

International Boundary and Water Commission United States and Mexico

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TRANSBOUNDARY ISSUES IN THE TIJUANA RIVER BASIN NEWSLETTER



The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC) continues to report on activities conducted for the transboundary spill that occurred on February 1, 2017. A section of the 48-inch diameter “Insurgentes” Sewer Collector collapsed near the confluence of the Rio Alamar and Tijuana River, in Tijuana, Baja California causing untreated wastewater to be released into the Tijuana River flowing through Mexico and the United States.

The IBWC has been implementing the recommendations from the Spill Report through the Minute 320 Water Quality work group. Through Minute 320, entitled “**General Framework for Binational Cooperation on Transboundary Issues in the Tijuana River Basin**”, various issues in the Tijuana River Watershed were identified that require binational coordination between the United States and Mexico in order to be addressed, coming to the conclusion that the priority topics of mutual interest in the basin are **Water Quality, Sediments, and Solid Waste**. Minute 320 established a Binational Core Group (BCG) and three Work Groups comprised of government agencies and NGOs from both countries, which meet regularly to discuss and identify cooperative opportunities on the three priority issues mentioned above.

This newsletter summarizes the actions carried out by the Minute 320 Work Groups to address the February 2017 Spill as well as the three work groups general activities through November 2017.

Photographs of the BCG and Work Group meetings this year in 2017.



Water Quality

- To address the recommendations that came out of the investigation, the agencies in both countries that form part of this Work Group undertook the following:
 - **Equipment for Emergency Situations:** The State Public Utility Commission of Tijuana (CESPT) purchased a pumping truck to manage large flows of wastewater. Likewise, it purchased compressors, motor pumps and soil compaction equipment to repair affected areas. CESPT is considering a total investment of 2 million dollars on this item.



- **Installation of Flowmeters:** Both Sections of the IBWC purchased and installed equipment to record the level of the flows in the Tijuana River, the Alamar River and at the intake to the PB-CILA Pump Station upstream of the international border. Additionally, USIBWC has issued a purchase order to relocate the meter originally planned in 2016 for PS No. 1 to the canal site, between PS No.1 and San Antonio de Los Buenos Wastewater Treatment Plant. This is expected to be installed and operational in the next few months. The flow meter installed at the Rio Alamar was stolen on Nov 5, 2017. MXIBWC is considering the next steps for its replacement.
- **Communications Protocols:** An international notification protocol was drafted and formalized by the IBWC on September 21. In addition, the notification of IBWC when spills with potential transboundary impact occur was incorporated into CESPT's emergency response protocol. Also, an operations protocol for the PB-CILA Pump Station was prepared that outlines the operations procedures both for the rainy season and for the dry period. The protocols have been finalized and signed and are available on the IBWC website.
- **Infrastructure Assessment:** The Scope of Work was prepared to develop a diagnostic on the existing pumping and bypass system, which includes the evaluation of new additional infrastructure alternatives in the United States and Mexico to increase the capacity to manage flows in the Tijuana River. Meetings were held in both countries to receive input from stakeholders. The NADB is currently incorporating those comments and will have the final scope of work submitted for contractor proposals in January of 2018. This Diagnostic will be funded by the North American Development Bank (NADB).
- **Infrastructure Works:** CESPT and the Baja California State Government issued an "Emergency Declaration" in March in order to get the funding needed to rehabilitate the wastewater collectors affected by previous rainfall, which include the "Insurgentes", "Oriente", "Poniente" and "San Martín-Cañón del Sainz" Collectors in Tijuana. The following table summarizes the works and investments made in US dollars through November as a result of the Emergency Declaration:

	Total	Amount Exercised	To Be Exercised
Rehabilitation	\$6,195,068.56	\$2,470,248.47	\$3,724,820.09
Protective Works	\$215,116.22	\$215,116.22	
Equipment	\$2,065,563.92	\$845,198.44	\$1,220,365.48
Cleaning of collectors	\$500,854.44	\$79,243.00	\$421,611.44
Total	\$8,976,603.14	\$3,609,806.13	\$5,366,797.01

In addition to the above, CESPT with its internal funding of \$2,190,000 USD undertook the rehabilitation of the “Sánchez Taboada”, “Líneas Cuatas”, “Ave. Las Américas” wastewater collectors and the culverts on Calle Montes Escandinavos. This funding, plus the resources allocated as a result of the “Emergency Declaration,” makes a total investment of \$11 million dollars in sanitation infrastructure and equipment in Tijuana.

Also, this year CESPT completed the *Sanitation, Sewer Lines, and Reuse Master Plan*, which outlines the short, medium and long-term sanitation needs in Tijuana, and establishes an action and works plan to implement the proposed infrastructure, the total cost of which is \$256,487 USD.

- **Water Quality Monitoring:** The IBWC prepared a routine water quality monitoring program for the Tijuana River that includes sites in Mexico and the United States, and also looks to include the Tijuana River tributary arroyos and canyons that cross the international boundary; sampling will be performed at these sites each month to measure many parameters in an effort to characterize the flows and determine potential sources. Additionally, the U. S. Department of Homeland Security contracted Parsons Engineering to conduct a 6-month intensive monitoring effort to characterize transboundary flows in 6 cross border canyons, which should begin in early Jan 2018. Similarly, Mexico’s National Water Commission (CONAGUA) established monitoring sites on the Tijuana River and the Alamar River as part of its national water quality monitoring network.
- **Binational Inspection Field Visits:** Both Sections of the IBWC carried out joint monthly inspections of the Tijuana River channel in order to detect and address in a timely manner any untreated wastewater discharges into the river. Additionally, a plan was developed to carry out binational field visits to the sanitation system and the critical sites where wastewater flows are contributed to the Tijuana River and to other transboundary streams.

Sediment

- In 2017, the Sediment Work Group has focused its efforts on studies, actions and infrastructure to control sediment in the upper part of the watershed.
- The USIBWC has finalized a draft Scope of Work for a feasibility study for sediments basins. The scope of work will include the analysis for two (2) sediment basins, one east of Dairy Mart Road and the other in Smuggler’s Gulch. It also includes the option of a third sediment basin to be determined by the study. The plan has been submitted to stakeholders and the California Regional Water Quality Control Board of review and comment.
- In November, the collection and exchange of data from both sides of the border was completed in order to carry out a Hydrologic, Hydraulic and Sediment study of the Tijuana River Watershed. This study includes the characterization of both the U.S. and Mexican portions of the watershed, the building of hydraulic and sediment

Solid Waste

- The Solid Waste Work Group has made efforts in 2017 to explore the scope of a diagnostic to locate the point sources with the largest contribution of solid waste on both sides of the border; also, to identify the priority issues to address and the infrastructure, resources, equipment, and personnel required; and likewise, to actively promote arroyo and channel cleanup programs, recycling, and public awareness and outreach regarding solid waste disposal on both sides of the border.
- A Scope of Work was prepared to develop a study to install trash booms at various strategic sites on the Tijuana River and its tributaries on both sides of the border. This study is planned to be carried out next year in 2018 pending available funds.
- The State of California, the NGO “Wildcoast”, and the Secretariat of Environmental Protection for the State of Baja California (SPABC) undertook a pilot project to collect and shred tires in the San Diego-Tijuana border, Phase #1 of which successfully collected around 35,000 tires. Phase #2 of this project is expected to begin soon with additional funding provided by NADB.
- The Tijuana Municipal Administration, through the Municipal Public Utilities Department, took actions to capture more than 45,000 metric tons of urban solid waste, with an annual daily average of 1,459.16 metric tons. The cleanup activities executed in 2017 also include areas in Cañón Zapata near the international boundary, the Tijuana River canalization and the East-West Express Lanes.



The IBWC is currently developing a website to increase flow of information and documents related to the Minute 320 workgroups. The current website is located at <https://www.ibwc.gov/Organization/Environmental/Minute320.html>

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