

**TIJUANA RIVER NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 1pm
301 Caspian Way, Imperial Beach CA, 91932
Meeting held virtually via the *Zoom* platform.
DRAFT meeting minutes

Advisory Council Members

Present: at this meeting in **BOLD PRINT**

Lisa Adams – California State Parks – District Superintendent I

619-688-3230, lisa.adams@parks.ca.gov

Chantel Jimenez – US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – Acting SDNWRC Project Leader

chantel_jimenez@fws.gov

Sally Brown – USFWS – Refuge Manager

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Mike McCoy – Tijuana Estuary Foundation, *formerly Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association (SWIA)* – President

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Charles Bradshaw – US Naval Base Coronado – Community Plans and Liaison Officer

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Chris Helmer – City of Imperial Beach – Environmental and Natural Resources Director

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Annica Ly – City of San Diego – Stormwater Department

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Doug Liden – US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) – Environmental Engineer

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Sean Ford – US Border Patrol – Public Lands Liaison

SEAN.A.FORD@cbp.dhs.gov

Bill Rogers – US Border Patrol – Special Operations Supervisor

WILLIAM.S.ROGERS@cbp.dhs.gov

Emily Allen – US International Boundary & Water Commission – Area Operations Manager

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Charles Gailband – SD County Parks – Region Manager

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Mike Verderber – SD County Parks – Supervising Park Ranger

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Sam Jenniches – State Coastal Conservancy – Project Manager

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Ashley Reineman – California Coastal Commission – Deputy Director, Statewide Programs

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Megan Hall – California Coastal Commission – Federal Programs Manager

megan.hall@coastal.ca.gov
Chelsea Jander – California Coastal Commission – Coastal Program Analyst
chelsea.jander@coastal.ca.gov
Gemma Waaland – NOAA's Office for Coastal Management – NERR Liaison
707-495-2623, gemma.waaland@noaa.gov

Program Managers Present:

Chris Peregrin – TRNERR – Reserve Manager

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Lorena Warner-Lara – TRNERR – Assistant Reserve Manager (Stewardship)

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Kristen Goodrich – TRNERR – Coastal Training Program

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Vacant – TRNERR – Education Coordinator

619-575-3615 ext. 304

Jeff Crooks – TRNERR – Research Coordinator

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Additional Attendees

Julio Leon, US Border Patrol
Charles Gailband, SD County Parks
Megan Hall, CA Coastal Commission
Joe Ellis, Public
John Zarem, TRNERR Volunteer
Marya Ahmad, CA State Parks
Demmuel Eslava, TRNERR
Stephany Garcia, TRNERR
Brian Jenvey, Documenters.org

Oscar Romo, Alter Terra (presenter)
Mary Johnson Powell, TRVEA
Pete Evaristo, Public
Anna Shepherd, US Navy
B.A.J., Public
Brian McNeece, Public
Lynn Reizer-Heftmann, TRVEA
Mario Zuniga, US EPA R9
Nanzi Muro, Public

1. **1:05 pm Meeting was called to order.**
2. **AGENDA** – the May 6, 2025, agenda was adopted.
3. **LAST MEETING MINUTES** – The February 4, 2025 minutes were posted late. Members should submit changes within two weeks, minutes will be adopted after that.
4. **Member Comments**

Lisa Adams – California State Parks – District Superintendent I

- a. The San Diego State Park District is continuing to monitor everything impacting the parks, the daily changes to federal funding, and the concerns over the river contamination. California State Parks is awaiting the final confirmation from Sacramento for the 2024-2025 budget. It is expected within the next couple of weeks.

Chantel Jimenez – US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – Acting SDNWRC Project Leader

- a. The USFWS does not have a budget for 2025 and there is still a hiring freeze until at least June and a possibility that the freeze will continue through the year. Due to the current federal administration's priority to reduce the federal workforce and to lower the federal budget this condition could likely continue through the year.

Sam Jenniches – State Coastal Conservancy – Project Manager

- a. Nothing to report.

Chris Helmer – City of Imperial Beach – Environmental and Natural Resources Director

- a. The City of Imperial Beach is experiencing staff turnover. This has affected the City's ability to respond as quickly as usual. The City is attempting to fill those positions.

Charles Bradshaw – US Naval Base Coronado – Community Plans and Liaison Officer

- a. The Navy has a scheduled preliminary project with the County of San Diego to continue restoration in the Tijuana River Valley and is preparing to send the FY2026 [REPI](#) Proposals.
- b. The Navy is also working actively with California State Parks to execute an encroachment protection agreement that will allow CA State Parks to take advantage of the REPI Program.

Annica Ly – City of San Diego Stormwater Department

- a. The City of San Diego is reporting that the Smuggler's Gulch berm is still functioning as designed.

Doug Liden – USEPA – Environmental Engineer

- a. Doug Liden is retiring tentatively on June 16. This might be D.Liden's last meeting in an official capacity. He introduced Mario Zuniga, who is an environmental engineer who will be the contact for the AC meetings.
- b. The USEPA administrator Lee Zeldin visited the border on April 22 and toured the river valley, the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP), and was given a flyover of the Tijuana River Valley. He visited with the US Navy on the Navy Seal Base. The visit included a press conference and a round table with some Congressional representatives. The previous day, he met with Mexican authorities.
- c. Mexico is going to expedite the removal of 10 to 12 million gallons a day (mgd) of treated sewage from the river to allow PBCILA to have additional capacity to handle dry weather flows, as well as to expedite the expansion of the SBIWTP to potentially treat in the interim while the full plant is being expanded to secondary to treat an additional 10 to 25 mgd and to blend the flows.

Ashley Reinemann – California Coastal Commission – Federal Programs Manager

- a. There is significant uncertainty to California's Coastal Management Program, which includes the State Coastal Conservancy, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), the three NERRs, and the Coastal Commission, particularly as it relates to the federal grants program which is through NOAA under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). In March, representatives of the above entities

went to Washington DC and met with about 18 congressional offices in support of FY2025 & FY2026 funding with more emphasis on the federal dollars for California coastal planning and regulatory, education and research programs. There is a possibility that California's Federal funding will be eliminated from the FY2025 & FY2026 and beyond budgets. The ramifications will be broad and sweeping. The agencies are working closely together to deal with the uncertainty of these unprecedented times. By the next meeting there may be more clarity.

- b. The new Federal Programs Manager, Megan Hall, was on the phone and was introduced.

Charles Gailband – SD County Parks – Region Manager

- a. The proposed county budget has been released and is seeking public input. The County is continuing working on existing projects in the river valley but there will be fewer new projects over the next few years.
- b. The campground opened partially on April 1st in the areas that were not affected by the berm breach. There is not a firm date for opening the rest of the campground pending clean-up of the flood affected areas.
- c. Regarding the testing done in the flood affected areas in the regional park, the results can be found on the Regional Park's website.

[https://www.sdparks.org/content/dam/sdparks/en/pdf/BrochuresMiscellaneous/trvrp/Tijuana River Valley Regional Park-Campground Reopening FAQs 03.19.25.pdf](https://www.sdparks.org/content/dam/sdparks/en/pdf/BrochuresMiscellaneous/trvrp/Tijuana_River_Valley_Regional_Park-Campground_Reopening_FAQs_03.19.25.pdf)

Sean Ford – US Border Patrol – Public Lands Liaison

- a. The Tijuana River barrier, a.k.a. Tijuana channel bridge is mostly complete and is pending testing. Currently the gates can't be lowered all the way down until the silt and debris is removed from the bottom. Once that is complete there will be a test to see if the automatic closure for the gates is operational.
D.Liden, question: The barrier was made to withstand 5 feet of water, so when there are periodic peak flows, can the barrier be used similar to the soil berm to keep the small flows on the Mexican side, so the flows can be pumped out of the river?
S.Ford, answer: It cannot withstand 5 feet of continuous flow. During wet weather events the gate will be opened to let the flow out. In dry weather flows it will allow the flow to build up to 5 feet and then open.
- b. The U.S. Marines work between the fences at Otay Mesa are mostly finished. That work is progressing west and is getting closer to the beach and is being done in between the fences in the enforcement zone and will not be impacting the park or the public.
- c. Regarding the condition of Monument Road: S.Ford is seeking for the City of San Diego to do some work on the road to make it safer; there have been some accidents. He is concerned that even though Border Field SP is closed for vehicles that people still come to the parking lot and that there are RVs and horses on the road. He recommends removing the silt and overgrown vegetation that is impacting the safety on Monument Road.
- d. The major gully at Smuggler's Gulch is smoothed out and ready for the panels to be installed by the end of May and should be done by August. Even though the BP was given an environmental waiver from the current administration, they are honoring all of the environmental guidelines that were previously in place on this project.

Emily Allen – US International Boundary & Water Commission – Area Operations Manager

- a. Link to report given: https://trnerr.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/IBWC_TRNERR-AC-Meeting-05.06.2025.pdf

Mike McCoy – Tijuana Estuary Foundation (*formerly SWIA*) – President

- a. The Tijuana Estuary Foundation is working on a quarterly basis with the Elkhorn Slough Foundation on information sharing around better fund raising.
- b. Dr. McCoy asked a question regarding the status of San Diego State University's absence on the advisory committee given that they have a field station on site. J. Crooks responded that the field station is still active and that SDSU's attendance tiered down over the years due to some changes in the science department. J. Crooks can look into that and let Dr. McCoy know later.
- c. Dr. McCoy questioned if the Senate and House can override the Executive branch of the Federal government's decisions of the distribution of funds as it pertains to NOAA. A. Reinemann replied with an explanation of the functions of the Continuing Resolution for FY 2024 and 2025.

5. Program Manager Reports

Chantel Jimenez for Sally Brown – USFWS – Refuge Manager Report

- a. It is nesting season at the beach and dune fencing is in place. Robert Patton is counting the birds.
- b. The Refuge Manager is working with State and Federal agencies and the Zoo for continued monitoring and surveys for the Light-footed Ridgway's Rails and is also seeking to get collection permits to improve genetic diversity in the captive breeding program.
- c. The Friends of the San Diego Wildlife Refuge has agreed to pay for the fabrication of the new interpretive signs for the North and South McCoy trails.

Chris Peregrin – TRNERR – Reserve Manager Report

- a. Regarding the NERRS, Chris explained the administration of the NERRS by NOAA, its creation by the CZMA (Coastal Zone Management Act) and the importance of the research and monitoring that takes place in the NERRS. This program is a federal and state partnership that is administered by NOAA. The federal and state governments contribute money and through that a system of research and monitoring is implemented. The information that is gathered informs educational and public learning opportunities, as well as serves as a criteria for the decisions made by stakeholders and local agencies. Here, that work is also done in partnership with the non-profit organization the Tijuana Estuary Foundation/SWIA. The Tijuana Estuary is dependent on federal funding and the pause last week temporarily impacted and interrupted the system to draws down funds for crucial operations of programs.
- b. The Monument Road realignment project's name is the "Border Field State Park Resilience Access and Habitat Restoration Project" and is at about 60/80 percent design. Public engagement for environmental review process is underway, [the virtual meeting is upcoming with the comment period to May 21.](#)

Lorena Warner-Lara – TRNERR – Education Report

- a. Victoria Bok was recently hired as a Park Interpretive Specialist (PIS). There are upcoming interviews for a second PIS to bring mostly full coverage to the education program. Other Education Program on staff include: Jessie Looney, Education Specialist/Interpreter I; Joyce Salazar, Senior Park Aide for Visitor Center operations; Robin Echols-Booth, Senior Park Aide for Volunteer Coordination; Haley Calhoun, District Interpreter I - part time support for school programs, curriculum development, and program support; Alexandra Latona, District Interpreter III for district-wide program management.
- b. School programs recently have been mostly self-led.
- c. Community outreach events:
 - 4/18: San Ysidro STEM Fair at Mirada Elementary - collaboration with SY Elementary School District and its Science Teachers
 - 4/24: Nature Day at El Toyon Elementary School in National City
 - 4/26: Dia de los Niños/Dia de los Libros
 - 5/4: Border Bioblitz "Community Day." Led by the San Diego Natural History Museum and Botanical Community Development Initiatives and hosted at TEVC. An early bird walk was led by USFWS Ranger, CA State Parks Interpreter, and naturalist Hector Valtierra.
 - 5/17: Crown Cove Aquatic Center Open House
- d. Saturdays: Jr Rangers
- e. Volunteer Appreciation: a boat ride in the San Diego Bay and a celebratory cook out was held at the Silver Strand in appreciation of the volunteers. A field trip for the volunteers to the SBIWTP was also coordinated.

Lorena Warner-Lara – TRNERR – Stewardship Report

- a. The Nelson Sloan Quarry Restoration and Beneficial Reuse of Sediment Project. The project is still in the regulatory phase and working on permits. The project team has been corresponding with agencies, and many of the permits are still under review. Recently comments from the City of San Diego have come back on the Site Development and Coast Development permits to address those with the help of Dudek whose contract was extended to the end of the year.
- b. The San Diego Urban Corps has been at Border Field SP working on Monument Mesa on habitat enhancement and weed clearing along parking lot. They also worked on an overgrown trail that was reported by the equestrian community.
- c. San Diego Urban Corps attended training with District office staff with a focus on Monument Mesa plants and small-scale restoration projects. They also received training on invasive species, especially new invasives, and on cultural resources.
- d. The Friday Stewardship volunteers continue their efforts on the trails and in the habitat around the Visitor Center.

Jeff Crooks – TRNERR – Research Report

- a. The research team, including USFWS is working with the Coastal Conservancy on the Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program (TETRP) in the Border Field area. There is some money for the project from the Coastal Conservancy. A proposal to fund additional elements of the project have been sent out.

- b. Monitoring with NOAA continues to track the water conditions. The reduction of flow has gone down to 10 mgd and there is an improvement in the dissolved oxygen conditions in the water.

Kristen Goodrich – TRNERR –Training and Engagement Report (*formerly Coastal Training Program (CTP)*)

- a. NERRA is the non-profit friends group for the NERRS and is helping to develop some strategies for education and outreach at both the local and national level that will be affected by potential budget cuts.
- b. CTP staff are supporting the National Geographic [Preserving Legacies](#) Project and through that, sharing lessons on preserving legacies and cultural heritage in the context of climate change. CTP will be continuing a series of workshops in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Office and Scripps.

6. New Business

- a. Oscar Romo (Alter Terra) gave an update on the trash booms in the Tijuana River main channel.

Presentation link:

<https://trnerr.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/TRNERR-AC-Mtg.-May-6-2025.pdf>

Trash boom information sheet:

<https://www.rcac.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/TRTB-Ribbon-Cutting-Informational-Flyer.pdf>

7. Public Comment

No comments were made.

8. Future Agenda Considerations

None suggested. Please email C.Peregrin and L.Warner-Lara with any future agenda items (*see emails at top of minutes*).

9. TRNERR Trails Committee meeting

Monday, June 2 at 9:30 am. Location undecided.

10. TRNERR MEETINGS for Advisory Council – In-person and Virtual @1pm

Future TRNERR Advisory Council meetings:

- Tuesday, August 5, 2025
- Tuesday, November 4, 2025

11. Adjourned at 2:37 PM

The meeting was adjourned.