

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
OCTOBER 14, 2009

ITEM: 13

SUBJECT: Information Item: Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team
(*Michael McCann and Benjamin Tobler*)

PURPOSE: This is an informational item to inform the Regional Board on the significant progress of the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team to promote and coordinate the many efforts of a wide range of agencies to protect the valley from effects of trash and sediment.

DISCUSSION: The Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team (TRVRT) convened its quarterly meeting on September 25, 2009, including 51 representatives of various agencies and organizations. The TRVRT's includes four Action Teams, comprised of the: Border Team, Bi-national Team, Restoration Team, and the Cleanup Team. The teams met for approximately two hours and the chair persons of each Action Team reported on the status of the various projects. Board Chairman Richard Wright and Board Member Grant Destache attended the quarterly meeting.

The Team Reports included the following highlights:

Border Action Team: Steve Smullen of the US International Boundary and Water Commission reported that 35,000 cubic yards of sediment from the Goat Canyon sediment basin is currently being transported to the beach located immediately west of the Tijuana River Estuary as part of a fate and transport study. This study is evaluating the effects of the sediment's 80/20 ratio of fine grains/course grains in beach replenishment potential. Typical beach sands have a 50/50 ratio.

Restoration Action Team: Jeff Crooks of the Tijuana Riv. National Estuarine Research Reserve (TRNERR) reported on strategies for implementing a valley-wide "visioning" effort to address overarching themes related to restoration of the Tijuana River Valley. One pressing need is an updated GIS-based map of the valley which identifies features such as habitat types, existing restoration or mitigation sites, locations associated with existing planning efforts, and ownerships. The TRNERR has agreed to lead

the effort to produce the required GIS layers. The restoration team also discussed the SD County Water Authority mitigation project, the City's maintenance of the Pilot Channel area, and the potential use of the former Nelson- Sloan quarry site as a restoration site needing fill material.

Bi-National Team: Doug Liden of USEPA reported that the federal government awarded four million dollars to projects associated with clean water efforts for the New River located in Imperial County. This is a strong signal from the federal government that trans-border water quality issues are finding favor and it bodes well for future efforts with the Tijuana River.

Cleanup Action Team: Cid Tesoro of the County of San Diego reported that the City of San Diego has formally declared a state of emergency for the Tijuana River Valley. The City has applied to the US Army Corp of Engineers (USCOE) for a Clean Water Action section 404 individual permit for the sediment removal, which also requires certification by the Regional Board under CWA section 401. The City has requested that the USCOE utilize their emergency review process. The City hopes that the permit will be issued by the end of September with clearing to begin in early October, and that other agency permits will be forthcoming as well. The plan proposes that sediment be temporarily stored at an existing borrow area used to create the border fence. Trash and cobble would be removed and sediment will be moved to another location (landfill or a former quarry site). The City would prefer to use an abandoned quarry site now owned by the County of San Diego. However, that part of the plan would require the County of San Diego to get a Reclamation Plan approved prior to the City's use of the site.

The TRVR Team has additional information on its website: www.tjriverteam.org

**SUPPORTING
DOCUMENT**

The River Team Update dated August 24,
2009.

RECOMMENDATION:

While this an informational item, at the conclusion of the discussion the Regional Board and/or the Executive Officer may make recommendations.



Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team

The River Team Update

August 24, 2009

August 24, 2009

The entire Recovery Team is to be congratulated for its efforts to obtain two NOAA Habitat Restoration Grants. While the grants were not obtained, the process helped to make the Recovery Team even stronger.

We want to thank the Action Teams who worked to put together the proposals (see page 5), and the many organizations and elected officials who supported them. Thanks go to Representative Susan Davis, Senator Denise Ducheny, Assemblymember Mary Salas, and Supervisor Greg Cox for providing letters of support. A special thank you to California EPA Secretary Linda Adams and the members of the Governor's California Mexico Border Relations Council for unanimously endorsing the submission.

Another big thank you goes to our member organizations who were able to get letters out in time for the submission, including the Bureau of Reclamation, State Water Resources Control Board, Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association (SWIA), SDSU Research Foundation, International Boundary and Water Commission, the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Reserve, the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Tijuana River National Estuarine Reserve which includes the following Recovery Team participants: NOAA, California State Parks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Coastal Conservancy, U.S. Navy, City of Imperial Beach, City of San Diego, County of San Diego, U.S. Border Patrol, SWIA, and the Pacific Estuarine Research Laboratory (PERL) at San Diego State University.

If we missed anyone who submitted a letter of support, we apologize and thank you, too.

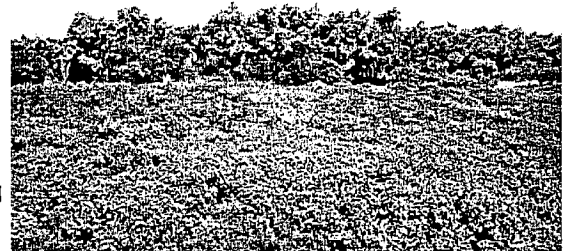
There is much to do. What do you think about where we are going? Please let us know!

John Robertus and Carl Nettleton
Co-Chairs, The Recovery Team

From Winter-to-Spring the Valley Changes; Cleanup Waits for the End of Nesting Season



By the end of December, the Tijuana River Valley had already been scoured by the winter floods. Along the main channel and in the Goat Canyon sedimentation basin, the valley was covered with silt and embedded with trash. Within months, areas of the channel and the Goat Canyon sedimentation basin had become green and filled with plant life.



From winter (left), when the valley is inundated with trash and sediment from each storm, to summer (below), the Tijuana River Valley is a changing place as evidenced by these photos taken west of the Dairy Mart Road Bridge.

Some trash had been collected during cleanup events like the one hosted by the Tijuana River Citizens' Council on June 6. However, much trash remains, either buried in sediment or covered by vegetation.

The new growth presents additional challenges. From March through September 15 is considered the nesting season for various bird species, including the least bell's vireo, California gnatcatcher, and southwestern willow flycatcher. During these periods, disruption of potential nesting habitat must be minimized, resulting in limited periods for work such as removing sediment and trash (and now vegetation) from the sedimentation basin, and conducting investigations necessary to ultimately clean up the valley floor.

It will be important to work closely with state and federal resource agencies to protect the sensitive birds that nest in the valley if work is to successfully move forward by September 15.

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For more information:
Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team
9174 Sky Park Court, Suite 100
San Diego, CA 92101
(858) 467-2952
info@tjriverteam.org
www.tjriverteam.org

June 26 Workshop - Moving Forward

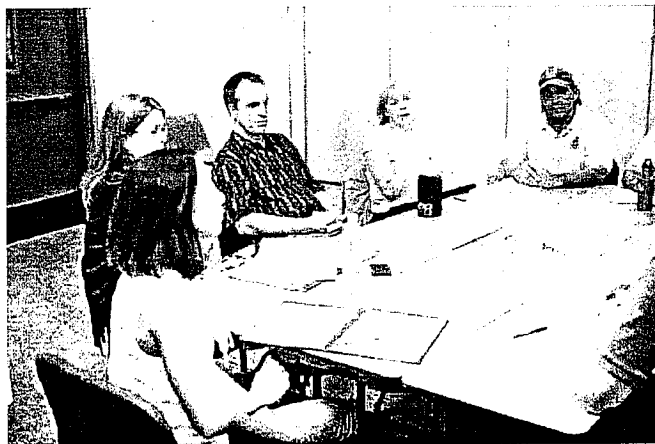
The Quarterly Workshop on June 26 was well attended, with more than 53 members of the Recovery Team present, and each Action Team had a healthy complement of its participants on hand. Discussions included identifying areas where historical accumulations of trash and tires might be found, possible sites for trash-capturing devices and new sedimentation basins, the structure of a vision document for the valley, and a binational report on work in Mexico. All of these efforts are progressing in unison to keep the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team moving forward.



Border Action Team members included (from left to right) Rachel Gregg, Ed Othmer, Dan Murphy, Doug Liden, Chris Peregrin, Grant Destache, and Action Team Chair Tony Heinrichs (with back to the camera). San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board Chair Richard Wright looks on in the background.



Bob Scott from URS Corporation points out the work being done to map out trash and sediment in the valley to Christina Buchanan and Tanya (last name not recorded). The trio are part of the Cleanup Action Team Co-Chaired by Cid Tesoro.



The Restoration Action Team had a healthy discussion about a vision for the valley. In attendance were (from left to right) Michelle Woo, Amy Campbell, Co-Chair Jeff Crooks, Betty Grizzle, and Patrick Gower.



Co-Chair Oscar Romo of the Bi-National Action Team (far left) facilitated an information-filled session. He was joined at the table by Doug Liden, Ben McCue and several Tijuana officials.

Photos courtesy of Dennis Williams, City of San Diego Environmental Services Department.

Action Team Updates - Work Underway

BORDER ACTION TEAM REPORT

Smugglers Gulch Sediment Characterization Complete

URS recently completed sampling and analysis of some of the sediment removed from the Smugglers Gulch stockpile channel this past spring. A final report is pending.

Possible Sites for Smugglers Gulch Sedimentation Basin

One of the key projects anticipated early on was a new sedimentation basin in Smugglers Gulch. Under a City of San Diego task order, URS has begun to identify the possible sites and size for that basin. A scoping meeting on June 29 moved the process into action.

Goat Canyon Sedimentation Basin and Trash Nets

The vegetation that has grown in the valley during the spring and early summer often becomes nesting habitat for the valley's endangered bird species. This includes growth in the Goat Canyon sedimentation basins. Work in Goat Canyon has stopped until the nesting season is over on September 15. When work begins again, the basins will be cleared of vegetation, the sediment will be removed from the basin, and a pilot trash net funded by The California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) will be installed, all in preparation for winter storms and the trash, tires and sediment that accompany them.

Installation of the trash net on behalf of State Parks is being funded by CIWMB. This \$250,000 grant will include cleaning out the Goat Canyon sedimentation basins. Work will begin early this fall. San Diego State University had previously conducted a topographic survey of the Goat Canyon sedimentation basins to estimate the volume of accumulated sediment. This information has been provided to CIWMB at the agency's request.

CLEANUP ACTION TEAM REPORT

Trash and Sediment Studies Gain Ground

While work continues on developing new grants, a number of projects are underway thanks to an initial grant of \$100,000



A Recovery Team member uses a hand-held GPS unit to mark the location of trash that has collected in the heart of the valley. Photo courtesy of URS.

from the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) and an additional \$700,000 from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). URS Corporation, working under the auspices of the County of San Diego continues to make progress under the CIWMB grant identifying the locations and amount of trash, waste tires and unwanted sediment in the valley.

Test Pits and Borings. Right-of-entry permitting with the County Park and Recreation Department and the International Boundary and Water Commission is complete, and test pits and borings are scheduled after September 15 when the bird breeding season ends.

Trash Survey. The trash survey has been completed all the way to the beach, thanks to the cooperation of Border Field State Park officials and grant support from CIWMB.

Historical Channels Evaluation. Historical aerial photos have been reviewed for the areas west of the initial study area to identify the locations of the major channels. A new map with expanded coverage to the ocean and including Border Field State Park is being prepared and will replace the one on the River Team web site and printed in the last update. The map will have a 2009 aerial photo to serve as its base.

www.tjriverteam.org

RESTORATION ACTION TEAM REPORT

Sediment Fate and Transport Study Gains Funding

The Tijuana Estuary Sediment Fate and Transport Study has restarted thanks to additional funding from the USEPA (through the SWRCB), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the California Department of Boating and Waterways. The funds pay for work that must be repeated due to the state bond freeze. This includes baseline monitoring, installing a temporary bridge, and mobilizing equipment. Material placement will begin at the end of September.

BI-NATIONAL ACTION TEAM REPORT

Tijuana Moving Forward With Projects to Help the River Valley

Tijuana and COLEF Team Up on Trash Characterization. The City of Tijuana and El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF) are working on a trash characterization study thanks to a \$45,000 Border Environmental Cooperation-Commission (BECC) Grant. The study is in response to the work of the Recovery Team.

Tijuana Planning Institute Studying Conservation Easements. INPLAN, Tijuana's Institute of Planning, is studying development of conservation easements. These easements will help keep pathways to the Tijuana River Valley free of trash.

Trash Nets in Los Laureles Canyon. Installation of trash nets in Los Laureles Canyon is being studied by the City of Tijuana's Urban Development Department.

BECC Grant Application Submitted to Track Tires

Another grant proposal to the BECC for \$100,000 has been developed between NOAA, UCSD, and the Tijuana Estuary National Research Reserve. The grant would fund a tire tracking study.

SWIA Grant Has Been Funded

The EPA grant awarded to SWIA at the end of 2008 has been released for funding. The three-year grant will result in work on both sides of the border, including revegetation projects, installation of 6,000 pervious pavers, 6,000 linear feet of rip-rap and coastal bluff protection.

So What's News in the Valley?

Union-Tribune Stories Focus on the Tijuana River Valley

An article on the front page of the local section of the San Diego Union-Tribune on July 28 used the Tijuana River Valley to focus efforts by the City of San Diego to gain approval from various federal agencies for a master storm water permit that will allow the City to clean out storm drains throughout the San Diego area.

Another story on August 3 profiled two wastewater treatment plants in Mexico that will help keep wastewater from entering the valley. The Arturo Herrera and La Morita treatment plants can treat 20 million gallons of sewage daily and will relieve the Punta Bandera facility. Arturo Herrera was turned on in March; La Morita begins operating later in 2009. They are part of a computerized system of pumps and pipes that will keep wastewater from entering the U.S. and will place treated effluent into the Pacific Ocean at Punta Bandera. Recovery Team members Oscar Romo and Doug Liden were quoted in the article.

Presentation to Presidential Advisory Committee

A presentation to the Good Neighbor Environmental Board on June 10 was also well-received. The Board said the work of the Recovery Team was an example of the projects they want to recommend. The Board is an independent federal advisory committee that advises the President and Congress on good neighbor practices along the U.S. border with Mexico.

Border 2012 Water Committee Hears Recovery Team Update

At the regularly scheduled Border 2012 Water Subcommittee in Tecate on June 17, Recovery Team members Ben McCue, Bart Christensen, and Oscar Romo provided the committee with an update on the work of the Recovery Team. Trent Briggs from San Diego State University gave an interesting presentation on sediment coming from unpaved roads in Tijuana that is now on the web site.

Meeting with Border Patrol Chief Held in June

Recovery Team Co-Chairs John Robertus and Carl Nettleton met with Border Patrol Chief Mike Fisher and his executive staff on June 29 to brief them about the Recovery Team's work. The meeting revealed a willingness of the Border Patrol to be part of the team and to work with the community at large. This is an important step in moving past differences about the border fence and moving toward a restored valley.

Meeting with SANDAG Staff Explores Mitigation Bank

With a shortage of wetlands habitat in Southern California, the Tijuana River Valley could be a prime area for transportation projects to obtain mitigation credits. Restoration Action Team Co-Chair Jeff Crooks and Carl Nettleton met with SANDAG officials on July 2 to explore the options and obstacles to establishing the valley as a mitigation bank.

Presentation to Chamber International Committee

On July 10, the Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce's International Committee received a presentation about the work of the Recovery Team. The presentation was praised as the most to-the-point and action-oriented presentation the committee has ever received.

IBWC Citizens Forum Hears About Recovery Team

Restoration Action Team Co-Chair Clay Phillips made a presentation to the IBWC Citizens Forum on Thursday, July 16, 2009, at a meeting in Imperial Beach. This presentation was also well-received, and Clay did an excellent job describing the work of the Recovery Team. Border Action Team Co-Chair Steve Smullen of the International Boundary and Water Commission spoke about the new construction at the International Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Recovery Team Represented on Regional Water Committee

The Recovery Team is now represented on the San Diego Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) Watershed Workgroup. A meeting on July 29 focused on coordinating efforts to obtain financial support through Proposition 84 bond funds.

NOAA Marine Debris Grant Submission Opportunity

A new opportunity has surfaced to resubmit at least part of the NOAA Habitat Restoration Grant application for a new Marine Debris Grant offered by NOAA. Because the work on the NOAA grant focused on cleaning up trash and sediment, the Marine Debris grant program might be better aligned to the work of the Recovery Team. Other opportunities also are being identified.



One of the Tijuana River Valley's many resident horses watches a visitor from a stable on Hollister Street. Restoring the valley's hydrology will help to alleviate flooding which periodically threatens the lives of both horses and people in the valley.

Ducheny Tire Bill Heads to Appropriations Committee

Senate Bill 167 by Senator Denise Ducheny has passed the Senate Natural Resources Committee and is in the Appropriations Committee. The legislation deals with waste tires across the border and allows the expenditure of funding south of the border to recycle tires.

Tire Enforcement Task Force Meeting Attended

On June 18, 2009, the Recovery Team was represented at the California/Baja California Water and Enforcement Task Force. The Task Force received an overview of the Recovery Team's work.

Valley Meetings and Events

Recovery Team Policy Committee Meeting
Friday, August 28, 2009, 10 a.m. - noon
SDRWQCB, 9174 Sky Park Court
San Diego, CA 92123

TRNERR Management Authority
Thursday, September 3, 1 p.m.
TRNERR, 301 Caspian Way, Imperial Beach

Border 2012 California-Baja California Water Task Force
Thursday, September 17, 11:30 a.m.
TRNERR, 301 Caspian Way, Imperial Beach

Recovery Team Quarterly Workshop
Friday, September 25, 2009, 10 a.m. - noon
SDRWQCB, 9174 Sky Park Court
San Diego, CA 92123