A PROPOSAL TO CREATE A TWO-YEAR PILOT PROJECT ENTITLED:

THE US-MEXICO BORDER GOVERNORS CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT

Introduction:

The US-Mexico Border Governors Conference (BGC) is an alliance of the Governors representing the ten states that comprise the US-Mexico Border Region. These are Arizona, Baja California, California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, New Mexico, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, Texas and Sonora. The BGC has two purposes: to foster dialogue between neighboring states that make up a dynamic region, where there is a shared economy, culture, natural resources and the environment and to speak as one voice to the U.S. and Mexican federal governments on issues of importance to the BGC states. The outcome of this single voice is the development of agreements and joint positions, which are presented in the form of *recommendations* included in yearly *Joint Communiqués.*

The full BGC meets on a yearly basis on alternate sides of the border. BGC's Presidency rotates among states and countries on a yearly basis. The BGC is led by the Governors themselves through a group of *Representatives*, who work with *Delegates* and *Contact Persons* organized in 9 worktables (defined below). Preparations for the XXII Border Governors Conference 2 day meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 2004, listed 382 government officials from the U.S. and Mexico, directly involved in these proceedings. At this Conference, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger formally recommended the appointment of an Executive Director and staff to carry the workload throughout the year, provide follow-up and report back to the Conference on the outcomes of the BGC recommendations.

Building on Gov. Schwarzenegger's recommendations, this concept paper introduces a 2-year pilot project calling for the creation of a *Border Governors Conference Secretariat.* If approved, the temporary Secretariat would be housed in California and be staffed and funded with existing resources from California agencies. The primary objective of this Secretariat would be to develop and present for approval of the full BGC an *BGC Accountability Process*. The objective of this process would be to:

1) Set up binational mechanisms to improve the BGC's communication and coordination amongst states, federal governments and designated stakeholders;
2) Provide follow-up to BGC directives and realize their full implementation;
3) Document successes, shortcomings, and solutions relative to the BGC's current practices;
4) Stream line and reduce the BGC's operating costs;
5) Improve effectiveness in the implementation of the BGC Joint Communiqués.

Background:
The BGC has been in existence since 1980. Since then, it has met on a yearly basis in different states on alternate sides of the U.S.-Mexico Border. Current organizational structure, communication mechanisms, protocol, costs and procedures present significant challenges to all involved.

As mentioned above, the XXII Border Governors Conference involved 382 mostly high-ranking public officials from both countries. *The Governors' Representatives (GR)* lead the BGC's proceedings. The GR's include at least one representative of each of the 10 Border Governors and in most cases, his/her alternate. Reporting to the GR's are the *Delegates,* who are organized in "Nine Work Tables and two subcommittees". Most Delegates are cabinet members, and/or designated government officials. The worktables identify, develop and agree on specific *recommendations and implementation plans* which are presented to the GR for editing and approval. These recommendations are then included in yearly *Joint Communiqués, which* are signed by all 10 governors at the end of the yearly *Conference.*

The nine worktables are: Agriculture, Border Crossings, Border Security, Education, Environment, Tourism, Economic Development, Energy, and Health. In 2003 and 2004, the worktables expanded to address Energy, Water and Wildlife issues. While the Governor's Representatives meet on several occasions throughout the year, each worktable defines its own *issues,* meeting *schedules* and *agenda* items. While the minority of worktables meet at least once, most meet between three to five times in a year on alternate sides of the border.

BGC Challenges
While a formal *BGC's Vision* for the border region at this time is undefined, the *Joint Communiqués* present the governor's predominant border issues and proposed solutions. Unfortunately, issue statements and action plans have often remained on paper only and have not been brought to full fruition. Since its inception, the BGC work has been "part time", expensive and with lukewarm results at best. However, there are some successes that can be highlighted as a result of the BGC's work, nevertheless, more could be accomplished through a group of individuals dedicated solely to providing support and follow-up to BGC issues. Following are areas that pose challenges and opportunities within the current structure of the BGC:

Perpetuity and Continuity:
By and large, all BGC representatives and most delegates are political appointees who rotate with every new administration. New administrations pose new sets of issues and priorities, which may or may not match those of previous administrations. Institutional memory is lost when there is a transition in administrations and follow-up to time-sensitive issues can pose a serious challenge with incoming administrations. Thus, the BGC's efforts lack continuity, a follow up strategy and are compounded by fluctuating priorities. The effectiveness of the BGC is thwarted by political discontinuity. This phenomena, is further aggravated by the asymmetries of the governors' calendar periods in office (6 years in Mexico and 4 to 8 years in the U.S) plus the different election

months on both sides of the border. A Secretariat could provide institutional memory, continuity and perpetuity on issues that require long-term planning and solutions. These issues could be further evaluated by outgoing and incoming administrations that in turn could provide different perspectives and thus delineate new strategies in addressing problems. Additionally, the Secretariat could be used as a neutral vehicle to provide briefings to the incoming administrations.

Follow Up with Federal Governments:

The yearly turn over of BGC Presidency without designated permanent representation before federal governments and new members has negatively affected the effectiveness of implementation and follow up on BGC priorities with federal governments. Most border issues require long term solutions and most of these are highly dependent of short federal budget cycles (in particular in Mexico). Frequently federal funding allocations do not address BGC recommendations. Without focused, continued, coordinated and dedicated effort and follow up strategy on the part of the BGC, *Joint Communiqués* are left unattended and in most cases not even addressed. A Secretariat could provide the necessary follow-up and constant pressure on the federal governments to provide consideration and inclusion of BGC priorities in their respective budgets.

Coordinated Effort and Staff:

Currently the BGC does not have a full time staff dedicated to tend its demands. BGC work is performed on "as needed" basis by government officials who work with counterparts either by phone, electronic means, and face-to-face meetings. While the BGC dedicated level of effort is "occasional", the responsibility is high, principally when addressing foreign governor's, partner agencies, local stakeholders and pressing the federal governments to fund priorities at the border.

The 18 Worktable Co-Chairs have the responsibility of transmitting, negotiating, implementing and reporting back to the GR. Thus, the Co-Chairs serve as a communication vehicle between the governor's representatives and worktable delegates in their own state, country and finally neighboring country. Communication is in English or Spanish depending on the occasion and traditionally follows the hosting country's foreign culture and protocol.

If the BGC is to reduce its costs while improving its efficiency, a new and different approach to the BGC work should be implemented. This proposal for change was the basis for Governor Schwarzenegger's call to establish staff dedicated to BGC issues and for accountability of successes and improving shortcomings. A Secretariat would provide fulltime staff dedicated solely to keep in constant communication with all 10 states and track issues related to the BGC. Direction on issues from a single source would lead to higher productivity, transparency and less chance for error.

Pre and Post Press Events:

Often times the events and outcomes that surround the BGC are covered by press only during the 2-day event. *Joint Communiqués* and worktable declarations are often lost in

time after the BGC ends and no press coverage is obtained throughout the year or when a milestone is reached by one of the worktables or Governor. The BGC is the largest existent venue that brings all the key players in the border region to a single event. There is no other entity to address border issues at this high-level in a comprehensive manner that allows an opportunity to involve stakeholders, the public and the three levels of government. The BGC has the ability and leverage to bring into its realm Presidents, Senators, Congressional representatives, foreign dignitaries, etc. to discuss and take action on issues affecting the border region. This opportunity could be capitalized on by providing pre and post press events that would cover milestones, successes and declarations throughout the year, while elevating the level of press and coverage for the BGC and its outcomes. Additionally, securing top-star speakers will prove as an effective method for discussing issues at the highest level and drawing for greater press coverage. A Secretariat would be able to develop a publicity campaign and thus engage press for pre, during and post BGC events.

The Border Governors Conference Secretariat:

The sole purpose of a Secretariat would be to ensure consistency, timely communication, follow-up and implementation of directives that would serve to attain BGC goals, assist with development of priorities, track successes, identify needs and secure resources to carryout its functions. The Secretariat would be responsible for working on a day-to-day, full time basis with the entire membership of the BGC states. The responsibilities would be many and include: development of agendas, securing high-level speakers, preparing briefing papers, website management, press communication, providing status reports and follow up on the border governors' recommendations regarding the implementation status of the Joint Communiqués, working directly with the host state to ensure all governor's interests are represented and that the agenda reflects the full spectrum from each state, fostering relationship building by providing informal social time functions for the Governors and their First Spouses. And coordinating multilateral efforts on behalf of the Governors', and representing the States' border interests before the federal governments and international institutions.

In coordination with the BGC Representatives and Delegates, the Secretariat would lead a Strategic Planning effort to define the BGC Vision, Mission, Goals and Tasks needed to guide its work.

Funding for the Secretariat for the 2-year pilot project would not come from new sources. Rather, operating expenses would be diverted from existing sources within California state agencies. The Secretariat would secure funding and staff for an initial 2-year period after which the BGC would evaluate the Secretariat effectiveness. Thereafter, the location of the Secretariat would be based on anyone of the 10 state(s) wanting to provide an investment in supporting the institution or through a collective support by the 10 states.

Organizational Structure:

Similar to other international organizations, the BGC Secretariat could be structured as a binational model of cooperation. Initially and for a period of two years, the BGC

Secretariat's structure could consist of an Executive Director, Deputy Director, Project Manager and an Administrative Assistant, which would be housed at and staffed by the State of California. For these two years the BGC Secretariat would be considered temporary and a "Pilot Project". At the terminus of this pilot project, the Border Governors will revisit the need and effectiveness of the BGC Secretariat.

Within a one-year period after the BGC Secretariat is approved and created, its staff will be responsible for developing a detailed binational border-wide work plan that would produce at minimum a strategic plan, internal bylaws, operational and administrative procedures, and a financial operating plan. While California would initially front the costs to create the proposed organization, the Secretariat in perpetuity is to be viewed as a binational institution with equal cost sharing and representation by staff from both countries.

All powers of the Secretariat would be vested in a Board of Directors, whose membership would come from all ten Border Governors who would be responsible for determining Secretariat's overall policy and guidance.

An Executive Director would be responsible for carrying out the Board's directives, as well as for the organization and day-to-day operations of the Secretariat. A Deputy Director would serve as the second-in-command operating officer and would support the Executive Director in fulfilling his/her duties. Under the direction of the Board, both individuals would oversee the development of the BGC Secretariat and keep the Board informed on the evolution of this proposal.

Operating Cost:

To date no actual total or partial costs involved in the BGC operating expenses have been documented, however, informal analysis can be derived from the yearly operating costs involving at least 382 mostly high-ranking government officials involved in the XXII Border Governors' Conference cited by their May 2004 Directory Of Contacts. Cost considerations should include at least, part-time work by all involved, travel, communications and meeting expenses currently charged to state budgets. Current costs to host a BGC is underwritten by the host state and by corporate sponsors. Securing sponsors can pose a challenge for many states. A Secretariat could be used to seek and secure funding or otherwise develop alternatives to cover BGC operating costs. For example, the Secretariat could evaluate the funding needs to carryout its functions and provide alternatives in securing outside funding. This would entail examining means, other than state government to fund meetings. An initial thought would be to charge admission to outside participants to attend the BGC *plenary session*, while keeping the worktables and Governor's meetings private and intact. This would provide income to offset costs associated with the BGC.

Resources Needed:

During the BGC Secretariat trial period no new funding will be needed, since personnel and operating expenses would be diverted from current partner agencies within California's state government. The Secretariat should be required to produce a 2-year

"Initial Statement of Work (ISW) which will include an operating and financial plan with statements of authority needs, responsibilities, funding sources and estimated expenses for a 2 year period.

Some of the concepts addressed in the Financial Plan will include: Personnel, office and equipment needs, printing, postage, website management, communications strategy, in-state, out-of-state and out-of-country travel.

The Initial Statement of Work would include strategies to engage all 10 BGC interests, plus statements to address U.S and Mexican federal government coordination needs as well as a proposed strategy to engage international organisms needed in the pursuit of the goals and objectives of the BGC. Alternatives for long term funding of the Secretariat will be reported at the end of this 2-year pilot project.

Some options to be considered for the perpetuity of the Secretariat could include: Creation of a 501(c)(3) Non Profit Organization, creation of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) or creation of a binational public sector institution funded equally by the 10 border states.

It is anticipated that California agencies wishing to partake in the BGC Secretariat pilot project would provide loaned staff, thus Personal Services and travel, would be paid directly to their respective employees by these participating agencies. Additionally, there would be a need for a "host" agency willing to house the Secretariat and be responsible for providing office space, associated overhead and basic operating expenses. A travel plan without customary Out-of –Country/ Out-of-State restrictions would have to be developed and approved by the Governor's office. Thus allowing Secretariat personnel to travel unhindered and as dictated by workload.

Estimated costs for staffing the pilot project per annum are as follows:
Executive Director – Salary and benefits would be dependant on loaned position *
Deputy Director - Salary and benefits would be dependant on loaned position*
Project Manager - Salary and benefits would be dependent on loaned position*
Administrative Assistant - Salary and benefits would be dependent on loaned position*

General Expenses/Facility Operations	$30,000
Printing	$10,000
Communication	$12,000
Postage	$ 6,000
Travel In-State *	$ 4,000
Travel Out-of-State/Out-of-Country*[1]	$ 45,000
Website Hosting	$ 5,000
Total	**$112,000**

* Paid for by respective agency loaning employee; All other expenses paid for by host agency
[1.] Out-of-State travel takes into consideration 3 trips per state per year for 2 nights each for 3 staff members.

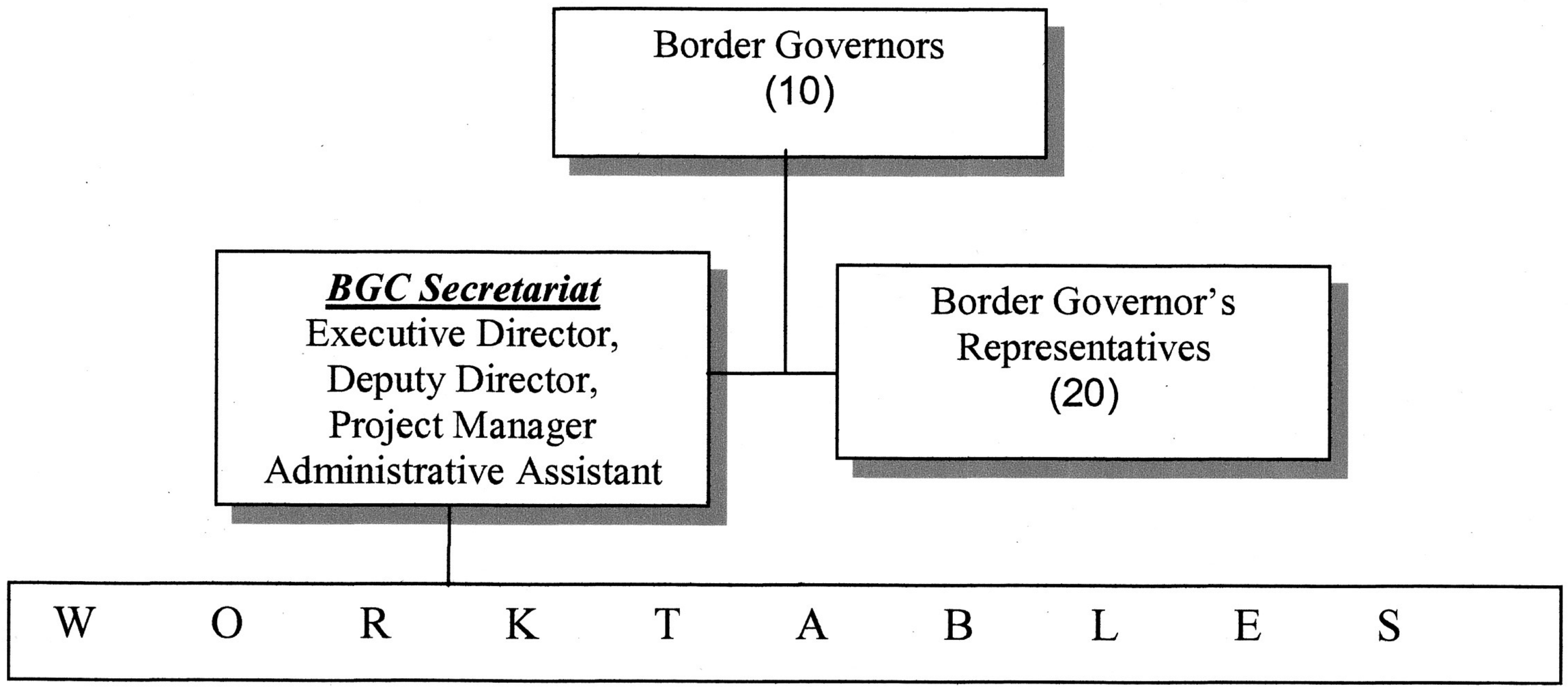
Benefits:

Creating a solid institutional infrastructure is a key factor for the success of any organization. The BGC Secretariat would provide institutional memory, focus on pressing issues and provide consistency in developing and following up on the implementation of the Border Governors' directives and policy. Long-term, year round dedication, communication and coordination would be achieved through a Secretariat since it would emanate from one location through a group of staff solely dedicated to BGC issues. Furthermore, the Secretariat could be used to set priorities and agendas for the Border Governors in both nations' capitols and serve as a conduit with other international financial institutions such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, The Organization for American States (OAS), The Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), The North American Development Bank (NADBANK), and the Commission for Environmental Cooperation amongst others.

Partnerships:

In an effort to maximize and leverage resources between and amongst the Border Governors, the Secretariat would seek to form and solidify partnerships with organizations such as the Western Governors Association (WGA), who has for the last 8 years successfully supported the 10 States Alliance (a.k.a. Ten States Retreat). The 10 States Alliance is an organization comprised of the ten environmental secretaries for the US-Mexico border region. It meets annually and serves as a platform to develop environmental policy with state and federal counterparts. Coordination for the Ten States Alliance is supported by the WGA and has provided an effective mechanism for accomplishing goals that reflect the Ten States' interests. The Ten States Alliance is viewed as a model for binational cooperation in addressing issues that are time sensitive, of mutual importance and at times controversial. The WGA could prove to be a well-respected resource that could assist the Secretariat with various functions and processes.

Conclusion:

This paper touches upon the concept to create an institution that would serve to coordinate efforts aimed at improving conditions and the quality of life along the US-Mexico Border through the policies developed by the Border Governors. Details to create such an institution will require careful planning and thoughtful insight by expert individuals in their respective fields. High energy and dedication by staff will be a requirement to make this effort a success. It is anticipated this concept paper will be shared with the Border Governors Representatives and thereafter with the Ten Border Governors, who will ultimately approve the creation of the BGC Secretariat. While the concept paper provides an overview of creating a Secretariat, details will have to be addressed and developed during the first year. To that end, the timeline envisioned for commencing the outlined concepts in this paper is January 2005, with a fully functional Secretariat by 2006.

Border Governors Conference Secretariat Reporting Chart