

USIBWC Citizens Forum
Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve
Imperial Beach, CA
May 6, 2010
Tentative Meeting Notes*

Board Members in Attendance:

Jack Bransford
Jo Brooks
Scott Huth
Ben McCue
Oscar Pombo
Carolyn Powers
Oscar Romo
Carlos Sanchez
Richard Tynan

USIBWC Staff in Attendance:

Dawi Dakhil
Rebecca Romero
Sally Spener

Members of the Public who signed in:

Job Nelson, City of San Diego
Denice Garcia, City of San Diego
Doug Paul, Paul Design Group
Jo Ellis
Jay Novak, TRCC
Jim Nakagawa, City of Imperial Beach
Armando Villarino, City of San Diego
Christine Darlak
Doug Liden, USEPA
Zeke Mazur
G. Castaneda, CBC

Senate Bill 167, Waste Tires in the California-Mexico Border Region

Job Nelson, Mayor's Director of Intergovernmental Relations, City of San Diego, gave an overview of this legislation and how it pertains to issues along the San Diego-Tijuana border. Approximately 700,000 – 800,000 tires/year are exported from California to Baja California. Transboundary stormwater flows bring some of those tires back into the United States in the Tijuana River Valley.

The legislation was signed into law last year. It provides for the California Integrated Waste Management Board (due to budget cuts, the board's duties have since been reconstituted within the governor's office/CalRecycle) to use funds for border activities; funds are generated from a \$1.75 surcharge on tire purchases in California. A

portion of this funding can now be used to address the flow of tires to/from Mexico and to address used tires in Mexico. The funds can now be used for projects in the border region, including education and tire recycling projects that address the movement of used tires from California to Mexico that are eventually disposed in California. The funds cannot be used for remediation of tires from illegal piles in Mexico.

A stakeholder meeting will be held July 16 in Sacramento to discuss this issue.

San Diego wants to work jointly with Mexico to identify activities that can be undertaken in the border region.

Oscar Romo, Watershed Coordinator, Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, continued with the discussion. He explained that one strategy is to improve trash collection in Mexico.

Over 4,000 tires were collected at the mouth of Goat Canyon by the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve last year. One obstacle is that the tires need to be cleaned before they can be accepted by a landfill or for recycling.

Baja California has established a quota on tire imports where you need to recycle one tire in order to be able to import one tire. Unfortunately, many businesses skirt the bureaucracy and bring tires into Mexico illegally. There are only three authorized tire confinement sites in Baja California.

Baja California is looking at legislation to address the tire problem. Education is needed about potential uses of waste tires.

Carolyn Powers asked about any involvement from the Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF), the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), and the North American Development Bank (NADB).

Mr. Romo responded that BECC had done research on waste tires years ago and it might now be a good time to approach BECC again.

Sally Spener (USIBWC) stated that Commissioner Drusina had seen the impact of waste tires in the Tijuana River Valley and he is interested in having the International Boundary and Water Commission be a part of the solution. He has discussed the matter with the Mexican Commissioner and has met with the City of San Diego to see how the Commission can help facilitate a solution.

Some board members suggested that more needs to be done to develop uses for waste tires such as for energy generation, printer ink, and rubberized asphalt.

Ben McCue suggested that since some waste tires have ended up on land controlled by the International Boundary and Water Commission, the Commission could help address the problem. He also suggested that BECC could possibly certify a project for use of California funds in Mexico.

Mr. Nelson suggested that a model program could be developed through the International Boundary and Water Commission that could address interception, education, recycling, etc.

Richard Tynan suggested that EPA should also be involved.

Mr. Nelson noted the importance of “front end” initiatives such as education rather than simply “back-end” approaches such as clean-up of dumped tires.

Mr. McCue observed that there is not a good market for recycled tire products in Mexico.

Mr. Romo noted that the Mexican system for control of tires, which tends to favor certain importers or disposal sites, should be reformed.

One man suggested that California needs to take greater responsibility for the problem by better controlling its tires to prevent them from going to Mexico.

Water Resources of Baja California and their Binational Implications

Oscar Pombo, Professor of Urban and Environmental Studies, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (Mexico), gave a presentation on this topic. He is working as a consultant for the water resources section of Baja California's Climate Change Action Plan.

In Baja California, 84% of water is used for agriculture, 8% for public urban use, and 8% for industrial use. By law, urban uses have priority over other uses. He presented tables showing continued rapid population growth in the state; population will double by 2030. Baja California has 96% water service coverage.

Tijuana gets 87% of its water from the Colorado River. Statewide, 65% of water is from the Colorado River and 35% from groundwater. Infrastructure is currently at capacity and meets demand.

Due to climate change, the Colorado River will have reduced flow and Baja California has no alternative sources. Many of the aquifers are overused.

To address the problem, several strategies are proposed: reduce per capita consumption, reduce leaks in the urban and agricultural irrigation systems, reuse treated wastewater, improve agricultural efficiency, build desalination plants, etc.

Recycled water is cheaper than desalinated water so that would be a more cost-effective source.

Agricultural losses are 43%. Increased agricultural efficiency is the best route and the consultants have advised the government to invest in this.

New wastewater treatment plants in Tijuana are high quality and could easily be upgraded to tertiary treatment. Desalinated water is too expensive for most Baja California households to afford.

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

Dawi Dakhil, Civil Engineer, USIBWC, gave a presentation about the ongoing construction for the upgrade of the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP). 90% of all structural concrete is complete. The overall plant is more than 60% complete. The plant will provide secondary effluent by January 5, 2011. He showed photos of construction progress.

Carolyn Powers suggested that a tour of the plant be included as part of the next board meeting.

Ben McCue asked about the amount of sludge that will be generated by the upgraded plant.

Mr. Dakhil responded that currently about 100-120 tons or 5-6 trucks of sludge per day are sent to Mexico. The new plant may produce 1.5 times the sludge. The sludge is taken to the Punta Bandera Treatment Plant in Mexico.

There was some discussion about "seeding" the new plant with sludge, including the possibility of using sludge from Mexico.

Doug Liden (EPA) – How much will energy use go up?

Mr. Dakhil responded that although energy costs will go up, the agency hopes there will be a corresponding decrease in chemical costs.

Public Comment

Mr. Liden announced a Solid Waste Forum May 12-14 to be held at the Centro Cultural de Tijuana cosponsored by several agencies.

Mr. Tynan announced that a meeting scheduled for May 13 at 9:00 a.m., a Master Plan meeting that the City of San Diego is responsible for to clear all the channel to the ocean.

Suggested Future Agenda Items

Carolyn Powers reiterated her suggestion for a tour of the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant

Sally Spener mentioned an item suggested at a previous meeting regarding the diversity of wildlife in the Valley. Dick Tynan added that the Least Bell's Vireo has held up dredging in the Tijuana River Valley and that the County could request taking the species off of the list. Carolyn Powers added that the habitat was created by Mexican sewage flows.

Ben McCue suggested that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service discuss changes in endangered species. He also suggested a discussion about the travel ban affecting travel of personnel from EPA and the International Boundary and Water Commission into Mexico.

The next meeting will be August 5. It was initially suggested to meet at the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve but, if the board wants to tour the treatment plant, then the board meeting could be held at the USIBWC office immediately following the tour.

Board Discussion

A draft mission statement for the board was passed out and reviewed. There was discussion about whether the board has legal authority to "provide advice" due to a potential conflict with the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Board members will review the draft statement and will provide comments to Sally Spener.

*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.