



International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

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COMMISSIONERS INSPECT WORK TO REPAIR DAMAGED TIJUANA SEWER LINES; TRANSBOUNDARY FLOW IN THE TIJUANA RIVER EXPECTED TO END SOON

United States Commissioner Dr. Maria-Elena Giner and Mexican Commissioner Adriana Resendez of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) today inspected work being undertaken in Mexico to repair two sewer lines that failed in late July. The initial repair work is expected to be completed by the end of the week so that one of the damaged pipelines can be brought back online. Once the pipeline is fully restored to service and pump stations are re-activated, transboundary wastewater flow to the Tijuana River will end.

The pipelines convey wastewater from Tijuana, Baja California to the San Antonio de los Buenos Creek and San Antonio de los Buenos Wastewater Treatment Plant in Mexico. While the repair work has been underway in an area known as Matadero Canyon/Smuggler's Gulch, the IBWC's South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP) has accepted a portion of the flow from the damaged pipelines for treatment in the United States. During August, the SBIWTP has been treating a daily average of 31.5 million gallons per day (mgd), which exceeds the plant's design capacity of 25 mgd. Treating these large volumes of wastewater at the SBIWTP is a temporary, emergency measure.

The Commissioners also met with Victor Daniel Amador Barragan, Director General of the Tijuana utility (CESPT) to discuss other short-term measures that could be undertaken to reduce the amount of untreated wastewater that Mexico discharges to the Pacific Ocean at San Antonio de los Buenos. Currents periodically transport the sewage north to the United States, polluting the ocean along beaches in San Diego County. Options include performing maintenance and repairs at the San Antonio de los Buenos Wastewater Treatment Plant.

“We appreciate the quick response by Mexican officials to repair the damaged infrastructure,” said Commissioner Giner. “We are also exploring what other projects could be undertaken in the near term to reduce the volumes of untreated wastewater being discharged into the ocean.”

To support the repairs being undertaken in Mexico, the USIBWC provided a vactor truck and pump. Staff from the U.S. Section’s San Diego Field Office and Headquarters have been meeting almost daily with Mexican officials to assist, provide technical expertise, and coordinate with U.S. Customs and Border Protection on access needed along the steep canyon. The U.S. Section continues to provide regular updates about the repairs on its Twitter page @usibwc.

The IBWC is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries and settling differences that arise in the application of the treaties. The U.S. Section of the IBWC operates the SBIWTP.

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