



International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

For immediate release
January 26, 2022

COMMISSION ADDRESSES TRANSBOUNDARY WASTEWATER FLOW AT SAN DIEGO-TIJUANA

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC) continues to work jointly to resolve infrastructure problems that have caused the transboundary flow of wastewater into the United States at the San Diego, California-Tijuana, Baja California international boundary. Mexican wastewater began flowing into the United States at Stewart's Drain on January 7. Initial investigations conducted by engineers from both the U.S. and Mexican Sections of the IBWC determined sewage was overflowing from a deteriorated sewage pipe along the border in Mexico, known as the international collector. Additional investigations are underway to determine if a blockage or damage to infrastructure in the United States is also contributing to the transboundary flow.

In response to the transboundary flow, the Mexican Section of the IBWC has adjusted operations of the PB CILA pump station in Mexico to reduce the flow of sewage to Stewart's Drain and the U.S. Section of the IBWC has installed additional pumping capacity at Stewart's Drain in the United States. These operations have temporarily increased transboundary flow in the Tijuana River, where the sewage is diluted with treated effluent and groundwater. IBWC engineers continue to adjust pump operations with the goal of restoring the conveyance of wastewater from Stewart's Drain to the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP) and reducing transboundary flow at both the Drain and in the Tijuana River as soon as possible.

"Engineers from both Sections of the Commission are working together to address this sanitation emergency," said U.S. Commissioner Maria-Elena Giner. "I commend them for implementing some short-term measures while we come up with a plan for a longer-term solution."

For her part, Mexican Commissioner Adriana Resendez noted, "The Mexican Section has maintained ongoing communication and coordination with the State Public Utility Commission

of Tijuana (CESPT) to evaluate failures in the Mexican system and determine the best solution to prevent the occurrence of these transboundary flows. We have also had constant contact with the U.S. Section, working together in search of joint actions that will help address this problem.”

Initial investigations in the United States this week at Junction Box 1 (JB1) did not detect any obstruction. The inspection included a previously-known problem with a gate at JB1 into a 96-inch pipeline that conveys wastewater to the SBIWTP. They determined the gate, which has been stuck partly open, remains capable of accepting the full volume of flows to the SBIWTP. The gate had already been scheduled for repair in the first half of 2022, prior to this month’s flows at Stewart’s Drain. Likewise, CESPT performed inspections that preliminarily determined that no blockage exists in the Mexican system that would keep flows from reaching the SBIWTP. However, additional investigations are underway to determine if there are any other obstructions in the 96-inch pipeline between JB1 and the SBIWTP. The daily volume of wastewater treated at the SBIWTP has declined by roughly half since the transboundary flows at Stewart’s Drain were detected earlier this month.

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries. The U.S. Section of the IBWC operates and maintains the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant in San Diego, which treats wastewater generated in Mexico.

News Media Contact:

Lori Kuczanski
915-494-6027
lori.kuczanski@ibwc.gov

Sally Spener
915-832-4175
sally.spener@ibwc.gov