SOUTHEAST ARIZONA CITIZENS FORUM  
October 14, 2021  
Webinar Meeting  
*Tentative Meeting Notes*

**Board Members in Attendance:**  
Bruce Bracker, Supervisor, Santa Cruz County  
Kathleen “Kathi” Campana, Santa Cruz Board of Realtors  
John Combo, Tubac Citizen  
Timothy (Tim) Grotheer, Tubac Citizen  
Ben Lomeli, Friends of the Santa Cruz River  
Harlan G. Lusk, National Park Service (Retired) Sahuarita Town Council  
Edna Mendoza, Arizona Dept. of Environmental Quality  
Jaime Rivera, Deputy Director of Conveyance, Pima County  
Mark Taylor, Vice President, Westland Resources, Inc.

**USIBWC Staff in Attendance:**  
Dr. Maria-Elena Giner, Commissioner  
John Light, Nogales Field Office Area Operations Manager  
Ramon Macias, Principal Engineer, Engineering Dept.  
Daniel Avila, Principal Engineer, Operations Dept.  
Sally Spener, U.S. Secretary  
Crystal Cadillo, Civil Engineer, Engineer Dept.

**Members of the Public in Attendance:**  
There were approximately 21 members of the public in attendance.

**Welcoming Remarks:**  
John Light, Nogales Field Office Area Operations Manager and Citizens Forum Co-Chair convened the Citizens Forum meeting and called the meeting to order.

Commissioner Giner gave opening remarks. She said she’s happy to be with the USIBWC. Giner talked about her work experience along the border. Giner’s career with the Border Environment Cooperation Commission and North American Development Bank spanned over 20 years. She worked with many border communities to develop environmental infrastructure. Giner is aware of the IOI and sanitation issues. Giner would like to leverage her skills with the USIBWC who is very talented, and with her contacts in Southeast Arizona to accomplish projects. USIBWC’s priorities are sanitation, and she is excited to continue working with them in her new role at USIBWC.

**Presentation #1 Nogales Trunkline and International Outfall Interceptor**  
Crystal Cadillo, Civil Engineer, USIBWC

**Questions/Answers:**  
**Comments: Ben Lomeli:**  
Please consider installing real-time transmitting transducer sensors that can detect flow levels and water quality changes for breach or “plug” monitoring. Sensors are relatively inexpensive and could provide early warning of ruptures in Nogales Wash when, like July of 2017, the whole system was under water and it took several days to detect the rupture.
The IOI also runs along the bottom of Nogales Wash. It also crosses the Wash in a few places, so more than just bank protection will be required. Our local and downstream communities need to work together, and all responsible parties need to diligently seek and advocate for sufficient funding levels to implement appropriate and permanent solutions to all these flood and water resource related issues and potential sources of contamination that threaten life, health and property. The capacity of the Nogales Wash channel must be upgraded to relieve flooding in Nogales and to eliminate threats of bursting the IOI. The IOI must be completely repaired or replaced/relocated and all sources of contamination along Nogales Wash must be eliminated as soon as possible to protect downstream potable water supplies in perpetuity.

**Question: Mark Taylor.** What about inflow and infiltration affecting the pipeline?  
**Answer: Crystal Cadillo.** The liner will seal cracks and holes to prevent infiltration. This will reduce flow to the Nogales International Wastewater Treatment Plant.

**Answer: John Light.** We do see the influence of inflow and infiltration in the IOI at the treatment plant. It’s mostly seasonal. Before our record monsoons this year, flows were at historic lows to the treatment plant. During the monsoon, as the groundwater table increased, we saw more flow at the plant.

**Question: Mark Taylor.** Is protecting the existing pipeline from potential erosion at the Nogales Wash part of the project?  
**Answer: Crystal Cadillo.** There were inspections of known areas where the IOI might be vulnerable. We decided there were two areas of concern where the IOI was considered vulnerable, especially due to stormwater debris during the monsoon. The project, in phases 1-3, includes Wash repairs at manhole 86 where there is bank erosion and encasing a portion that is not encased, where it is just bare pipeline in the creek. We will also address this at manhole 93.

**Comment: Misael Cabrera, Director, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality**  
Commissioner Giner, we had begun conversations with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers about rehabilitating/improving stormwater infrastructure in Sonora. We are happy to resume those discussions with your help. I saw the IOI contract has been awarded and there is still funding available for this project. Taking into consideration USIBWC funding, the Arizona match, and the million dollars from the foundation, are there plans to accelerate the next phases?  
**Answer: Crystal Cadillo.** We initially planned Phase 4 next year then the following year Phase 5. But we now expect to be able to solicit and award both Phases 4 and 5 in this next fiscal year.

**Comment: Senator Rosanna Gabaldon.** She noted her work on this issue over her years of service in the Legislature and is glad to see the IOI rehabilitation moving forward as well as some work on the Nogales Wash. However, she wants to do so much more. She noted her constituents have experienced raw sewage in the Wash for years. She hopes that under Commissioner Giner’s leadership, more attention will be brought to the issue and that communications with the Mexican Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission will improve. She also applauded the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality for working with maquilas on the other side of the border. She would like to support efforts to look at other long-term solutions for the Nogales Wash.  
**Response: Commissioner Giner.** She expressed her interest in taking a holistic view of the issues. She suggested that a white paper describing these challenges would be helpful, to be able to have a policy paper that would help document the board’s concerns and actions that could be taken to address them.
Comment: Senator Rosanna Gabaldon. She noted the board had written a letter in the past when Commissioner Drusina was at USIBWC. She also invited Commissioner Giner to visit the border communities, which Commissioner Giner said she would be happy to do.

Question: Mark Taylor. What is going on with Sanitary Sewer Overflows in Mexico that affect the United States?
Answer: John Light. He explained that during storms, to relieve flooding, manhole covers are removed in Nogales, Sonora. As a result, silt and sediment ends up in the pipelines, damages pumps, and causes Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs). Some investment from the United States is trying to address this. Dr. Laura Norman from USGS is working on this.
Comment: Edna Mendoza. The North American Development Bank has projects in Nogales, Sonora to address these issues. We should invite them to present on this at a future meeting.

Comment: Bruce Bracker
Thank you for a great update on the IOI. This is a tremendous accomplishment by very dedicated public officials. While there are many other storm water flow issues to tackle and a huge issue of responsibility of maintenance of the IOI, these should not detract from the fact that we will have a much safer system when this project is done.

Comment: Laura M. Norman
To speak to John Light's introduction (thank you!!), the USGS has been working in Ambos Nogales for a while. My research has been in identifying where storm water infrastructure would be most useful to reduce erosion, reduce flooding, and increase recharge throughout the Arizona-Sonora border. IBWC funded some of this research at Nogales, Sonora ~10 years ago, when detention structures were being installed. I would be happy to brief anyone who is interested and could share a lot of publications we have developed. I am working as an Embassy Science Fellow in the Municipality of Nogales, Sonora too. If you are curious, I gave a >20 min. talk last week describing this with some projects/results of my research that are being used now climate adaptation and mitigation strategies... available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwpF2qFm-dY&t=16s

Presentation #2 Managing Effluent Recharge and Recovery in Southern Arizona
Presenter's name: James Brown
Phone number: (520) 724-6033
Email address: james.brown@pima.gov

Questions/Answers:
Comment: John Light, USIBWC. A good part of the effluent from the Nogales International Wastewater Treatment Plant belongs to Mexico. There is value to that effluent and different entities have looked at options to exercise that value.
Comment: John Combo. If you could offer funding to Nogales, Sonora, it could be a way to encourage them to continue to have that effluent coming to the United States.
Comment: Ben Lomeli. Fortunately, gravity and costs are on our side! (To keep flow in the river).

Comment: Edna Mendoza

Presentation #3 PFAS Occurrences within the Tucson Basin
Presenter’s name: John Kmiec, Interim Director, Tucson Water

Comment: Senator Rosanna Gabaldon. I applaud the City of Tucson and ADEQ for working together to address PFAS. Unified Community Advisory Board (UCAB) on October 20th at 5:45 p.m. It will be an interesting meeting about contaminants in Tucson. Join the meeting at https://arcadis-us.webex.com/arcadis-us/onstage/g.php?MTID=e8d2760120935cbb3913f5a24c5dc7080

Comment: Bruce Bracker. Great presentation, thank you. What did Marana spend on the treatment plants?
Answer: Kmiec. $17 million

Public Comment:
Luke Cole: The Sonoran Institute puts out our Living River reports and has done so for several years. The purpose is to show the value of putting effluent into the Santa Cruz River. We use IBWC data. We have a long-term dataset and will benefit officials considering what the future of the river could be. We would be more than happy to brief the Citizens Forum or any interested parties. This year’s report is in both English and Spanish: https://sonoraninstitute.org/resource/living-river-report-2020/

Board Discussion
Comment: Bruce Bracker. What have you done to try to mitigate the failure of the lines in Mexico, with wastewater coming into the United States?
Answer: John Light. With this year’s record monsoon, there was extensive damage to the collection system in Nogales, Sonora and they had a difficult time making repairs so there was wastewater discharged directly to the Nogales Wash, which crossed the border into the United States. Helping Nogales, Sonora to have a more robust system is part of the holistic approach. It was significant amounts of wastewater that impacted us. There were efforts to chlorinate on both sides of the border.

Comment: Ben Lomeli. We would like PFAS sampling in Rio Rico, which is downstream of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Sonoita Creek.
Answer: Misael Cabrera, Director, Arizona Department of Water Resources. We did collect some limited samples there and we have that data. I will wok with my team to deliver it to you.

Suggested Future Agenda Items:
1. NADB projects in Nogales, Sonora—significant work has been done
3. Water drawdown in Cochise County. They are talking about potentially making it an AMA (Active Management Area).
4. The Living River report by Luke Cole, Sonoran Institute
5. Update on the cross-border Santa Cruz aquifer study (not sure if it’ll be ready by Feb. 2022)
6. San Pedro recharge basins
7. IOI updates
8. Presentation from new Commissioner of the Mexican Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission

Comment. Commissioner Giner. I challenge this group to develop an agenda of things we should all be working on so we have a common message of what is needed in our region.

Comment: John Light. At the next board meeting, we could formulate some ideas and suggested actions items, a plan we could show the Commissioner. The board seemed to like this idea.

The next Southeast Arizona Citizens Forum will be **February 10, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. via Teams**. The emphasis will be on projects in Cochise County. Please send this info to: Lori.kuczmanski@ibwc.gov

Meeting adjourned.

** Meeting notes are tentative and summarize in draft the contents and discussion of Citizen Forum meetings. While these notes are intended to provide a general overview of Citizen’s Forum Meetings, they may not necessarily be accurate or complete, and may not be representative of USIBWC policy or positions.