



## **International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section**

For immediate release  
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### **USIBWC SUBMITS REPORT TO CONGRESS ON TIJUANA RIVER CONDITIONS**

In accordance with a Congressional requirement enacted on February 18, 2019, the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (USIBWC), on August 15 submitted a report to Congress on transboundary flows in the Tijuana River watershed. The report quantifies and analyzes the transboundary flows that enter the United States from Mexico, discusses notification systems, and describes steps taken to mitigate the flows. The report is available [here](#).

The USIBWC submitted the “Report to the Congress on Transboundary flows that enter the United States from Mexico in the Tijuana Watershed” to the Senate Appropriations Committee. The report documents flow in the Tijuana River that crossed into the United States during the period of February 18 – July 8, 2019. Most of the flow was caused by rainfall in the watershed, while three instances were due to mechanical failures of the Tijuana sanitation system, including a major sewage pipeline rupture in Tijuana in June. Total river flow entering the United States during the period was 4.5 billion gallons, less than half the river flow during February 2017 alone, when a significant sewage spill occurred in the Tijuana River.

Transboundary flows consist of stormwater, treated and untreated sewage, groundwater, and potable water. Transboundary flows most often occur when stormwater exceeds the capacity of the pump station that diverts water out of the Tijuana River, requiring the pumps to shut down temporarily.

The report notes the Commission adopted new notification protocols, improving international communication and notifications to U.S. stakeholders. The USIBWC has installed a river gaging station with sensors in the Tijuana River at the international boundary with near real-time information available online of

flows entering the United States. The sensor-based notification system marks a major improvement that responds to California stakeholders' requests to devise a more automatic system. After verifying the automatic alerts, the USIBWC distributes notifications via email.

To mitigate transboundary flows, the USIBWC has constructed earthen berms in the Tijuana River channel at the international boundary that have been effective in reducing dry-weather transboundary flows, including a 7-month period in 2018 when the berms captured all transboundary flows in the river channel. The USIBWC is also conducting a feasibility study of sediment capture basins, to be completed in 2019. The study considers trash, debris, and small wastewater flows as well. Moreover, a study commissioned by the North American Development Bank, expected to be released this month, is reviewing options for improving the Tijuana sewage diversion system to reduce transboundary flows. In addition, the Commission is currently undertaking a year-long binational water quality monitoring program in the Tijuana River Basin to determine contaminants in water and soil.

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