



INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION
UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

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City of Nogales, Arizona, agrees to transfer IOI ownership to USIBWC

The City of Nogales, Arizona, has agreed to transfer its ownership of the International Outfall Interceptor (IOI) to the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC).

This agreement, which the City Council approved Wednesday (April 10), will take effect once USIBWC receives \$12.5 million for operation and maintenance of the nine-mile pipeline through a congressional appropriation or other funding.

“We and other federal, state, and local agencies have been working for years to identify the resources and personnel needed to ensure effective maintenance of the IOI,” USIBWC Commissioner Dr. Maria-Elena Giner, P.E., said. “In light of the particular international challenges involved with the IOI, and the \$34 million federal investment in its rehabilitation, USIBWC is eager to take on responsibility for the pipeline’s maintenance. Prioritizing preventive maintenance will help avoid pipeline breaks and leakage, ensuring more cost-effective repairs and letting us better fulfill our mission of treating U.S. and Mexican wastewater.”

The ownership transfer was made possible by the Nogales Wastewater Improvement Act of 2023.

The Act was led by Arizona U.S. Senators Kyrsten Sinema and Mark Kelly and Representatives Raul Grijalva and Juan Ciscomani.

“Thanks to our law, we’re delivering a solution for Nogales decades in the making. This agreement is the first step in finally strengthening public health and safety in Nogales by giving the U.S. control of the IOI,” said U.S. Sen. Sinema, who originally introduced the Nogales Wastewater Improvement law.

“This announcement is an important step towards addressing failing wastewater infrastructure and protecting public health for folks in Nogales,” said U.S. Sen. Kelly. “This ownership transfer will provide a permanent solution to guarantee maintenance of the outfall interceptor so that Nogales residents will no longer have to bear the cost. I’m committed to ensuring Congress steps up and provides the funding needed to enable the transfer to be completed.”

“Since 2004, my office has worked in Congress to secure funding for repairs and transfer the ownership of the International Outfall Interceptor to the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC),” said U.S. Rep. Grijalva. “I am appreciative of the partnership of the IBWC and Senators Sinema and Kelly to help this effort across the finish line. This marks another point of progress in the collaborative effort to protect public health and the water quality of the Nogales community.”

“As Arizona works towards a more secure water future, strong infrastructure is a pillar of that goal. I am pleased to see the initial approval of the IOI transfer, a step in the right direction in improving filtration, management, and water treatment of this system,” U.S. Rep. Ciscomani said.

“This agreement underscores the importance of collaboration and investment in our infrastructure. The International Outfall Interceptor plays a crucial role in safeguarding our water resources, and I applaud the City of Nogales, the International Boundary and Water Commission, and all partners involved for their dedication to its maintenance and operation,” said Karen Peters, Cabinet Executive Officer of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ). “ADEQ is proud to have facilitated the dialogue between the City of Nogales and IBWC during the negotiation process.”

“After years of intense negotiations and with the new leadership of Commissioner Maria-Elena Griner, the City of Nogales, Arizona, has agreed to transfer its ownership of the International Outfall Interceptor to the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission,” said Nogales Mayor Jorge Maldonado. “This agreement wouldn’t have been possible without the appropriations of federal dollars supported by Senators Kyrsten Sinema and Mark Kelly and Congressmen Raul Grijalva and Juan Ciscomani. With this said, the City of Nogales, Arizona, will continue to work with IBWC in conserving and maintaining a great relationship with each other and Mexico to assure that we all grow together. We thank IBWC for agreeing in all our terms and respecting the future growth for our Community as we resolved this situation with good intentions and with the support of each other.”

The IOI carries transboundary wastewater flows from Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, and Nogales and Rio Rico, Arizona, to the Nogales International Wastewater Treatment Plant (NIWTP).

Installed between 1970 and 1971, it is comprised of reinforced and unreinforced concrete pipe that ranges in size between 24 inches and 42 inches in diameter. Much of the pipeline lies underneath the Nogales Wash channel and Potrero Creek.

The City of Nogales contracted a study to assess the condition of the pipeline in 2005 and identified significant pipeline deterioration.

Rehabilitation of the IOI is being undertaken with funding participation from the USIBWC, and supplemental funds from the Mexican Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission, the State of Arizona, and Freeport McMoRan Foundation.

Under two contracts awarded in 2021 and 2022, SAK Construction used Cured-in-Place-Pipe (CIPP) technology where a liner is inserted in the existing pipeline, then cured to form a solid pipeline inside the old pipeline. Because this technology doesn’t require excavation of the pipeline, construction will cause less traffic disruption.

The rehabilitation is expected to be completed within the next two weeks.

Roughly 12 million gallons per day of treated water from the NIWTP is an important contribution to the Santa Cruz River basin which supplies water for drinking, ranching, farming and other activities critical to the Arizona economy. The river also sustains habitat critical for migratory species.

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries. The USIBWC operates and maintains the NIWTP.



March 27, 2024, Phoenix, Arizona: Dr. Maria-Elena Giner, P.E., Commissioner of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC), and Nogales Mayor Jorge Maldonado reach agreement to transfer ownership of the International Outfall Interceptor (IOI) from the City to the USIBWC. *Photo courtesy of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.*

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