



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Tijuana River Diversion Rehabilitation For the City of Tijuana, Mexico November 2021

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9 (EPA) intends to award a Border Environmental Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) grant to the City Tijuana, Mexico for the rehabilitation of lift stations PBCILA, PB1A, and PB1B, part of the Tijuana River diversion system as well as the construction of a new Tijuana River intake, all components are located in the City of Tijuana, Mexico.

EPA's award of a grant for the proposed project is a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC §§4321-4370f. In accordance with NEPA, Council of Environmental Quality Regulations at 40 CFR §§1500.1–1508.28, and EPA NEPA regulations at 40 CFR Part 6, EPA Region 9 has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) describing the potential environmental impacts associated with, and the alternatives to, the proposed project. This finding of no significant impact (FONSI) documents EPA's decision that the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

Project Location and Description

The City of Tijuana is within the larger municipality of Tijuana and covers an area of approximately 538 square miles. It contains the municipal delegations of San Antonio de los Buenos, Playas de Tijuana, Centro, Sánchez Taboada, La Mesa de Tijuana, Cerro Colorado, La Presa, Centenario, and Mesa de Otay. The City of Tijuana is connected to the San Ysidro district of southern San Diego in the United States by the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa Border Crossing Stations.

The project consists of the rehabilitation lift stations PBCILA, PB1A and PB1B, and incorporate the construction of a new, expanded Tijuana River intake of approximately 289 ft (88 meters) with a 48-in fiberglass reinforced (FRP) pipe. A new intake will aid in the elimination of Tijuana River dry-weather flows at 25 mgd and will supplement efforts to eliminate untreated discharges to the river. Together with the rehabilitations of PBCILA, PB1A, and PB1B, the project will help protect public health and the environment on both sides of the border.

Purpose and Need for Proposed Project

The proposed action will improve the wastewater diversion system in Tijuana and will result in mitigation of transboundary wastewater flows entering the United States and improvement in sanitary conditions within the City of Tijuana. A 2017 Comprehensive Wastewater Treatment and Reuse Plan prepared by the Comisión Estatal de Servicios Públicos de Tijuana (CESPT) found numerous areas of the wastewater system in need of improvement and affected by significant deterioration, facing imminent failure.

Rehabilitation measures and construction of additional infrastructure will reduce the risk of lift station failures that may result in untreated or inadequately treated wastewater discharges totaling approximately 1,500 liters per second or 34.2 million gallons per day (NADB, 2021). If these discharges reach the Tijuana River and flow north into the United States, beaches in San Diego, Imperial Beach, Coronado, and other coastal cities will be at risk of contamination. Mexican beaches face a similar scenario when discharges flow west towards Playas de Tijuana and Rosarito, Baja California, Mexico.

Tijuana's collection and diversion system requires the rehabilitation of pumping plants and intake expansion to operate per its intended purpose. The environment, public health, and economy of the affected areas depend on its reliability and will continue to face negative impacts under the diversion system's current deteriorating status.

In preparing the EA, EPA examined two alternatives, the no-action alternative and the proposed alternative. Under the No-Action alternative, no construction activities will take place. The proposed alternative will rehabilitate lift stations PBCILA, PB1A, and PB1B, and involve the construction of a new Tijuana River intake of approximately 289 feet, otherwise known as the Tijuana River Diversion System. These actions include improvements that were identified by CESPT and NADBank to mitigate transboundary flows created by untreated wastewater discharged into the Tijuana River. The proposed alternative was selected based upon engineering feasibility, compliance with regulatory requirements, preliminary cost estimates, and environmental considerations.

Environmental Consequences

After carefully considering the regulatory, environmental (both natural and human) and socio-economic factors as described in the EA, EPA has not identified any significant impacts to the environment that would result from the implementation of the proposed project.

Public Review

EPA made the EA and unsigned FONSI available for public review through October 27, 2021, on the internet at <https://www.epa.gov/small-and-rural-wastewater-systems/us-mexico-border-water-infrastructure-grant-program-public>. Notice of the public comment period was published in the *San Diego Union Tribune* on September 27, 2021.

EPA did not receive any comments on the EA and unsigned FONSI prior to the close of the public comment period on October 27, 2021.

Finding

Based on the information contained in the EA, and after opportunity for public comment, EPA has determined the proposed project will not result in significant impacts to the environment and an environmental impact statement is not required.

Tomás Torres
Director, Water Division

November 11, 2021
Date