

NORTHEAST SONORA, MEXICO, WATER PROJECT (NSWP) 1994-2004

Richard Kamp, as director of Border Ecology Project, has co-directed the NSWP with a Mexican NGO, Enlace Ecológico (Enlace), since 1994. NSWP utilizes and strengthens the capacity of Universidad de Sonora (UNISON) laboratories, collects and analyses baseline water quality data, and develops remediation and pollution prevention strategies for about 5,000 mi² of ground water and three river basins in Sonora, Mexico. Sonoran and Arizona state governmental agencies supply lab in-kind support and participation. Regional Sonoran stakeholders are involved in planning and evaluation meetings approximately twice a year. NSWP has been successful in the following areas:

- Identification and elimination of contamination in Agua Prieta, Sonora: Solvents and inorganic contaminants from maquiladoras, old copper smelters, and natural causes have been found in wells in Agua Prieta. All maquiladora hazardous waste discharges from factories in Agua Prieta, Sonora, have been identified and stopped. Efforts are underway with government agencies to develop long-term groundwater cleanup.
- Identification of contamination and remediation options in Cananea, Sonora: near a large Grupo Mexico (also owns Southern Peru Copper Company) mining complex. Surface water contamination has been characterized in two river basins, mining sources have been identified, and elements of a mining closure plan have been presented. Efforts have been coordinated with grass roots coalitions to develop a multisectoral regional water commission that can implement recommendations to remediate and prevent contamination from the mine. Some surface mining contamination has been eliminated already as a result of the project.
- Development of a Public-interest laboratory at Universidad de Sonora: Citizens from nearby Sonoran communities can ask the laboratory to collect and analyze samples from waters of concern. The Rector of UNISON worked with BEP, Enlace, E-Tech (through Ann Maest), Sonoran community groups, and USEPA Region 9 to initiate this public-access laboratory program in February 2004.