TIJUANA RIVER NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE
ADVISORY COUNCIL
Tuesday, May 5, 2026, 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
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
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

Haley Calhoun – California State Parks – Interpreter II (Education)
619-575-3613 ext.305, haley.calhoun@parks.ca.gov

Jeff Crooks – TRNERR – Research Coordinator
619-575-3615 ext. 333, jcrooks@trnerr.org

Additional Attendees

Dale Nookester, Public
Joe Ellis, Public
Alex Perez, Public
Pete Evaristo, Public
Jennifer Hua, Public
Valery Gomez, Rep. Vargas, CA-52
Lisa Cumper, Jamul Indian Village
Megan Doran, SD County Parks
Alyssa del Rosario, SD County Parks
Scott McCreary, Concur
Daniel Watman, Friends of Friendship Park
Lynn Reizer-Heftmann, TRVEA
Ransses Lopez, TRNERR
Empress Holliday, TRNERR
Shanasia Sylman, TRNERR
Demmuel Eslava, TRNERR
Myriam Valencia, TRNERR
John Zarem, TRNERR Volunteer

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

2. **AGENDA –** The May 5, 2026, agenda was adopted.

3. **LAST MEETING MINUTES –** The February 2, 2025, minutes were proposed.

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
b. Introduced the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP). It provides grants for infrastructure projects that help support their missions. If there are projects in the TRV that could start construction within the next two years, agencies should reach out to

discuss possible funding. Eligible projects include but are not limited to shovel-ready projects, infrastructure improvements, water and sewer pipe projects, road improvements, energy resilience projects, etc.
For more information: https://oldcc.gov/our-programs/defense-community-infrastructure-program

Sam Jenniches – State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) – Project Manager
a. Not present.

Chris Helmer – City of Imperial Beach – Environmental and Natural Resources Director
a. Not present.

Annica Ly – City of San Diego Stormwater Department
a. Nothing to report.

Tara Flint-Silva – USEPA – Life Science & Project Officer
a. EPA conducted site visits with counterparts from the Tijuana utility agency to review infrastructure projects and discuss their progress. Participants included federal representatives, state and federal contractors, the federal water agency (CONAgua), and the North American Development Bank (helps the EPA manage grant funding in Mexico).
b. The Parallel Gravity Line carries sewage from Tijuana to the San Antonio de los Buenos Treatment Plant. Concerns about several pumps at Pump Station 1 being out of service, and contributing to increased sewage flows into the Tijuana River are being addressed. Two bypasses will come online this week, allowing the Pump Station 1 to return to normal operating capacity.
c. The Effluent Relocation Project aims to remove approximately 10 million gallons per day of treated water from the Tijuana River. Currently, two Tijuana treatment plants discharge treated water into the river. Diverted water will be rerouted upstream of Rodriguez Reservoir on the Mexican side; project completion targeted for next summer.
d. The EPA continues holding monthly Binational Technical Group calls with the IBWC and their counterparts in Tijuana. These meetings are not generally open to the public. The EPA is exploring options to provide more transparency and share information with political leaders.
e. L.Cumper from the Jamul Indian Village, a federally recognized Tribe, requested to attend the meetings. T.Flint-Silva will follow up and connect her with the appropriate contacts.

Megan Hall – California Coastal Commission – Federal Programs Manager
a. Not present.

Charles Gailband – SD County Parks – Region Manager
Mike Verderber – SD County Parks – Supervising Park Ranger
a. A. Del Rosario was introduced as a member of County Parks resource management team. She will present later about the County's Tijuana River Valley Habitat Restoration Plan.

Sean Ford – US Border Patrol – Public Lands Liaison

a. Not present.
b. C. Peregrin mentioned Agent Sams will be the new liaison and will attend future meetings.

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

a. The Foundation hired an Executive Director to help them connect with service clubs, city neighbors, local businesses, and nonprofits.
b. Quarterly meetings with National Estuarine Research Reserve Association (NERRA) continue. There are concerns about the President's proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget, which includes $0 in funding for the NERR System. This has happened before. During budget negotiations, Congress has restored funding for the program. The Foundation is supporting NERRA's efforts to obtain letters of support from businesses, organizations, and interested members of the public to show community support for these programs.

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

a. Construction for JB1 is complete, and the project is in the final testing and commissioning phase. JB 1 now includes a backup gate to allow for maintenance if clogs occur while keeping it operational, especially during periods of high flow caused by heavy rain.
b. PBCILA pump station will temporarily shut down due high flow volumes (~190 MGD). Once river flows decrease, the system will return to normal operation. During PBCILA suspension, PB1 continues sending 35 MGD to the treatment plant to maximize treatment capacity.

5. Program Manager Reports - *Refer to written program manager reports*

Sally Brown – USFWS – Refuge Manager

a. It is nesting season for threatened and endangered birds. There are Western snowy plover eggs in the fenced beach nesting area and chicks on the beach. These eggs are well camouflaged, and the chicks are small and unable to fly. Please help provide a safe refuge for them by keeping dogs leashed and observing from a distance. California least tern numbers have been very low in the early part of the 2026 nesting season, but they are expected to be nesting on the beach soon.
b. Last summer, during the 2025 nesting season, there were 26 plover nests and 77 tern nests on the beach north of the river, a decrease from the 56 plover nests and 208 tern nests documented in 2024. In addition, there were 99 tern nests and 21 plover nests at Border Field State Park. The reduction in numbers has been attributed to limited prey fish availability, predation by corvids, harriers, peregrines, and gull-billed terns, and an ongoing long-term trend of limited fledging success.
c. The new BARK Rangers program will be kicking off on the beach in May with the help of the SD Bird Alliance and the Friends of San Diego Wildlife Refuges. Our four-legged friends and their caretakers will be invited to take the BARK Rangers pledge to **B**ag your pet's waste, **A**lways leash your pet, **R**espect wildlife, and **K**now where you can go. Newly sworn in BARK Rangers will earn a bandana.

d. Continuing work with Team Ridgway's Rail in a captive rearing effort between State and Federal wildlife agencies, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, SeaWorld San Diego and the Living Coast Discovery Center. Have revised the propagation plan to address the genetics of the captive population based on the results of a genetic study conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey. The genetic study estimated the effective population size across the species' range at only 158 reproducing adults. To improve the genetics of our captive rearing population, trapping was conducted in December and January, and egg collection is ongoing this spring. Four adult females were collected, and two chicks have hatched from collected eggs. Two more eggs are being incubated at SeaWorld. Based on the results of the USGS study, collections were targeted for the most genetically diverse rail populations, and rails from three different north San Diego County marshes have been incorporated into the captive rearing program this year.
e. A new survey protocol for the rail annual census is being tested by the USFWS this year that includes a standardized level of effort and randomly selected survey points to produce results that are statistically comparable and allow for the estimation of detection probabilities and calculation of population size.
f. 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 in January. Researchers conducted a habitat assessment on the Refuge in August, access routes were cleared during the winter months, and surveys are planned for summer. The Refuge Manager will attend a Pacific pocket mouse release organized by the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance and USGS at North San Mateo, Orange County, in May.
g. Surveys for endangered salt marsh bird's beak were conducted in the marsh in 2025 as part of the Rare Plant Inspect and Manage Monitoring effort by the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program. You can read more about the effort here: https://sdmmp.com/view_project.php?sdid=SDID_sarah.mccutcheon%40aecom.com_57cf0196dff76#data-files-tab
h. Following winter rains, the presence of San Diego fairy shrimp was documented within a vernal pool on the Refuge for the first time since 2008.
i. Nine beautiful new interpretive signs have been installed along the North and South McCoy trails and provide information on native species, habitats, and restoration efforts within the Reserve. A sign dedication event was held to celebrate the installation in February.
j. Post and cable fencing has been repaired at several locations along the McCoy trails.
k. Maintenance clearing was performed along the Refuge trails at the west end of Sunset Avenue this winter and spring. We ask that trail users please remain on the trails due to the presence of sensitive habitat areas adjacent to the trails.

Chris Peregrin – TRNERR – Reserve Manager Report

a. Approximately 20,000 cubic yards of sediment have been excavated from the Goat Canyon Sediment Basin. The contractor is completing sediment testing to determine the quality of the material. The material meets state and federal requirements for industrial reuse. The project will be advertised for bid.

b. The Resilient Access and Habitat Restoration (RAHR) project is moving toward being advertised for bid. The project will realign the entrance road and restore habitat at Border Field State Park.
c. The California Conservation Corps cleaned debris from the Border Field SP entrance road that was left behind by the government-declared emergency storms in September. The park remains closed but is close to reopening for pedestrian and bicycle access.

Haley Calhoun – TRNERR – Education Report

a. Next week is *Teachers on the Estuary* (TOTE). It is a program designed to help teachers learn more about estuary systems through hands-on training and field experiences. A special bilingual *Teachers on the Estuary* session will be offered in partnership with National Geographic. Thirty educators are currently registered. The program will include a tour of the Tijuana River Valley led by Research Coordinator Jeff Crooks and Michael Connolly Miskwish, a member of the Kumeyaay Nation.
b. June 10–14 is California State Parks Week.
c. On June 13, the Reserve will host an event highlighting efforts to improve accessibility. Accessibility projects include NaviLens, an app that helps visitors who are blind or have low vision navigate the Tijuana Estuary trails, and ongoing trail maintenance. During the event, sensory kits will be available for checkout at the visitor center, and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters will be provided for nature walks.
d. Celebrate Amphibian Week with us this weekend! The USGS will host an engaging talk and introduce visitors to live amphibians. Friends of the SD Wildlife Refuges will support the fun event. There will be hopping frog origami art project, and children will have the opportunity to create their own frog pond snack plate.

Lorena Warner-Lara – TRNERR – Stewardship Report

a. The Nelson Sloan Quarry Restoration and Beneficial Reuse of Sediment Project would utilize sediment from wetland restoration activities and controlled sediment sources from the Goat Canyon Sediment Basin and Smuggler's Gulch to restore the Nelson Sloan Quarry site. The abandoned sand and gravel quarry would require approximately one million cubic yards of sediment to restore the land. The project team is working on regulatory permitting requirements with the County of San Diego, with Dudek serving as the contractor.
b. Urban Corps is working on Arundo treatment and removal efforts at Border Field SP. State Parks Forestry Aide R.Lopez has played a significant role in supporting this work.
c. Small-scale habitat enhancement projects include the planting of new vegetation around the Visitor Center and amphitheater. Additionally, more than 100 plants were installed at Border Field near the entrance with the support of a long-term volunteers and Urban Corps.
d. Urban Corps also continues to support habitat enhancement efforts at Monument Mesa.
e. To prepare for Tijuana River Action Month, a networking mixer was held at the Reserve's amphitheater.
f. During nesting season, Western snowy plover monitoring takes place along the beach, along with CA gnatcatcher and least Bell's vireo surveys conducted in the Goat Canyon drainage.

Jeff Crooks – TRNERR – Research Report

a. Loggers are deployed throughout the estuary to track water level, dissolved oxygen, and other environmental conditions.
b. Tijuana River flow gauge data is being provided by the IBWC. Earlier today, peak flows reached approximately 8 cubic meters per second, or 80–90 million gallons per day. Flows decrease relatively quickly following rainfall events; however, previous storms have resulted in prolonged periods of elevated flows.
c. Prolonged periods of low dissolved oxygen are a concern because they can lead to fish kills and shellfish mortality. Conditions are expected to improve as flows decrease. During neap tide series, when there is less tidal action, extended periods of low dissolved oxygen can happen.
   Periods of very high dissolved oxygen, reaching approximately 500% saturation, have also been observed. Nutrients in the water from sewage fuel the growth of algae and phytoplankton. During daylight hours, photosynthesis produces large amounts of oxygen, resulting in oxygen concentrations that exceed the rate at which the gas can escape from the water. Staff hope to track ecosystem recovery as flow volumes continue to decline.
d. Monitoring fish and shellfish populations is ongoing through minnow trapping and other data collection efforts to evaluate how these species are responding to changing environmental conditions.
e. Monitoring data, including daily flow totals and live camera footage from the Boca River Station, are available on the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve website at https://tijuanariver.trnerr.org/.
f. The Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program (TETRP) is continuing to move forward. Planning efforts are focused on both the material that will be excavated from the wetlands and the placement of the excavated sediment. The project's environmental footprint has been reduced due to available funding while continuing to maintain the goal of increasing tidal flow.
   Project staff are working with regulatory agencies to determine how much excavated sediment can be placed on the beach as part of a beach nourishment effort paired with dune restoration activities.
   The goal of the TETRP project is to restore ecosystem function by improving and restoring a variety of habitats, including marsh, beach, and dune environments, while supporting endangered species.
   The project will soon be moving towards permitting.

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

a. The launch of the Marine Debris Leadership Coalition was a success, bringing together two cohorts from 2023 and 2025 to collaborate on marine debris-related issues. The event was action-oriented and focused on identifying opportunities for working groups in the areas of knowledge and research, policy and governance, resourcing, technology and innovation, and community engagement.
   The groups have been activated and will continue working together through a training and engagement program that provides networking opportunities, points of contact, training,

and technical assistance over the next year. California Sea Grant, the funder of this initiative, published a story highlighting the cohort and their collaborative work.

b. Work has begun on a community-based project focused on developing a public art installation and community mural. The project will build on the Cultural Heritage Climate Vulnerability Assessment conducted last year and will explore next steps related to cultural heritage and climate adaptation. A preview of the project may be showcased in the training center. The effort will bring together community members and decision-makers to collaboratively envision what the Tijuana Estuary could look like under various climate scenarios. The project will provide an opportunity for communities to share their perspectives and help define what adaptation could look like in response to environmental change.

6. New Business

Update on the Tijuana River Valley Habitat Restoration Plan, Alyssa Del Rosario (County Parks)

Presentation link: https://tijuanaestuary.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/FINAL-TRV-HRP-Presentation_2026.05.05.pdf

7. Public Comment

D.Watman, Friends of Friendship Park

Question: Are there any updates on the Border Field Resilience, Access, and Habitat Restoration (RAHR) Project, including whether a date has been set for reopening the vehicle and pedestrian road?

C. Peregrin Answer: There are no new updates on the RAHR project. The project team is continuing efforts to prepare the project for advertisement and bidding later this year. The road flooded this morning and will remain closed until it dries.

8. Future Agenda Considerations

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, May 11th, at 9:30 am, meet at the entrance to Border Field SP.

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

- Tuesday, August 4, 2026
- Tuesday, November 3, 2026

11. Adjourned at 2:39 PM

The meeting was adjourned.