U.S. – Mexico Binational Meeting on Transborder Water Pollution
November 22, 2021
U.S. Consulate General Tijuana

Joint Statement

The U.S. and Mexican governments met today in Tijuana to discuss transboundary water pollution challenges along the shared border. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Michael S. Regan and U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Ken Salazar led the U.S. delegation, which also included Commissioner Maria-Elena Giner of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) and U.S. Representative Scott Peters. Mexico was represented by the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (SRE) Chief Officer for the North American Unit Roberto Velasco Álvarez and the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) Director for International Affairs Miguel Ángel Zeron along with Mexico's Consul General in San Diego Carlos González Gutiérrez, Deputy Technical Director of the National Water Commission (CONAGUA) Humberto Marengo, Commissioner Adriana Reséndez Maldonado of the Mexican section of the IBWC, and representatives of Baja California's state authorities for water and sanitation.

Recognizing the critical importance of addressing water pollution for the benefit of citizens on both sides of the border, the U.S. and Mexican delegations reviewed the important progress made toward reducing pollution levels. Mexico highlighted their $46 million dollars of investment by local, state, and federal authorities completed between 2019 to 2021 in water sanitation projects for the Tijuana River, including the recent upgrades to Pump Station CILA in Tijuana as well as numerous infrastructure repair projects financed by CONAGUA and EPA to reduce wastewater flows.

The U.S. and Mexican delegations agreed that reducing transboundary flows of polluted water in the Tijuana River, the canyons, and the coast are a high priority for both countries and committed to continue joint efforts to further reduce pollution levels.

As part of these efforts, the delegations discussed plans for the forthcoming $300 million investment by the EPA that will reduce transboundary wastewater flows in the Tijuana River and along the Pacific coast, as part of a comprehensive plan announced on November 8, 2021 (link to EPA press statement).

The United States underlined that this comprehensive plan will deliver reliable wastewater treatment for over 500,000 Tijuana residents. Additionally, the plan will benefit the thousands of residents and tourists in San Diego County who enjoy the Tijuana River Valley and local beaches, while significantly reducing the flow of untreated wastewater impacting both U.S. and Mexican communities and ecosystems.

Mexico highlighted the recent investment in the expansion and modernization of Pump Station CILA, noting that these upgrades had reduced transboundary flows for the first time in decades. Mexico also flagged the new regional plan developed jointly by the Federal Government and the State of Baja California to address transboundary pollution flows.

Both governments reaffirmed their shared commitment to take coordinated action to finding a lasting solution to transboundary pollution flows, with CONAGUA re-affirming its plans to fund wastewater treatment, collection, and reuse projects in Tijuana. The Mexican delegation also presented a new draft

“Special Northern Border Sanitation Program” that will be used to seek additional resources for future projects.

In particular, the U.S. and Mexican delegations agreed to further coordinate on projects and funding sources related to wastewater collection, wastewater reuse from la Morita and Arturo Herrera Wastewater Treatment plants, and the rehabilitation of the San Antonio de los Buenos Wastewater Treatment Plant to handle wastewater from coastal communities.

Thanks to these cooperative binational efforts, water quality in the Tijuana River and along the Pacific coast will improve significantly, enhancing public health, restoring ecosystems, and creating new recreational opportunities on both sides of the border. These projects will also provide important opportunities for wastewater reuse in a drought-prone region.