

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

Tuesday, August 5, 2025, at 1pm  
301 Caspian Way, Imperial Beach CA, 91932  
Meeting held virtually via the *Zoom* platform.  
***adopted 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

***Justyn Stahl for Chantel Jimenez – US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – Acting SDNWRC  
Project Leader***

chantel\_jimenez@fws.gov

***Justyn Stahl for Sally Brown – USFWS – Refuge Manager***

619-964-1980, sally\_brown@fws.gov

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

619-423-0495, mcco4ib@aol.com

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

619-545-4134, charles.p.bradshaw3.civ@us.navy.mil

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

619-628-1370, chelmer@imperialbeachca.gov

***Eddie Silva and Jim Haynes for Annica Ly – City of San Diego – Stormwater Department***

858-654-4272, AnLy@sandiego.gov

**Tara Flint-Silva – US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) – Life Scientist & Project  
Officer Mexico Border & Pacific Islands Infrastructure Section**

619-849-1036, FlintSilva.Tara@epa.gov

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**

619-891-8089, emily.allen@ibwc.gov

**Charles Gailband – SD County Parks – Region Manager**

charles.gailband@sdcountyparks.ca.gov

**Mike Verderber – SD County Parks – Supervising Park Ranger**

619-428-2946, mike.verderber@sdcounty.ca.gov

**Sam Jenniches – State Coastal Conservancy – Project Manager**

760-832-7365, sjenniches@scc.ca.gov

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

805-585-1800, ashley.reineman@coastal.ca.gov

**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**

619-575-3615 ext. 303, chris.peregrin@parks.ca.gov

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

619-575-3615 ext. 312, lorena.warner-lara@parks.ca.gov

**Kristen Goodrich – TRNERR – Coastal Training Program**

619-575-3615 ext. 314, kgoodrich@trnerr.org

Vacant – TRNERR – Education Coordinator

619-575-3615 ext. 304

**Jeff Crooks – TRNERR – Research Coordinator**

619-575-3615 ext. 333, jcrooks@trnerr.org

**Additional Attendees**

Joe Ellis, Public

John Zarem, TRNERR Volunteer

Marya Ahmad, CA State Parks

Empress Holliday, TRNERR

Demmuel Eslava, TRNERR

Ransses Lopez, TRNERR

Pete Evaristo, Public

Lynn Reizer-Heftmann, TRVEA

Hva, public

KIHuston, public

Dan Watman, Friends of Friendship Park

Shanasia Sylman, Margaret A. Davidson

Fellow

1. **1:07 pm Meeting was called to order.**
2. **AGENDA** – the August 5, 2025, agenda was adopted.
3. **LAST MEETING MINUTES** – The February 4, 2025, minutes were adopted. May 6, 2025, minutes were posted late and will be up for adoption at the next meeting.
4. **Member Comments**

Lisa Adams – California State Parks – District Superintendent I

- a. Nothing to report.

*Justyn Stahl for Chantel Jimenez – US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – Acting SDNWRC Project Leader*

- a. Since 2025 USFWS has lost about 25% of its workforce nationwide due to deferred resignations, early voluntary retirement, voluntary separation and senate payment realignment programs. Chantel Jimenez is Deputy Project Leader since Jill Terp's retirement in November and is the acting Project Leader since Andy Yuen's retirement in February. The USFWS is still impacted by the ongoing hiring freeze. The ability to get things done is problematic due to the current hiring freeze, and unfilled positions, and an anticipated 6 to 6.5 % budget cut for 2026 could extend those complications. The Refuge team appreciates the assistance of the other agencies and the volunteers who help in keeping trails clean and clear and safe for the public. Recently two new volunteers from Volunteer Warfighter have joined the volunteer team for the Refuge.
- b. The Otay River Estuary Restoration Project will restore 125 acres of salt ponds to the coastal salt marsh. The area is at Pond 15 at the north end of the salt works complex, the flood plain site, adjacent to Ports Pond 28 property, and south of the bike path and east of 13th street in I.B. All the earthwork has been completed over the winter. However, due to high saline conditions, irrigation planting will be delayed until the winter of 2026-2027. So far, there has been some natural recruitment of pickleweed and cordgrass in parts of the areas restored.

*Sam Jenniches – State Coastal Conservancy – Project Manager*

- a. The Coastal Conservancy is a co-host and sponsor of the 30x30 Partnership 2025 Summit, which will take place in San Diego on August 14 and 15, 2025. The main summit will feature programs and speakers, will be held at the San Diego Natural History Museum on August 14. Those activities are all sold out but some of the content will be streamed. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August there will be a series of field trips open to the public throughout San Diego County, including the Tijuana River Valley.

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

- a. The City of Imperial Beach needs to fill the position of Mayor since Paloma Aguirre became County Supervisor.
- b. There have been many ongoing projects in the City, including road construction in various locations.
- c. There will be a lot of activities for National Night Out.

*Eddie Silva and Jim Haynes for Annica Ly – City of San Diego Stormwater Department*

- a. No updates.  
Question C.Peregrin: Chris asked about the request brought forward at the May meeting to have the vegetation growing on the shoulder and into Monument Road trimmed back for safety reasons, west from Hollister Street along Monument Road.  
Answer E.Silva: He will notify the transportation department who is charge of doing clearance work along the road.

Tara Flint-Silva – USEPA – Life Science & Project Officer Mexico Border & Pacific Islands Infrastructure

- a. Since Doug Liden retired in June, she is the local person with the USEPA who is working on the Tijuana River issues.
- b. On July 24, 2025, a new MOU, was signed by the USEPA and Mexico’s counterpart agency, SEMARNAT, specific to the Tijuana River with the focus of the management of the cross-border wastewater issues and expediting any projects related the problem.

Megan Hall – California Coastal Commission – Federal Programs Manager

- a. Nothing to report.

Charles Gailband – SD County Parks – Region Manager

Mike Verderber – SD County Parks – Supervising Park Ranger

- a. The County Parks will be working on the upcoming 30x30 Partnership Summit tour.
- b. The County is working on restoration designs for work at Skivey’s Ranch.
- c. They County is preparing to do repair work and restoration across from Monument Mesa (Spooner’s) to adjust water transport and slope issues.
- d. There has been a rise in illegal dumping and vandalism in the Tijuana River Valley.

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

- a. Link to report given: <https://tijuanaestuary.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/TRNERR-Advisory-Council-Quarterly-08.05.2025.pdf>

At the end of May both phase 1 & 2 of the International Collector Project was completed. As more projects are completed there is a reduction in transboundary flow. The dry weather transboundary flows into the river have been reduced from 10 - 12 MGD to 5 MGD. To continue meeting compliance, the IBWC needs to work with Mexico to manage the flow from PB1, the Mexico pump station, to our treatment plant.

The Silva Drain project was completed and brought back to service. Update on JB1, the scheduled completion date is being revised. The Del Sol canyon collector has another plugged line in the conveyance all the way to JB2. Replacement of the line is being done, and manholes are being installed along the way to prevent future transboundary flows.

Two other major projects are looking at sludge dewatering to increase the solids processing as part of the 10 MGD and the pumpstation to prevent transboundary flows, both projects are moving now and are funded.

The 10 MGD in 100 days progress is at day 77 of the 100 days. August 28 will be the 100-day mark. Part of the project takes the 10 MGD at the primary section and the 25mgd from the secondary section then blends them after the secondary section. The IBWC is continuing its work with the WaterBoard on permit compliance.

The Wastewater Treatment Plant’s operations and maintenance contract is current and is being evaluated for any needed revision and for possible additional funding. The IBWC continues constant communication with Mexico and by doing so prevented 1.2 billion gallons of raw sewage from flowing into the river during the International Collector Project.

- b. Schedule is being revised. The IBWC website has weekly updates on both the 10 MGD Project and the Minute 328 Project. The IBWC is also sending out information and updates on social media.

- c. Question C.Peregrin: where does the sludge go after it is collected?  
Answer E.Allen: currently it is going to landfill in Mexico but also many vendors have inquired about obtaining the sludge for reuse.
- d. IBWC dashboard for updates on the Incremental Increase and Minute 328 project:  
<https://www.ibwc.gov/10-mgd-incremental-increase-100-days/>
- e. Sign up for the IBWC news releases and announcements here:  
<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=yx0L4rF99Eexs6CCAow6A7Er8oLy-nlBpVjrK1JPaXNUQURLR1pYQlpBVTE4VEJDM0E3MIA5SkxPVS4u&origin=QRCode&qrcodeorigin=presentation&wdLOR=cE0B81B40-D40A-46C3-9B11-00819E1130CD>

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

- a. Previously known as SWIA, the new official name is the Tijuana Estuary Foundation and more accurately reflects its core mission and location. The website is almost completely updated. Recently they met with the Executive Director of NERRA and discussed the association’s connection with the reserve.
- b. The Foundation is working on recruitment of new board members and is prioritizing fundraising to support their relationship with TRNERR.
- c. The Tijuana Estuary Foundation is now meeting quarterly with the Elkhorn Slough Foundation.

**5. Program Manager Reports - [Refer to written program manager reports](#)**

*Justyn Stahl for Sally Brown* – USFWS – Refuge Manager Report

- a. August is at the end of the nesting season. During the peak there were snowy plovers and least terns at the end of Seacoast Drive. There are challenges with foot traffic and off leash dogs near or in the fenced nesting areas. People are asked to be vigilant and respect the nesting areas. The fledgling numbers were down this year, particularly at D Street, but at Seal Beach Refuge there was double the number of fledglings over last year. Elegant terns in the Refuge had a bump up in numbers this year, likely due to the Mexican population. At Isla Raza, in the Sea of Cortez, there were 28,000 nesting pairs of elegant terns among other species
- b. The Refuge staff continue to work as part of a consortium of scientists, NGOs and resource agencies investigating possible reintroduction sites for the critically endangered Pacific pocket mouse. Refuge staff attended the pacific pocket mouse working group meeting this year. <https://institute.sandiegozoo.org/species/pacific-pocket-mouse>
- c. The Refuge is continuing work with Team Ridgway’s Rail in a captive rearing effort between State and Federal wildlife agencies, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, Sea World San Diego and the Living Coast Discovery Center. Results of a genetic study conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey has helped direct releases of young captive reared rails to marshes in Orange County in 2025.
- d. Surveys for endangered salt marsh bird’s beak were conducted in the marsh this year as part of the Rare Plant Inspect and Manage Monitoring effort by the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program.  
[https://sdmmp.com/view\\_project.php?sdid=SDID\\_sarah.mccutcheon%40aecom.com\\_57cf0196dff76#data-files-tab](https://sdmmp.com/view_project.php?sdid=SDID_sarah.mccutcheon%40aecom.com_57cf0196dff76#data-files-tab)

- e. There will be a large-scale removal of tamarisk off of the Sunset Trail, as well as a Marine Debris Survey Program led by NOAA on the beach.
- f. New large interpretation signs have arrived and are being assembled and ready for installation soon.
- g. The Refuge is working closely with the City of Imperial Beach on the Living Levees Project. Details are in the report.
- h. There has been a recent spike in two species of mangroves being planted in the south San Diego Bay and at the Tijuana Slough NWR. This activity is illegal, and the non-native species can be bad for the ecology. If anyone sees new plants or witnesses someone planting things let the NWR know.
- i. The NWR, the Port of San Diego, and other agencies continue to survey for and eradicate *Caulerpa Prolifera*, an invasive species of algae which originated in the area along the Coronado Cays. The likely cause is saltwater tank dumping or water exchange. The agencies and NWR continue to survey for, contain and eradicate any of this species detected.
- j. Thanks to the Friends of the Refuges and the Navy, the Seal Beach NWR has continued to have monthly tours.
- k. Cal State Long Beach and Coastkeeper have been working on a Living Levy Project using oyster's shells to combat erosion along the shoreline.
- l. On July 18, 2025, Captain Jessica O'Brien officially handed over command of Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach to Captain Kyle A. Caldwell in a traditional Navy Change of Command ceremony. NWS thanks Captain O'Brien for her collaboration with NWS and looks forward to working in the future with the new Navy captain.
- m. Regarding the Natural History Museum's Healthy Canyon's Initiative, the NWR is working on restoration work at the San Diego NWR just south of the Sweetwater reservoir with RECON and Friends of the San Diego Wildlife Refuges doing vernal pool restoration.
- n. The Refuge is serving as a site for the Natural History Museum's Healthy Canyons Initiative as a base line for all of the organisms in the habitat. The Refuge is also partnering with the National Park Service and the BLM on the Seeds of Success a native seed collection program which will allow the collection of seeds for a seed bank to be used for recovery elsewhere in the region.
- o. [Refer to written program manager reports](#)

Chris Peregrin – TRNERR – Reserve Manager Report

- a. Regarding the federal budget, the funding for the Reserve was approved for the FY 2025 but will not be received until October 1, 2025. The amount was the same as in 2024. The president has zeroed out the budget for NERRs FY 2026, however there is hope that the House of Representatives and the Senate will include the NERRs back into the budget for 2026.
- b. [30x30 Partnership Summit](#) is in town and the Reserve is part of a collaborative effort with the other partners to create tour opportunities that reaffirm the importance to the region and the nation of the Tijuana River Valley's conservation efforts. This is a good opportunity to highlight four large projects - the TETRP II Phase I, a tidal and saltmarsh restoration program; second is the Nelson Sloan Quarry Beneficial Reuse of Sediment Project; third the [Resilience Access and Habitat Restoration Project](#) to realign the entry road in Border Field

- State Park to Monument Mesa; and forth an education and public use enhancement project for Border Field State Park at Monument Mesa and Friendship Park. Also, considering Proposition 4, there are funds appropriate for these projects.
- c. Border Field State Park opened to non-vehicular visitors on June 26, 2025, and will now be open as of August 16 to vehicles.
  - d. The North Beach was badly overgrown and impacted by flooding and erosion. The San Diego Urban Corps and the Reserve's Stewardship crew cleared about a mile of equestrian access trail.
  - e. Regarding staffing, there are two new Park Interpretive Specialists - Victoria Bok and Seth Shaffer. The Reserve Volunteer Coordinator, Robin Echols-Booth, is retiring this month.

Vacant – TRNERR – Education Report

- a. [Refer to written program manager reports](#)

Lorena Warner-Lara – TRNERR – Stewardship Report

- a. Continue working on permitting for the Nelson Sloan Quarry Restoration and Beneficial Reuse of Sediment Project; including working with the City of San Diego on site development and coastal development permits.
- b. The surveys for the least Bell's vireo and the California gnatcatcher were completed a few weeks ago. The surveys which are associated with the Goat Canyon sediment basins area also included, this year, areas at Monument Mesa and Lichty Mesa because of the Monument Road realignment project.
- c. This is the 16<sup>th</sup> year for the Tijuana River Action Month (TRAM) which will run from September 20<sup>th</sup> through October 19<sup>th</sup> and features binational events. The planning is underway so you will be able to find calendar items on the website and on Facebook. In conjunction and overlapping with TRAM is Latino Conservation Week and Climate Action Week. This year the local artist and volunteer, Desiree Hanau will be doing the artwork and flyer for TRAM.
- d. [Refer to written program manager reports](#)

Jeff Crooks – TRNERR – Research Report

- a. The lower levels of transboundary flows are resulting in better dissolved oxygen readings and there are more fish and invertebrates in the tidal channels.
- b. The rivermouth continues something to pay attention to using satellite imagery. There is a possibility of the mouth closing up because of the neap tide series but the upcoming winter storm surges could change that.
- c. The Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program (TETRP), one goal is to restore tidal action and keep the inlet open.
- d. The Reserve is working with the CA Marine Sanctuaries Foundation which has a contract for mitigation monitoring.
- e. Scripps has a new pathogen forecast model (<https://pfmweb.ucsd.edu/>) out a lot of beefy math and going on behind the scenes. The goal is to try to look at 5 days out to see what is happening with ocean water quality and to see if it is safe to go in the water. It is really difficult to get a handle on the river inputs because it is so dynamic and variable.

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

- a. The second Marine Debris Leadership Academy has been funded by the California Seagrass to build leadership coalitions around the US. This second academy will be cross-border and will help participants and stakeholders on how to think about and act on marine debris.
- b. The Training and Engagement Program completed the California Cultural Heritage Climate Vulnerability Assessment. The process was community led and brought people together cross-border to think about what are some of the implications in the development of pathways for adaptation and the impact on cultural heritage, and how that might be better addressed in planning and action. As a result, the meeting over 5 workshops in 6 months have developed a draft that will be reviewed by the participants and will inform adaptation planning going forward. It will be shared in the fall of 2025
- c. Margaret A. Davidson fellow, Shanasia Sylman will be presenting her research today.
- d. [Refer to written program manager reports](#)

## 6. **New Business**

- a. Shanasia Sylman (Cornell University) presented on her work through the Margaret A. Davidson Fellowship.  
Presentation link: [https://tijuanaestuary.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Sylman\\_05-Aug-2025\\_Getting-Beyond-Consultation.pdf](https://tijuanaestuary.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Sylman_05-Aug-2025_Getting-Beyond-Consultation.pdf)

## 7. **Public Comment**

J.Zarem, Public

Question: What will be the fee for Border Field State Park when it is open to vehicles?

C.Peregrin Answer: To be determined, there will be an iron ranger to collect the fees.

Dr McCoy, Tijuana Estuary Foundation

Question: On the Poseidon improvements on Pond 20 in the Otay River Estuary Restoration Project, has the Port of San Diego started any mitigation? Is there any mitigation by the port on the pond 20 mitigation?

J.Stahl, Answer: The Refuge has been meeting with them and there are some plans, and they are working through cultural compliance and hoping the projects can merge.

Dr McCoy, Tijuana Estuary Foundation

Question: On the Pump Station 1, the lift is about 400 feet on the Mexican side; to get that down to Punta Bandera, will they relieve enough pressure on the infrastructure at the bottom of the hill before they start pumping it up? It has always been a problem at the bottom of the hill.

T.Flint-Silva Answer: Pump Station 1 in Mexico is in the process of getting significantly upgraded and has been for a few years now. It has funding committed but at this time since January the funding has been frozen. Hopefully by the end of the year the pump will be upgraded so it can handle the increased flows and the increased pressure to avoid failures at the pump station.

D.Watman, Friends of Friendship Park

Question: Is there a date for the EIR on the road realignment?

C.Peregrin Answer: Will follow up with Dan soon.

No comments were made.

**8. Future Agenda Considerations**

None suggested. L.Warner-Lara asks about Friendship Park People's History Project (Coastal Stories grant) as a possibility. S. Jenniches says it is not ready, D. Watman says maybe by the next quarter or following. 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, August 18 at 9:30 am. WILL BE RESCHEDULED.

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

Future TRNERR Advisory Council meetings:

- Tuesday, November 4, 2025

**11. Adjourned at 2:34 PM**

The meeting was adjourned.