

State of California
Regional Water Quality Control Board
San Diego Region

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
MARCH 16, 2015

ITEM: 8

SUBJECT: **Tentative Resolution No. R9-2015-0036: Resolution Endorsing a Request for Disbursement from the Cleanup and Abatement Account to Fund the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team** (*Melissa Valdovinos*)

PURPOSE: To consider adoption of Tentative Resolution No. R9-2015-0036. The Resolution endorses the Cleanup and Abatement Account (CAA) Project “Phase 1 of the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team Five-Year Action Plan Implementation” by requesting funds in the amount of \$1.55 million.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Tentative Resolution No. R9-2015-0036

KEY ISSUES: The Board’s endorsement of the CAA Project demonstrates full concordance with Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team (Recovery Team or TRVRT) goals.

PRACTICAL VISION: The CAA Project implements several chapters of the San Diego Water Board’s Practical Vision. It advances the Chapter 1 goal of achieving healthy waters through strategic and effective government actions. It contributes to the Chapter 3 goals of improving physical and biological integrity in naturally occurring wetlands and restoring natural floodplains and habitats. Because Recovery Team efforts are a consensus-based collaboration representing a broad cross-section of stakeholders, these efforts are also consistent with Chapter 4 in maintaining proactive outreach that provides the public with easily understood information and pathways to communicate recommendations for improving conditions in the Tijuana River Valley. In addition, the CAA Project is in line with San Diego Water Board Resolution No. R9-2015-0020 as it benefits Disadvantaged Communities along the U.S.-Mexico border while promoting water quality and habitat restoration.

DISCUSSION:

Project Location and Background

The Tijuana River watershed drains a 1,730 square-mile basin and is divided by the U.S.-Mexico border. Most of the basin is located in Mexico, while only 27 percent of the total watershed is located within the U.S., in the San Diego Region. The headwaters originate in both the United States and Mexico with the main part of the river flowing via a concrete-lined flood control channel through Tijuana and subsequently crossing over into the U.S. at San Ysidro, California. The lower Tijuana River then flows westerly in a broad floodplain into the Tijuana River Estuary before discharging into the Pacific Ocean. Two major tributaries at Goat Canyon and Smuggler's Gulch also discharge to the lower Tijuana River.

Throughout the years, trash and sediment deposition have been an enduring problem for the Tijuana River. In 2008, the San Diego Water Board convened its first Tijuana River Valley sediment and trash workshop, which led to the creation of the Recovery Team, a consensus-based collaboration of over thirty federal, state, and local government agencies, environmental and science communities, and other interested organizations and stakeholders from both sides of the border. Due to Recovery Team efforts, there is now a better understanding of 1) existing trash and sediment problems in the Tijuana River Valley, 2) how the hydrologic and hydraulic functions of storm flows affect the Tijuana River Valley, and 3) how changes to physical characteristics of the Tijuana River Valley impact the floodplain.

Based on this improved understanding and priorities established by the Recovery Team, specific projects with defined five-year objectives have been developed in a Five-Year Action Plan with the objectives of maintaining collaborative momentum and implementing projects that advance Recovery Team goals. This Plan, which is under consideration of San Diego Water Board endorsement by adoption of Resolution No. R9-2015-0036, is in line with priorities expressed in San Diego Water Board Resolution No. R9-2015-0020 as it benefits Disadvantaged Communities along the U.S.-Mexico border while promoting water quality and habitat restoration.

Project Need

The San Diego Water Board submitted a request to the State Water Resources Control Board to provide Cleanup and Abatement Account (CAA) funds for the first phase of high priority projects. The Board's endorsement of the CAA Project reinforces this request by demonstrating concordance with Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team goals and support to fund the following efforts:

1. Reclamation of Nelson Sloan quarry underway using sediment excavated in the Tijuana River Valley;
2. Brown Property fill removal and restoration underway;
3. Completion of a valley-wide sediment management plan;
4. Facilitation of the Five-Year Action Plan implementation, which includes implementation of an interagency agreement to acquire Tijuana River Valley property from willing sellers; and
5. Downstream trash clean-ups performed on a regular basis using proven enhanced approaches to produce measurable increases in trash removal efficiency.

The City of San Diego will most likely manage this CAA Project and seek partnerships with the County of San Diego and other participants in the Tijuana River Valley. The CAA Project manager will serve as the administrator for tasks undertaken by its partners. The length of the CAA Project will be two years; the first two years of Five-Year Action Plan work.

Scope of Work and Budget Summary

For CAA Project details, please see Supporting Document 2. This CAA Project contains five components:

Reclamation of the Nelson Sloan Quarry (Phase 1)

The scope of this component is to explore management and operations alternatives for reclamation of the Nelson Sloan quarry and to update environmental documents based on preferred alternative. The quarry is no longer in operation and may be an ideal site in the Tijuana River Valley to deposit excavated sediment from cross-border sources.

Estimated Cost - \$500,000

Brown Property Restoration (Phase 1)

The scope of this component is to prepare a hydrology study, feasibility study, and environmental documents for the Brown Property, the site of unauthorized fill activities in the past. The removal of this fill and restoration of the site to riparian forest floodplain would substantially improve the hydrology of the Tijuana River Valley

Estimated Cost - \$300,000

Preparation of a Sediment Management Plan for the Tijuana River Valley (Phase 1)

The scope of this component is to prepare a valley-wide Sediment Management Plan (SMP). The sediment management options to be studied include reclamation of the Nelson Sloan quarry, beach replenishment, construction aggregate and fill material, fill for Tijuana River Valley trails and dirt roads, fill for horse ranches and agriculture land, and landfilling. The sediment management plan could potentially include source identification and management options in Mexico as well.

Estimated Cost - \$300,000

Recovery Team Support (Phase 1)

The scope of this component is to recruit a contractor to dedicate the time required to maintain momentum on priority projects. This may include administrative services, facilitation, translation, website enhancements, and mapping. The ideal first step for this type of project could involve the development and implementation an interagency agreement to acquire highly desirable property within the Tijuana River Valley from willing sellers.

Estimated Cost - \$300,000

Targeted Trash Removal Projects (ongoing)

The scope of this project provides support for Tijuana River Action Month (TRAM) trash clean-up efforts, including small vehicle or draft horse use in sensitive, forested areas for removal of larger, heavier debris.

Estimated Cost - \$150,000

LEGAL CONCERNS: None

**SUPPORTING
DOCUMENTS:**

1. Tentative Resolution No. R9-2015-0036
2. Request for Cleanup and Abatement Funds for Phase 1 of the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team Five-Year Action Plan Implementation, Dated March 2015

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Notice was provided via Lyris List on February 23, 2015 and in the agenda for the March 16, 2015 Board Meeting, which was posted on the San Diego Water Board's website.