

## **Request for Cleanup and Abatement Funds**

### **Phase 1 of the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team Five-Year Action Plan Implementation**

**March 2015**

#### **1.0 PROJECT LOCATION AND BACKGROUND**

The Tijuana River watershed drains a 1,730 square-mile basin. The watershed is divided by the U.S.-Mexico border with just 27% located within the San Diego Region. The headwaters originate in both the United States and Mexico with the main part of the river flowing via a concrete-lined flood control channel through Tijuana and subsequently crossing over into the U.S. at San Ysidro, California. The Lower Tijuana River then flows westerly in a broad floodplain into the Tijuana Estuary before discharging into the Pacific Ocean. Two major tributaries at Goat Canyon and Smuggler's Gulch also discharge to the lower Tijuana River. Throughout the years, trash and sediment deposition have been an enduring problem for the Tijuana River. The Tijuana River and its estuary have numerous 303(d) listings for pollutant impairments, including sedimentation/siltation, solids, turbidity, and trash.

In 2008, the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Diego Water Board) convened its first Tijuana River Valley sediment and trash workshop, which led to the creation of the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team (Recovery Team or TRVRT), a consensus-based collaboration of over thirty federal, state, and local government agencies, environmental and science communities, and other interested organizations and stakeholders from both sides of the border. Common amongst all members was the desire to address sediment and trash flows which degrade valuable estuarine and riparian habitats, threaten life and property from flooding, and impact recreational opportunities for residents and visitors in the Tijuana River Valley.

In 2011, San Diego Water Board Executive Officer David Gibson informed the Recovery Team of his decision to temporarily suspend all efforts on the sedimentation and trash TMDL. The purpose of this suspension was to provide an alternative approach by allowing the Recovery Team to implement its Tijuana River Valley Recovery Strategy (Recovery Strategy), which outlines collaborative projects to cost-effectively address sediment and trash problems in the Tijuana River Valley. In 2012, the Recovery Strategy was endorsed by the San Diego Water Board by adopting Resolution R9-2012-0030.

Due to Recovery Team efforts, there is now a better understanding of 1) existing trash and sediment problems in the Tijuana River Valley, 2) how the hydrologic and hydraulic functions of storm flows affect the Tijuana River Valley, and 3) how changes to physical characteristics of the Tijuana River Valley impact the floodplain. This understanding allows the Recovery Team to identify the highest priority projects based on the following four criteria:

1. Consistent with priorities in the Recovery Strategy;
2. Involve relatively straightforward paths of completion;
3. Can be controlled by agencies within the U.S.; and
4. Are expected to produce long-term benefits to managing trash and/or sediment.

Based on these criteria, ten specific projects with defined five-year objectives have been developed in a Five-Year Action Plan; these projects are divided into two tiers based on the criteria. The objective of the Five-Year Action Plan is to maintain collaborative momentum and implement projects that advance Recovery Team goals as described in the Recovery Strategy.

## **2.0 PROJECT NEED**

Tier 1 projects are the highest priority projects in the Five-Year Action Plan. The San Diego Water Board has submitted this request to the State Water Resources Control Board to provide Cleanup and Abatement Account (CAA) funds for the first phase of the Tier 1 projects. Phase 1 will be the first step in accomplishing the Tier 1 projects' five-year objectives:

1. Reclamation of Nelson Sloan quarry underway using sediment excavated in the Tijuana River Valley;
2. Brown Property fill removal and restoration underway;
3. Completion of a valley-wide sediment management plan;
4. Facilitation for implementation of the Five-Year Action Plan, including implementation of an interagency agreement for the acquisition of Tijuana River Valley property from willing sellers; and
5. Downstream trash clean-ups performed on a regular basis to produce measurable increase in trash removal efficiency due to enhanced approaches.

Accomplishing these objectives will alleviate environmental impacts and inefficient practices employed to offset the impacts due to the ongoing trash and sediment problems that have been compromising beneficial uses of the lower Tijuana River Valley for decades

Ideally, the City of San Diego will manage this CAA Project and seek partnerships with the County of San Diego and other participants in the Tijuana River Valley. The CAA Project manager will serve as the administrator for tasks undertaken by its partners. The length of the CAA Project will be two years; the first two years of Five-Year Action Plan work.

### 3.0 SCOPE OF WORK

This CAA Project contains five components:

**A. Reclamation of the Nelson Sloan Quarry (Phase 1)**

The scope of this component is to explore management and operations alternatives for reclamation of the Nelson Sloan quarry and to update environmental documents based on preferred alternative. The quarry is no longer in operation and may be an ideal site in the Tijuana River Valley to deposit excavated sediment from cross-border sources.

*Estimated Cost - \$500,000*

**B. Brown Property Restoration (Phase 1)**

The scope of this component is to prepare a hydrology study, feasibility study, and environmental documents for the Brown Property, the site of unauthorized fill activities in the past. The removal of this fill and restoration of the site to riparian forest floodplain would substantially improve the hydrology of the Tijuana River Valley

*Estimated Cost - \$300,000*

**C. Preparation of a Sediment Management Plan for the Tijuana River Valley (Phase 1)**

The scope of this component is to prepare a valley-wide Sediment Management Plan (SMP). The sediment management options to be studied include reclamation of the Nelson Sloan quarry, beach replenishment, construction aggregate and fill material, fill for Tijuana River Valley trails and dirt roads, fill for horse ranches and agriculture land, and landfilling. The sediment management plan could potentially include source identification and management options in Mexico as well.

*Estimated Cost - \$300,000*

**D. Recovery Team Support (Phase 1)**

The scope of this component is to recruit a contractor to dedicate the time required to maintain momentum on priority projects. This may include administrative services, facilitation, translation, website enhancements, and mapping. An ideal first effort requiring this kind of support would be the development and implementation an interagency agreement for the acquisition of Tijuana River Valley property from willing sellers.

*Estimated Cost - \$300,000*

**E. Targeted Trash Removal Projects**

The scope of this project is to provide support for Tijuana River Action Month (TRAM) trash clean-up efforts, including allowing small vehicles or draft horses to be used in sensitive, forested areas to remove the larger, heavier debris.

*Estimated Cost - \$150,000*

**4.0 BUDGET**

The San Diego Water Board is requesting \$1,550,000 from CAA funds to cover the costs of the five components of this CAA Project: Phase 1 of the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team Five-Year Action Plan Implementation.

The estimated cost to complete Phase 1 of each component is as follows:

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Component A: Reclamation of the Nelson Sloan Quarry            | \$500,000 |
| Component B: Brown Property Restoration                        | \$300,000 |
| Component C: Preparation of a SMP for the Tijuana River Valley | \$300,000 |
| Component D: Recovery Team Support                             | \$300,000 |
| Component E: Targeted Trash Removal Projects                   | \$150,000 |

**5.0 PROJECT SUBMITTALS**

Submittals associated with Phase 1 of each component are as follows:

**A. Reclamation of the Nelson Sloan Quarry**

Management and operations plan that explores various alternatives for Nelson Sloan quarry operations and identifies preferred alternative

Environmental documents required for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance

**B. Brown Property Restoration**

Hydrology study that explores the hydrologic impacts due to various fill removal and restoration scenarios

Feasibility study that evaluates the practicality and cost estimates of the potential fill removal and restoration scenarios

Environmental documents required for CEQA compliance

**C. Preparation of a Sediment Management Plan for the Tijuana River Valley**

Sediment management plan that, at a minimum, achieves the following:

- Describes problem and the utility of the sediment management plan;
- Identifies responsibilities of authorities /agencies;
- Identifies needs and collaborative opportunities, including common staging areas and common disposal/receiving sites;
- Defines factors affecting short- and long-term sediment volumes and quality;
- Identifies strategies and costs associated with sediment management options, including best management practices and green infrastructure;
- Identifies short- and long-term alternatives with costs and implementing recommendations;
- Identifies strengths and limitations of collaborative opportunities; and
- Identifies regulatory roles, subsequent environmental review, and permit obligations.

**D. Recovery Team Support**

Formal agreement that describes the property acquisition process and identifies who will purchase, manage, and provide long-term operation and maintenance funding for individual parcels

Submittals associated with administrative services, facilitation, translation, website enhancements, and mapping

**E. Targeted Trash Removal Projects**

Report documenting trash removal quantities for various clean-up locations