

# International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

Volume 4,  
January 2018

## TRANSBOUNDARY ISSUES IN THE TIJUANA RIVER BASIN NEWSLETTER



Through Minute 320 of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC), entitled "General Framework for Binational Cooperation Transboundary Issues in the Tijuana River Basin, October 2015" different issues have been identified in the Tijuana River basin requiring binational coordination between Mexico and the United States to address them. The Minute identifies the priority topics of common interest in this basin as Water Quality, Sediment, and Solid Waste.

Minute 320 established a Binational Core Group composed of federal, state, and local government agencies as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from both countries, and tasked it with establishing Binational Work Groups (BWG). These groups meet to discuss the issues that require attention, as well as to explore different opportunities for cooperation on the three priority themes

This newsletter summarizes the actions carried out by the Minute 320 Work Groups during the months of December 2017 and January 2018. It also summarizes the recommendations derived from the investigation on the wastewater spill to the Tijuana River that occurred during the first week of February 2017.



### A) Water Quality

During March and April of 2017, a binational investigation was carried out on the spill of untreated wastewater that was bypassed into the Tijuana River. This bypass occurred as a result of the rupture of a section of the "Insurgentes" collector, in the vicinity of the confluence between the Tijuana and Alamar rivers, in Tijuana, Mexico. According to the recommendations derived from the investigation, the institutions of both countries that make up the Minute 320 Water Quality BWG have done the following:

- 1. Equipment for emergency situations:** The State Public Services Commission of Tijuana (CESPT) has made a total investment of \$39.28 million pesos (\$2.12 million USD) for the acquisition of construction equipment and maintenance of the sanitary sewer network.

2. **Installation of Flow meters:** The Mexican Section of IBWC acquired and installed equipment to record the flows in the Tijuana River. Currently, the meters are installed at: the diversion of the Tijuana River into the pumping station "PB-CILA"; the point immediately downstream of the diversion to PB-CILA and before the international border; and in the Tijuana River downstream of the border in the U.S.
3. **Communication:** An international protocol for spill notifications was prepared and is being used by the responsible agencies of both countries. Likewise, a requirement to notify the IBWC was included in the CESPT emergency response protocol when spills occur with potential for cross-border impact. Also, a protocol for the operation of the PB-CILA pumping station was prepared.

In this regard, it is important to point out that on January 9, 2018, there were significant rains that generated runoff greater than the capacity of pumping plant PB-CILA, which caused its shutdown of operation until January 20, 2018. The flows (wastewater mixed with treated wastewater, rainwater, and groundwater) drained during this period down the Tijuana River from Mexico and into the U.S.



4. **Infrastructure Assessment:** A scope of work for a contractor to perform a diagnosis of the existing bypass and pumping system was developed by the Minute 320 BWG. The diagnostic includes the evaluation of new infrastructure alternatives in Mexico and the United States to increase the flow management capacity of the Tijuana River. This diagnostic will be financed by the North American Development Bank (NADB), which has already begun the bidding process. NADB received an Expression of Interest from 10 firms for review of qualifications to participate in the procurement process for the Tijuana River Diversion Study. NADB has completed an initial evaluation and has recommended 5 firms to continue in the specific Request for Proposal process. The procurement activities are expected to be completed on or about March 30, 2018.
5. **Infrastructure Works:** CESPT has continued to carry out rehabilitation work on the critical wastewater collectors. These works carried out through the "Declaration of Emergency" issued by the State of Baja California and CESPT, amount to a total cost of \$ 170.7 million pesos (\$9.22 million USD). Likewise, CESPT provided additional resources to carry out the work on the collectors. To date, CESPT has completed the rehabilitation of the Sanchez Taboada Collector, the Cuatas sewer line, and the Calle Montes Escandinavos laterals. They are currently at 77% of the rehabilitation of the Las Americas Avenue sewer lines, which are 8-inch and 15-inch concrete collectors.
6. **Water Quality Monitoring:** Mexico's National Water Commission (CONAGUA) established monitoring sites on the Tijuana River and the Alamar River as part of its national water quality monitoring network and is currently monitoring these sites. In the United States, the USIBWC developed a water quality monitoring program for the Tijuana River as well as sampling any transboundary flows at each of the canyon collectors. This program is under review by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board.
7. **Binational Field Inspections:** IBWC has made joint tours of the Tijuana River channel and tributary streams in order to detect and act on potential transboundary wastewater spills. Eventually, institutions from both countries will participate in these tours, such as CESPT, SPA-BC, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, USEPA, CONAGUA, etc.

## B) SEDIMENT

In 2017, the members of the Sediment BWG focused their efforts on studies, actions, and maintenance of the infrastructure to control the sediment in the upper part of the Tijuana River basin.

A study promoted by the sediment work group is expected to be carried out on the Hydrological, Hydraulic, and Sediment aspects of both the Mexican and American parts of the Tijuana River basin, based on the information available from both countries and collected during 2017.

Additionally, the University of San Diego and the Center for Scientific Research and Higher Education of Ensenada, Baja California (CICESE) in collaboration with other institutions, developed a study called "Modeling the impact of the sediments of Los Laureles Canyon to the basin", which will assist the working group in analyzing the sediment issues in the basin.

In addition, the Directorate of Works and Urban Infrastructure of the City of Tijuana currently performs preventive maintenance to the sediment retention structures in the city. In future volumes of this newsletter, we will include updated information on the volume of sediment removed from the tanks and other actions that are performed by the City.



## C) Solid Waste

The project "Program for Integrated Management of the Water in the Tijuana River Basin" was recently concluded by the Gonzalo Río Arronte Foundation, whose objective is to develop an integrated water management plan for the basin. The foundation is seeking to develop an adaptive management approach to improve the environmental quality of the Basin through the effective participation of society, a consensus based vision and the ecologically balanced management of water. It is an initiative carried out by Pronatura Noroeste, the Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), the Border Environmental Education Project. (PFEA) and Water and Social Welfare (ABISO).



Also, work continues on the binational study for the installation of trash booms in different strategic sites along the Tijuana River and its tributaries on both sides of the border.

The Mexican Section of the IBWC with resources contributed from CONAGUA, is undertaking the bidding process for works to remove sediment and solid waste from the Tijuana River channel in the 500 meters upstream of the international border.

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