



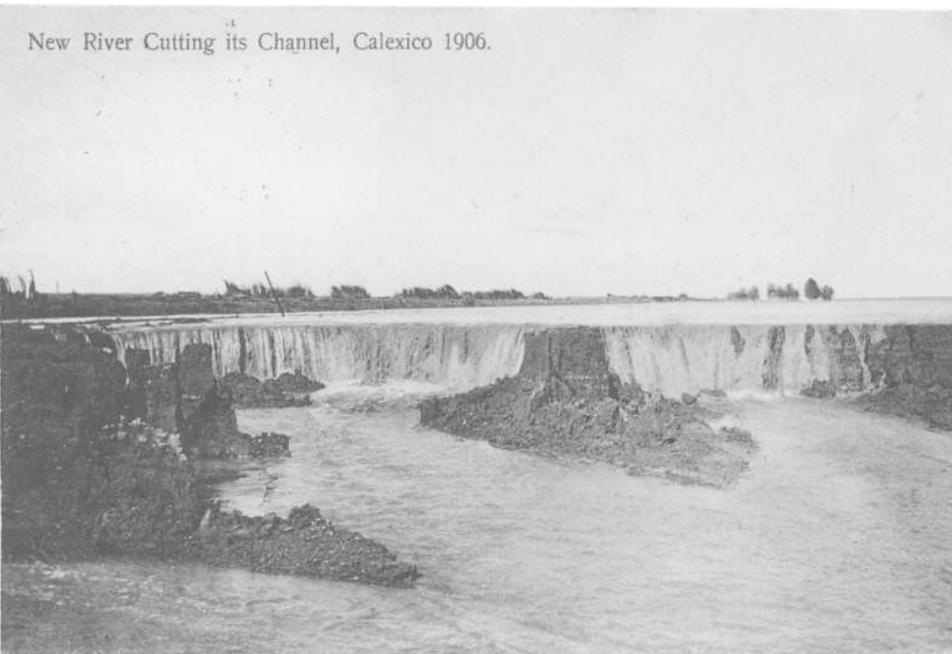
Colorado River Citizens Forum

December 14, 2009

El Centro, CA

New River History

In 1905-07 the Colorado River washed out diversionary works, and the entire Colorado River flow coursed into the Salton basin creating the New and Alamo River channels and the present Salton Sea, thus the name “new” river.

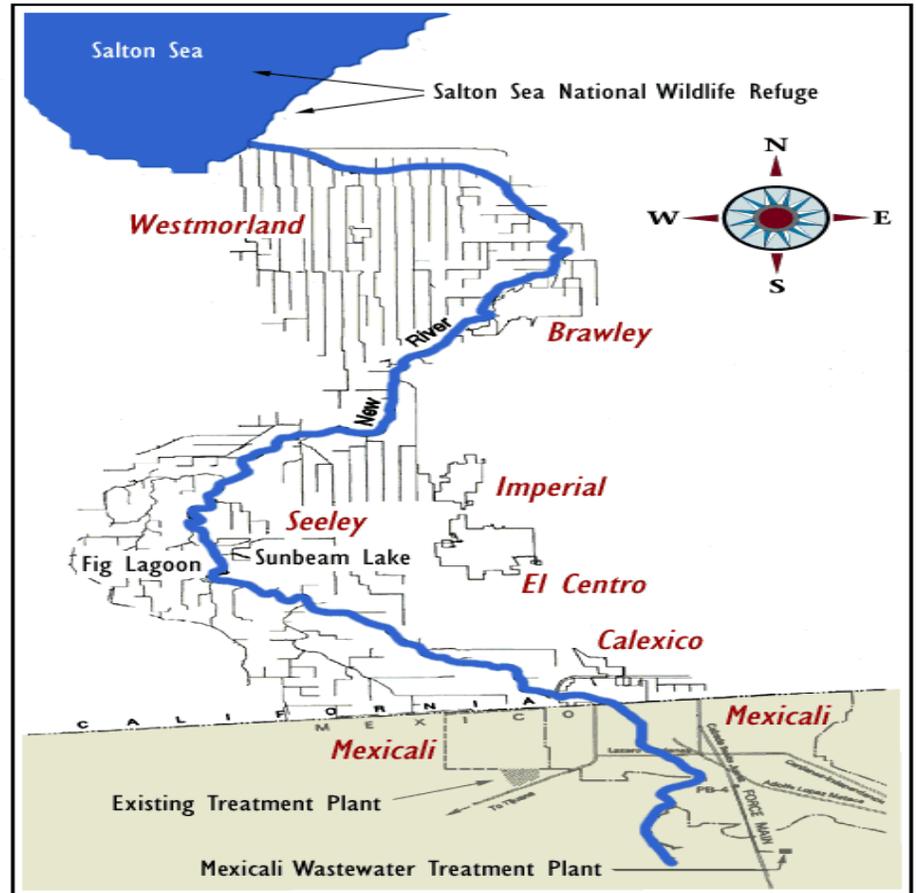


New River cutting its channel, Calexico 1906

New River History

The New River channel that was created is approximately 60 miles in length and up to 2/3 of a mile in width within the United States. Within Mexico this it is discernible for about 13 miles. The river flows north into Imperial County through Calexico.

New River



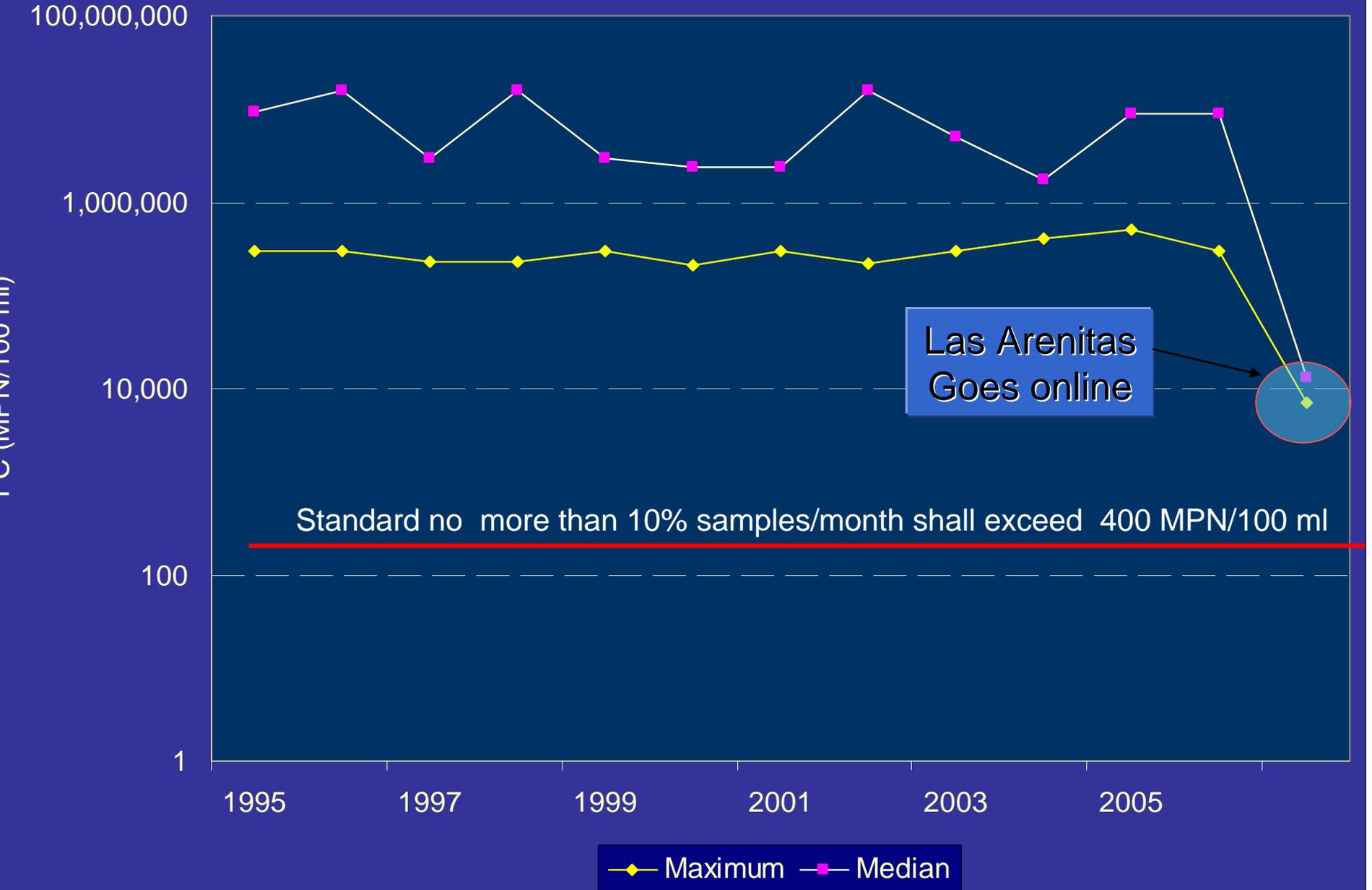
New River Map

What it has become.....

The Most Polluted River in North America

- For decades, the flows in the New River channel at the border have been primarily agricultural, municipal and industrial sources of wastewater from Mexico
- The New River is an “Impaired Water Body” under the Clean Water Act and violates public health standards for every pollutant that is measured under the law
- 2009 water samples continue to document fecal coliform, arsenic, ammonia, dissolved solids and selenium levels in excess of reporting thresholds and public health standards.
- Many pollutants and known toxic chemicals regulated under the Clean Water Act are not being tested for at all right now.

New River - Fecal Coliforms



Unknown Health and Environmental Risks

- Undocumented immigrants using the New River as a border crossing: What are the individual health risks and society-wide exposure risks?
- Non-reportable and under-reported disease risks
- A comprehensive analysis of the quality of the New River water has not been performed
- Comprehensive health assessment linking water pollution and threats to residents not yet performed

Unknown Health and Environmental Risks

(continued)

- No specific study has assessed the biological and ecological risks of not treating New River pollution sources entering at the border
- The New River pollution has been a problem since Mexicali started growing in the 1940's
- No study has looked at long-term soil and groundwater contamination of the River channel in Calexico
- Due to the intense desert heat and evaporation levels, water-borne chemicals and toxins may actually become airborne in and around the New River

Calexico New River Committee History

- In response to the need for organized efforts to mitigate the negative impact of the New River, the Calexico New River Committee (CNRC) was established in 1999 by a group of concerned community members
- First organized community grassroots effort for New River cleanup
- Obtained a 501 (c) 3 private non-profit corporation status in 2001
- 2006 Memorandum of Understanding with City of Calexico to ensure collaboration and coordination of efforts



PRIORITIES

**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

**PUBLIC
HEALTH**

**ENVIRONMENTAL
AND SOCIAL
JUSTICE**

Goals and Objectives

- Obtain the legal authority and funding necessary for full remediation and cleanup of the New River so that it becomes an asset to the community
- Maintain continuous communication with all stakeholders and partners: Policy, Advocacy and Legal
- Community Outreach: Establish an education and action plan for the next 5 years to coincide with the adoption timeline for the New River Improvement Project
- Establish an economic re-development strategy for the west side of Calexico that anticipates cleanup of the New River and the removal and public health and environmental threats

Drawing attention to the New River

Media

- Use of local and regional periodicals and television stations to inform about New River legislation / policy-making

Community Organizing

- Monthly meetings with block leaders
- Door to door outreach

CNRC Website

- Contains latest news on New River
- Each and every document regarding the New River
- Projects and efforts from the CNRC

Drawing attention to the New River

(continued)

CNRC Newsletter

- Provides accurate information on the various activities performed by the CNRC

CNRC DVD

- A great informative tool that summarizes the history of the New River's pollution, the work of the CNRC and the efforts to clean up the New River in approximately 6 minutes

Activities

- Community education/awareness meetings targeting residents and community groups to discuss potential strategies to reduce environmental threats from the New River
- Advocate for policy change using community input in the media and among elected officials
- Development of community-generated policy documents that address health-related impacts of the New River pollution
- Train community leaders to lead community education/awareness meetings

Policy for New River clean-up

- Committed elected officials representing Imperial County at the state and federal level secured \$4 million in matching funds in 2009 for the New River Improvement Project
- The CNRC sponsored AB 1079 (Perez); this legislation requires the creation of a strategic plan by the State of California which will be implemented by the City of Calexico and the CMBRC
- 20+ community residents from Imperial County traveled to Sacramento in support of AB 1079; legislators hear a first-hand testimony from those most affected by the New River
- History is made on October 12, 2009 – Governor Schwarzenegger signs AB 1079, the New River Improvement Project begins!

Community advocating for change!



CNRC Next Steps

- Continue to secure additional funds for implementing the New River Improvement Project from state and federal funding sources
- Launch the CEQA/NEPA environmental review process for the New River Improvement Project in 2010 (Phase 1)
- Use the Project's environmental review phase to better study the human health risks currently caused by the River
- Create an economic re-development strategy for the west side of Calexico in conjunction with the Project
- Continue advocacy for environmental/social justice

SUPPORT OUR PROJECT!

Calexico New River Committee

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Sign up for the CNRC Newsletter at

www.CalexicoNewRiver.org