



INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION
UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

For Immediate Release
October 29, 2024

USIBWC, Partners Celebrate Launch of South Bay Plant Rehabilitation and Expansion

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) celebrated the launch of the rehabilitation and expansion of the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP), a project that will double the facility's capacity.

The work at the San Diego, Calif., plant is being funded jointly between the USIBWC and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with the aim of drastically reducing transboundary sewage flows from Baja California, Mexico.

The project's early work to start this year includes setting up a bypass system for the primary facilities and performing in-depth structural assessments of the concrete structures.

This will be followed with concrete repairs early in the new year.

The project includes infrastructure rehabilitation and capacity expansion to double current treatment capacity of 25 million gallons per day (MGD) to reach 50 MGD average flow, with a peak hydraulic flow capacity of 75 MGD.

The first phase, in the amount of \$42.4 million, covers design for the full scope of the rehabilitation and expansion of SBIWTP. The USIBWC awarded the contract to PCL Construction of Long Beach, Calif. PCL selected Stantec Consulting Services, Inc., of San Diego, as the design firm.

The full project cost, including design, construction, contingencies, project management, and other support services, is estimated at \$600 million.

Dr. Maria-Elena Giner, P.E., USIBWC Commissioner, celebrated the project's launch with other leaders from the U.S. and Mexico during a ceremony at the plant on Tuesday, October 29, 2024.

"The USIBWC, our Congressional supporters, the Department of State, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other federal, state, and local stakeholders, as well as the residents of this area, have been waiting for this moment for a long time," said **Commissioner Giner**. "It's taken a lot of work to get to this point, including more than \$30 million in repairs to the plant over the last year. This expansion is just part of our strategy to help protect public health. We are also monitoring Mexico's sanitation infrastructure improvements and taking urgent actions to eliminate dry weather transboundary flows."

"For far too long, Southern California residents have faced dangerous health and environmental hazards from the toxic waste and raw sewage flowing across the border," said **U.S. Senator Alex Padilla**. "Expanding and renovating this critical plant will significantly accelerate treatment efforts, providing cleaner water and air for affected communities. I am glad to have worked with my colleagues to secure millions in urgently needed federal funding for the U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission and EPA to combat this crisis."

"For too many years, the pollution and public health crisis in the Tijuana River Valley has impacted the lives and livelihoods of San Diegans," said **U.S. Senator Laphonza Butler**. "These communities deserve better, which is why I am relieved to see USIBWC take this important step to expand the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant and prevent sewage from reaching our coastal communities."

"From awful sewage smells to closed beaches, toxic sewage pollution has hurt our communities for too long. These upgrades to the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant are a critical step forward in the fight to combat this pollution," said **U.S. Representative Juan Vargas**. "I'm glad that our San Diego Congressional delegation

was able to secure \$400 million in federal funding for this project. We'll continue to work to address the sewage pollution in the Tijuana River Valley using all available avenues and ensure our air, water, and land is safe for all."

"For years I've called the cross-border sewage crisis one of the biggest environmental catastrophes in the Western Hemisphere, but it threatens more than nature, it threatens public health," **U.S. Representative Scott Peters** said. "Today, we are in the best place we've been in decades to fix this horrible problem. We've secured hundreds of millions of dollars to rehab and expand this treatment plant, and the highest levels of government in the U.S. and Mexico are more aware than they've ever been about how dire and harmful the problem is. Thank you to all who've worked hard to make this happen. We must continue to hold ourselves and Mexico accountable to our commitments to finish this important work; people are counting on us."

"I'm both pleased and relieved to see progress on the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant's rehabilitation and expansion," said **U.S. Representative Mike Levin**. "I've been working on this issue with my colleagues for years, and the pace of progress has been frustrating while the Tijuana River Valley has carried dangerously high levels of pollutants into our region. This announcement couldn't come soon enough. It is critical that we prioritize addressing this environmental crisis for the people of San Diego and get this work done as soon as possible. I'm glad that the EPA and the USIBWC take their commitment seriously and I'm grateful for their partnership in ensuring pollution-free water throughout San Diego County."

"The Tijuana River Valley has flowed with sewage and pollution longer than I've been alive, but I'm so glad we're making bigger and faster progress than ever before," said **U.S. Representative Sara Jacobs**. "Once this project is completed, the capacity of the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant will double, helping to improve our health and safety and keep our businesses and beaches open. Our San Diego Congressional delegation will keep pushing to bring home more federal funds, assistance, and oversight to see this project through."

"I thank our federal and cross-border partners for beginning the crucial work to repair and expand this long-neglected infrastructure at the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant," said **Governor Gavin Newsom**. "San Diego communities have dealt with this crisis for far too long, and the state will continue pushing for action to fully address this challenge."

"Clean water is essential to vibrant, healthy communities. This project represents a big step toward a clean water future for the residents, businesses, and wildlife in and around San Diego," said **Bruno Pigott, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Water at the U.S. EPA**. "By doubling the treatment capacity here at the South Bay Wastewater Treatment Plant and taking complementary actions on both sides of the border, we can fix this decades-old problem. There is a lot of work ahead and EPA is committed to working with our partners to sustain progress."

"This expansion marks important progress as the U.S. and Mexico work to address the sewage crisis along our border," said **Yana Garcia, California Secretary for Environmental Protection**. "It's critical that we - together with our local and federal partners - continue to push for investments in comprehensive, lasting solutions. Our communities, environment, and ecosystems deserve a resolution to this ongoing problem."

"At PCL Construction, we understand the complexity and importance of a project of this magnitude. With decades of wastewater construction experience and 30 years of building in San Diego, we're well-positioned to navigate the intricacies of this market," said **Ankur Talwar, District Manager for PCL's Civil Infrastructure Division**. "Together with the USIBWC, the EPA and our partners at Stantec, we will make a meaningful difference in the quality of life for residents on both sides of the border."

"We are committed to designing meaningful improvements to address aging infrastructure and increase wastewater treatment capacity for this San Diego community," said **Mike Watson, Senior Vice President and Director, Design Build, at Stantec**. "In partnership with PCL, we will work hard to provide the most seamless plant expansion possible. We believe the repairs and changes we are undertaking will make a measurable difference both now and in the future."

This project is consistent with the binational agreement known as Minute No. 328, "Sanitation Infrastructure Projects in San Diego, California-Tijuana, Baja California for Immediate Implementation and for Future Development."

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

The project was awarded using the Progressive Design-Build contract delivery method consistent with government contracting practices and regulations.

This method allows for phasing construction to meet the project goals based on available funding, shortens the construction schedule, minimizes cost risks, and integrates input from construction experts during the design phase to increase quality and reduce the need for change orders.

The USIBWC anticipates design to be completed in 20 months. The maximum timeline for construction is 5 years, although this could be decreased by as much as 18 months through the innovative Progressive Design-Build approach. The plant will remain in operation throughout design and construction.

The USIBWC anticipates providing more definitive estimates of the full project cost and the construction schedule once the project reaches the 30% design stage in Spring 2025 and 60% design stage by Fall 2025. Early construction packages have been issued during the design phase to enable work to start in 2024.

A key part of the early construction packages is site preparation work, including excavating for additional new Primary Sedimentation Tanks, relocating the plant's perimeter fence, and installing shoring to protect utilities during construction activities.

Regular updates on the work's progress will be provided at <https://bit.ly/3Lxo6PY>.

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