

USIBWC Citizens Forum
October 7, 2010 6:00-8:30 pm
Imperial Beach - Tijuana Estuary National Estuarine Research Reserve
Meeting Notes*

Board Members in Attendance:

Jo Brooks
Ben McCue
Oscar Alberto Pombo
Oscar Romo
Carlos Sanchez
Richard Tynan
Michael Williams
Steve Smullen

USIBWC Area Operations Manager and Citizens Forum Co-Chair Steve Smullen kicked off the meeting and asked board members to self introduce.

Rare and Protected Bird Species at the Tijuana Slough Refuge

Kurt Roblek, Acting Refuge Manager, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), San Diego Bay and Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuges, gave a brief presentation on threatened and endangered (T&E) species of birds managed by USFWS at both the Tijuana Estuary and San Diego Bay. A once rare species of gull in San Diego County has become more common in recent years. It has been preying on the least tern, also a threatened and endangered species, causing significant loss of fledglings and eggs. This is posing a management dilemma for the USFWS.

A member of the public asked several questions regarding banding and control in both the local population and a historical population at the Salton Sea. Other members asked questions regarding nesting and food sources. Nesting of the least terns and snowy plovers occurs mainly in sandy areas and food is present in both the ocean and the Tijuana River. Food in the river usually consists of sardines and smelts. Excellent photos accompanied the presentation.

Tijuana River Valley Stormwater and Sediment Control Planning

Gabriel Duran, Engineer Planner, USIBWC Headquarters Office, gave a brief presentation on the role of the IBWC in the levee certification process for the Tijuana River Flood Control Project and the Commission's role in the Corps of Engineers-City of San Diego cooperative effort in sedimentation and trash cleanup.

Tijuana River Valley Stormwater and Sediment Control Planning Presented by the Los Angeles District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Ed Demesa, Chief, Plan Formulation Branch, gave a summary of work in the Tijuana River Valley performed by the Corps to date. The local sponsor for these studies was the Tijuana River Valley Water District (now defunct). There were questions/statements from the audience on the necessity of additional studies. The Corps explained that until they received Congressional funding they would not be able to

conduct a reconnaissance study, which is the first step in determining feasibility and cost effectiveness. Once that is complete then the hydrology and hydraulics of the Tijuana River system must be defined before any project is conceptualized. The cost is shared by the sponsor, which is the City of San Diego, and some of the work already accomplished by the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team (TRVRT) or by the City could be considered as an in-kind contribution.

Chris McFadden of the City's Stormwater Department stated that the work that the TRVRT had done was a good start and that the future work would closely align with the goals of that entity. A member of the audience mentioned that there were already flood control plans in place that had been voted on in a resolution by the City and that the City just needs to start the action by funding the program. Jo Brooks asked if this work had been allocated for a particular budget year, and Jim Peugh asked if there was a scope of work for the funding. The responses were that nothing had been done to date on implementing the flood control plan. Jim Peugh said that economic development was a driver for flood control in 1998, and asked if there was development planned for the Valley. Both Dick Tynan and Steve Smullen stated that the Valley is primarily rural and that local and regional plans identify the need to maintain its rural character and recognize value in wildlife habitat and recreation.

There was some discussion as to whether any of these projects could be funded through the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC). The Commissioners of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) were BECC board members at one time, but at present the IBWC merely reviews the projects and provides feedback to the BECC on similar projects that may be contemplated or underway by the Commission.

Coastal Storm Project

Oscar Romo, Watershed Coordinator, Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, presented an innovative slope stabilization and public park construction project in Los Laureles Canyon in Tijuana (Goat Canyon in the US) which utilizes discarded tires, and which also incorporates native vegetation and water retention features. He also presented his trash tracking project, funded through an EPA grant, which will enable determination of locations in Los Laureles Canyon that are subject to erosion and where trash is subject to movement from water.

Suggested Future Agenda Items

Mike Williams reiterated his request for Orange County Sanitation District to present on the groundwater replenishment project in Fountain Valley. Oscar Romo requested some historical presentations on the Naval Outlying Field (NOLF) and the IBWC. Ben McCue suggested a presentation on erosion caused by the border fence. Mike Williams suggested a presentation on the type of fish that are present in the Tijuana River.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Next Citizens Forum meeting is scheduled for January 20, 2011.

*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.