

Water Quality Report Card

Pathogens in New River

Regional Water Board: Colorado River Basin, Region 7

Beneficial Uses Affected: REC-1, REC-2

Implemented Through: NPDES Permits
3rd Party (U.S. IBWC)

Effective Date: August 14, 2002

Attainment Date: 2005

STATUS Conditions Improving

Pollutant Type: Point Source Nonpoint Source

Pollutant Source: Non-Point Source Runoff
Wastewater Discharges

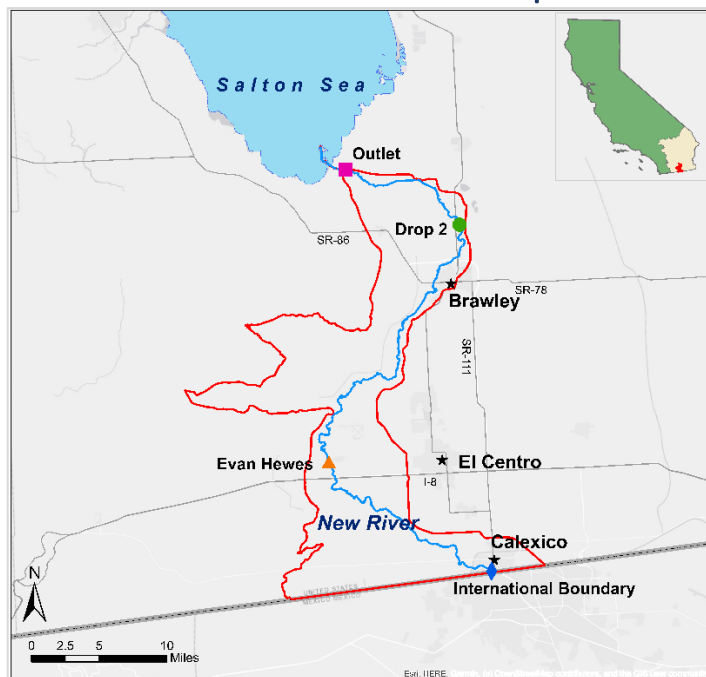
Water Quality Improvement Strategy

The New River originates about 20 miles south of the International Boundary (IB) in the Mexicali Valley, Mexico, and flows north into the U.S. to the Salton Sea in Imperial County, California. The New River is listed as impaired for pathogens on the USEPA Clean Water Act 303(d) List. We infer the presence of pathogens from high *E. coli* and fecal coliform bacteria concentrations, common indicators of fecal contamination. *E. coli* and fecal coliform concentrations exceed the water quality objectives (WQOs) established to protect recreational beneficial uses of the river. Impairment is most severe at the IB due to discharges of wastewater from Mexico, which account for one-sixth of the river's total flow. To address the pathogen impairment, the Colorado River Basin Regional Water Board (Water Board) adopted the [New River Pathogen TMDL](#) in August 2002. TMDL implementation calls for controlling pathogens in wastewater discharges in the U.S. and at the IB. The Las Arenitas Wastewater Treatment Facility began operations in Mexico in 2007 to treat Mexicali wastewater and divert treated effluent from the New River. Because the Water Board lacks jurisdictional authority over Mexico, implementation relies on cooperation between the Mexican and U.S. governments to reduce waste and bacterial concentrations that cross into the U.S. at the IB.

Water Quality Outcomes

- Infrastructure failures in Mexicali, Mexico were responsible for discharges of raw and partially treated sewage in the New River, and for high numbers of *E. coli* and fecal coliform at the International Border between 2013-2018.

New River Watershed Map



- Negotiations between U.S. and Mexico, and associated agencies, are ongoing to ensure coordination of IB projects to bring the New River into compliance.
- After the Las Arenitas Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) began operations in Mexico in March 2007, water quality monitoring data demonstrate significant reductions in *E. coli* and fecal coliform concentrations at New River at IB monitoring site and in *E. coli* concentrations at all monitoring sites.
- Although conditions are improving data show that New River bacteria WQOs have not been met.

Water Quality

