



INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION
UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
UNITED STATES SECTION

March 10, 2025

Dear Stakeholders:

The U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) and our federal partners have had several meetings with Mexican officials regarding last weekend's transboundary flow at the San Diego, Calif.-Tijuana, Baja Calif. international boundary.

Some of this information is preliminary and can change as we learn more, but so far, this is what we know:

Multiple unforeseen construction issues at the project to replace Tijuana's International Collector resulted in flows of wastewater mixed with rainwater that entered the Tijuana River near the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP).

A problem installing two inflatable plugs into 72-inch pipes during Phase 1 of the International Collector project on Saturday at about 11 a.m. resulted in wastewater flows diverted to the river for about four hours.

Another problem occurred at about 1:30 a.m. Sunday due to unexpected wastewater flows in the system coming from two pipes previously unknown to the Tijuana utility.

That sent wastewater mixed with large amounts of rainwater into Stewart's Drain.

This flow was estimated to be more than 3 million gallons and exceeded the International Collector's capacity.

That caused an accumulation of debris that blocked SBIWTP's Junction Box #1, resulting in minimal flows reaching the plant. This situation could have jeopardized the plant's biological treatment system had it continued.

USIBWC contractor Veolia cleaned the debris so flow could resume to the plant.

By mid-afternoon Sunday, transboundary flows had stopped, and the plant resumed normal operations.

The USIBWC, along with representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of State, immediately contacted the Mexican Section of the IBWC to investigate the cause of the transboundary flow.

During binational meetings held Sunday night and Monday morning, Mexico committed to hold daily meetings to keep U.S. officials informed regarding the progress of the International Collector as well as any problems that may arise.

A team of technical experts from USIBWC and EPA is deploying to the area and will tour the construction site on Wednesday.

I have made it very clear to Mexico the importance of avoiding future transboundary flows to the greatest extent possible during this very complicated construction project. I plan to remain in close contact with them.

Mexico has shared with us that construction challenges as well as heavy rains may delay the International Collector's completion.

We appreciate EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin's attention to this issue and will keep him as well as all our stakeholders informed of Mexico's progress.

I ask everyone to keep in mind that getting the new International Collector in operation as soon as possible is a crucial milestone and will bring more resiliency to the sewage infrastructure in Tijuana and reduce transboundary flows.

The International Collector, the largest wastewater conveyance pipe in Tijuana, has been plagued by leaks that have caused transboundary flows.

The new International Collector will have the capacity to carry up to 60 million gallons per day of untreated sewage to SBIWTP, which is currently being expanded.

(Our X site is a good place to check for updates: <https://x.com/usibwc>)

Warm regards,

Dr. Maria-Elena Giner, P.E.
Commissioner (U.S. Section)
International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico
United States Section

