



Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team

The River Team Update

August 24, 2009

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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



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.

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.



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.

What's Inside?

- June 26 Workshop page 2
- Action Team Updates page 3
- What's News? page 4
- Pending Meetings page 4
- More News page 5
- Photo of the Month page 5
- Mission and Vision page 5
- Action Teams page 5
- Contact Information page 5

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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

More News . . .

NOAA Habitat Enhancement Grants - Thanks to the Teams!

The work of the Recovery Team has not been deterred even though two grant applications submitted to NOAA for a Habitation Restoration Grant were not successful.

"This was our first attempt at a joint submission of a major grant as a team," said Co-Chair John Robertus. "It was a success in showing we could work together and has established part of the framework for future grant applications."

According to NOAA representatives the grant was well presented and had no flaws. Priority went to projects that were further along in development and expected to be completed in the near future.

The City of San Diego, in particular David Wells, and Bryn Evans with URS are to be congratulated on doing an outstanding job in a short time frame. Thanks also go to Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the San Diego State University Research Foundation, and the County of San Diego for their contributions.

Jeff Crooks and the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve also deserve credit for the second grant that was submitted.

Despite not being awarded the grants, the applications helped define the work that must be completed as a team!

The River Team Photo of the Month . . .

With each issue of the River Team Update, we plan to publish a new photo that captures the beauty of the valley. All Recovery Team members are welcome to submit their photos, with the understanding that photos submitted can be used to illustrate various communications tools, including grant applications, collateral materials, and the River Team web site. This month's photo is of a Lorquin's Admiral butterfly.



Tijuana River Valley Cleanup Garners Tons of Trash

A volunteer cleanup by the Tijuana River Citizens' Council on June 6 gathered several tons of trash, filling two large containers. The event gathered 250 volunteers and was supported by Wildcoast, Surfriider, Tijuana River Valley Equestrian Association, REI, Patagonia, and Allied Waste.

Web Site Update Includes New Reports/Presentations

The River Team web site now includes four historical studies on the Tijuana River Aquifer and two reports: the "Tijuana River Valley County Park Habitat and Trails Plan" and the "Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program." The web site also includes links to new media stories and Recovery Team participants' web sites, updated rosters, and two PowerPoint presentations showing trash and sediment issues from the other side of the border.

TMDL Requirements Discussed on August 10

On August 10, representatives from the EPA, WildCoast, the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the County of San Diego (all participants on the Recovery Team) met to discuss Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements for trash in the Tijuana River Valley. A future WildCoast cleanup event will be used to start gathering data for proposed TMDLs. TMDL is a regulatory term in the U.S. Clean Water Act describing the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards.



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A publication of the
Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team

Our Vision:

A Tijuana River Valley free of historical trash and sediment, protected from future deposits of trash and sediment, restored to a sustained physical, chemical and biological integrity, and performing its hydrologic functions, while respecting the rights of current and future landowners and users.

Our Mission:

To bring together the governmental administrative, regulatory, and funding agencies in tandem with advice from the scientific community, the environmental community, and affected stakeholders to protect the Tijuana River Valley from future accumulations of trash and sediment, identify, remove, recycle or dispose of existing trash and sediment, and restore the Tijuana River floodplain to a balanced wetland ecosystem.

Our Action Teams:

Border Action Team

Capturing and diverting cross-border trash and sediment. (*Tony Heinrichs, theinrichs@sandiego.gov*)

Clean-up Action Team

Cleaning up trash and sediment in the river channel. (*Cid Tesoro, cid.tesoro@sdcounty.ca.gov*)

Restoration Action Team

Planning and implementing restoration of the river ecosystem. (*Jeff Crooks, jcrooks@tijuanaestuary.org*)

Bi-National Action Team

Abating pollution at sources in the U.S. and Mexico. (*Oscar Romo, oromo@parks.ca.gov*)

For more information:

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