



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

March 11, 2015

Ellen M. Way, Chair
Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board
73-720 Fred Waring Dr., Suite 100
Palm Desert, CA 92260

Dear Chairperson Way:

Thank you for your December 8, 2014 letter to EPA and the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) expressing concerns about the effects of sewage from Mexico on water quality of the New River. EPA agrees with the Regional Water Quality Control Board that failing wastewater infrastructure in Mexicali is a serious issue and we are committed to working with the Regional Board and our partners in Mexico to find appropriate solutions.

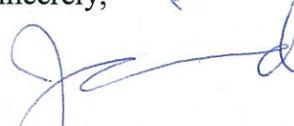
Adequate and well-maintained wastewater infrastructure in Mexicali is crucial for protecting New River water quality. Since 1995, EPA has spent over \$40 million to improve wastewater infrastructure in Mexicali. Ensuring that the infrastructure we have funded is being properly maintained and in good working order is a priority for EPA. We have been in dialogue with our program partners in Mexico to obtain more specific information about the repairs needed, including whether the equipment at issue was part of previously-funded binational projects. In addition, we have a current \$1.3 million project to rehabilitate aging and failing collection lines that pose a direct public health threat and an environmental risk from infiltration into groundwater and surface water that eventually cross into the United States.

As a necessary step towards securing resources to address the infrastructure and operations and maintenance problems in Mexicali, we have also begun discussions with CONAGUA about EPA funding a year-long study to evaluate the state of wastewater infrastructure, identify and estimate the costs of specific projects needed to address deficiencies, and identify opportunities for technical assistance.

Finally, we will work with IBWC, via the New River Binational Technical Committee, to review and improve the IBWC's existing contingency plans for addressing emergencies with the wastewater infrastructure system. Closer adherence to procedures to minimize bypasses to the New River is needed while infrastructure repairs and upgrades are planned and implemented.

The Regional Board has been instrumental in working with EPA and our binational partners to improve water quality in the New River. We will continue to engage the Regional Board and keep you informed of our progress in pursuing improvements on the ground in Mexicali. If you have questions, please contact me at (415)947-8707, or Doug Eberhardt, manager of our Infrastructure Section, at (415) 972-3420.

Sincerely,



Jane Diamond
Director, Water Division

cc: Edward Drusina, IBWC
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