TIJUANA RIVER NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE
ADVISORY COUNCIL
Tuesday, November 4, 2025, at 1:00-2:30 pm
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 II
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
619-964-1980, sally_brown@fws.gov
Mike McCoy – Tijuana Estuary Foundation, *formerly Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association (SWIA)* – President
619-423-0495, mccoy4ib@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
Annica Ly – City of San Diego – Stormwater Department
858-654-4272, AnLy@sandiego.gov
***Tom Konner and Mario Zuniga for Tara Flint-Silva* – US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) – Life Scientist & Project Officer**
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
Pete Evaristo, Public
Lynn Reizer-Heftmann, TRVEA
Rachel Myers, TRVEA
Shanasia Sylman, Margaret A. Davidson Fellow
James Peugh, Public
Myriam Valencia, TRNERR

1. **1:06 pm Meeting was called to order.**

2. **AGENDA –** The November 4, 2025, agenda was adopted.

3. **LAST MEETING MINUTES –** The May 6, 2025, minutes were adopted. August 5, 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 II
a. Nothing to report.

Chantel Jimenez – US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – Acting SDNWRC Project Leader
a. Not present.

Charles Bradshaw – US Naval Base Coronado – Community Plans and Liaison Officer
a. Not present.

Sam Jenniches – State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) – Project Manager

a. The Conservancy is accepting pre-applications and is taking questions from projects eligible to receive funding from last year's climate bond. For questions, contact S.Jenniches or visit www.scc.ca.gov.
b. $4 million in funding from NOAA to the SCC has come through for the Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program II Phase I to enhance the dune component of the project.

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

a. Nothing to report.

Annica Ly – City of San Diego Stormwater Department

a. Maintenance work in Smuggler's Gulch still requires approval and funding from the City of San Diego Public Utilities Department and the County for the portions located on their properties.
b. Water levels at Saturn Blvd. have diminished. The County has the most recent information regarding the interim proposals being considered in the short term (*see also presentation link under New Business items*).

Tom Konner and Mario Zuniga for Tara Flint-Silva – USEPA – Life Science & Project Officer

a. Nothing to report.
b. T.Konner is a manager of the Mexico Border and Pacific Island Infrastructure Section in the Water Division, Region 9 EPA. He shares responsibility for the EPA side infrastructure work happening in the Tijuana River Watershed. Mario Zuniga and Tara Flint-Silva are also part of the team. Doug Liden was part of the team before retiring this spring.

Megan Hall – California Coastal Commission – Federal Programs Manager

a. The Commission will meet at Imperial Beach from December 10-12. Staff will provide an update on the status of the pollution crisis, including status of IBWC and USMCA projects and efforts by the Water Board, the County Air District, etc. Input from the council on key information they feel is important to include in the briefing is welcome. Interested parties are welcome to attend and/or provide comments; sign up to provide comments will be on the Commission's website after the agenda is posted (mid-November).
   For questions, contact M.Hall (*see email above*). The main staff working on this are Cassidy Teufel and Annie Rosen.
   Follow-up inquiries should be directed to annie.rosen@coastal.ca.gov.

Charles Gailband – SD County Parks – Region Manager
Mike Verderber – SD County Parks – Supervising Park Ranger

a. San Diego County Parks has a project to reroute some runoff to prevent erosion on the bluffs of Spooner's Mesa which includes a small habitat restoration project. That work is expected to be demobilized within about a week, as the project is coming to completion.
b. All stops have been pulled to address the Tijuana River Valley Community Garden. Supervisor Aguirre has been very involved, RFPs were issued and closed, and several proposals were submitted. An operator is expected to be selected soon to ensure continuous operations without impacting gardeners.

Sean Ford – US Border Patrol – Public Lands Liaison

a. Not present.

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

a. The Tijuana Estuary Foundation recommends inviting a representative from Tijuana and Tecate to join the Advisory Council, especially now with Zoom. This would be beneficial since most of the watershed lies in Mexico and continued coordination is essential to addressing ongoing issue and maintaining strong relationships. TRNERR Staff are in Tijuana regularly. A statistic from the San Diego Chamber of Commerce states that Tijuana's population is projected to grow at a rate 40% by 2050.
b. Comment by C.Peregrin: the suggestion is a good one. He mentioned that the team has also been discussing inviting a member of the Kumeyaay Nation to join the Advisory Council and has drafted a letter.
c. J.Crooks mentioned that the language will be reviewed as part of the update to the TRNERR CMP to ensure it includes reevaluating the composition of the Advisory Council.

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

a. Not present.

Program Manager Reports

Sally Brown – USFWS – Refuge Manager Report

a. Not present.

Chris Peregrin – TRNERR – Reserve Manager Report

a. TRNERR operations are funded through a 70% federal (NOAA) and 30% state (match) partnership with CA State Parks, established under the Coastal Zone Management Act, and managed with the Tijuana Estuary Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
b. FY 2025 federal funding is in place starting July 1, 2025; FY 2026 funding is uncertain, with no allocation in the President's budget and delays due to a federal shutdown. NERRS is looking to Congress, the Senate, and the House of Representatives to see what funding levels may be approved
c. The 30 NERRs reserve managers met at the ACE Basin reserve to align programs and review the Coastal Zone Management Act to ensure alignment of programs with legislative intent.
d. NOAA awarded approximately $500,000 through the Procurement and Acquisition Construction Grant Program to replace the 30-year-old Tijuana Estuary Visitor Center roof, including solar panels and rainwater catchment infrastructure. Approximately $250,000 in state funding through the Watershed Conservation Initiative will serve as match and will support improvements to the visitor center public restroom plumbing repairs and upgrades.
e. The Monument Mesa Improvements Project received approximately $4 million (reduced from $5 million) from California State Parks for improvements to interpretation, education, and visitor-use infrastructure. Preliminary planning is underway with the State Parks Service Center. This effort is connected to a grant provided by the State Coastal Conservancy to the Friends of Friendship Park for park improvements and interpretive

offerings. All groups are collaborating to engage the community in deciding what planned improvements take priority.

f. Border Field State Park (BFSP) access is closed due to flooding from recent rains, this is typical for this time of year. The Draft EIR for the BFSP Resilience Access and Habitat Restoration Project is expected in late November. This project will realign the entrance road, restore habitat, and generally make the park more resilient to flooding and sea level rise.
g. The Goat Canyon sediment removal began this week, with approximately 20,000 cubic yards removed this year at a cost of $1.9 million. This represents roughly one-third of the total volume, more cannot be cleared due to funding limitations. A new contract will be released for rebid this upcoming year.
h. The goal for the new Goat Canyon contract is to include an option to transport sediment to Nelson Sloan Quarry. This would allow the County and California State Parks to restore the quarry's topography and habitat. Implementation of this plan is expected to begin next year. The team is currently working on obtaining regulatory permits.
i. Myriam Valencia joined TRNERR as a Staff Services Analyst and will support administrative, overall program management, and the Advisory Council.
j. Interviews for the Volunteer Coordinator position have been completed.
k. The Education Coordinator position remains vacant. A strong education program continues with permanent, seasonal, and district staff support.
l. Low Sunday visitation has prompted review of educational programming and possible changes to visitor center operating days, including closing on Sundays.

Vacant – TRNERR – Education Report

a. J.Looney and H.Calhoun are currently in Florida attending the annual NERRS Education Coordinators meeting, helping connect TRNERR's program with other reserve programs nationwide.

Lorena Warner-Lara – TRNERR – Stewardship Report

a. Nesting season ended September 15; fourteen California gnatcatcher territories were detected. Additional surveys were conducted this year on Lichty and Monument Mesas in support of the projects mentioned earlier, but no territories were detected here. This matches last year and is up from 2023 (9 territories).
b. Tijuana River Action Month ran September 13 to October 19 with approximately 40 partners. Preliminary numbers show about 30 events total throughout the watershed. Of those, 18 events had approximately 1,740 participants and approximately 132 tons of trash were removed, along with about 4,000 pounds of recycling and 143 tires. Some highlights included a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Steve's Park; the local Girl Scout troop that joined Coastal Cleanup Day and generously used some of their cookie funds to provide supplies; and the art-centered closing ceremony which featured youth art submissions, a Kumeyaay artist from the *Eyaay Ahuun* Foundation, and nature sketching walks with *Bugologist*/*Bichólogo* and this year's local TRAM artist, Desiree Hanau. Efforts continue to reimagine TRAM activities in the Tijuana River Valley given current conditions, in collaboration with multiple partners.

c. The San Diego Urban Corps crew continues habitat restoration work, started two years ago with the American Conservation Experience (ACE) crew through funding from Wildfire Resilience Program and now from a grant from the Ocean Protection Council. Work focuses on arundo removal at Border Field but shifts to the visitor center area during the rainy season. As part of TRAM, a volunteer event was held in conjunction with the State Parks Foundation to plant about 65 native plants across a half-acre site where the crews had previously removed saltbush. Additional areas will be planted with help from staff, Urban Corps, the Friday Stewardship crew, and additional volunteer days.

Jeff Crooks – TRNERR – Research Report

a. Fall is the major monitoring season. Staff continue the Vital Signs Monitoring Program, tracking conditions in the estuary. Monitoring includes vegetation (some transects visited annually since 1989) and water quality (dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity, salinity, and water level). Preliminary data indicates some recovery from the abysmal conditions of the past few years of high transboundary flows and extended periods of extremely low oxygen.
b. Biological monitoring is more challenging. Typically, this involved entering the water with nets to collect fish and other species (since the late 1980s and early 1990s). This has stopped for the past few years due to water quality issues. However, alternative monitoring continues using minnow traps to collect small fish and invertebrates such as clams, scallops, crabs, and shrimp. Early observations suggest some recovery of fish and invertebrates. Management interventions reducing transboundary flows over the past year appear to be contributing to this recovery. Conditions are still not at historical levels, but the upward trajectory is positive, and monitoring will continue.
c. Monitoring at Los Peñasquitos Lagoon (LPL) is starting to show recovery of cordgrass where it has not been seen for decades, as well as eelgrass.
d. Starting to do water quality monitoring associated with the Otay River Estuary Restoration Project in South San Diego Bay with dataloggers at pond 15 and probably also in Sweetwater River. This network of deployed data loggers is useful both for characterizing individual systems and for providing a broader comparison across these three regional sites.
e. The Reserve is working more broadly across the region to develop and strengthen monitoring programs across Southern California and beyond to establish a network of sentinel sites. The goal is to track short-term variability and long-term change.

Lorena Warner-Lara for Kristen Goodrich – TRNERR –Training and Engagement Report (*formerly Coastal Training Program (CTP)*)

a. The second Marine Debris Leadership Academy was held over six days based in both Imperial Beach and Tecate in October with virtual and in-person experiences, including overnight stays. Participants were able to visit several sites and really take a deep dive into marine debris issues and hotspots, including how these issues can lead to flooding. The academy included representatives from US, Mexico, and the Kumeyaay through a participant from the *Eyaay Ahuun* Foundation. Staff reached out to Tribes to invite them to participate.
b. A communications audit was completed for the reserve by ROCA Communications; a draft communications strategy is being finalized. Despite funding challenges, the reserve was

able to bring on a communications fellow (M.Herring) to support development of an implementation plan and to begin rolling out elements of the strategy over the next six months.

c. Anything not discussed today will be included in the six-month report at the next Advisory Council meeting.

5. New Business

a. Kiran Seibel (County of San Diego, Parks and Recreation) presented the Saturn Blvd Feasibility Study
Presentation link: https://tijuanaestuary.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Saturn-Boulevard-Presentation_Stakeholder-Outreach.pdf

6. Public Comment

No comments were made.

7. Future Agenda Considerations

M.McCoy suggested Brown Fill. Please email C. Peregrin and L. Warner-Lara with any future agenda items (*see emails at top of minutes*).

8. TRNERR Trails Committee meeting

Monday, November 17, at 9:30 am, meet at the entrance to Border Field SP. Proposed looking at the bridge on the beach trail.

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

The following dates were adopted for the 2025 TRNERR Advisory Council meetings:

- Tuesday, February 3, 2026
- Tuesday, May 5, 2026
- Tuesday, August 4, 2026
- Tuesday, November 3, 2026

10. Adjourned at 2:32 PM

The meeting was adjourned.