

A Message from U.S. Commissioner Drusina

“Excellence Through Teamwork”



Inside this issue:

<i>Message from the Commissioner</i>	1
<i>Signing IBWC Minute 323 on Colorado River</i>	2
<i>IBWC Addresses Transboundary Issues in the Tijuana River Basin</i>	3
<i>Minute 323 Ceremony in Santa Fe</i>	4
<i>USIBWC Addresses Sewage Leak in Nogales, Arizona</i>	6

The IBWC continues to demonstrate to the United States and Mexican governments that through cooperation even the most difficult challenges can be resolved in a friendly and successful manner to the benefit of all. So far this year we have faced challenges that have resulted from the drought in the Western United States, aging infrastructure along the border, administration executive orders calling for new efficiencies, budget uncertainty and an aging workforce. Any one of these could cause an agency to reel back and become ineffective, but not the U.S. Section of the IBWC. We have faced each and every one and have moved forward.

The drought that threatens to impact millions in municipalities, industry and agriculture was addressed with the enactment of Minute 323 in September 2017. That international agreement is the culmination of years of work and it establishes a fair way to deal with water shortage and surplus, protects the environment, and promotes water conservation. This nine-year agreement is good for both the United States and Mexico.

Aging infrastructure is creating new challenges across the border. The IBWC is addressing that demand in San Diego, California-Tijuana, Baja California by investing 17 million dollars in the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant. This is on top of the 335 million dollars in capital expenditures since 1991 to treat sewage from Tijuana. A sewer line break earlier this year in Tijuana dumped millions of gallons of sewage into the transboundary Tijuana River and we investigated. The Mexican government reports that, after the IBWC task force found a series of operational deficiencies in Tijuana, they have acquired some 12 million dollars in emergency funds that are dedicated to fixing the infrastructure and improving the operational needs to respond to system breakdowns.

The U.S. administration, in a cost control measure, has ordered all federal agencies to cut back personnel authorizations. The Commission has come up with a plan that merges responsibilities of different positions and has frozen others to meet this order. Based on our guidance to date, the good news is that no personnel will lose their jobs.

The federal government’s annual budget in modern times has consistently resulted in “Continuing Resolutions (CR)” that extend our funding for months until our legislators can settle their differences. While the current CR ends December 8th, we are hopeful that they will resolve their differences and pass another resolution that keeps us working in full force into next year.

All in all, the IBWC continues to meet the challenges along the border and it is simply because we have the best employees in the nation. Happy Holidays and may God continue to Bless the United States of America.

Signing of Minute 323: EXTENSION OF COOPERATIVE MEASURES AND ADOPTION OF A BINATIONAL WATER SCARCITY CONTINGENCY PLAN IN THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, has concluded a new Colorado River agreement, Minute 323, "Extension of Cooperative Measures and Adoption of a Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan in the Colorado River Basin." Commission officials signed the Minute on September 21 in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua and both governments approved it on September 27.

The agreement, which will remain in effect through 2026, extends or replaces key elements of Minute 319, a previous agreement that expires at the end of 2017. Minute 323 contains various provisions to improve U.S. - Mexico cooperation in Colorado River management. It establishes a Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan that would take effect should a Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan be put into effect in the United States. This is in addition to a provision on low elevation reservoir conditions at Lake Mead, during which Mexico would experience water delivery reductions in parallel with those in the United States in order to deter more severe reductions in the future. Under the Minute, Mexico would also receive additional quantities of Colorado River water during certain high elevation reservoir conditions.



The Minute allows Mexico to defer delivery of a portion of its Colorado River allotment in the event of potential emergencies, such as earthquakes, or as a result of water conservation projects in Mexico. This water will be available for subsequent delivery to Mexico as determined through its planning processes. While this boosts Lake Mead elevation to the benefit of all users, this also gives Mexico greater flexibility in how it manages its Colorado River allotment.

The Minute implements measures to address salinity impacts stemming from the joint cooperative actions and identifies measures to address daily flow variability in Colorado River water deliveries to Mexico. Another key aspect is water for the environment and funding for environmental monitoring and habitat restoration. As in Minute 319, the new agreement also provides U.S. investment in water conservation projects in Mexico to generate additional volumes of water that will be shared between both countries and the environment.

"Minute 323 is the result of many rounds of technical discussions involving a broad group of stakeholders from both countries. This agreement demonstrates that through cooperation we can resolve the most difficult challenges," said U.S. Commissioner Edward Drusina of the International Boundary and Water Commission.

Mexican Commissioner Roberto Salmon said, "This agreement provides certainty for water operations in both countries and mainly establishes a planning tool that allows Mexico to define the most suitable actions for managing its Colorado River waters allotted by the 1944 Water Treaty."



**US and Mexican
Section
Commissioners and
Secretaries sign
Minute 323**

IBWC Addresses Transboundary Issues in the Tijuana River Basin

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC), directed an investigation of a sewer collector collapse near the confluence of the Alamar and Tijuana Rivers, in Tijuana, Baja California during February 2017. Rain, aging underground structures, failure of a bus shelter, and overhead and buried power lines complicated repair efforts, and the sewage peak flows were diverted to the Tijuana River, eventually flowing into the United States. Repairs were not able to be completed until February 23, 2017.

The recommendations from the IBWC investigation were to conduct routine, binational observations of the Tijuana sewer system at locations that contain transient flows, damaged infrastructure, discharges to the Tijuana River, and/or ongoing sewer system rehabilitation projects. The IBWC developed an initial plan to conduct joint tours of the Tijuana sewer system prior to binational technical committee meetings to gain a visual understanding of the issues and the progress. An initial set of site visit locations was developed with the understanding that the locations can be modified based on public interest, the recommendations of the binational technical committee members, and emerging challenges requiring attention. The plan for the tours should be finalized by the end of the year so that committee members can begin the site visits in early 2018.

Another area of concern was the communication between governmental agencies in Mexico and the United States and the timely notification of the public in both countries when a sewage spill occurs. To address this issue, the IBWC improved its notification procedures adding an inter-governmental notification protocol to formalize timely notification whenever there is an event that could lead to a transboundary spill, so the proper agencies can take protective measures.



Emergency repairs were made to a collapsed Tijuana sewer collector

Commission Minute 323 Signing Ceremony, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Department of the Interior Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt, Arizona Department of Water Resources Director Tom Buschatzke, Border Affairs Coordinator Hillary Quam of the Office of Mexican Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, Director General for North America Mauricio Ibarra Ponce de Leon of the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Relations, and IBWC Commissioners Edward Drusina and Roberto Salmon, accompanied by members of their staffs, gathered in Santa Fe, New Mexico on September 27, 2017 to commemorate Commission Minute 323, "Extension of Cooperative Measures and Adoption of a Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan in the Colorado River Basin." The Commissioners signed letters announcing the Minute's entry into force. The ceremony, attended by more than 200 guests, took place during the Water Education Foundation's Colorado River Symposium.

"I congratulate the two Commissioners of the IBWC for their hard work and commitment to signing this Minute. It will provide greater certainty and stability throughout the Colorado River Basin, in both the U.S. and Mexico, through 2026," said Deputy Secretary Bernhardt.

Arizona Department of Water Resources Director Tom Buschatzke said, "The State of Arizona appreciates the efforts of the United States and Mexico to continue binational cooperation on long-term water management. This agreement provides substantial benefits to Arizona, particularly regarding opportunities for augmenting water supplies, which is a top priority for Governor Ducey."



COM Drusina (top) and Border Coordinator Quam (right) speak at the ceremony in Santa Fe, NM



Minute 323 Ceremony..



Deputy Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt addresses attendees (left) and Mexican Diplomat Mauricio Ibarra presents remarks (right)

All photographs courtesy of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.



Commissioners sign entry into force letters (left) and Tom Buschatzke, Director, Arizona Dept. of Water Resources, addresses the group (right)



Regional water leaders packed the room (left) and Commissioners Salmon and Drusina thanked them for their support (right)

USIBWC Addresses Sewage Leak in Nogales, Arizona

Using its authority to respond to transboundary emergencies, the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) took action in late July after a sewage leak was detected in Nogales, Arizona in a pipeline known as the International Outfall Interceptor (IOI). On August 2, 2017, USIBWC contractor KE&G Construction, Inc. of Tucson, Arizona completed installation of a bypass system to divert sewage that had been leaking from the IOI into the Nogales Wash. This ensured the sewage would be captured and conveyed for treatment at the Nogales International Wastewater Treatment Plant (NIWTP), operated by the USIBWC. The sewer line, which is owned by the City of Nogales, Arizona, conveys city sewage from Nogales and Rio Rico, Arizona along with Mexican sewage.

KE&G Construction personnel installed the temporary bypass pipeline around the damaged section of the IOI to contain the sewage and so that the IOI could be inspected and repaired. The pipeline, which was placed into operation in 1972, is in poor condition. Excessive amounts of groundwater infiltrate the pipeline, significantly increasing the volume in the wastewater system. This increased volume results in higher than normal operations and maintenance costs for treatment of the wastewater at the NIWTP.

Also, in October, KE&G Construction began emergency repairs on a manhole that pertains to the IOI. Manhole 89 became dislodged due to heavy rainfall and storm waters in Potrero Creek. The temporary bypass system set in place on August 2 remained operational until the repairs were completed October 30, 2017. The \$1.65 million contract included building a diversion of the Nogales Wash around the repair area, installing shoring along the bank for bank protection, and replacing the damaged manhole and IOI pipeline.



Manhole 89 (left), and repair work (right)

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