

**Colorado River Citizens Forum
Calexico, CA
June 12, 2013**

***Tentative Meeting Notes**

Board Members in attendance:

Elston Grubaugh, Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation District
Jim Cherry, Cherry Water Management
Roberta McDermott, US Natural Resources Conservation Service, Retired
Bruce Kuhn, Imperial Irrigation District
Tom Davis, Yuma County Water Users Association

Board Member Absent:

Karl Eanockson
Chuck Cullom
Mark McBroom
Kevin Eatherly
Bill Plummer, Water Resources Consulting

USIBWC Staff in attendance:

Anna Morales, Yuma Office
Diane Hinkle, Yuma Office

MXIBWC Staff in attendance:

Alenzue Angulo, Mexicali Office

17 Members of the public in attendance, including:

D. Livesay, Coachella Valley Water District
Doug Barnum, USGS
Al Goff, retired USIBWC
Glenn Freeman, retired
Juan Jose Ruiz S., State Water Commission of Baja California
Miguel Figueroa, Calexico New River Committee
Karen Zamora, KAWC
Maria Gonzalez, Yuma County
Andy Horne, County of Imperial
Darren Simon, San Diego County Water Authority
John Renison, County of Imperial
Juan Leal, DDS, Yuma County
Ron Derma, Bard Water District
Jose Angel, California Regional Water Quality Control Board

Welcome and Introductions

Elston Grubaugh, Co-Chair, welcomed the attendees and asked the Board to introduce themselves.

Calexico River Parkway update/follow up work to Assembly Bill. No. 1079

Miguel Figueroa, Executive Director, Calexico New River Committee, gave a presentation on this subject. Assembly Bill 1079 was authored by Assembly Member V. Manuel Perez, 80th District, and co-sponsored by the Calexico New River Committee. It was signed into law on October 11, 2009. AB 1079 established a

Technical Advisory Committee to prepare a Strategic Plan to identify restoration and/or clean-up options for the New River. It required the California-Mexico Border Relations Council to adopt the Strategic Plan.

New River Improvement Project (NRIP) Technical Advisory Committee had various agency members and four Work Groups: Impairment, Remediation, Background & Funding, and Visioning.

The New River Improvement Project Work Plan took the work of the four Work Groups and merged them to develop drafts and then a Final Strategic Plan, with participation of a Technical Advisory Committee and Steering Committee. The NRIP Strategic Plan was developed considering a planning approach in which addressing a cumulative and severe problem requires:

- A long term, multi-faceted effort spanning the entire river corridor,
- An effort that builds on and learns from existing efforts,
- Involves collaboration of many agencies and institutions.

The New River was broken into 5 reaches. Specific water problems are unique to each specific reach:

- Mexicali Reach: Mexicali Valley to International Boundary
- Calexico Reach: International Boundary to Highway 98
- Seeley Reach: Highway 98 to Evan Hewes Highway
- Brawley Reach: Evan Hewes Highway to Drop 2 by Brawley
- Salton Sea Reach: Drop 2 to its outlet at Salton Sea

The NRIP Strategic Plan included quantification of current and projected New River water quality impairments and their threat to public health, prioritization of the actions necessary to protect public health and to meet New River water quality objectives and other environmental goals, such as improving the quality of water flows into the Salton Sea. It also included identification of potential funds for the implementation of the project, and potential lead agencies that would be responsible for environmental review of activities related to the cleanup and restoration of the New River. There was also a plan for a river parkway.

The NRIP Strategic Plan was reviewed by Cal EPA and released to the public by the California-Mexico Border Relations Council during their regular meeting on May 25, 2012 in Calexico, CA. It was taken to stakeholders in the county to get everyone's voice in the plan. The electronic copy of plan is available at: <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/Border/News/>

Some of the recommendations in the plan include: locating a trash screen on the New River in the United States, a conveyance and disinfection facility (Calexico), and the Calexico River Parkway. Key implementing programs include various state and local pollution control programs, such as those of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Improved water quality and river corridor conditions in the New River support and benefit the local communities, aquatic and riparian ecosystems, and agricultural activities, while contributing water resources for the health and restoration of the Salton Sea delta and ecosystems.

The Calexico Parkway Project consists of development of a parkway on the Westside of town consisting of pedestrian and bike paths to be constructed within portions of the New River's flood plain that passes through the City over a distance of three miles extending from the international border to State Highway 98.

During the first quarter of 2013, the various research and data sources were addressed. Cultural surveys and burrowing owl surveys were completed along with delineation/vegetation mapping.

Some of the benefits of the program include reduction of air pollution and odor impacts in residential areas, wind break, aesthetic improvement, environmental and economic benefits. There is also tree planting in the area.

Assembly Bill 407 was authored by Assembly Member V. Manuel Perez, 56th Assembly District and sponsored by the Calexico New River Committee. AB 407 will establish a detailed definition and authorization that is consistent with the New River Improvement Project Strategic Plan and the language in AB 1079. The bill consolidates the various statutory authorities and funding programs related to the New River into one integrated program: the New River Watershed Water Quality, Public Health and River Parkway Development Program. It passed the Senate floor on May 1, 2013; next it will be heard by the Senate Committee on Environmental Quality

For more information, contact:
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 www.CalexicoNewRiver.com

Question/Answers (Q & A):

Q: What is the average flow at the New River at the International Boundary?

A: About 80 cubic feet per second.

Q: What is the salinity in the New River?

A: 2200 parts per million.

Q: Are the proposed trees adaptable to salinity?

A: Yes

Q: What kind of habitat value will these trees have?

A: Not sure, tend to be used in areas with habitat already established. After a year, the trees require little water.

Q: Where is the source of water coming from to water these trees?

A: Wastewater treatment plant near the site.

Q: What type of trash rack design will be used in the New River? A screen?

A: Has to be mechanized to properly be able to be disposed by a third party.

New River/Mexicali Sanitation Projects, Accomplishments Report

Jose Angel, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, gave a presentation on this topic.

The Binational Technical Committee consisted of U.S. EPA; State Water Resources Control Board, State of California, Imperial County, Imperial Irrigation District, International Boundary and Water Commission, Conagua, State Water Commission (CEA of Baja California), State Public Services Commission of Mexicali (CESPM).

Minute 294 Binational Projects included quick fixes at a cost of \$7.5 million USD. Eleven emergency repairs were funded through a cost sharing agreement between the United States and Mexico. These projects were implemented under the supervision of a Binational Technical Committee (BTC). The BTC has led to improved communication between the two countries. Collection system improvements were made by lining or replacing existing sewer pipes and acquiring modern sewer cleaning equipment. Other improvements include rehabilitation and upgrades to pumping facilities that lift and deliver wastewater to the treatment facilities, and

improvements to existing lagoons at the Zaragoza and Ortega wastewater facilities in Mexicali to increase reliability and capacity.

There were also the projects known as the Mexicali I Projects , which cost \$51 million USD. This included rehabilitation of about 20 miles of sewer main, installation of sewage collection systems in the western part of Mexicali, repositioning of 36 kilometers (km) of sewage collectors and construction of 7.65 km of new sewage collectors. Installation of telemetry and construction and rehabilitation of pump stations also occurred. This work had expected completion by 2004.

The Mexicali II projects cost \$26 million USD, including a new 20 million gallon per day (mgd) pumping plant known as Pumping Plant #4, new 20 mgd force main, and new 20 mgd treatment plant known as Las Arenitas.

Following completion of the binational projects, there was a significant decrease in fecal, *E. Coli* bacteria at the New River at the international border. Nonetheless, bacteria remains a serious problem. Trash adds bacteria and other pollutants. Industrial discharges like slaughterhouse discharges must be addressed as well as discharges that have not been disinfected. There has been significant reduction in pollution for such things as nutrients, total suspended solids, pathogens, and objectionable odors. Also, there was a significant increase in dissolved oxygen and clarity.

For Mexicali IV, there was a sewage collection system project.

The Binational Technical Committee role is to conduct “observation tours” in Mexicali, identify and discuss problems and their solution, oversee development and implementation of binational sanitation projects, share/exchange information, and conduct binational water quality monitoring.

The 10 to 20 mgd of raw sewage that were historically present in the New River at the border has been eliminated and resulted in significant, measureable improvements in water quality as it relates to pathogens, nutrients, bacteria and dissolved oxygen. In spite of these significant improvements there are still quality impairments caused by dumping trash, pesticides from agricultural runoff, nutrients and pathogens from confined animal feeding operations and slaughterhouses. Continuous measures must be taken to address this problem.

Questions:

Q: Is Mexico planning to use the water from the New River in the future?

A: Possibility of use will depend on the salinity of the water.

Suggested Future Agenda Items

1. Update on All American Canal Turnout under Minute 319
2. Following program update in Imperial Valley
3. Water Conservation projects in Imperial Valley
4. Central Arizona Project's proposal of Wellton Mohawk return flow channel above Imperial Dam
5. Board tour of the New River wetlands (in the cooler months)

If there are other issues/projects you would like to hear, please email the Yuma IBWC office at anna.morales@ibwc.gov or sally.spener@ibwc.gov

Next meeting scheduled for September 11, 2013 from 4-6pm in Yuma, AZ at the Yuma County Development Services Aldrich Hall at 2351 W. 25th Street.

*Meeting notes are tentative and summarized in draft the contents and discussion of Citizens Forum Meetings. While these notes are intended to provide a general overview of Citizens Forum Meetings, they may not necessarily be accurate or complete, and may not be representative of USIBWC policy or positions.