



# THE BOUNDARY MARKER

Spring 2011

## SUMMIT CONVENED TO IMPROVE SANITATION AND WATER QUALITY

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC) convened more than 230 experts from both countries in San Antonio, Texas on March 16-18 during the Binational Border Sanitation and Water Quality Summit. The theme of the Summit was “Today’s challenges, tomorrow’s opportunities.” Participants attended a series of sessions in the areas of sanitation, technology, water quality, and financing where they worked to identify activities and funding to improve wastewater collection and treatment and consider a framework for binational efforts to improve sanitation and water quality in border communities.

Summit attendees were welcomed by the two IBWC Commissioners who, in their inaugural remarks, discussed the need for the Summit. Over 30 panelists from both the U.S. and Mexico were invited to present at the Summit breakout sessions, which were presided over by a U.S. and Mexican co-chair. The co-chairs presented recommendations and conclusions from these sessions to the IBWC Commissioners.

Distinguished speakers included U.S. Congressman Henry Cuellar, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Rooney, EPA Regional Administrator Al Armendariz, Mexican Senator Claudia Corichi, Mexican Congressman Oscar Lara, and Eduardo Baca, Director General for North America in Mexico’s Ministry of Foreign Relations.

“I was pleased with the quality of the participants and their presentations at the Summit. We identified some of the challenges we face in improving water quality and sanitation along the border and heard some excellent suggestions about ways to work more effectively in the future,” said U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina.

Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon indicated that he was pleasantly surprised by the great interest that the Summit generated in border communities as well as among the entities responsible for addressing these issues on both sides of the border.

He added that he is sure that the result of the Summit will allow mechanisms for cooperation to be presented to both governments to improve border sanitation and water quality.



**Mexican Congressman Lara and  
Commissioners Salmon and Drusina (l to r)**

Recommendations from Summit participants included such things as: promote reuse of treated effluent, consider use of new treatment technologies, and promote the systematic collection and exchange of water quality data between the two countries.

In association with the Summit, the IBWC installed an exhibit, *Maps, Minutes, and Monuments: History of the Boundary, 1848-2011*, at the Instituto Cultural de Mexico in San Antonio. The exhibit included photos, documents, artifacts, and video documenting 163 years of Commission history.



## SAN DIEGO TREATMENT PLANT UPGRADE BEGINS OPERATIONS

The South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP) in San Diego, California began treating sewage to secondary standards in compliance with the Clean Water Act, following substantial completion of a technology upgrade in late 2010. The SBIWTP, owned and operated by the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC), treats up to 25 million gallons per day (mgd) of wastewater originating in Tijuana, Mexico.

Construction of the upgrade began in January 2009 by contractor PCL Construction of Tempe, Arizona. The contract, totaling \$92.7 million, covered construction of an activated sludge secondary treatment process at the SBIWTP to improve effluent quality. The plant had been providing advanced primary treatment since it was first constructed in 1997. The treated effluent is discharged 3.5 miles offshore into the Pacific Ocean.

The USIBWC was under federal court order to upgrade the plant by January 5, 2011. The secondary treatment facilities became operational in November 2010. The upgrade is designed to comply with water quality standards applicable in the United States for total suspended solids, biochemical oxygen demand,

and acute and chronic toxicity (which measure the impact of effluent on reproduction and mortality of certain microorganisms).

Ongoing sampling shows that the effluent is meeting the standards. The wastewater treatment plant upgrade, which doubles the original plant footprint, was constructed in accordance with existing agreements with Mexico that call for activated sludge secondary treatment facilities in the United States to treat

up to 25 mgd of sewage from Tijuana. In accordance with those agreements, Mexico paid for a portion of the plant's original construction cost and contributes to ongoing operation and maintenance costs. Completion of secondary facilities was delayed due to litigation and funding limitations in the United States.

The contractor moved construction trailers offsite at the end of March and a ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for mid-May. PCL will continue to work on several modifications to the contract through the summer, including upgrades to the telephone system, installation of an automatic backwash for the non-potable water system strainer, blower modifications to optimize power usage, and piping modifications to the belt filter press feed system.



**Aeration Tank #7 at the upgraded treatment plant processes wastewater from Mexico.**



## COMMISSION SIGNS COLORADO RIVER AGREEMENT

United States Commissioner Edward Drusina and Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, reached agreement to allow for a temporary delay in delivery of water allotted to Mexico under the 1944 Water Treaty. The delay would affect water that Mexico cannot use until repairs are made to infrastructure damaged during the April 2010 earthquake in the Mexicali Valley. The agreement, Minute 318, "Adjustment of Delivery Schedules for Water Allotted to Mexico for the Years 2010 through 2013 as a Result of Infrastructure Damage in Irrigation District 014, Rio Colorado, Caused by the April 2010 Earthquake in the Mexicali Valley, Baja California," was approved by the Governments of the United States and Mexico on December 20, 2010.

In accordance with the 1944 Water Treaty between the two countries, Mexico receives an annual allotment of 1.5 million acre-feet of water from the Colorado River. Minute 318 allows Mexico to adjust its delivery schedule downward during the period from 2010 through 2013 by a total of up to 260,000 acre-feet when it cannot utilize its full allotment due to damage to its irrigation infrastructure. The water would then be delivered to Mexico in subsequent years after repairs are made to irrigation district canals.

The Minute notes the willingness of authorities in the United States to support Mexico in light of the problems arising from the earthquake damage. Likewise, the Minute states the desire of both countries to schedule future delivery of the water in such a fashion so as not to trigger or exacerbate any potential shortage conditions in the United States.

In Minute 318, the Commission reiterates its commitment to work on additional joint cooperative actions on the Colorado River that could benefit both

countries. This work will occur within the framework of Minute 317, which notes the interest of the Commission in exploring opportunities for binational projects that conserve water, minimize the impacts of potential Colorado River shortage conditions, and generate additional volumes of water using new water sources by investing in infrastructure such as desalinization facilities.

"I am pleased that we were able to conclude an agreement that responds to the humanitarian aspect of the significant damage that was experienced in the Mexicali Valley," said U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina. "Minute 318 sets the stage for future cooperation between the United States and Mexico on the Colorado River that will benefit both countries for years to come."

Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon indicated that this Minute was of special importance to Mexico in that it can reschedule its water deliveries whenever it chooses in order to be able to receive the water when it can be used effectively. This

allows Mexico to make the maximum possible use of the waters that are allotted to it under the 1944 Water Treaty, to the benefit of the States of Baja California and Sonora.

The Commission worked closely with Mexico's National Water Commission and the Bureau of Reclamation in the development of Minute 318. Reclamation is the U.S. federal agency responsible for administering the waters of the Lower Colorado River on behalf of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. Approval of Minute 318 coincided with a meeting of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar, with Mexico's Secretary of the Environment, Juan Rafael Elvira, and the Director General of Mexico's National Water Commission, Jose Luis Luego, in Mexico.



**Mexican Section Secretary Luevano  
Commissioner Salmon, Commissioner  
Drusina, and U.S. Section Secretary Mata  
(l to r) sign Minute 318.**

# International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

## United States Section

4171 N. Mesa Street  
Suite C-100  
El Paso, TX 79902-1441  
Phone: (915) 832-4100  
Fax: (915) 832-4190  
<http://www.ibwc.gov>

**Commissioner**.....Edward Drusina

**Principal Engineer** .....Carlos Peña

**Principal Engineer**.....John Merino

**Secretary**.....Adolfo Mata

## Mexican Section

Av. Universidad No. 2180  
Zona de El Chamizal  
A.P. 1612-D C.P. 32310  
Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua  
Phone: (011-52-656) 613-7363  
Fax: (011-52-656) 613-9943  
<http://www.sre.gob.mx/cila/>

**Commissioner**.....Roberto F. Salmon

**Principal Engineer**.....Gilberto Elizalde

**Principal Engineer**.....L. Antonio Rascon

**Secretary** .....Jesus Luevano



International Boundary and Water Commission  
United States Section  
4171 N. Mesa Street, Suite C-100  
El Paso, TX 79902-1441