

California Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Colorado River Basin Region



Interim Executive Officer's Report  
January 14, 2016

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## Staff Activities

### A. Basin Planning Unit

Unit Chief: Joan Stormo, Senior Engineering Geologist, P.G.

Every Regional Water Quality Control Board is required to have a water quality control plan (Basin Plan) for their region. The Basin Plan implements relevant provisions of the federal Clean Water Act and the California Water Code, and includes water quality objectives and beneficial uses for ground and surface waters within its region. The Basin Plan also identifies implementation plans to achieve water quality objectives. Implementation plans may specify certain conditions or areas where the discharge of waste, or certain types of waste, will not be permitted.

The Colorado River Basin Region's Basin Planning Unit is charged with conducting legally required Triennial Reviews of the Basin Plan, updating the Basin Plan as necessary, and developing other Basin Plan amendments as necessary (e.g., when establishing and/or changing water quality objectives). In our region, the Unit also oversees development and implementation of Salt and Nutrient Management Plans (SNMPs) and is responsible for our region's Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP). Further, it provides regulatory oversight of the Septic Tank Discharge Prohibitions for Yucca Valley, Desert Hot Springs, and the Cove Area in Cathedral City.

**Triennial Review**—The Board adopted the 2014 Triennial Review of the Basin Plan in its September 17, 2015 Board public meeting. Staff is preparing relevant “after board” documents, and finalizing the administrative record for submittal to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) for filing, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) for approval. The Administrative Record should be ready for submittal in January 2016. [*Theresa Kimsey, Environmental Scientist*].

Staff also began work on the on the Triennial Review priority issues (review of beneficial uses of constructed wetlands in Imperial and Coachella Valleys, updating the Basin Plan's information on the Salton Sea, septic systems in La Quinta Cove, fish tissue study, and bioassessment study of non-perennial and intermittent surface waters). [*Joan Stormo, P.G.*]

- *SWAMP Aquatic Ecological Assessment* - Bioassessment monitoring was conducted in spring of 2015, wrapping up a three year study to characterize the chemical and biological health of the region's natural perennial and non-perennial waters. This aquatic ecological assessment of perennial and intermittent streams and rivers was conducted using a core suite of biological, chemical, and physical habitat indicators. We screened for indications of water quality and sediment degradation for aquatic life and related uses, benthic community condition, habitat condition, and physical and chemical condition. The results of the assessment will be reflected in the Basin Plan. [*Jeff Geraci, Environmental Scientist*]
- *SWAMP Fish Tissue Study*—The purpose of this study is to conduct monitoring for bioaccumulation of contaminants in animal tissue (e.g., fish tissue) throughout the region's rivers, lakes, canals, agricultural drains, Salton Sea, and other water bodies and their

associated impact on beneficial uses of these waters. Multiple samples of sport fish species were successfully collected and are now being analyzed to determine whether samples exceed several critical threshold values of potential human impact (advisory or action levels). CalEPA's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) is evaluating the study's data to establish fish consumption advisories for the public as necessary. A decision from OEHHA on advisories is expected next year. [Jeff Geraci]

*Salton Sea*—On November 21, 2015, Interim Executive Officer met with Bruce Wilcox, Assistant Secretary for Salton Sea, to discuss regulatory priorities to assist the Natural Resources Agency with its Salton Sea restoration efforts, including the proposed construction of 12,000 acres of wetlands and shallow habitat for migrating birds. [Jose L. Angel, P.E.]

**Yucca Valley Septic Tank Discharge Prohibition**—In May 2011, the Board adopted this Prohibition to phase out in three deadline-specified phases the discharges from septic systems in three specific areas of Yucca Valley. The Prohibition's deadline for Phase 1 is May 2016. Hi-Desert Water District (HDWD/District) is building a centralized sewage collection system and wastewater reclamation facility (WRF) to assist property owners to comply with the Prohibition. There have been significant delays in obtaining financing and voter approval for building the centralized system and WRF. Financing and voter approval are now in place. Staff has drafted an amendment to the Prohibition for Board consideration of adoption at the March 10, 2016, Board meeting. Staff has also completed the necessary draft CEQA document and Staff Report in support of the amendment. The draft amendment and supporting documents have been posted for the required 45-day public review and comment period. In substantive part the draft amendment would extend the deadlines for compliance with all three Phases. The extensions are necessary to accommodate the updated and more accurate engineering changes needed to address unanticipated engineering construction and cost increase issues as well as to incorporate a more sophisticated evaluation of which properties should be connected first to the WRF to better protect water quality over time in as cost-effective manner as possible. Board staff has met several times with HDWD staff to draft/finalize the proposed amendment. [Theresa Kimsey]

On December 15, 2015, the Interim Executive Officer met with HDWD Management to discuss the proposed amendment to the Prohibition and the applicability of currently specified exemptions to the Prohibition. Also, on December 17, 2015, the Interim Executive Officer presented the draft amendment to the HDWD Board of Directors at the District's regularly scheduled public meeting. As part of its public outreach efforts, Board staff will also be providing the Town of Yucca Valley Council members an overview of the proposed amendment in a meeting to be scheduled, will be participating in an radio interview in Yucca Valley to publicize the proposed amendment, and will be conducting a Board public workshop on the amendment in early to mid-January 2016 in Yucca Valley. [Jose L. Angel, P.E.]

## **B. Underground Storage Tank/Cleanup Unit**

Unit Chief: John Carmona, Senior WRC Engineer, P.E.

**GeoTracker Update**—Senate Bill 445 (added Section 25299.50.6 to the California Health & Safety Code, which created the new Site Cleanup Subaccount to work on inactive sites). Board staff is working on entering missing programmatic information for the GeoTracker Database.

GeoTracker is the State Water Board’s Internet-accessible database system used by the State Board, regional boards, and local agencies to track and archive compliance data from authorized or unauthorized discharges of waste to land, or unauthorized releases of hazardous substances from underground storage tanks. Region 7 has been very proactive and may be ahead of most regions in updating the information with approximately 85% of the required information already updated for the Region. Unit staff expects to be 100% current by the first week of January 2016. [*Rosalyn Fleming, Kola Olatunbosun, Phan Le—Water Resources Control Engineers*]

**USEPA Brownfields Program**—Brownfields are underutilized properties where reuse is hindered by the actual or suspected presence of pollution. Cleanup and redevelopment of these sites benefits communities by removing the threats to human health and the environment, stimulating economic growth, and revitalizing neighborhoods. Board staff is working with USEPA to identify leaking underground storage tank sites for potential targeted brownfield assessment sites. USEPA would provide site assessment at no charge to the owners. [*Rosalyn Fleming, Kola Olatunbosun*]

On December 20, 2015, the Interim Executive Officer provided a letter of support to Imperial County Transportation Commission to seek USEPA grant funding to assess potentially contaminated properties along the “Golden Line” corridor and the recently constructed Transit Center in Brawley. [*John Carmona, P.E.*]

**Department of Defense (DoD) Program**—Board staff has completed Joint Execution Plans (JEPs) for DOD sites and the DOD and its Resource Estimation Worksheet (REW) for Contract Cycle Fiscal Year 2016-2018. Board staff also exceeded program target goals for SFY 14-15. [*Phan Le*]

Fiscal Year	Target Description	Target	Completed	% Complete
2014-15	No. of Sites New into Active Remediation	3	4	133%

**Site Cleanup Program 2014-15 Performance Report** – Board staff has exceeded program target goals for SFY 14-15. [*Rosalyn Fleming*]

Fiscal Year	Target Description	Target	Completed	Complete
2014-15	No. of Sites New into Active Remediation	1	2	200%
	No. of Sites Projected Closed	1	2	200%

**Underground Storage Tank Program 2014-15 Performance Report** – Board staff has exceeded program target goals: [*Rosalyn Fleming, Kola Olatunbosun, Phan Le*]

Fiscal Year	Target Description	Target	Completed	% Complete
2014-15	No. of Sites New into Active Remediation	5	15	300%
	No. of Sites Closed	7	13	186%

**Low-Threat Closure Policy and Path to Closure Plans**—Board staff is performing more extensive Low-Threat Closure Policy and Path To Closure Plan (PTCP) reviews with responsible parties (RPs) and RP representatives. The reviews address impediments to closure, timely site assessment and cleanup, cleanup costs, cooperation and collaboration among other issues. [*Rosalyn Fleming, Kola Olatunbosun, Phan Le*]

**Environmental Justice**—Please refer to “Environmental Justice” Section of this report (p. 14).

### C. Total Maximum Daily Load Unit

Unit Chief: Nadim Shukry-Zeywar, Senior Environmental Scientist, Ph.D.

Unit core responsibilities are the development and implementation of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), updating the Region’s list of impaired surface waters (a.k.a. “303(d) Clean Water Act List”), and development and implementation of Waivers of waste discharge requirements for agricultural runoff and related activities.

**Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) Roundtable Meeting**—This program includes development and implementation of regulatory measures (e.g., Conditional Waivers and General Orders) to address water quality impacts associated with agricultural activities. On January 27 and 28, 2016, Region 7 will be hosting the Roundtable meeting. Typical topics discussed at the meetings include budget, program performance, and case studies. This January meeting includes a field trip of the Coachella Valley key agricultural areas, which is being organized by the Coachella Agricultural Waiver Coalition. [*Nadim Shukry-Zeywar, Ph.D.*]

**Imperial Valley Conditional Waiver of WDRs for Agricultural Activities**—On October 27, 2015, Board staff and Chair Way met with Ms. Linsey Dale and Al Kalin from the Imperial County Farm Bureau (ICFB) and Steve Charlton from the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) to discuss problems associated with the applicability and implementation of the Imperial Valley Conditional Agricultural Waiver. They also discussed problems associated with the collection of the State fee for coverage under the Waiver. During the meeting, an agreement and understanding were reached on how to address these problems, including recommending the Board amend the Conditional Waiver so that it extends the deadline for the IID and ICFB to fully implement the Conditional Waiver. [*Logan Raub, Environmental Scientist*]

On November 24, 2015, Dr. Zeywar sent a letter to IID and ICFB clarifying the applicability of the Conditional Waiver regarding certain parcels of land that (a) were or still are zoned for agricultural purposes, but are not currently used for that purpose, including solar farms, feedlots, and dairies located on land zoned for agriculture; and (b) are other irrigated areas that are not zoned for agricultural purposes, including golf courses, cemeteries, and school yards. [*Nadim Shukry-Zeywar, Ph.D.*]

**Coachella Valley, Palo Verde Valley and Palo Verde Mesa, and Bard Valley Conditional Waivers for Agricultural Activities**—Board staff contacted the Coalition Leads for subject Conditional Waivers on December 10 and 11, 2015, to alert them of the fee changes enacted by the State Water Board. Specifically, Board staff informed them that parcels of agricultural land that have not been irrigated at any time during the last five years do not need to pay the state fee.

- Unit staff began drafting a General Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) Order and its supporting CEQA documentation to regulate agricultural runoff from the Palo Verde Valley, Palo Verde Mesa, and Bard Valley. If adopted by the Regional Water Board, the General WDRs Order will replace the current Conditional Waivers of WDRs for Palo Verde Valley and Palo Verde Mesa, and for the Bard Valley. Board staff believes this is a more effective and less resources intensive way to deal with agricultural runoff. Unit staff will be meeting with Palo Verde Irrigation District and Bard Irrigation District managers to discuss this proposal early in January 2016. [*Francisco Costa, Environmental Scientist, Ph.D.*]

**Clean Water Act 303(d) List**—Unit staff is preparing draft technical and regulatory documents to recommend the Regional Water Board delist Diazinon from the Region’s CWA 303(d) List of Impaired Surface Waters for the Alamo and New Rivers. Board staff expects to take this Item for Board action at the Board’s May 2016 public meeting. [*Jeong-Hee Lim, P.E., Ph.D.*]

**TMDL priorities/ USEPA Vision**—Unit and management staff met with USEPA staff and State Water Board TMDL Program Management staff this past summer to discuss Region 7 priorities for the USEPA Vision for implementing the Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 303(d) Program. The USEPA Vision is a long-term vision for assessment, restoration, and protection under the CWA Section 303(d) Program. Under the Vision, States are expected to identify by 2016 its long-term CWA 303(d) Program priorities through FY 2022. The priorities will focus on identifying watersheds or individual waters for priority restoration and protection. Regional Water Board staff identified pesticide impairments in the Region as the Region’s Vision Priority and submitted it to the USEPA. Board staff will assess all agricultural waivers in the Region in addressing the pesticide impairments, and will revise them to be general orders and to address pesticide impairments in the Region as appropriate. Staff plans to present the general orders to the RB for adoption in the next 3 years starting mid-2016. [*Abdi Haile, P.G; Nadim Shukry-Zeywar, Ph.D.*]

## D. NPDES Unit

Unit Chief, Kai Dunn, Senior WRC Engineer, P.E., Ph.D.

The NPDES Unit is responsible for implementation of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Program. In this capacity, the Unit provides regulatory oversight of all wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) in the region that discharge to surface waters, confined feeding animal operations (CAFOs), and storm water Dischargers. It is also responsible for review of requests for and issuance of Water Quality Certifications (WQCs).

**Niland Sanitary District WWTP**--Board staff is providing the District, the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC), and collaborating agencies, including USDA, USEPA, and the County of Imperial, with comments on proposed solutions to remedy longstanding effluent discharge violations at the WWTP. The District is under a Board Cease and Desist Order requiring the District to implement improvements to address the violations. The proposed improvements are intended to meet the requirements of the WWTP’s NPDES permit. The final draft of the preliminary Engineering Report is expected to be finalized within the next three months. [*Anders Wistrom/Kai Dunn*]

**Priority NPDES WWTP Inspections for Permit Renewal**—Board Staff will also conduct three inspections/site visits with the USEPA contractor for NPDES facilities during the first week of January 2016. The three facilities are:

- IID Carp Hatchery: permit renewal scheduled for March Board Meeting;
- US Navy Naval Air Facility WWTP: permit renewal scheduled for March Board Meeting; and
- City of Holtville WWTP: permit renewal scheduled for June Board Meeting or later.

**CAFOs in Imperial Valley**—Board staff, Jose Figueroa-Acevedo, has completed inspecting all twenty-nine (29) active CAFOs in the Imperial Valley to follow up on the October 2015 letter sent by the AEO (Jose L. Angel) to the CAFOs regarding preparedness for El Niño. Mr. Figueroa-Acevedo reports that CAFO operators have taken measures to get ready for the event, including proper removal and disposal of manure and ensuring on-site storage facilities have the storage capacity required by their NPDES permit. [*Jose Figueroa-Acevedo, WRC Engineer*]

**Water Quality Certification**—Section 401(a) of the Clean Water Act provides that any applicant for a Federal license or permit to conduct any activity including, but not limited to, the construction or operation of facilities that may result in any discharge to “navigable waters” shall provide the licensing or permitting agency a certification from the State in which the discharge originates or will originate, or, if appropriate, from the interstate water pollution control agency having jurisdiction over the navigable water at the point where the discharge originates or will originate, that any such discharge will comply with the applicable provisions of Sections 301, 302, 303, 306, and 307 of the Clean Water Act. “Navigable waters” is a term of art, and it includes, based on case law, not only waters that are “navigable in fact,” but also waters that may be navigable. This State certification is referred to as a “Section 401 Water Quality Certification.” The following table shows all of the Certifications that the Colorado River Basin Office has issued so far for the 2015 Calendar year. [*Jay Mirpour, WRC Engineer*]

<b>Applications Received</b>	<b>Certification Issued<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>
<a href="#">09/29/2015</a>		Imperial Valley Solar 2, LLC	Imperial Valley Solar 2, LLC - Mount Signal Solar 2 Project
<a href="#">06/26/2015</a>	<a href="#">10/16/2015</a>	Rugged Solar LLC	Rugged Solar LLC
<a href="#">05/21/2015</a>	Certification Denied without prejudice on <a href="#">10/09/2015</a>	Jacumba Solar LLC	Jacumba Solar LLC - Jacumba Solar Energy Project
<a href="#">03/20/2015</a>	<a href="#">05/06/2015</a>	SoCalGas	Water Quality Certification for Southern California Gas Company Desert Area Operations and Maintenance Projects
<a href="#">03/20/2015</a>	Applicant withdrew Application	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Regional General Permit (RGP) 22 for the Restoration of Backwaters along the Colorado River

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, Water Quality Certification for the listed projects was issued by the Executive Officer on the date shown.

Applications Received	Certification Issued <sup>1</sup>	Applicant	Project
<a href="#">02/17/2015</a>	Certification Denied without prejudice on <a href="#">05/22/2015</a>	The Kiner Group, Inc	Indian Wells Crossing Project
<a href="#">01/26/2015</a>	<a href="#">03/20/2015</a>	Caltrans	Bridge Maintenance on I-10 PM 80.33 Over Cotton Gulch Bridge Wash Project
<a href="#">07/15/2014</a>	<a href="#">02/02/2015</a>	City of Palm Springs	Indian Canyon Drive Widening Project
<a href="#">02/17/2015</a>	Certification Denied without prejudice on <a href="#">02/17/2015</a>	The Kiner Group, Inc	Indian Wells Crossing Project
<a href="#">02/17/2015</a>	<a href="#">08/05/2015</a>	The Kiner Group, Inc	Indian Wells Crossing Project
<a href="#">05/21/2015</a>	Certification Denied without prejudice on <a href="#">10/16/2015</a>	Coachella Valley Water District	CVWD Oasis Area Irrigation System Expansion Project - Assessment District No. 34

**Mandatory Minimum Penalties**—Unit staff is working with the State Water Board Office of Enforcement staff to prioritize and clear office workload on MMPs this SFY. [*Kai Dunn, P.E., Ph.D.*]

**NPDES Roundtable**—On December 17, 2015, Region 7 hosted the NPDES Roundtable meeting. Representatives from the State Water Board and other Regional Water Boards participated in the roundtable in person. Key topics discussed during the Roundtable included cost of compliance, the General NPDES Permit for Pesticide Application, Whole Effluent Toxicity testing, and NPDES Program Performance. [*Kai Dunn, P.E., Ph.D.*]

## E. Non-Chapter 15, Chapter 15 Unit

Unit Chief: Doug Wylie, Senior WRC Engineer, P.E.

**Water and Sewer Issues in Eastern Coachella Valley**—Board staff attended a meeting on November 16, 2016, with Riverside County Economic Development Agency and CVWD to address the St. Anthony Trailer Park wastewater treatment problem in Mecca and its efforts to get funding to connect to water and sewer services provided by the Coachella Valley Water District. Pueblo Unido, who operates the Trailer Park, received a USDA grant to connect the park to a centralized water and sewage systems. Coachella Valley Water District has committed to connect the Park to its water and sewer systems. After the onsite wastewater disposal ponds at the park are appropriately abandoned, the WDR permit will be terminated. [*Abid Khalaf, WRC Engineer*]

**Local Agency Management Programs (LAMP) Development**—Board staff has been working with Riverside and Imperial County Health Department staff to collaborate on the development

of their LAMPs. Unincorporated areas of either County will be included in the respective LAMP development and are subject to the criteria specified in the LAMP. In addition to Riverside and Imperial County LAMPs, staff may receive up to 31 LAMPs from other local agencies, such as the incorporated cities within the Colorado River Basin Region. Incorporated cities must be either 1) specifically work with their respective County to be included in the County LAMP; 2) develop their own LAMP; or 3) on May 13, 2018, adhere to the Tier 1 Requirements in the OWTS Policy. *[Mary Serra, Doug Wylie]*

**One World Beef**—Since August 2015, Board staff has held numerous meetings with representatives of One World Beef (OWB) to address regulatory issues at the Brawley slaughterhouse, which is currently owned by National Beef of California (NBC). NBC ceased operating the slaughterhouse in May 2014 and has recently entered into a Sales Agreement with OWB to sell its slaughterhouse to OWB. Board staff has drafted WDRs and a Time Schedule Order for OWB for its proposed re-opening of the slaughterhouse and discharge of process wastewater to onsite ponds and to the City of Brawley Wastewater Treatment Plant. Staff has also drafted a Special Order to rescind a Cleanup and Abatement Order the Board adopted for NBC. The CAO requires NBC to properly decommission its slaughterhouse's onsite wastewater treatment facility. Because the work required under the CAO has been completed or is no longer necessary, given the impending resumption of operations by One World Beef, the CAO is no longer necessary. *[Jose L. Angel, Doug Wylie]*

**Landfill Program**—In September 2016, long-time employee Liann Chavez retired. Her responsibilities managing the Landfill Program are being transitioned to staff members Jennie Snyder and Herb Jackson. Staff is coordinating with Clean Harbors Westmorland Class I Landfill and CalEnergy's Desert Valley Monofill on updating their permits for industrial waste landfills near Westmorland in Imperial County. *[Jennie Snyder, WRC Engineer, P.E., and Herb Jackson, Engineering Geologist, P.G.]*

**Composting General Order**—The State Water Board released for public comment the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and General Waste Discharge Requirements for Composting Operations (General Order). The comment period for both documents ended on March 2, 2015. A public workshop was held on February 13, 2015. A Board Workshop was held on June 16, 2015, in the Cal/EPA Headquarters Building. Several informal, focused stakeholder meetings were held prior to and following the Board Workshop. The State Water Board certified the EIR and adopted the General Order on August 4, 2015. Regional Water Board staff will coordinate with local compost companies in the Coachella and Imperial Valleys to enroll them in the General Order. *[Jennie Snyder, P.E.]*

**Package WWTP in Yucca Valley and 29 Palms**—Board staff has conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the WWTPs for the Yucca Valley and 29 Palms areas. The evaluation has revealed chronic noncompliance issues and needed oversight improvements. Staff will be working with the State Water Board Office of Enforcement to address the noncompliance issues and bring the WWTP in compliance with Board requirements. *[Doug Wylie, P.E.]*

## F. Administrative Unit

Unit Chief: Hilda Vasquez, Staff Services Manager I

The Administrative Unit provides administrative and clerical support to all the office programs and staff. It is responsible for assisting the office with accounting, budgeting, business services (managing state property/equipment, office records, and state vehicles), service contracts, human resources, procurement, travel, providing front desk assistance to the public, and processing Public Records Act (PRA) requests. Additionally, it provides web page support, clerical services to the Regional Water Board Members, and is responsible for processing Board Agendas.

- The Unit continues to work closely with State Water Board staff to implement the audio/visual and related improvements to the Board meeting room. The Unit reports that upgraded microphones will be ready for the March Board meeting. [*Mary Castañeda, Associate Government Program Analyst*]
- During the October 2015 to December 18, 2015 period, the office had 75 visitors. [*Terry Barnes, Office Technician*]
- During the October 2015 to December 18, 2015 period, the office received and responded to twenty (20) PRA requests. [*Soni Wells, Associate Government Program Analyst*]
- On December 16, 2015, the Unit completed compiling the Agenda for the January 14, 2016 Board meeting and assisted with the posting of all related Public Notices for actionable Board items. [*Mary Castañeda, Associate Government Program Analyst*]

## Issues of Regional Significance

### A. New River Pollution from Mexico

**New River in Calexico**—On November 21, 2015, the Interim EO met with Assemblyman Eduardo Garcia (D-Coachella) to discuss New River pollution from Mexico and addressing New River water quality problems in Calexico and the ongoing construction of a river parkway by the City of Calexico. Board staff has been working closely with CalEPA and representatives from the Governor’s Office to address New River pollution in the Calexico area. The New River Improvement Project Strategic Plan recommends a trash screen, conveyance system, and a disinfection facility to address New River pollution in Calexico. The table below shows the associated costs for the projects.

New River Projects in USA <sup>2</sup>			
Project	Location	Projected Cost	O&M Costs/ year
Trash Screen	Calexico, immediately downstream of US-Mexico Border <sup>3</sup>	\$4,000,000	\$100,000
New River Conveyance System	Calexico, from the Border to approximately City of Calexico WWTP	\$17,000,000	\$50,000
New River Disinfection Facility	Calexico, at or near City of Calexico WWTP	\$86,400,000	\$4,500,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$107,400,000</b>	<b>\$4,650,000</b>

Because of diminishing flows in the New River at the Border with Mexico and overall economic concerns with the disinfection facility, alternatives are being evaluated to deal with the problem and also to develop a plan that would benefit the Salton Sea. Board staff will be participating in a meeting with CalEPA and representatives from the Governor’s Office on January 6, 2016, to discuss the alternatives. [Jose L. Angel, P.E.]

**New River in Mexicali**—Board staff Jose Figueroa participated in the Binational Observation Tour of the New River in Mexicali on December 10, 2015. A copy of his report for the Tour is attached. The next New River/Mexicali Sanitation Program Binational Technical Committee meeting is scheduled for February 2016. The problems with the dilapidated sewage infrastructure continue to threaten New River water quality at the Border with Mexico. Even though Mexico is addressing the problems as a matter of priority, and has spent close to \$4 million to address the problems this year, resolving the problems will require additional binational resources. The Table below shows the SFY 15-16 critical project needs in Mexicali and how Mexico spent the money. [Jose L. Angel and Jose Figueroa-Acevedo]

Municipal Sewage Collection and Treatment System - SFY 15-16 Critical Projects in Mexicali			
Priority	Project Location	Project	Projected Costs
1	Zaragoza WWTP	Various improvements/repairs	\$7,703.56

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the source for the projects and their costs is the “New River Improvement Project Strategic Plan, December 2011.”

<sup>3</sup> Trash screen, conveyance system, and disinfection facility would require approval from federal agencies (Department of Homeland Security, Customs Office, State Department, USEPA, IBWC) and would also require a Joint Powers Agreement to own and operate them.

Municipal Sewage Collection and Treatment System - SFY 15-16 Critical Projects in Mexicali			
Priority	Project Location	Project	Projected Costs
1	Las Arenitas WWTP	Various repairs	\$218,750.00
1	Sewage Pumping Plant 1	Rehabilitation of Pumping Plant	\$1,468,750
1	Sewage Pumping Plant 4	Rehabilitation of Pumping Plant	\$16,835.81
1	Sewage Pumping Plant 5	Rehabilitation of Pumping Plant	\$68,750.00
1	Right Side PP	Rehabilitation	\$843,750.00
1	Sewage Collection System Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Equipment	Purchase of O&M Equipment, including sewage collection system vacuum trucks	\$687,500.00
Projected Total			\$3,312,055.38

For SFY 16-17, it is anticipated that Mexico will need approximately another \$23 million to address the emerging problems. The Table below shows the sewage infrastructure priority needs for SFY 16-17.

SFY 16-17 Municipal Sewage/Wastewater Critical Projects in Mexicali			
Priority	Project Location	Project	Projected Costs
1	Zaragoza WWTP	Pretreatment Program	\$1,870,885.52
1	Las Arenitas WWTP	Expansion	\$8,756,250.00
1	Sewage Pumping Plant 2	Rehab	\$282,537.00
1	Sewage Pumping Plant 4	Frequency Modulator (Electrical)	\$112,031.35
1	Sewage Pumping Plant 5	Rehab	\$843,750.00
1	Various Sewage Lift Stations	Rehab	\$1,598,813.76
1	Pumping System	Telemetry Equipment	\$1,000,000.00
1	Sewage Collection system	New Lines	\$2,337,500.00
1	Sewage Collection system	Rehab	\$1,116,983.31
1	Sewage Collection system	Repair Collapsed Collectors	\$222,470.41
1	O&M Equipment	Purchase of O&M Equipment, including sewage collection system vacuum trucks	\$4,937,500.00
Estimated Total			\$23,078,721.36

## B. Salton Sea

**Salton Sea Restoration**—The ecosystem of the Salton Sea continues to decline. Current and projected environmental impacts, including the gradual elimination of the Salton Sea's beneficial uses (e.g., fishing and Rec-1) and air quality impacts, are enormous. In recognition of these

serious impacts, Governor Brown has formed a Salton Sea Task Force to address immediate critical restoration needs. The California Natural Resources Agency is Task Force Lead. Following consultation with key stakeholders, the Task Force has made a series of short- and medium-term recommendations for the Salton Sea, including immediate restoration of habitat for migrating birds. Based on the Task Force recommendations, Governor Brown has directed the Natural Resources Agency to:

1. Begin immediate implementation and further development of a Salton Sea Management Plan
  - The plan will prioritize actions that respond to air quality and natural resources impacts while incorporating opportunities for regional economic development, including recreational and renewable opportunities that benefit implementation of the plan.
  - A science advisory committee will be utilized to provide scientific expertise into plan development.
  - Colorado River stakeholders will be asked to assist with the development of the plan. The Salton Sea Authority and its members will be asked to help facilitate local involvement.
2. Improve public outreach and local partnership
  - Air quality and environmental impacts of a reduced Salton Sea will be felt foremost by the residents of the region. The state will provide a meaningful public forum to discuss Salton Sea issues locally and to develop future plans and actions.
3. Accelerate project implementation and delivery
  - The state will work with Salton Sea and Colorado River partners to accelerate planning, state and federal permitting and construction.
4. Meet a short-term goal of 9,000-12,000 acres of habitat creation and dust suppression projects at the sea
  - Projects to meet short-term goals will be achievable with available funding.
  - Short-term projects will address dust suppression and natural resources needs while laying the foundation for a long-term Salton Sea management framework.
  - Projects will be staged to address the expected progression of playa exposure and designed to provide access corridors for renewable energy development on those lands.
5. Set a medium-term goal of 18,000-25,000 acres of habitat creation and dust suppression projects at the sea
  - Funding plans to meet medium-term goals will need to be developed by the state with Salton Sea and Colorado River partners.

The Governor has also directed the State Water Board monitor implementation of the Salton Sea Management Plan and to work closely with the Regional Water Board to closely monitor progress of the cleanup of the tributaries to the Salton Sea. The California Natural Resources Agency will have to work closely with the Regional Water Board and State Water Board to implement the Governor's directives to ensure they are consistent with the Basin Plan. [*Jose L. Angel, Jeff Geraci*]

**Salton Sea Workshop**—The State Water Board has scheduled a Salton Sea Workshop for January 5, 2016, in Sacramento. The Regional Water Board has been invited to provide the

State Water Board with an update on the progress to address water quality problems of the tributaries to the Salton Sea. The Interim Executive Officer, Jose L. Angel, and Mr. Geraci will be representing the office at the Workshop and providing the requested report to the State Water Board. TMDL Unit staff is also assisting Mr. Angel to put together his prepared remarks. [Jose L. Angel, P.E.]

Board staff intends to report:

1. Region 7 progress and emerging problems in dealing with New River pollution from Mexico and the steps the Regional Water Board has taken to address them;
2. The good work the farming community in the Imperial Valley is doing in implementing the Regional Water Board Silt TMDLs;
3. The recent measures the Regional Water Board has taken to address agricultural runoff in the Coachella and Imperial Valleys (e.g., adoption of Conditional Ag Waivers of Waste Discharge Requirements);
4. The status of water quality of the Sea's tributaries, as indicated by our various water quality monitoring programs; and
5. The urgent need for implementation of a comprehensive restoration plan for the Sea.

### C. Environmental Justice

Ms. Maria Davydova, Environmental Scientist, has been designated as the Regional Water Board's Environmental Justice (EJ) Coordinator. In this capacity, she is responsible for representing the office at various EJ Task Forces and community events. The following paragraphs describe some of the recent Board staff activities in this area.

**Environmental Justice Taskforces**—Board staff participates in two EJ Task Forces:

- a. Coachella Valley (3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month – 3 – 5 pm). Board staff is working with Comite Civico Del Valle, Inc. and eastern valley constituents on addressing environmental complaints. Other participants include Riverside County Transportation and Land Management, Coachella Valley Mosquito and Abatement District, Cities of Coachella and Palm Desert, USEPA, the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, and representatives for Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia. [Maria Davydova]
- b. Imperial Valley (3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month – 3 – 5 pm). Board staff is working with Department of Toxics Substances and Control staff as a governmental agency representative of water issues in the Imperial Valley. [Maria Davydova]

Ms. Davydova and Mr. Angel participated in the 12/17/2015 EJ Task Force meeting. During the meeting, the Interim Executive Officer provided the Task Force with an update on the status of the Complaint issued against NBC and informed the Task Force about the impending re-opening of the Brawley slaughterhouse by One World Beef. He also stated that Board staff has drafted a permit and an enforcement Order so that the slaughterhouse can resume wastewater discharge operations. [Jose L. Angel, P.E.]

**Polancos and Water and Sewer Issues in Eastern Coachella Valley**—Upon direction by Management, beginning in November 2015, Board staff started attending meetings with Riverside County Economic Development Agency to address the water and sewer issues the Polancos face in the eastern Coachella Valley. [*Maria Davydova*]

**Environmental Complaint Notification**—Board staff has developed a web page for our Region, which will provide information on how to file an environmental complaint and provide information on local contacts. [*Maria Davydova*].

**Sixth Annual Imperial Valley Environmental Health Leadership Summit (11/21/15)** – Board management and staff participated at the Summit. Ms. Davydova also conducted water quality outreach and education and provided material on water and environmental issues to Summit participants. [*Maria Davydova*].

#### **D. Office Performance**

**SFY 15-15 Office Performance**—The State Water Board published in December 2015 the State Water Board’s and Regional Water Board’s performance reports for SFY 14-15. In general, all workload target commitments were met, excepting workload commitments on the TMDL. Board staff will be discussing the performance results and other significant work completed but not included in the performance report at the January 14, 2016, Regional Water Board meeting. [*Jose L. Angel, Abdi Haile, Mary Serra*]

A copy of the State Water Board’s report for Region 7 can be downloaded from:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/about\\_us/performance\\_report\\_1415/targets/71127\\_targets\\_rb7.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/about_us/performance_report_1415/targets/71127_targets_rb7.shtml)

**2015 Office Accomplishments**—The State Water Board is also publishing the State Water Board’s and Regional Water Board’s accomplishments for the current calendar year. Copies of the accomplishments report can be downloaded at:

[http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/publications\\_forms/publications/general/docs/accomplishments\\_report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/publications_forms/publications/general/docs/accomplishments_report_2014.pdf)

The State Water Board’s Accomplishments Report recognizes the following Region 7 accomplishments:

1. Adoption of the Conditional Waiver of WDRs for Agricultural Activities in the Imperial Valley [*Jose L. Angel, Jennie Snyder*];
2. Progress in addressing New River Cleanup [*Jose L. Angel*]
3. Drought and Urban Water Conservation Symposium [*Robert Perdue, John Carmona*]

Board staff will be discussing these and other key 2015 accomplishments at the upcoming January 14, 2016, Board meeting. [*Jose L. Angel, Abdi Haile, Mary Serra*]

## Personnel and Administration

**December 1, 2015 All-staff meeting**—The overwhelming majority of the staff were able to attend this meeting. Items discussed during the meeting included feedback about the November 19 Board meeting, preparations and key items for the upcoming January 2016 Board meeting, and plans for the office December Holiday Party. The Interim Executive Officer also announced during the meeting his selection of Abdi Haile as Interim Assistant Executive Officer and Ms. Jeong-Hee Lim as Ombudsperson for the office. Attendance to the all-staff meetings is mandatory, pre-approved leave for staff notwithstanding. The purpose of the meetings is to exchange information and improve office-wide communication. The next all-staff meeting is scheduled for January 20, 2016. [*Abdi Haile, P.G.*]

**Management Team Meetings**—The Interim Executive Officer has established mandatory Weekly Management Team meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to exchange information on Unit project status, personnel matters, upcoming Board meetings, and administrative matters to improve communication and enhance team work. For December 2015, the Management team met on December 1st, December 7<sup>th</sup>, December 14th, and December 21<sup>st</sup>. [*Jose L. Angel, P.E.*]

**HR Training**—On January 5, 2016, State Water Board HR Chief, Christopher Fernandez, will be conducting training for Region 7 supervisors regarding staff working hours and other related matters (e.g., flex and alternate work schedules). [*Jose L. Angel, P.E.*]

**Leadership Training**—Greg Bourne from UC Davis will be conducting the 2<sup>nd</sup> module on Communication for all staff early next January 2016. Core office values have also been finalized. Posters showing the core values are presently being posted throughout the office. A Transition Team comprised of staff and supervisors has been formed to assist Upper Management develop and implement communication protocols and improve office-wide accountability. [*Jose L. Angel, P.E.*]

**Retirements**—Ms. Liann Chavez, Senior EG Specialist, retired this past September 2015, after 25 years of state service in the office. [*Hilda Vazquez, SSM II*]

**Vacancies**—The office is fully staffed (33 full-time staff) and has no vacancies. Regional Water Board staff will be requesting additional staff positions and hiring authority to deal with New River pollution from Mexico and regulatory oversight and assistance for Salton Sea restoration efforts. [*Hilda Vazquez, SSM II*]

## Regional Water Board Action Items

The following table shows the status of requests made by Regional Water Board Members.

Item	Requested by	Date Requested	Status
Triennial Review progress update	Board Members	9/17/2015	Update included in the December 2015 Interim EO Report (please see p. 2)
Red Hill Bay /Salton Sea update	Ms. Nancy Wright	11/19/2015	Update provided below [ <i>Jose L. Angel</i> ]
Monitors/video screens for the back of Board Meeting Room	Board Members	11/19/2015	Scheduled to be installed during SFY 16-17 [ <i>Hilda Vasquez, Mary Castaneda</i> ]
Topock Tour and Cleanup Project Update	Board Members	11/19/2015	Scheduled for November 2016. Planning for Tour by PG&E is scheduled for November 9, 2016, at the Topock Compressor Station. Board Meeting will be held on November 10, 2016, in Needles (meeting location TBD). [ <i>Robert Perdue, Tom Vandenberg</i> ]

**Red Hill Bay/Salton Sea Habitat Restoration**—On November 5, 2015, publicly elected officials, State Natural Resources Agency officials, and Federal officials broke ground for a 450-acre, \$3.5 million wetland project at Red Hill Bay. The wetlands are part of an overall habitat mitigation and restoration effort for the Salton Sea and follow up on the Governor’s directive to the Natural Resources Agency (see Salton Sea Section of this Report, p. 12). Water from the Alamo River is being diverted to the wetlands to restore shallow habitat for shoring birds. The project also mitigates fugitive dust emissions from exposed playa at the Alamo River delta. The exposed playa and loss of habitat at the Alamo River Delta are the result of diminishing inflows into the Salton Sea, which have been caused by water transfer agreements between Imperial Irrigation District, San Diego County Water Authority, and Coachella Valley Water District; and by reductions of flows in the New River at the Border with Mexico. Other similar early habitat projects (e.g., wetlands) are being planned and designed for implementation next year.

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**Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board**

**BINATIONAL OBSERVATION TOUR OF THE NEW RIVER – DECEMBER 2015**

December 11, 2015

To: Jose L. Angel, Interim EO

From: Jose Gpe. Figueroa-Acevedo

**SUBJECT: DECEMBER 2015 BINATIONAL OBSERVATION TOUR**

I participated on behalf of the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Colorado River Basin Region (Regional Water Board) in the subject tour of the New River drainage and wastewater collection system in Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico on December 11, 2015. The purpose of the tour is to document progress addressing New River pollution in Mexicali. A list of all agencies and individuals participating in the tour is given below followed by a report:

Roberto Cardenas	US International Boundary & Water Commission (IBWC-US)
Isacc D. Vizzuett Herrera	Comision Estatal Servicios Publicos Mexicali (CESPM)
Jose de Jesus Ayala	CESPM
Alfredo De la Cerda Regis, Pedro Ortiz	Comision Internacional de Limites del Agua (IBWC-Mexico)
Javier M. Ortiz	North American Development Bank
Alejandra Nunez	Border Environment Cooperation Commission
Antonio Espinosa F	Comision Nacional Del Agua (CONAGUA)
Jose Figueroa-Acevedo	Regional Water Board

As during the most recent months, CESPM continues the replacement of collapsed collectors thought the collection system but mainly in the Mexicali I area. CESPM stated that as of today, no raw sewage from collectors is impacting the New River. The 80-100 liters per second that were being discharged via drain 134 into the New River were rerouted to Pumping Plant No. 2. The majority of the collectors in the Mexicali I area are 35 years old or older. Consequently, it is expected that collapses of collectors will continue until replacement of all of the dilapidated collectors is performed.

In anticipation of El Niño and to prevent New River adverse water quality impacts, CESPМ is currently implementing a community-based program to perform the cleaning of the Mexicali, Hipolito Renteria, Amplacion and Xochicali Drains. Cleaning of Drains will continue as required.

The first stop during this tour was performed at the Las Arenitas WWTP which appears to be well maintained and operated, however, as is well known; the wastewater treatment plant is over its maximum capacity. CESPМ is performing the evaluation of four different alternatives to increment the plant's capacity. An observation of Pumping Plants 1, 3 and 5 was also performed during the tour. All pumping stations were operational and appeared to be well maintained. The renovation of Pumping Plant No. 3 is almost finished, according to CESPМ; this plant will be fully renovated no later than January 2016. Also, \$24 million pesos have been assigned for the renovation of Pumping Plant No. 1 (Phase 1), which is expected to be completed by April 2016. An additional \$9 million pesos will be required for the total renovation of the plant. In addition, the equipment for Pumping Plant No. 5 was on the site waiting for its installation. Finally, approximately \$200,000 dollars left from the Esperanza and Loma Linda sanitary sewer projects will be assigned, if the bank agrees, to the upgrading of Pumping Plant No. 2. According to CESPМ, Pumping Plants 1, 2, 3 and 5 may have operational limitations, but no bypasses are currently occurring or planned to the New River. During the tour, the Zaragoza lagoons were also observed. All of the oxidation lagoons and all the facultative lagoons were operating during this tour. Pumping Plant No. 8 appears to be well maintained and was also operational. Effluent from Zaragoza lagoons was gray/green. CESPМ stated that at least four of the lagoons are facing sedimentation problems.

The city of Mexicali continues to grow at a rate that will require significant resources to maintain the current collection and wastewater treatment services in the Mexicali metropolitan area. The collection system is mostly constructed of concrete or clay pipes that are at least 35 years old and already collapsing and the Arenitas lagoons do not have sufficient capacity to accommodate this growth. Also the clandestine disposal of trash can be observed all thought the municipality.