



INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION
UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

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USIBWC BREAKS GROUND ON CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AT SOUTH BAY WASTEWATER PLANT

The U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) today broke ground on an infrastructure improvement project critical to the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant's rehabilitation, expansion, and permit compliance.

The project to refurbish Junction Box 1 (JB-1) will install two new gates on an 8-foot-wide pipe that carries wastewater from Mexico to the plant.

The non-functioning JB-1 has impacted the plant since 2021. For the first time since then, the plant will be able to control how much wastewater it accepts, including during heavy rains, thereby protecting its equipment from damage and flooding, and meeting its treatment capacity limit of 25 million gallons per day (MGD).

Reducing the inflow will make it possible for the plant to more efficiently treat water it sends into the Pacific Ocean through the 3.5-mile South Bay Ocean Outfall, once again achieving federal water quality standards on a consistent basis.

Repairs to JB-1 are included in the commitment the USIBWC made under the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board's time schedule order issued in 2023.

The USIBWC awarded a \$5,793,110 contract to rehabilitate JB-1 to Veolia Water West Operating Services Inc., of Boston, Mass., which will use subcontractors WachsField Technologies of Scottsdale, Ariz., and J.R. Filanc Construction Co. of Escondido, Calif. The repairs are expected to be completed by spring of 2025.

Meanwhile, progress is being made on plans to rehabilitate and expand the plant.

In August, USIBWC announced it awarded a \$42.4 million design contract to rehabilitate and expand the plant, doubling its current treatment capacity to 50 million gallons of wastewater on an average day and 75 million gallons at peak capacity.

USIBWC expects to issue early construction packages during the design phase so some expansion work can start in 2024.

The plant's expansion, in combination with wastewater infrastructure improvements in Mexico under Minute 328, is intended to eliminate up to 90% of sewage reaching the coast.

The rapid progress on rehabilitating JB-1 and expanding South Bay's treatment capacity was made possible by a stream of federal funding supported by advocates, including members of

Congress and local elected officials, many of whom joined Dr. Maria-Elena Giner, P.E., USIBWC Commissioner, to celebrate the long-awaited groundbreaking.

The USIBWC is working on four fronts to tackle the transboundary issue: Repairs to the South Bay plant; expansion of the plant; monitoring Mexico’s commitment on projects in Minute 328; and taking urgent action to ensure zero transboundary flows during the dry season.

“We have been extremely busy making repairs to our plant to meet permit compliance and move forward on expansion plans, thanks to our dedicated employees and the support of the White House, Congress, and many other federal, state, and local stakeholders,” Commissioner Giner said. “At the same time, we are closely monitoring Mexico’s progress on their wastewater infrastructure improvements to ensure tasks are completed. We are committed to doing everything possible to enhance the health of communities along the U.S.-Mexico border and permit safe entry to the beaches.”

“Today’s groundbreaking is the first critical step to expanding the International Wastewater Treatment Plant, which will ultimately protect water quality and alleviate the burden on communities along the border that have been impacted by wastewater pollution for too long,” said David Gibson, executive officer of the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board. “As we celebrate these upcoming repairs to Junction Box 1, it’s important to acknowledge that it will take committed cross-border collaboration and bold, aggressive actions to end decades of pollution.”

“Today marks a pivotal moment as we begin construction on a project that will transform flow control at South Bay and strengthen the plant’s ability to protect the San Diego coast from extreme levels of highly polluted cross-border wastewater,” said Aaditya Raman, President of Veolia’s Municipal Water Contract Operations, West Region. “We want to thank Commissioner Giner and the teams from Veolia and USIBWC for their efforts to keep South Bay functioning under extraordinary circumstances, the elected officials who have tirelessly advocated for the funding this plant needs, and the people of San Diego who deserve this relief.”

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