

**Colorado River Citizens Forum
Imperial Irrigation District Board Room
El Centro, California
October 24, 2018
Tentative Meeting Notes***

Board Members in attendance:

Roberta (Bobbi) Stevenson-McDermott, Yuma Natural Resource Conservation District Member, Arizona
Association of Conservation Districts Board Member
Matt Dessert, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District
Meghan Scott, Yuma County Agriculture Water Coalition
Mark William White, Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe
Tom Davis, Yuma County Water Users Association
Jim Buster, Southwest Resource Strategies
Phil Rosentrater, Salton Sea Authority
Brian McNeece, retired Professor
Frank Ruiz, Audubon Society

USIBWC Staff in attendance:

Anna Morales, Area Operations Manager, USIBWC, Yuma, Arizona

41 Members of the public in attendance:

Welcoming and Introduction Remarks:

At 4:00PM Citizens Forum Co-Chair Meghan Scott convened the meeting by welcoming the group and provided a brief description of the meeting agenda items. Board members introduced themselves.

Presentation One: Update on the New River Improvement Project by Adriana Godinez, Water Resources Control Engineer, California Regional Water Quality Control Board (CRWQCB) Region 7

Ms. Godinez presented an overview of Border Pollution Problems, New River Improvement Project and the CRWQCB border activities report.

Border Pollution Problems

The Mexicali Valley is of flat terrain and has limited tools to address emerging sanitation problems. Key sewage infrastructure in the Mexicali Sanitation System consists of 12 major pumping plants; 27 lift stations; 1,875 miles of sewage collectors; 2 wastewater treatment plants (Las Arenitas and Zaragoza); and 2 sewer vacuum trucks.

Emerging problems in Mexicali:

Since 2013, problems with pumping plant outages due to maintenance issues and aging sewage collector lines collapses threatened discharges of raw sewage into the New River.

In 2014, there were 3 instances of raw sewage discharges into the New River and were brought to the attention of the International Boundary & Water Commission (IBWC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

In 2015, a policy meeting with USEPA, the USIBWC, Imperial Irrigation District (IID), County and State officials was held. USEPA funded a study to better characterize the problems in the Mexicali Sewer

system. In the same year, 3 discharges of raw sewage occurred (5-20 million gallons per day (mgd)) and Mexico rebuilt Pumping Plant No. 3.

In 2016, more discharges of raw sewage occurred. The Study was completed, and the draft report was released to the Binational Technical Committee (BTC). The Study noted key infrastructure was at or beyond its useful life and maintenance was needed. The cost to address these problems was estimated at \$75 to \$80 million dollars.

Measures to deal with discharges:

In 2016, a U.S. BTC policy meeting was held. The USEPA and North American Development Bank (NADBank) allocated \$330,000 for bypass equipment. May 2018 all the equipment purchased was delivered and deployed. Comision Estatal de Servicios Publicos de Mexicali (CESPM – Mexicali’s state owned Water Utility Commission) brought additional equipment to help with the rehabilitation work and built temporary pumping facilities. These efforts assisted in mitigating and preventing most of the raw discharges into the New River from Mexico.

In June 2018, Pumping Plant No. 4 had an electrical failure causing 1 million gallons of raw sewage to spill into the New River in a 70-minute period; then another in August 2018 where a pump failed at the Madero Lift Station causing 47,550 gallons to spill in a 3-hour 20-minute period. The equipment purchased was used to assist with this occurrence.

New River in Imperial Valley

The 3 key components in the 2011 New River Strategic Plan (NRSP) are river reaches, structural controls, and non-structural controls. The plan consists of 3 river reaches: Reach 1 in Calexico, Reach 2 in Seeley and Reach 3 in Brawley. Structural controls, such as waste water treatment plants, wetlands or aeration are another key component. Non-structural controls, such as regulatory measures, are the other component.

In Reach 1, a New River Parkway will begin phased construction March/April 2019.

Phase 1 of the New River Improvement Project consists of the design, cost estimates and environmental documents of a fully-automated trash screen to remove 1 ton per day of domestic trash; a bypass encasement starting near the international boundary, with the outfall east of the All-American Canal; and a 5.0 million gallon per day pump-back system. This would be a secondary treated wastewater from Calexico Waste Water Treatment Plant. Phase 1 contract was awarded to Michael Baker Inc. in March of 2018. Phase 1 to be completed October 31, 2018. Phase 2 consists of construction.

California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 7, 2018 Border Activities Report

The Regional Board participated in the following border-related activities:

Binational Technical Committee and New River tours May, July and October.

Held a New River Workshop in May.

California Mexico Border Relations Council meeting in July

Calexico Community Meeting in July

Continue with New River Improvement Project stakeholder meetings on an on-going basis throughout the year.

In Summary

Binational cooperation has worked; the New River is threatened by the condition of the aging infrastructure in Mexicali, CESPM has received equipment to assist in preventing discharges of raw sewage into the New River; federal agencies and NADBank must prioritize CESPM’s projects for funding the \$75 million problem.

The New River Improvement Project for the River Parkway is shovel ready. Will go out for public bid December 2018; New River Improvement Project Calexico Phase 1 to be completed by October 31, 2018.

Question & Answer (Q&A):

Q: How far is the outfall east of the All-American Canal?

A: It's out of the right-of-way by 300-400 feet.

Q: Who will have ownership of the facility?

A: City of Calexico.

Q: 30 years ago, it was said the New River was to be encased in the La Mesa area. Is this still going to happen? Is the State responsible for this project as well?

A: Not sure who was going to do the encasement. The CRWQCB is only responsible for the current New River Improvement Project.

Q: What does the water from Mexico look like for the New River in the future?

A: Mexico intends to re-use more of the water in the future. The current trend is showing lower flows.

Q: What is the primary purpose of the project?

A: Minimizing threat to public health.

Q: Will the quality of the water to the Salton Sea still be the same?

A: Not going to change, it will be the same amount and quality of water.

Q: This project is just creating a bypass from the City of Calexico?

A: Yes, it's raising the quality of life of the residents living by the New River.

Q: Will water be swimmable?

A: It is secondary treated.

Q: What will be the operation and maintenance cost?

A: There will be a MOU in place with the City. It's estimated at \$150,000.

Q: Where will the trash be going that is collected?

A: Hasn't been addressed yet. Still determining the trash hazard and how it has to be handled.

Q: What are the sources of funding for the construction?

A: Prop 68 \$10 million; another Prop (Prop number unknown) currently on the ballot for \$20 million. If current Prop passes, the project will be 100% funded.

Q: Where is the bypass water going to be diverted to?

A: The outfall will be east of the All-American Canal back into the New River. The untreated flow will be supplemented with secondary treated water.

Presentation Two: Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan, Kevin Kelley, General Manager, Imperial Irrigation District (IID)

Mr. Kelly discussed where IID stands with the Drought Contingency Plan (DCP).

The intent of the Colorado River Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan is to reduce the likelihood of Lake Mead reaching certain critical low reservoir elevations; to reduce the risk of involuntary Upper Basin curtailment to maintain compliance with the Colorado River Compact and authorize conserved water storage in the Upper Basin; provide Lower Basin operational certainty; and to bring into effect the Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan (Mexico's participation in drought contingency planning) under the International Boundary and Water Commission's Minute 323. He presented a slide prepared by the Bureau of Reclamation showing the probability of Lake Mead dropping below elevation 1020 feet, a critically low level. With a Drought Contingency Plan in place, the probability of reaching this low level drops to below 10%. Without the Drought Contingency Plan, the risk could exceed 40% by the year 2026.

He presented a slide outlining the various elements of a Drought Contingency Plan (DCP), including federal legislation, and various interstate and intrastate agreements in the Upper and Lower Basin States.

The Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan would provide for water contributions from the Lower Basin States ranging from 200,000 to 600,000 acre-feet per year through the year 2026 to shore up Lake Mead elevations; these contributions would be in addition to shortage reductions already identified in the 2007 Interim Shortage Guidelines. There would also be additional operational flexibility for some types of conserved water, among other elements of the plan. He presented a slide showing the cumulative water contributions of each of the three lower basin states (California, Arizona, Nevada) under varying conditions through 2026, in accordance with the terms of the DCP.

In California, various DCP implementation agreements would be required, including agreements between and among irrigation districts and municipalities, and the Metropolitan Water District.

We are in year 19 of the drought. IID recognizes the problem of the Salton Sea and the impacts of water transfers. IID is not interested in water transfers. IID is not interested in system conservation.

There are three things IID wants from the DCP. IID is willing to contribute to the DCP, contingent upon IID having the ability to create storage behind Lake Mead up to 300,000 acre-feet (as overrun assistance, not as a transfer), recognition of and commitment by the Federal government and other State entities to a sustainable Salton Sea, and partnerships to address these problems. It's also important to have support by our water users.

If the DCP moves forward, its terms will go through 2026. IID needs operational flexibility tools to manage its water and needs others to recognize the Salton Sea elevation problem cannot be exacerbated.

Q: Can the return flow sustain the Salton Sea?

A: No

Q: How important is it to have an equitable distribution plan?

A: You can't manage what you can't measure.

Q: How close is California to having an agreement on DCP?

A: IID and Metropolitan Water District have had several meetings. Estimating, we are at about 95%, the remaining 5% is tough.

Q: Does IID have room to store more if a farmer wants to?

A: Yes

Public Comments:

None

Board Discussion and Future Agenda Items:

- IBWC Mexican Section – Report on New River and other projects.
- Security along the US/MX border – Border Patrol, Homeland Security
- Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program (LCRMSCP) Update
- Yuma Mesa Irrigation & Drainage District Proposed Fallowing Program

Next meeting January 23, 2019 in Yuma County, location to be determined

The meeting adjourned at 5:35pm.

*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.