Notimex, 10/24/97, 10/26/97; Excelsior, 10/27/97; El Nacional, 10/30/97)

-- End --