

USIBWC Citizens Forum
October 22, 2009, 6:30–8:30 pm
Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve
Imperial Beach, CA
Meeting Notes*

There were 17 members of the public present. All board members were present.

Welcome and Introductions

Steve Smullen, USIBWC Area Operations Manager and Citizens Forum Co-Chair, gave a brief introduction to the IBWC as a binational agency and stated the purpose of the Citizens Forum to promote the exchange of information between the USIBWC and the public about Commission activities and related issues.

Public Comment

Oscar Romo announced the upcoming Greening of the Border conference to be held at the University of San Diego on November 18-20 and invited participation.

Ben McCue of Wildcoast invited participation in a clean-up scheduled for October 24 at Dairy Mart Road Bridge. He also requested that USIBWC provide a temporary holding area for used tires recovered from USIBWC property. Smullen replied that it should not be a problem but he would check with Division Engineer Bernie Kruse. This was later approved and tires are being temporarily stored at a turnout on Monument Road just outside the southwest gate of the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Carolyn Powers spoke about flooding in the Tijuana River Valley and requested that USIBWC consider maintaining the channel downstream of the Dairy Mart Road Bridge as part of the agency's flood control project. Smullen stated that USIBWC officials at Headquarters in El Paso were already reviewing the request and that he would bring it up as an issue for the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team to address.

Tijuana Estuary Fate and Transport Study

Clay Phillips, Manager of the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve (TRNERR) presented an overview of the Fate and Transport Study in which screened and tested sediment from the Goat Canyon sediment basins is being used for beach replenishment. There is a significant monitoring component to the work. The work is receiving major contractor and regulatory agency oversight as it is a pilot project which may have impact on current technical requirements for beach replenishment material in California. Indications are that it has been successful so far. Smullen asked the overall cost; Phillips replied that the cost was \$1.8 million. Ben McCue asked if a spike in bacterial contamination in surf samples was due to the nature and origin of the material. Phillips responded that the material was thoroughly tested – he did not have an answer until more of the data was in. Someone asked how material is placed. Phillips responded that the material is screened on site, then transported by truck and dumped in the surf zone just north of the international boundary. There were also questions about the duration of monitoring and evaluation of biological impacts. Phillips stated that the overall scope of work was very comprehensive.

Trash, Sediment, and Waste Tire Characterization Study, Tijuana River Valley: The Status

Robert Scott of URS Corporation gave a presentation about the trash and sediment characterization study done under the auspices of the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team (TRVRT). The presentation was generally well received. An audience member asked what the cost was and where money for the study came from. Scott responded that the project cost approximately \$200,000 and the funding came through an Integrated Waste Management Board grant coordinated through TRVRT. Scott stated that the area on IBWC property does not have a lot of trash in the deeper horizons, and that more appeared to be on the surface. Eventually (and contingent upon funding) the data will be available via a GIS internet interface such as ArcView.

Status Update on Construction of the Secondary South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant

Steve Smullen gave a presentation on the status of the SBIWTP Secondary Construction. Work is about 42% complete, with significant concrete pours occurring over the past three months. Work on the large concrete structures is mostly completed and construction contractor PCL is working on the deck walkways and mechanical installation. Following his update, there were questions and answers.

Question - What is secondary tankage for?

Smullen - Aeration and sedimentation.

Question - Will the plant be in compliance?

Smullen - The plant should be in compliance. We will have to wait and see how effective secondary is in removing all pollutants.

Question - Can the secondary effluent be used for Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team projects?

Smullen - The effluent belongs to Mexico. We are having a binational meeting on Nov. 6 to discuss Mexican use of secondary effluent. Mexico is responsible for the cost to take back secondary effluent. The PERC line, which was constructed to provide for the return of effluent to Mexico, was damaged by smugglers and this must be factored in.

Question - Will the plant be expanded in the future?

Smullen - Unlikely in the near term as expansion comes at Mexico's expense and they have just completed two new plants -- Arturo Herrera(Monte los Olivos) and La Morita.

Smullen mentioned that CESPT, the Tijuana utility, has offered to provide a tour of infrastructure to the Citizens Forum board members and suggested that early December would be a good time. Citizens Forum Co-Chair Oscar Romo will be working on the logistics and the dates, and an email will be sent out.

Board Discussion

A number of board members, especially Carolyn Powers, Jack Bransford, and Michael Williams, expressed interest in taking a more active role in providing solutions to local problems. Smullen mentioned (echoed by Carl Nettleton of TRVRT) that the

TRVRT was an active venue for local stakeholders interested in working on problems related to flood control, trash and sediment capture, and restoration.

Suggested Future Agenda Items

Oscar Pombo offered to present a summary of his work in water resources along the border. Mike Williams suggested a presentation on algae harvesting for biofuel production.

Other suggestions received after the meeting:

How projects are prioritized and receive funding through the IBWC.

Pathogens in wells in the Tijuana River Valley.

SDSU study on sediment transport

Reschedule the presentation by the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association that had been planned for October.

The next meeting will be held January 28, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve in Imperial Beach.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm

*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.