



INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION
UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
UNITED STATES SECTION

April 9, 2025

Dear Stakeholders:

Mexico has informed us they started discharging approximately 5 million gallons a day (MGD) of wastewater into the Tijuana River last night and anticipate continuing to do so for the next five days as they repair a critical junction box that is part of the International Collector project.

They told us this was a difficult decision and spent days looking at other alternatives. In the end, the team working 24/7 on this complex and extremely important project felt they had exhausted all other options and found a path to mitigate the amount of flow to the river from a potential of about 25 MGD to 5 MGD.

The latest step involves drying Junction Box #3 so it can be rebuilt with reinforced concrete. That requires diverting the flow, most of which will continue to be sent to the Mexican coast, but still about 5 MGD will go to the river.

This is expected to last about five days, when Phase 1, the installation of the new International Collector, is scheduled to be completed.

The root of this issue goes back to March 9, when Mexico encountered two unknown lines sending flows into the International Collector.

One of the flows was stopped, but Mexico has been searching non-stop for the second and trying to isolate or divert it by using large steel plates, sandbags, and pumps.

As of last night, they were not able to secure the peak flow.

Additionally, the USIBWC has requested Mexico take action to activate its PBCILA lift station to remove as much flow as possible from the river before it enters the United States, given the new wastewater discharge. This pump is normally closed during the rainy season.

Phase 2, the rehabilitation of the old International Collector, should start soon after Phase 1 and is expected to last about eight days.

During Phase 2, it's anticipated the International Collector will not send flows to the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP) for about three to five days. The USIBWC, along with our operator, Veolia North America, is making contingency plans to protect the plant's biological treatment process should the shut-off last longer.

The International Collector project in Tijuana consists of relining a major aging sewage pipeline and connecting it to a new pipeline that should reduce the risks of leaks and transboundary flows.

Before this project was scheduled to begin on Feb. 24, 2025, Mexico proposed completing the work in one phase, which would have sent approximately 25-30 MGD of wastewater into the river over the course of about three to four weeks.

Mexico agreed to change plans after USIBWC, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Department of State urged that country to implement a bypass solution. This should prevent more than half a billion gallons of wastewater from reaching the river by the time the project is finished.

Since early March, the USIBWC and EPA have been in daily contact with Mexico and receive detailed project updates.

On April 4, officials from these agencies and the U.S. Consulate toured the San Antonio de los Buenos Treatment Plant near Tijuana and confirmed the plant is in the final stages of stabilization and is expected to be in compliance with Mexican standards in 2-3 weeks, treating 18 MGD.

The seven-day average (3/28–4/4/2025) of flow into SBIWTP was 20.56 MGD and the Tijuana River was 45.07 MGD.

(Our X site is a good place to check for updates: <https://x.com/usibwc>)

Warm regards,

Dr. Maria-Elena Giner, P.E.
Commissioner (U.S. Section)
International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico
United States Section

The following photos are courtesy of the Mexican Section of IBWC:

