

U.S.-Mexico Border Water Infrastructure Program FY 2017 Annual Report

EPA’s U.S.-Mexico Border Water Infrastructure Program (BWIP) funds the planning, design, and construction of high priority water and wastewater infrastructure projects along the U.S.-Mexico border. The BWIP provides hands-on management and technical oversight for pre-construction activities such as planning, engineering, environmental reviews, and design. This assistance benefits communities lacking the technical and managerial capacity needed to complete all pre-construction requirements and increases their opportunities to receive construction funding from other programs, such as Texas’ Economically Distressed Areas Program and U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development Water and Environmental Programs. The BWIP also assists communities in identifying and securing all available funding sources needed to fill construction funding gaps, ensuring access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation often for the first time.



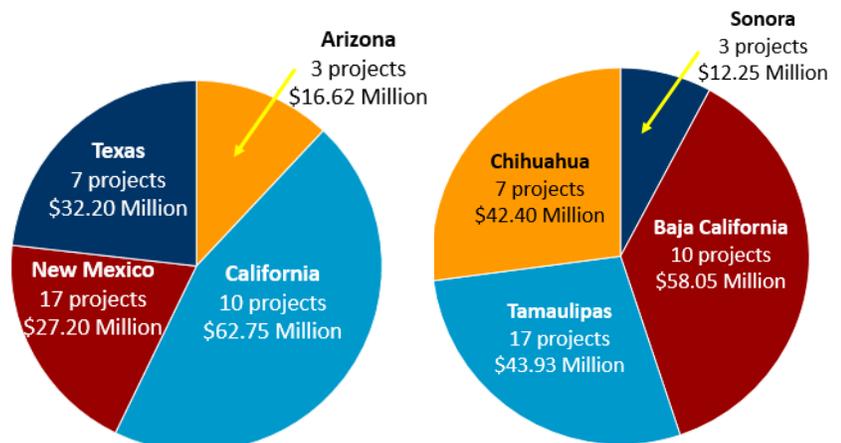
Figure 1: Map of U.S.-Mexico Border Region

Several rivers along the border flow northward from Mexico to the U.S. and the Rio Grande forms the natural border between the two countries. Through a joint investment partnership with Mexico, the BWIP addresses would-be transboundary sewage discharges before they reach the U.S., protecting the public health, environment, and well-being of our border communities. Mexico is required to match EPA’s investments in Mexican-side projects at least dollar for dollar. Treating raw sewage before it reaches U.S. waters is the most technically feasible and financially viable option to prevent transboundary contamination.

Program Accomplishments

From 2003 through fiscal year 2017 (FY17), the BWIP funded 128 projects; 108 of those projects have completed construction. Working closely with U.S. and Mexican federal, state, and local partners, the program provided access to safe drinking water to 70,000 homes and wastewater collection and treatment services to 673,000 homes for the first time. From the program’s inception through FY17, the program has developed the capacity to treat approximately 280 million gallons per day of raw wastewater in the border area, improving the quality of surface and groundwater along the border.

In FY17, EPA conducted a new project application and prioritization cycle for BWIP funding in close coordination with the North American Development Bank (NADB). EPA evaluated and ranked these projects based on a variety of criteria, including environmental and human health factors, degree of U.S. benefit, and EPA Regional priorities. The FY17 priority list contains 61 eligible drinking water and wastewater projects with a total estimated construction cost of \$296 million that address public health and environmental conditions along the U.S.-Mexico border.





Building technical and managerial capacity at Sunland Park, New Mexico through partnerships

The construction of a new wastewater treatment plant in Sunland Park, a small and disadvantaged community in New Mexico, started in August 2017. Camino Real Regional Utility Authority (CRRUA), the local wastewater utility, struggled with inadequate and aging infrastructure, environmental compliance challenges, and lack of managerial capacity and resources. For close to two years, EPA, the New Mexico Environmental Department (NMED) and NADB, worked closely with CRRUA to implement a capacity building plan to ensure CRRUA could effectively manage a new wastewater treatment plant. EPA provided more than \$85,000 to implement the plan and the technical assistance necessary to complete all pre-construction activities. EPA and NMED also funded the construction of the \$12.7 million treatment plant. EPA contributed \$9 million and NMED provided the additional \$3.7 million in state funding. The treatment plant will improve access to sustainable wastewater treatment services to approximately 6,438 residents of Sunland Park and Santa Teresa and will greatly reduce the risks of untreated or inadequately treated wastewater discharges.



Photo 1: Construction activities for the new Sunland Park treatment Plant: (photo courtesy EPA Region 6)

CRRUA's board chair, Josh Orozco, stressed the importance of finally being able to provide adequate wastewater treatment capacity in the community. At the July 11, 2017 groundbreaking ceremony, Mr. Orozco said this new plant “will not only allow more homes and more businesses to be helped, but will also improve the health of our community.”

Protecting the Tijuana River Watershed from transboundary contamination

The Tijuana River originates in Baja California, Mexico, crosses the U.S.-Mexico Border in San Ysidro, California, and empties into the ocean just south of Imperial Beach, California. Discharges of raw and poorly treated sewage in Tijuana can impact the economy, health, and environment of U.S. communities like Imperial Beach and Chula Vista



Photo 2: Repair of a broken wastewater collector in Tijuana (photo courtesy Construction Management company, Grupo Integral de Servicios Noroeste S.A. de C.V., Arq. Luis Zaragoza)

in San Diego County. A BWIP multi-phase effort is underway to repair some of the deteriorating wastewater collectors. These collectors carry sewage from households to the Tijuana wastewater treatment plant. The repair of these collectors will help prevent a catastrophic collapse that could result in hundreds of millions of gallons of untreated sewage flowing into the U.S. and onto San Diego County beaches. Through the EPA partnership with CONAGUA, the Mexican water agency, EPA contributed \$3 million and Mexico \$4 million for the repair of more than 6 miles of collectors. A second phase for the construction of 2.5 miles of additional sewage lines is underway. The estimated cost of this project is \$3 million with a projected EPA contribution of \$1.4 million.

For more information about this program, please contact us at:

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Office of Wastewater Management

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<https://www.epa.gov/small-and-rural-wastewater-systems/us-mexico-border-water-infrastructure-grant-program>

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