

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
BOARD MEETING SESSION – SAN DIEGO REGIONAL WATER BOARD
MARCH 19, 2019**

ITEM 5

SUBJECT

INFORMATIONAL ITEM REGARDING WATER QUALITY AT THE U.S./MEXICO BORDER IN THE TIJUANA RIVER WATERSHED, CALIFORNIA

DISCUSSION

Transboundary flows of containing wastes from Tecate and Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico have significantly impacted water quality in the lower Tijuana River Valley, Estuary and coastal waters from Imperial Beach to Coronado since at least 1953. Impacts to ecosystems and communities occur from sediment, solid waste, releases of sewage and industrial wastes, highly polluted storm water runoff, and flooding. In 2009, the San Diego Water Board convened the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team (Recovery Team) including over 30 local, state, federal, and non-governmental organizations.

In 2012, the San Diego Water Board published the *Tijuana River Valley Recovery Strategy: Living with the Waters* and adopted [Resolution R9-2012-0030](#) endorsing a multiagency, collaborative approach to protecting and restoring water quality in the Tijuana River Valley. After leading a Binational Summit in 2014, the San Diego Water renewed its commitment to the Recovery Strategy in [Resolution R9-2015-0035](#) and adopted a Five-Year Action Plan to focus on several key projects to restore habitats and protect communities. A key outcome of these efforts was the 2015 approval by United States and Mexico sections of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) of Minute 320 to the 1944 Treaty governing the *Utilization of Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande*. Minute 320 is a framework Minute for a binational approach to reducing water quality, solid waste, and sediment impacts in the lower Tijuana River.

In 2017 and 2018, numerous large and repeated sanitary sewer overflows occurred in Tijuana with significant ecosystem and community impacts downstream. As a result of significant community concerns, the San Diego Water elevated and expanded on the Recovery Team efforts, proposed TMDLs for solid waste and bacterial indicators in the Tijuana River and tributaries, an Investigative Order to IBWC to monitor transboundary flows throughout the year. The San Diego Water also engaged in an extensive outreach effort with IBWC, EPA and US Department of Justice to identify practicable and reasonable management measures to intercept and divert the wastes in the Main Channel and Smugglers Gulch drainages as envisioned in the Recovery Strategy and discussed in the Minute 320 workgroups and Binational Core Group Meetings.

In May 2018, the San Diego Water Board issued a 60-day Notice of Intent to Sue under the Citizen Suit Provisions of the Clean Water Act. On September 4, 2018, the San Diego Water Board filed a citizen's suit complaint against the United States Section of IBWC alleging ongoing violations of the Clean Water Act and the NPDES for the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant and its five canyon collector systems.

POLICY ISSUE

Water Quality at U.S./Mexico Border and Coastal Waters in San Diego, California

FISCAL IMPACT

N/A Informational Item Only

REGIONAL BOARD IMPACT

N/A Informational Item Only

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

N/A Informational Item Only