

USIBWC Citizens Forum
May 23, 2013
Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve
Imperial Beach, California
*Meeting Notes

Attendance Roster:

Steve Smullen, USIBWC
Bob Scott, URS
Paloma Aguirre, Wildcoast
Jo Brooks, San Diego Coastkeeper
Steve Hamada
Josie Hamada
Sean Aten
Alma Aguilar, Southwestern College
Julia Chunntleer, Surfrider
Dani Boudreau, Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve
Mike McCoy, SWIA
Jim Nakagawa, City of Imperial Beach
Patricia McDough, County of San Diego
Sharyn Fitzgerald, U.S. Consulate, Tijuana
Ruth Garcia, District 8 Office, City of San Diego
Danielle Williams, Scripps Inst. of Oceanography
Megan Bailiff, EWSA SIO
Heyo Tjarks, River Prtners
Shayne Waldron, PCL
Virginia Huntington
Stuart Huntington

Paloma Aguirre kicked off the meeting, thanked all those present for their attendance, and asked Board members and audience members to self introduce. There was a representative from Senator Vargas' office as well as the US Consulate in Mexico. Steve Smullen announced that the next meeting would be the last for the current board. USIBWC's Sally Spener would be soliciting new members; watch for the announcements at the next meeting.

Climate Understanding and Resilience in the Tijuana River Valley Grant

Dani Boudreau, Coastal Training Program Associate with the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, gave an overview of the CURVV (Climate Understanding and Resilience in the River Valley) grant. The study will provide an understanding of vulnerabilities and adaptations associated with climate change, especially sea level rise. The three-year effort will have significant stakeholder involvement in three parts: Year 1- data collection and vulnerability assessment, Year 2 - adaptation strategies, and Year 3 -adaptation implementation. The outcomes of the first two parts will be used to inform local landowners so

that they can plan for infrastructure modifications or policy change. The results can also be transferred to other areas or jurisdictions.

Public- How is sea level rise modeled?

Dani Boudreau- There are various approaches and models, from comprehensive ones to smaller bathtub models. They include the Coastal Storm Monitoring System (CoSMoS) from USGS, specifically the 10 year storm; and Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM), which models shoreline change and saltwater marsh migration from coastal storms.

Public- Have any other watersheds or areas been studied with this program?

Dani Boudreau- The West Coast is rather progressive compared to the East Coast. Other studies include San Diego Bay and US Navy. We are the first to include both a riverine and coastal ecosystem.

Public- Please comment on retreat from the coast as a last option in the adaptation strategy. Is there a sense of realism about this option?

Dani Boudreau- Some countries such as the Netherlands are far advanced as they have basically given up 20% of the land in that country as unusable. This is just one strategy in the palette and is of course very controversial as municipalities lose infrastructure and tax revenues. It is also difficult to determine state ownership in areas that have steep terrain or cliffs at the shoreline.

Public- What about eminent domain?

Dani Boudreau- This is really an issue for local ordinances to address.

Public- What about Department of Homeland Security - are they involved?

Dani Boudreau- Yes, they are on the steering committee

Public- Explain what the steering committee is.

Dani Boudreau- The steering committee is a subset of the broad stakeholder group, which includes landowners in the valley who own vulnerable infrastructure. The steering committee will be implementing the recommendations and engaging the broad stakeholder group helps to level the playing field.

Public- What has been done thus far?

Dani Boudreau- Stakeholders have identified critical infrastructure. The staff is currently in the process of assimilating GIS maps and model output to determine how stakeholder infrastructure will be affected.

Public- Is Mexico involved?

Dani Boudreau- Yes, they have been invited, and are the source of some of the non climatic stressors such as sediment and trash. We are working through both NGOs and SANDAG to reach out to Mexican entities for their input.

South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP)

Steve Smullen, Area Operations Manager for the IBWC San Diego Field Office gave an overview of ongoing activities at the SBIWTP and provided the status of the proposed Minute for trash and sediment in the Tijuana River Valley. Approximately 60,000 cubic yards of sediment, trash and tires have been removed from the upper part of the flood control project. All tires and trash have been disposed of off site. The contractor has some additional screening to complete for about 1/5 of the material.

The draft report on the secondary clarifier solids washout study has been received from

URS and it has been provided to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board. There are different types of proposed alternatives, including operational or process changes, structural modifications, and construction of new clarifiers. The costs vary from \$50,000 to nearly \$7M for 3 new clarifiers. The draft report is currently under review and the final should be out in two months.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)/Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) solids stabilization study for the SBIWTP is undergoing revisions to address disparity of solids disposal costs between Mexico and the U.S., and to modify the proposed recommendation to sell biogas as fuel. The revised final draft should be available this summer. The water quality of the effluent discharged from the plant has been within permit limits with 2 violations since the last Citizens Forum meeting in February 2013. One particular violation was the result of a petroleum, fats, oil, and grease dump on April 20.

For the proposed trash and sediment Minute that has been authorized by the Commissioners, a U.S.-only meeting was held on February 27, 2013 to develop a response to Mexico's workgroups' proposal. During the April 17, 2013 binational meeting, the US proposed the organization of three workgroups focused on trash, sediment and water quality. Current activities include funding by IBWC of a sediment management plan that is binational in nature. EPA currently has a sediment modeling study underway and a hydrology workshop will be held June 5. The workshop on the Tijuana Watershed sponsored by San Diego State University (SDSU) and El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF) held May 14-16, 2013 was successful and will assist in the development of the new Minute.

Public- Why is the Minute taking so long? It was supposed to be completed by this June?

Steve Smullen- It is not unusual for Minutes to be a year in development. Minute 319 was much more complicated and was started in 2008.

Public- Weren't we supposed to learn from Minute 319?

Steve Smullen- Yes, the process is similar. Minute 319 involved many states, irrigation districts and the Bureau of Reclamation. The proposed trash and sediment Minute is unusual in that it includes the public – something the IBWC has never done before.

Public- Why does the City of San Diego issue emergency declarations every week for ocean water due to the San Antonio de los Buenos Wastewater Treatment Plant in Mexico?

(No one knew the answer.)

Public- The City could do it less often.

Paloma Aguirre- Mexico has environmental documentation completed for the new wastewater treatment plant at San Antonio de los Buenos, they are just waiting on funding. The treatment plant is probably long overdue for an upgrade.

Public- Which of the alternatives will probably be done for the secondary clarifier study?

Steve Smullen- We will look seriously at flow equalization, additional clarifiers, process modifications, and extension of the aeration system. We are definitely going to implement a more permanent polymer addition system later this year.

Public- For the April 20 dump, would that not result in legal action, fines, or jail time if it happened in the US?

Steve Smullen- Yes, the problem is catching the entity responsible.

Public- How long did the April 20 event last?

Steve Smullen- About 8 hours - so it was significant. Luckily we did not lose the biology

of the plant. We were in full compliance the following day. Regarding the solids washouts, we try to maintain a high solids inventory in the aeration basins as a buffer against possible toxic constituents. We could maintain less solids inventory and lower our occurrences of solids washout but we run the risk of losing bacterial populations that take a long time to redevelop, during which time we can have many violations in a row.

Other issues:

Paloma Aguirre announced a June 1 public Tijuana River cleanup by Wildcoast

Headwaters to Ocean Workshop will be held next week May 28-31 at the Catamaran in Mission Bay.

Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF) will be holding their biennial conference at Town and Country in San Diego during Nov 2013 – topics include sea level rise, ocean acidification, nutrients and invasive species. Deadline for submissions is June 1.

Suggested Future Agenda Items

1. Presentation on decentralized wastewater treatment options, such as Ecoparque in Tijuana.
2. Jo Brooks suggested a presentation by Living Machine Systems about a decentralized, green wastewater treatment system at Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Liberty Station.
3. Binational access to Border Monuments (Friends of Friendship Park)
4. Summary of Headwaters to Ocean Workshop (offered by Danielle Williams of Scripps)
5. Doug Liden of EPA - offered to present an update on EPA's Tijuana Watershed sediment transport study and Border 2020, which had been postponed from this meeting

Next meeting scheduled for August 22, 2013.

*Meeting notes are tentative and summarize, 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.