

San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

NOTICE OF WRITTEN COMMENT PERIOD AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER TENTATIVE CEASE AND DESIST ORDER TO UNITED STATES SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION (USIBWC), SOUTH BAY INTERNATIONAL WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT, DISCHARGE TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN THROUGH THE SOUTH BAY OCEAN OUTFALL (TENTATIVE CEASE AND DESIST ORDER NO. R9-2025-0139)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Diego Water Board) will conduct a public hearing for the consideration of Tentative Cease and Desist Order No. R9-2025-0139 at a meeting on August 27, 2025.

**Wednesday, August 27, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.
San Diego Water Board Meeting Room
2375 Northside Drive, Suite 100, Room 108
San Diego, California 92108
(and via Video and Teleconference)**

Instructions to Join the Meeting

The meeting agenda includes instructions on participating in the meeting in person or from a remote location. If you wish to provide oral comments, or if you require Spanish language interpretation, you must attend in person or join via Zoom using the instructions provided in the meeting agenda. Those who do not plan to provide oral comments are encouraged to view the webcast at: <https://video.calepa.ca.gov/#/>.

The meeting agenda is posted on the San Diego Water Board's website at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/board_info/agendas/2025/aug27/index.html.

Document Availability

Tentative Cease and Desist Order No. R9-2025-0139 is available for review on the San Diego Water Board's website at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/board_info/agendas/2025/aug27/index.html.

Public Review and Opportunities for Public Comment

The San Diego Water Board is accepting written comments on Tentative Cease and Desist Order No. R9-2025-0139. Written comments must be *received* by 12:00 PM (noon) Pacific Time on August 21, 2025. Written comments must be submitted as follows:

1. By email to: sandiego@waterboards.ca.gov. Emailed comments must include the following subject line: "Comment - Tentative Cease and Desist Order No. R9-2025-0139".

2. By mail to: Melissa Corona, San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board, 2375 Northside Drive, Suite 100, San Diego, California 92108-2700

Please note that San Diego Water Board members and staff will consider written comments received, but will not be responding to comments in writing.

Interested persons are encouraged to provide oral comments at the public hearing on August 27, 2025.

Background

The United States section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has announced a planned accelerated incremental expansion of its South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP). The SBIWTP receives domestic and industrial wastewater from the City of Tijuana's municipal collection system; dry weather flows captured by five canyon collectors in the Tijuana River Valley; and occasional dry weather transboundary flows collected by vacuum trucks from other locations. USIBWC discharges secondary-treated wastewater from the SBIWTP to the Pacific Ocean via the South Bay Land Outfall (SBLO) and South Bay Ocean Outfall (SBOO).

USIBWC's discharge from the SBIWTP is regulated by Order No. R9-2021-0001, as amended, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit No. CA0108928, *Waste Discharge Requirements for the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant Discharge to the Pacific Ocean Through the South Bay Ocean Outfall* (NPDES Permit). The NPDES Permit establishes waste discharge requirements for the discharge of secondary-treated wastewater from the SBIWTP, including a maximum permitted effluent flow limitation of 25 million gallons per day (MGD).

Limitations within Tijuana's collection and conveyance system result in discharges of wastewater to the concrete-lined main channel of the Tijuana River in Mexico. This frequently results in polluted transboundary flows through the main channel of the Tijuana River that reach the Tijuana River Valley, Tijuana River Estuary, and the Pacific Ocean shoreline adjacent to the river mouth.

To reduce dry weather transboundary flows, USIBWC has announced a planned accelerated 10 MGD expansion of the SBIWTP treatment capacity from 25 MGD to 35 MGD. USIBWC states that its target date to receive the 10 MGD increase is August 28, 2025. USIBWC plans to treat up to 35 MGD of influent wastewater through advanced primary treatment followed by 25 MGD of secondary treatment using existing activated sludge processes. The advanced primary treatment will consist of chemically-enhanced primary treatment (CEPT), using coagulants to increase solids removal. Secondary treatment will consist of existing activated sludge processes. USIBWC plans to blend the bypassed 10 MGD advanced primary effluent with the 25 MGD secondary effluent prior to discharge to the Pacific Ocean via the SBLO and SBOO.

The removal and treatment of an additional 10 MGD from the City of Tijuana's municipal wastewater collection system will allow authorities in Mexico to capture additional dry weather flows from the main channel of the Tijuana River, reducing transboundary flows into the United States.

Transboundary flows of untreated domestic and industrial wastewater originating in Tijuana result in significant and prolonged water quality impairments in the lower Tijuana River, Tijuana River Estuary, and San Diego's near-shore coastal waters. Poor water quality conditions stemming from transboundary flows have resulted in significant beach closures in southern San Diego County and degraded air quality, particularly in the communities of Imperial Beach, Nestor, and San Ysidro, with disadvantaged communities bearing the brunt of the pollution. Accordingly, controlling transboundary flows from Mexico and improving border water quality is one of the San Diego Water Board's highest priorities.

On July 16, 2025, USIBWC sent a letter to the San Diego Water Board requesting an amendment to their NPDES Permit to treat up to 10 MGD of increased flow. The San Diego Water Board has determined that USIBWC's target date to treat up to 10 MGD of increased flow by August 28, 2025, does not provide sufficient time for the Board to amend USIBWC's NPDES Permit.

USIBWC's planned expansion from 25 MGD to 35 MGD and inability to treat more than 25 MGD to secondary treatment standards, requiring a partial bypass of secondary treatment, will violate or threatens to violate the NPDES Permit and other requirements of the San Diego Water Board for the facility. The San Diego Water Board will consider issuance of Tentative Cease and Desist Order No. R9-2025-0139 to require compliance with NPDES Permit final effluent limitations, with the exception of certain parameters with established interim effluent limitations, establish remedial and preventative actions USIBWC must implement, and require submittal of technical reports.

No term or condition of the NPDES Permit would be superseded or stayed by issuance of the Tentative Cease Desist Order No. R9-2025-0139.

Accessibility

Individuals who have special accommodation needs should contact Ms. Chris Blank at (619) 521-3382 or Christina.Blank@waterboards.ca.gov at least 5 business days prior to the meeting.

Language Interpretation Services

Spanish language interpretations services will be available for this meeting.

Staff Contact

For questions about this public notice or Tentative Cease and Desist Order No. R9-2025-0139, please contact Melissa Corona, P.E., Senior Water Resource Control Engineer, at Melissa.Corona@waterboards.ca.gov.