

USIBWC Citizens Forum Meeting Minutes
November 17, 2011 6:00-8:30 pm
Dempsey Holder Center
City of Imperial Beach, California
*Tentative Meeting Notes

There were approximately 16 members of the public present. All members of the board were present with the exception of Patrick McDonough of the County of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department. Steve Smullen (Chair) kicked off the meeting, thanked all those present for their attendance and requested that the new board members self introduce. He then turned the meeting over to the Co-Chair Ben McCue of Wildcoast. Mr. McCue stated that the purpose of the Citizens Forum was to promote a 2-way exchange of information about IBWC projects and activities. Mr. McCue introduced the first speaker on the agenda, Robert Nienhuis of Veolia Water North America, Operations Supervisor of the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP), who gave an update on the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit compliance.

After an overview of the treatment plant processes, Mr. Nienhuis described the warranty work performed since initial plant start up in January 2011. These items included recoating of the clarifier launders, re-inspection and certification of the secondary clarifier sludge collectors, and elimination of hydraulic bypassing at the plant. All of these items resulted in conditions that compromised effluent quality, due to mixing of secondary effluent with advanced primary effluent, aeration tanks and clarifiers that had to be taken in and out of service, or clarifiers that remain out of service due to misaligned chain and flight systems. In addition, a plant upset in late June of 2011 caused loss of the plant's activated sludge population, and caused effluent violations during July 2011. In response to the upset, Veolia has raised activated sludge concentrations in the aeration tanks and installed pH and electrical conductivity meters at the headworks so that potential future shock loading can be anticipated. In the last 3 months, the plant recorded 4 exceedances on daily standard. All four were due to high flow conditions and solids washout in the secondary clarifiers. All effluent metals and toxicity standards have been met since start up. The plant is performing well if run within design parameters. Mr. Nienhuis was asked if these issues are normal during operations start up? Response was yes; in fact it is fewer than expected in a normal startup. Mark West noted that surfers have been saying that the beach seems cleaner. Steve Smullen noted that the City of San Diego reported in May 2011 during an inspection of the South Bay Ocean Outfall (the pipe that conveys treated wastewater to the ocean) that the discharge from the diffusers was basically clear, whereas when the plant was discharging sewage treated only to the advanced primary level, the discharge was dark. Mr. Smullen also noted that because of the issues with warranties and plant upsets there were issues with NPDES permit compliance. Until USIBWC can prove a three-month discharge in compliance, the Regional Water Quality Control Board will not issue a new permit. Failures now are due to solids washout and not treatment issues per se.

Rob Stroop of URS provided a status report on habitat mitigation associated with the SBIWTP secondary plant construction – which included clean out of the Goat Canyon Sediment Basins and invasives removal /re-vegetation of 5 acres in lower Goat Canyon. Cleanout included removal of 42,000 cubic yards of sediment, 1000 tires and 15 tons of trash. This was much less than the anticipated 60000 yards of sediment, 3000 tires and 50 tons of trash and is attributed to cleaner conditions in the upper parts of Los Laureles Canyon from community

projects that took place earlier in the year. Duration of the sediment removal was approximately 3 weeks.

On behalf of the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association (SWIA), Tito Marchant of Ecological Management Inc. provided a presentation on the habitat restoration portion of the mitigation project. SWIA has done over 1200 acres of this type of work in the Tijuana River Valley over the last 8 years. Habitat restoration includes removal of patches of arundo donax and restoration of riparian trees and shrubs, including coastal sage scrub. The window for removal is narrow and must be done in the dormant period. The time around late November is best. The 5-year restoration plan has been fully approved by State Parks and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The recent rains have helped.

Fernando Tellez Gamez of Mexico's National Water Commission (Conagua) was unable to attend to present on the Rio Alamar channelization, however Danielle Litke of Wildcoast filled in and provided a summary of the activities during Tijuana River Action Month (October 2011). The mid-September to mid-October time frame is critical for cleanups as it is outside of the nesting and flood seasons. The tallies for this season were 2467 volunteers in both countries, with over 2000 in Mexico. Over 63,000 pounds of trash was removed and over 43,000 pounds was removed in Tijuana. There were 35 separate targeted sites in Tijuana alone. Volunteers donated 8000 hours and improved conditions on more than 8 acres.

The floor was then opened for public comments. There was disappointment expressed on the absence of the speaker from Conagua. Paul Ganster mentioned that he has long been familiar with the Rio Alamar and is concerned that there may be cross-border impacts. Steve Smullen stated that no information had been received by the USIBWC from the Mexican Section on the project, but that it could be requested. Margarita Diaz, a resident near the project, stated that 1/3 of the project had already been 90% completed and that squatters on the land would probably be displaced. There was a question from the floor on ocean monitoring – has there been any analysis of secondary treatment vs. primary treatment as it affects the ocean? Steve Smullen stated that USIBWC is required to monitor ocean waters for the NPDES permit jointly with the City of San Diego, but that no comparison had been done and nothing was in the works. Mayda Winter stated that the Surfrider lawsuit and the subsequent monitoring study produced infrastructure that was still in place but that the funding to Scripps had expired. Steve Smullen stated that the USIBWC had suggested a modified ocean monitoring approach to the Regional Board but doubted that it would be allowed without further scientific study.

Announcements by USIBWC - flow monitoring equipment will be installed in Goat and Smugglers Canyon by February and will tie in to the County ALERT system and to the SBIWTP. USIBWC expects to have permits in place to remove 60,000 cubic yards of material from the Tijuana River Flood Control Project – some of that material could possibly be used for beach replenishment in Imperial Beach. Ben McCue asked if Goat Canyon sediment removal could be done annually by IBWC instead of State Parks. Steve Smullen responded that he doubted this would happen since State Parks has the O&M responsibility.

Suggestions for future presentations include:

- Rio Alamar Channelization: Effect on cross-boundary flow and IBWC operations
- La Paz Agreement: implications on cross-border notification
- City of San Diego recycled water study – presentation by Marsi Steierer.
- Update on transnational desalination projects; project locations and relevance to public
- Institutional structure in Mexico related to water issues

SWIA fate and transport study for Goat Canyon sediment disposal
Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team recovery strategy: role of IBWC -12/7/11 rollout
meeting
EPA- Border 2020 and bi-national policy

The next meeting is scheduled for February 16, 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.