

FRONTERA FRIDAY: THE THREE CALIFORNIAS



The Californias have a long and rich history and shared environment. When explorers first came to the region, it was populated by many separate indigenous peoples and named for the mythical island of Queen Calafia. The Spanish colonizers initially designated Loreto – the site of the first mission established in the Californias – as the capital. The jurisdiction was subsequently divided into “Alta” (Upper) California and “Baja” (Lower) California. Alta California was ceded to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, while the entire peninsula of Baja California

remained under Mexican jurisdiction. In 1952, Baja California became a State of Mexico, establishing Mexicali as the capital. The Territory of Baja California Sur did not become a State until 1974 when the paved highway from Tijuana to Cabo San Lucas was completed.

Despite being now divided politically into two nations and three states, the region remains tied together by culture and economy, as well as geography and environment – a naturally arid habitat, the Pacific Ocean, the Sea of Cortez, the Colorado River Watershed, and the Tijuana River Watershed. Tourism of residents from California to the Baja California peninsula and vice versa sustains all three economies. Growing numbers of companies are active in both of the twin cities of San Diego and Tijuana, or have facilities in Los Angeles and Mexicali. There is increasing recognition throughout the region that our prosperity and security are shared: from natural disasters to public health challenges, from economic cycles to investment in infrastructure, we are all in it together.

Government officials in all three states, many non-governmental civic organizations, and an ever-increasing number of businesses and educational institutions are working together across state and national boundaries. Priorities include facilitating production and trade and improving education, health, public safety, and environmental outcomes. Meeting the challenge of developing sustainable economies, protecting our shared resources, and providing a high quality of life for all residents requires a shared approach.

Frontera Fridays are quarterly events that connect leaders from both sides of the border to UC San Diego and serve as a platform for learning, networking and discussing opportunities and challenges that make our binational region unique. They are organized by the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies (USMEX) at the School of Global Policy & Strategy (GPS) and the Urban Studies and Planning Program (USP) and honor the legacy of Chuck Nathanson and the San Diego Dialogue.