

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Expansion of Wastewater
Collection System for Tijuana River Basin Area

PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is considering authorizing the award of a Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) grant to the Comisión Estatal de Servicios Públicos de Tijuana (CESPT), the local utility for the cities of Tijuana and Playas de Rosarito, for construction of wastewater collection lines to serve existing communities in Tijuana that lack adequate wastewater disposal. Tijuana, a municipality comprised of about 1.5 million people, is located adjacent to the U.S.-Mexican border on the Pacific coast south of the City of San Diego, CA.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the proposed action is to address the environmental and public health risks associated with inadequate collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater. The proposed action will protect public health by providing wastewater collection to about 34,000 residents in the Tijuana River basin areas of Lomas Del Valle, Maclovio Rojas and Ojo de Agua that currently lack access to this service. Residents in these communities currently use latrines or open ditches for wastewater disposal. The proposed action will significantly reduce or eliminate the use of inadequate wastewater disposal practices, resulting in improved environmental and sanitation conditions.

The proposed action consists of installing about 59 miles (95,000 meters) of wastewater collection (sewer) lines ranging from 8 to 30 inches (20 to 76 centimeters) in diameter. This collection system will accommodate an estimated 2 million gallons per day (mgd) (88 liters per second (lps)) of wastewater generated by the communities and convey flows by gravity to the La Morita wastewater treatment plant currently under construction. The proposed action will collect an estimated 1.5 mgd of untreated wastewater that currently contributes to the Tijuana River. These flows represent about 15% of the treated effluent to be discharged to the Tijuana River by the two new La Morita and Monte de los Olivos wastewater treatment plants.

CESPT is constructing a complementary project that will ensure that wastewater flows collected as a result of the proposed action will not contribute to dry weather transboundary flows to the U.S. via the Tijuana River. CESPT's complementary project will expand the Tijuana River diversion and conveyance system from 11 mgd (500 lps) to 34 mgd (1,500 lps) to intercept treated flows from the communities receiving service under the proposed action as well as all treated discharges from the two new wastewater treatment plants. Treated discharges and other river flows will be intercepted prior to the international border and conveyed in a dedicated line for discharge to the Pacific Ocean in Mexico at Punta Bandera.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES AND CONDITIONS

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), EPA has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) that analyzes the potential transboundary

environmental impacts of the proposed action. After considering a wide range of regulatory, environmental (both natural and human) and socio-economic factors, the EA did not identify any significant impacts to the environment that would result from the implementation of the proposed wastewater collection system.

Environmental impacts in Mexico are addressed in the *Manifestación de Impacto Ambiental*, which was prepared in accordance with the environmental impact review process of the Secretaría de Protección al Ambiente de Baja California. This analysis supports a determination that the proposed infrastructure project will not have a significant adverse impact on human health and the environment in Mexico.

PUBLIC REVIEW

The EA is on file, along with other project materials, and is available for public inspection at the EPA Region 9 office in San Francisco, California. This EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) can also be viewed on-line on the EPA website at <http://www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder/infrastructure> and on the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) website at www.cocof.org. Copies of the EA are also available for public review at the EPA San Diego Border Office, 610 West Ash Street, Suite 905, San Diego (telephone: (619) 235-4765).

Interested persons, including those who disagree with this proposal, may submit comments to EPA Region 9 within 30 calendar days from the day this document is issued. No administrative action will be taken on this proposed project prior to the expiration date of this comment period. Comments, via letter, fax or email, should be sent to Susan Cox at the address listed below:

Susan Cox (WTR-4)
U.S. EPA Region 9
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
Telephone (415) 972-3555
Fax (415) 947-3537
Email cox.susan@epa.gov

After EPA assesses any comments received, those comments, EPA responses, and this Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) will be forwarded to the Regional Administrator for review and signature. If this FNSI is signed by the Regional Administrator, it will not be re-circulated for review but will be available to any individual upon request.

FINDING

After review of the EA and any comments received, EPA has determined that the proposed expansion of the wastewater collection system for the Tijuana River basin area will not have a significant impact on the environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared for this project.

Wayne Nastri
Regional Administrator

Date