

Dear Interested Member of the Public,

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) understands the profound impact that transborder sewage is having on the daily lives of residents in South San Diego County, and we are working with urgency to address health concerns and reduce cross-border sewage flows.

Cross-border flows in the Tijuana River have been significantly reduced as Mexican pump station PBCILA returned to operation on September 10 and additional repairs to the Mexican conveyance system were completed. We are experiencing no-flow conditions in the river during the days but still seeing transborder flows in the evenings due to typical wastewater peak flows. The U.S. and Mexican International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) Sections are working together to further reduce wastewater inflows into the river, find additional capacity within the Tijuana wastewater system, and assess the viability of constructing a sediment berm across the river to contain the peak flows and eliminate all transborder flows.

The EPA, the County of San Diego, and the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD), in coordination with the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), are working together to better understand recent incidents of increased odor and prepare for the possibility of an increase in transborder flows during the upcoming rainy season. Local, state and federal authorities, including EPA, San Diego County and California Department of Public Health, have communicated to the public that current assessments indicate no imminent danger or threat to the community. While acknowledging the hardship caused by strong odors in the area, officials confirmed that there is no immediate risk to public health. Nonetheless, ATSDR is supporting local agencies to understand the extent of the community's exposure and potential health impacts due to long-term exposure. EPA is working to enhance the County and SDAPCD's air monitoring and public notification capabilities, and South Coast Air Quality Management District has deployed equipment to the San Diego area to assist SDAPCD with monitoring. In addition, the EPA will be providing funding to SDAPCD to distribute air purifiers to local residents to help reduce impacts of odors inside homes in the most affected communities.

On the wastewater infrastructure side, EPA and the USIBWC are working collaboratively with Mexico to advance the commitments made in the binational agreements known as [Minute 328 and the EPA-CONAGUA Statement of Intent](#) to address cross-border flows through infrastructure projects. In January 2024, the Mexican government held a groundbreaking ceremony for a new 18 million gallons per day (MGD) wastewater treatment plant at San Antonio de los Buenos, with construction of civil works on track to be completed by the end of September and operations beginning by the end of 2024. The rehabilitation of the largest wastewater conveyance pipe in Tijuana (the International Collector, which has a capacity of 60 MGD) is underway and expected to be completed in the next few months. This new collection pipe replaces the largest wastewater collection pipe in Tijuana and will help prevent future spills of wastewater into the U.S. The project for rehabilitation and flood protection of Pump Station 1, which will receive partial funding from EPA's Border Water Infrastructure Program, is expected to begin construction this year with plans for completion in 2026. The Los Laureles I Pump Station rehabilitation is expected to be complete by the end of October, which will reduce cross-border flows in Goat Canyon. Collectively, these projects will provide additional protection from future spills and leaks that currently enter the Tijuana River. Please refer to the [USIBWC GIS Portal](#) to view the location and status of projects in Mexico.

Regarding infrastructure on the U.S. side of the border, USIBWC will hold a groundbreaking ceremony and news conference at the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP) on September 30 to announce a project that will restore critical functions at the plant and help achieve permit compliance. The project to rehabilitate Junction Box 1 (JB-1) will install two new gates on an 8-foot-wide pipe that carries wastewater from Mexico to the plant. For the first time since the existing gates failed in 2021, JB-1 will allow the plant to control how much wastewater it accepts during heavy rains, protecting it from damage and preserving its ability to function properly so it continues to meet permit standards.

This comes about a month after USIBWC announced the award of a contract for the design and construction of the South Bay plant's rehabilitation and expansion. The first phase, in the amount of \$42.4 million, covers design for the full scope of the rehabilitation and expansion of SBIWTP. The project, developed in partnership between USIBWC and the EPA and consistent with the 2020 United States-Mexico-Canada Implementation Act, includes essential rehabilitation of existing infrastructure and capacity expansion to double current treatment capacity of 25 MGD to reach 50 MGD average flow, with a peak hydraulic flow capacity of 75 MGD. The plant will remain in operation throughout design and construction. More details: <https://www.ibwc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/FINAL-SBIWTP-Rehab-Expansion-Contract-Award-Final-8-21-2024.pdf>.

If you would like to be added to our distribution list to receive updates regarding EPA activities, please respond to this email and let us know. If you are already on our list, you will continue to receive updates when they go out. You may also continue to refer to our webpage for news about this important challenge: <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-water-infrastructure/usmca-tijuana-river-watershed>.

Thank you for your continued partnership in addressing cross-border pollution in the Tijuana River Watershed. Please feel free to contact us with further comments or questions at this email: [tijuanaewater@epa.gov](mailto:tijuanaewater@epa.gov).

Sincerely,

Tomás Torres and Andrew Sawyers, EPA Co-Chairs