



INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION
UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

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USIBWC Commissioner Dr. Maria-Elena Giner, P.E., meets with Tijuana officials regarding wastewater flows

From Commissioner Giner:

Last week, January 25, I and my Mexican Section, International Boundary & Water Commission (IBWC) counterpart Commissioner Adriana Reséndez Maldonado, met with representatives of the Comisión Estatal de Servicios Públicos de Tijuana (CESPT), the wastewater provider in Tijuana. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the status of flows within the San Diego-Tijuana wastewater infrastructure system. We are very concerned that we still have not seen any improvement in wastewater flows, specifically regarding reductions in both transboundary flows in the Tijuana River and flows into the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP).

CESPT has assured me that the 42-inch pipeline (PB1A) has been repaired. However, we have learned that due to the ongoing new highway construction along the border and adjacent to pipelines PB1A and PB1B, these pipelines have been taken out of service and/or not operated at full capacity. Work on these pipelines is estimated to be completed in the February-March timeframe after which we should see reductions in transboundary flows and inflows to the SBIWTP. As an immediate measure, I have emphasized to the Mexican state and federal governments the importance of returning to wastewater flow levels experienced prior to the PB1A pipeline break of July 2022.

We had record rainfalls in 2023 that included Tropical Storm Hilary. Experience and observations have shown that impacts from rains within the Tijuana River watershed can last much longer than the rain events themselves. This has contributed to the high and continued transboundary flows in the Tijuana River and has also exacerbated the flow effects of the PB1A pipeline break.

As an outcome to our meeting, we have agreed to take the following actions:

- Continue to monitor the schedule and progress of the work on the PB1A and PB1B pipeline and push, as necessary, towards bringing pump stations PBCILA and PB1 back to full operating capacities.
- San Diego Field Office IBWC personnel will accompany CESPT monthly on their surveys of the Tijuana River and canyons to note any significant changes in flows and their locations. Significant observations will be further investigated, and appropriate actions will be taken.

- Through our monthly inspections, communications will be enhanced whereby the U.S. Section IBWC will receive systematic updates on sources of flows as well as sanitation projects and other activities in Tijuana.
- Site visit by U.S. and Mexican Sections IBWC and CESPT in late January/early February to verify the accuracy of the existing flow meters.
- Implement a Wastewater Mass Balance Plan and flow monitoring and reporting program that will provide an accurate accounting of flows into the wastewater system as well as identify new sources of flows. Accuracy of flows through mass balance calculations will provide the proper accounting of flows and allow for informed decisions on short- and long-term management of transboundary flows.
- CESPT will continue to work on the PB1 pump station rehabilitation project which is scheduled to go out to bid at the end of February 2024, in addition to completion of the ongoing rehabilitation of the International Collector pipeline.
- Regular meetings between the U.S. Consulate and State of Baja California officials to monitor progress of the Minute 328 projects.
- Kickoff meeting in early February for a study to establish a road map towards implementation of a project at Morita and Arturo Herrera wastewater treatment plants to redirect that effluent out of the Tijuana River for reuse, where it currently contributes to transboundary flows.

Once flows in the river are reduced and pump station PBCILA can be returned to service, it is expected that transboundary flows will return to levels last seen in spring 2022 and prior to the rupture of the pipelines in Matadero Canyon in July 2022.

The restoration of manageable wastewater flows, in particular the reduction and elimination of transboundary flows at the Tijuana River and return of flows to the SBIWTP within NPDES permit limits, remains a top priority for me. I will continue to be engaged on this issue as long as necessary to eliminate transboundary flows and achieve compliance of our plant.

For more information:

Frank Fisher, Public Affairs Chief
(915) 494-6027
frank.fisher@ibwc.gov

