

USIBWC Citizens Forum Meeting Minutes  
Tijuana Estuary  
Imperial Beach, California.  
February 16, 2012 6:00-8:30 pm

Meeting Notes\*

Board Members in Attendance:

Aaron Allen, Office of Senator Juan Vargas  
Jo Brooks, San Diego Coastkeeper  
Paloma Aguirre, Wildcoast (Alternate for Ben McCue)  
Paul Ganster, San Diego State University  
Scott Huth, Metro Wastewater JPA  
Patrick McDonough, County of San Diego  
Robert Scott, URS Corporation  
Mark West, Surfrider San Diego Chapter

USIBWC Staff in Attendance:

Steve Smullen  
Guillermo Martinez  
Gabriel Duran

Members of the Public in Attendance:

Joan Brooks, volunteer, Tijuana Estuary  
Bob Durrin, FEMA  
Ed Curtis, FEMA  
Juan Gutierrez, volunteer, Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve  
Tim Stebbins, City of San Diego  
Steve Smithson  
Mark Stephens  
Jim Peugh, San Diego Audubon Society  
Jim Nakagawa, City of Imperial Beach  
Danielle Litke, Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve  
Kyle Winkler, Sufrider  
Roderick Michener, Surfrider  
Shayne Waldon  
Laura Silvan, PFEA  
Margarita Diaz, PFEA  
Ginny Huntington  
Armando Villarino, City of San Diego

Welcome and Introductions

Steve Smullen (Chair) kicked off the meeting, thanked all those present for their attendance and requested that the board members self introduce. He mentioned that the Citizens Forum was established by the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) in the early 2000s to bring together community members and enable the early and

continued two-way flow of information, concerns, values, and needs between the USIBWC and the general public, environmentalists, water managers, irrigators, and government agencies. It is not a Federal Advisory Committee.

### Miscellaneous Updates

Smullen then had a few updates on information presented at the last meeting. Regarding the start-up of secondary treatment at the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP) and warranty issues associated with the upgrade, two clarifiers were placed in service after a third-party survey by the construction contractor indicated no serious alignment problems. The secondary clarifiers still appear to be lacking sufficient capacity, however, and solids washout occurs during fairly low peak flows. Veolia, the treatment plant operator, is currently using polymer to maintain a manageable solids level and eliminate washout, and this appears to be working even at fairly high peak flows – up to about 40+ million gallons per day (mgd). USIBWC plans on initiating an independent study to determine the root cause and to provide alternative solutions to improve effluent quality. Status update meeting with the Court was scheduled for February but no date has been set yet by attorneys for both sides.

The U.S. Section has requested information from the Mexican Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission on the Rio Alamar construction but has not received anything to date. The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, CalEPA, URS and USIBWC toured the Rio Alamar in late January during a Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team visit. The group was informed by CONAGUA that the river lining project is titanic just from the legal standpoint and lawsuits, and there continue to be legal hurdles that will have to be handled by the City of Tijuana for the road construction proposed adjacent to the channel. The Board has prepared a draft letter to Commissioner Drusina asking for support in obtaining requested information; copies were provided to attendees.

Smullen mentioned the USIBWC notification process regarding releases in Mexico, how notice is received from Mexico and communicated to U.S. entities, such as when there is a break in the line sending sewage to the United States. Smullen then asked attendees for public comment, there were none.

### Present Ocean Monitoring Activities Surrounding the South Bay Ocean Outfall

Tim Stebbins of the City of San Diego gave an overview of the ocean monitoring program for the South Bay Ocean Outfall and Point Loma Outfall. Stebbins explained that the program consists of many components, including monitoring of shore and offshore water quality (fecal indicators, oil and grease, and suspended solids), benthos, kelp beds, fish and invertebrate populations, and fish contaminant bioaccumulation. In addition, there are aerial kelp bed surveys, remote sensing and imaging (for plume tracking), and outfall inspections. Despite many years of monitoring there have been no conclusions drawn and it appears that the outfall discharges do not materially affect the marine environment.

Mark West asked about whether the locations for rig fishing were only in Mexico. Stebbins said there were 3 sites; 2 were located farther north near the Pt Loma Outfall. Steve Smullen asked about the location of the International Boundary Line and Paul Ganster asked about the location of the Mexican discharge at San Antonio de los Buenos, which were then pointed out on the map. An audience member asked how far out from shore is the farthest monitoring location (10 miles). Ed Curtis asked about the satellite imaging frequency. Stebbins responded that they were available about 2 times per month but that they try to coordinate with

sampling dates. Patrick McDonough asked about the bottom line - are conditions improving? Stebbins responded that the ocean environment is highly variable and it is difficult to attribute any changes in abundance, variety of marine life, etc. to a specific cause. There have been negligible instances of bioaccumulation in fish tissue.

#### Update on the USIBWC's Tijuana River Levee Certification Efforts

Guillermo Martinez of the USIBWC then provided an overview of the levee certification process for the USIBWC's Tijuana River Flood Control Project –mandated by law – which requires that levees be capable of withstanding a 100-year flood with 3 feet of freeboard. URS is in the process of completing draft and final reports for the North and South levees and the work will be completed by the end of March. The work had been ongoing since 2009 but due to changes in the FEMA certification criteria (Ed Curtis of FEMA described the 2011 controversy/change in FEMA modeling practices) and funding shortfalls the work has only recently been executed. There was still a significant certification requirement outstanding, which is to address land-side drainage requirements by local authorities. Paul Ganster asked if changes in upstream conditions were reflected in the model (no, based on gage analysis). Did the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers turn the levees over to the IBWC (Yes). An audience member asked if the modeling considered the trash and sediment and its effect on flood water surface elevations. (No). Jim Peugh asked if the sediment was going to be removed (Yes).

#### Master Planning International Watershed Initiative

Gabriel Duran of USIBWC then provided a brief presentation on the IBWC watershed initiative. Many in the group were enthusiastic about the possibility of a Commission Minute that could address solutions to ongoing and new problems in the Tijuana River watershed.

#### Board Discussion/Suggested Future Agenda Items

In Board discussion, no specific items were raised for future meetings. Steve Smullen mentioned that he expected Halla Razak of San Diego County Water Authority and Marsi Steirer of the City of San Diego to present on the transboundary desalination project and the status of recycled water in the region, respectively. Guillermo Martinez of the USIBWC promised to provide an update on the Tijuana River Flood Control Project levee certification, which is expected to be completed soon. The Citizens Forum Board would like a response to the letter on the Rio Alamar by next meeting and would like it to be posted publicly. Smullen offered that this could be posted on the USIBWC website in the Citizens Forum area. Paul Ganster offered to draft a letter recommending that a Minute be considered for a binational watershed initiative to start working on the trash and sediment problem in the Valley.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 10, 2012.

\*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.