

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT  
FEBRUARY 13, 2013

ITEM: 7

SUBJECT: Update on Previous Trash Tracking Studies in the Tijuana River Valley (*Melissa Valdovinos*).

PURPOSE: To provide information on previous trash tracking studies and highlight the importance of continued tracking with the goal of source identification.

RECOMMENDATION: None

KEY ISSUES: None

DISCUSSION: Waste flows are not contained by international boundaries and the subject of solid waste disposal is of interest to the entire San Diego/Tijuana border region. Unregulated dumpsites in the Tijuana River Valley are a product of the disconnect between Mexican federal environmental regulations and local policy enforcement. Although several studies have highlighted the problem of border-area solid waste pollution, a lack of substantial published literature on the subject of transborder solid waste management created the need for a study like the Los Laureles Trash Tracking Project.

The Los Laureles Trash Tracking Project included direct observation in the field and geographic information system (GIS) spatial analysis of 75 dumpsites in the context of canyon geography and hydrology. The purpose of the project was to identify solid waste flows and their origin within Los Laureles Canyon in order to support the strengthening of anti-dumping laws, facilitate enforcement efforts, and ultimately eliminate unregulated dumpsites. In order to effect such changes, government officials require a scientific record of the solid waste management problems. The Los Laureles Trash Tracking Project produced a scientific record of source identification for the period of November 2010 through February 2011. Transborder flow of solid waste was confirmed by locating approximately 20% of tracking devices on the U.S. side of the border in the Goat Canyon sediment basin.

The results of the project are discussed in the Los Laureles Canyon Transborder Trash Tracking Study available at <http://usa.alterterra.org/category/trash-tracking>.

Several months were spent disseminating the project's results to stakeholders and officials in an effort to educate them on storm-induced solid waste flows, resource management, and solid waste management solutions. Results were presented to Tijuana's Secretary of Infrastructure and Urban Development, David Navarro, and then Secretary of Social Development, Miguel Medrano. Both officials toured the canyon and the estuary with Professor Romo, and expressed interest in cooperating in future studies and addressing their findings. Project results have also been presented to University of California San Diego, the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team, the San Diego Water Board, and the Border 2012 Task Force.

There are fourteen pairs of U.S.-Mexico border cities that suffer similar effects of transborder solid waste flows found in Los Laureles, so the benefits of strengthening anti-dumping laws and enforcement efforts in Mexico could be far reaching. Lessons learned from this research can now be used to create an international model for waste management in other transborder watersheds along the border.

Media stories that have highlighted the results of the study include:

- KUSI News "Getting Control of Border Pollution"
- San Diego Union Tribune "Blue Bottles Show Tijuana Garbage Trails"  
<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2011/feb/22/blue-bottles-show-tijuana-garbage-trails>
- San Diego Union Tribune "Using Trash to Track Tijuana's Trash"  
<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2011/feb/13/tracking-trash-trash>; and
- Mexico's National Public Radio (IMER) 102.5 FM (Mar Sin Fronteras) <http://tunein.com/radio/FUSION-IMER-1025-s68035/>

The next steps to continue promoting these solid waste management efforts are to:

- Continue trash tracking research on an annual basis;
- Track the trash from the dumpsites to their original sources (the dumpers); and
- Expand this study to include GIS mapping of dumpsites in Matadero/Smuggler's Gulch and Los Sauces/Yogurt

## Canyons.

The 2013 Dumpsite Mapping Project would support these next steps by mapping and recording the Los Sauces/Yogurt Canyon and Matadero/Smuggler's Gulch Canyon drainage basins. It would also support the overall goal of improving cross-border solid waste management through community outreach and public agency meetings, closures of unregulated dumpsites (six anticipated), changes in or enforcement of policy/local ordinances pertaining to illegal dumping practices, and implementation of source reduction practices.

LEGAL CONCERNS: None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: Proposal for Detection, Mapping and Communication of Solid Waste Pollution Sources in the Tijuana River Valley