

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

Tuesday, August 13, 2024, 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 Tomas – California State Parks – District Superintendent I**

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**Andy Yuen – US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – SDNWRC Project Leader**

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**Sally Brown – USFWS – Refuge Manager**

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**Mike McCoy – 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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Loni Beyer Wilson – US Naval Base Coronado – Natural Resources Manager

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

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***Jillian Haynes for Annica Ly* – City of San Diego – Stormwater Department**

858-654-4272, AnLy@sandiego.gov

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

619-235-4763, liden.douglas@epa.gov

Bill Rogers – US Border Patrol – Border Patrol, Special Operations Supervisor

WILLIAM.S.ROGERS@cbp.dhs.gov

Morgan Rogers – US International Boundary & Water Commission – Area Operations Manager

619-417-4613, morgan.rogers@ibwc.gov

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

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

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

**Ashley Reineman – California Coastal Commission – Federal Programs Manager**

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

Chelsea Jander – California Coastal Commission – Coastal Program Analyst

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**Gemma Waaland – NOAA's Office for Coastal Management – NERR Liaison**

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**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)**

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

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**Jeff Crooks – TRNERR – Research Coordinator**

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**Anne Marie Tipton – TRNERR – Education Coordinator**

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**Members of the Public**

Charles Gailband, SD County Parks

Gita Akbarpour, Rep. Jacobs, CA-51

Sandra Dibble, Voice of SD

Mary Johnson Powell, TRVEA

Tara Flint Silva, EPA R9

Steve Ussery, Public

Jim Harry, City of San Diego

John Zarem, TRNERR Volunteer

Ransses Lopez, TRNERR

Lynn Reizer-Heftmann, TRVEA

Brian McNeece, Public

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

**2. AGENDA** – May 7, 2024, agenda was adopted.

**3. LAST MEETING MINUTES** – May 7, 2024 minutes will be available on the website today or tomorrow. Members will have two weeks to review and adopt.

**4. Member Comments**

Lisa Tomas – California State Parks – District Superintendent I

- a. Update: There are plans in progress to have the California State Parks Commission to visit Border Field State Park on September 11<sup>th</sup> to assess issues at the park.

Sam Jenniches – State Coastal Conservancy – Project Manager

- a. Regarding the search for funding for TETRP II Phase I; the Conservancy applied for NOAA’s Climate Resilience Regional Challenge grant and was not selected for funding. The application was very ambitious and would have covered wetland and dune system restoration in three different projects between here and Ventura County. The Conservancy is awaiting the status of an application they submitted to the NFWF (National Fish and Wildlife Foundation) for the National Coastal Resilience grant and are exhausting any other funding opportunities for the project.

Andy Yuen – USFWS – SDNWRC Project Leader

- a. Since the last meeting, the budget continues to decline, they are down a little less than \$250,000 overall for the San Diego Refuge Complex since the last fiscal year. Sally Brown will continue to be the only employee assigned to the Tijuana Slough and San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuges and there is no expectation of funding to replace the positions that were previously filled by, Eddie Owens, Debby Good, or the biologist position.
- b. USFWS continues working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and California State Parks on preparing the application to maintain the Tijuana River mouth.
- c. California State Parks, the Refuge staff, and SWIA, continue to work with the Coastal Conservancy and other agencies on the TETRP project.

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

- a. Thank you to the Coastal Conservancy and the County of San Diego for being great partners. The Navy supported the Coastal Conservancy on the NFWF application and is working with the County of San Diego in the river valley on the REPI program.

Jillian Haynes – City of San Diego – Stormwater Department

- a. Regarding the berm repairs in Smuggler’s Gulch, due to safety concerns with the materials, the operation staff is not on site and the situation will need to be reevaluated before workers can go back in. The City is coordinating with the public utilities and the County of San Diego on the next steps needed to continue the repair work. Currently the accomplished work seems to have resulted in the flows staying within Smuggler’s Gulch.

Tara Flint – USEPA

- a. Tara re-introduced herself. She is back from maternity leave and is working for the USEPA Region 9 border office with D.Liden. Her work focuses on the USMCA projects, and the Tijuana River issues and other work. No other updates.

Doug Liden – USEPA – Environmental Engineer

- a. The Border 2025 National Coordinators Meeting is coming up on October 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. He can provide the link if anyone is interested in attending.
- b. The EPA and IBWC had a very successful meeting with Mexico today and everyone agrees that the issue needs to be addressed as quickly as possible. Looking at some of the projects on the Mexican side, one is the San Antonio de los Buenos which is about 70% complete. The work is expected to be completed by the end of September and to go online sometime in November. They need some of the necessary parts and will get some of the repairs done to get the flows to the coast. The International treatment plant doesn’t want to take on anymore flows because rehab work is being done, and the lines are not operational from the pump station to the coast and there is nowhere else for that flow to go so additional contamination is being observed in the system.

Ashley Reinemann – California Coastal Commission – Federal Programs Manager

- a. The California Coastal Commission, the Coastal Conservancy, and Bay Conservation Development Commission are three agencies that make up the California Coastal Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act. They are undergoing a 312 evaluation with NOAA this year, and the evaluation week is August 26- 30. The virtual public meeting is on August 28 from 12-1pm, and if anyone is interested they can register at <https://forms.gle/fzivtXuP1VLj5Fd16> and comments can be sent to [czma.evaluations@noaa.gov](mailto:czma.evaluations@noaa.gov) by September 6, 2024.

Charles Gailband – SD County Parks – Region Manager

- a. The County’s contractor continues to work on dredging and clearing Smuggler’s Gulch and are approaching the pilot channel where they will also be clearing and dredging in the very near future.
- b. Due to the Smuggler’s Gulch berm work being on hold and the probable near future seasonal rains, there are not any immediate plans to open the campground.
- c. County Parks have made a lot of progress at the Brown property off Hollister. Habitat restoration and invasive plant removal work was funded through several grants. There will also be work done at the Bird and Butterfly Garden to enhance the public interface, including invasive plant removal and planting of appropriate natives.

Mike Verderber – SD County Parks – Supervising Park Ranger

- a. Signs have been placed in the work areas for hikers, bikers, horseback riders to move safely around the work areas.

Mike McCoy – SWIA – President

- a. SWIA had a retreat in late June working with the Reserve staff, the board, on a succession plan to update the projects and programs that are handled at the SWIA office so they can prepare for TETRP.
- b. Mayda Winter will be retiring in the near, but not too near future, and SWIA will need to be planning for that.

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

Sally Brown – USFWS – Refuge Manager

- a. There are nesting birds, small flightless chicks, and camouflaged eggs on the beach. She had the opportunity to band some birds last week. Please keep dogs on leash.
- b. USFWS with the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program completed surveys on salt marsh bird’s beak in the refuge this year. Quite a few plants were found, including a new plant, Coulter’s saltbush. Seeds were collected for possible future need.

Chris Peregrin – TRNERR – Reserve Manager Report

- a. The current Program Managers [report](#) is available, they are produced every six months and is available for public viewing on the TRNERR website. A new one was just made for the last six months.

- b. Border Field State Park remains closed due to the persistent issues with the cross-border flows. Problems with the diverters and canyon collectors allow contaminated flows to cross Monument Road at the park entrance.
- c. State Parks have been working on the design for the realignment of the park entrance road for Border Field. The design is 60% completed and the environmental reviews are also moving forward.
- d. In addition to the realignment of the entrance road there is a project funded through California State Parks to make improvements to the interpretive elements and the public use facilities on Monument Mesa.
- e. There will be a 5-person crew from the San Diego Urban Corps working at the Research Reserve and Border Field State Park for the next year starting in September. The funding for the crew is through a grant from the Ocean Protection Council.

Anne Marie Tipton – TRNERR – Education Report

- a. The previous several months have not been very busy for the education department.
- b. The education department has a new employee. The new State Park Interpreter I, Jessie Looney will be helping with the newsletter, onsite school groups, Scout groups, PORTS, and Jr. Rangers.
- c. In August, the Jr. Rangers will be back for the first time in four years. The program is free for 7- to 12-year-olds and is on Thursdays from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm. There are 48 weeks of programs with 12 different topics that will be presented each year. The update and the calendar are on the TRNERR website.

Jeff Crooks – TRNERR – Research Report

- a. Update on the water quality issues and the effects on dissolved oxygen, the habitat and critters, it continues to be problematic. As a result, the Tijuana Estuary will not be a reference site for the SONGS San Dieguito Wetland Restoration Project.
- b. A paper just came out that addresses the issues of low oxygen due to contamination in the estuary and as it relates to the tides. Natalie Mladenov, Doug Liden and Jeff Crooks are some of the authors of the paper. The open access document can be found at (or find a link in the TRNERR digital library):  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969724052872?via%3Dihub>

Lorena Warner-Lara – TRNERR – Stewardship Report

- a. Refer to the program managers report on the TRNERR website for more in-depth reporting on all the different programs.
- b. [Tijuana River Action Month](#) is starting September 15 going through October 20. The first week of TRAM overlaps with Latino Conservation Week so Audubon and USFWS have been coordinating in conjunction with that. There will be in-person and virtual activities on both sides of the border within the entire watershed. The TRAM events will be on the TRNERR website homepage.

## Kristen Goodrich – TRNERR – Coastal Training Program Report

- a. The Coastal Training Program (CTP) team members Empress Holiday and Ana Eguiarte have been collecting information across training workshops on marine debris and debris related flooding. As a result, the collected and compiled information is used to inform a Binational Emergency Response Guide that is in development. The CTP is working on finalizing a draft for review.
- b. The CTP team is also involved in an effort through a National Geographic project called [Preserving Legacies](#) that is focused on improving understanding of risks to cultural heritage in the context of climate change. Over the next 5 months they are preparing a series of workshops that will involve participants to understand values and attributes and what it is that makes people feel connected to this place throughout time and in moving forward in the context of climate change.
- c. California Sea Grant awarded CTP a grant through the [Marine Debris Community Action Coalitions Competition](#) which will fund the next iteration of the cross border Marine Debris Leadership Academy for the next three years. It will continue to provide opportunities for communities on both sides of the border to work together on the problem of marine debris issues.

### 5. New Business

Doug Liden (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) presented on a study for the reuse of wastewater in Mexico.

Presentation link: [https://trnerr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Advisory-council-presentation-Liden-8\\_13\\_24.pdf](https://trnerr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Advisory-council-presentation-Liden-8_13_24.pdf)

### 6. Public Comment

#### M.McCoy, SWIA

Comment: Dr. McCoy commented on the E-bikes getting into the tern colonies. There needs to be limits on these types of transportation being limited in sensitive areas.

C.Peregrin Answer: Because of the multijurisdictional nature of the reserve, that the topic would be a good one for the Trails Committee meeting in two weeks.

#### M.Johnson Powell, TRVEA

Question: Are there any plans to install trash booms in Smuggler's Gulch before winter?

C.Gailband Answer: County Parks is looking at getting an off the shelf boom system because the previous apparatus was wiped out during Tropical Storm Hillary.

#### M.Johnson Powell, TRVEA

Question for C.Gailband: Do you have idea how far west the pilot channel will be dredged?

Answer C.Gailband: No, the County is going to keep going until the funding runs out. The County is dredging more material than they budgeted for. The contract is based on material removed and it has been overwhelming because of constant input of material.

Question: So there's no chance it will go as far as USFWS property?

Answer C.Gailband: I couldn't tell you that, I couldn't give you an informed answer right now.

M.Johnson Powell, TRVEA

Question: Do any of you know about the installation of the odor sensors that was proposed over a year ago? What I read in the newspaper is that their reasons why they have not been installed, something about the county said that they weren't sure of the safety of the ladder that the person reading the gauge would have to use to climb to the roof of the fire station does anyone know where those are at? Cause this has been more than a year now.

Answer A.M.Tipton: It's the San Diego Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD).

Answer C.Gailband: The County is close to getting one installed at the campground.

Answer J.Crooks: TRNERR has not been contacted by them but have had similar equipment installed on the visitor center roof by others. He is planning to reach out them (SDAPCD) and let them know that TRNERR is open to having one installed.

Answer C.Peregrin: He reached out to SDAPCD to let them know that TRNERR is a good place for monitoring. It is his understanding that they have selected two locations, based on public interest, for the sensors, the City Council location which is good because it is in a populated neighborhood, and the Imperial Beach Pier.

B.McNeese, member of the public

Question for D.Liden presentation: Would the Rodriguez reservoir need to be cleaned up prior to it once again being used for storage? He read that it hasn't been used for storage since 1993 and is currently contaminated by neighborhood run-off.

Answer Doug Liden: yes, all the wastewater flows into the dam should be stopped and it should be cleaned up prior to the proposed reuse projects.

S.Dibble, The Voice of San Diego

Question: In their public statements, government officials are supporting desalinization. Is it an either-or situation, what are your views on attitudes toward desalinization or reuse?

Answer D.Liden: His concern with desalinization is it depends on the size of the project. Desalinization might make sense for coastal communities but if you are going to build a mega desal to supply all of Tijuana, then a. what would you do with reused water?, and b. where are you going to get the finances to pay for what is obviously going to be an expensive project? If you are going to build a mega desal project, then it doesn't make sense to do a reuse project.

D.Liden also emphasized that it is crucial to have adequate wastewater treatment to handle the added water in the system and the added potential growth because of the new water supply. D.Liden said that he would always prefer to see a reuse project prior to desalinization because of the energy cost and the environmental cost and it is a win for the USA. He said it doesn't make sense to throw highly treated wastewater into the river or the ocean.

M.Johnson Powell, TRVEA

Question: Since the spill at the Hollister Street Pump Station of 200,000 gallons is getting blamed all over the media for being the smell in the Tijuana River Valley and in Imperial Beach, and it's not coming from the pump station now, it's coming from the river around Saturn and the ponds at the Hollister Street Bridges, is anyone official going to try to counteract that in the media stories that are going on? The public is blaming the Hollister

Street Pump Station for the sewage smells and they are not really coming from the Hollister Street pump station other than inadvertently, because it's not carrying the wastewater to the treatment plant. There is sewage going down to Border Field State Park and to Smuggler's Gulch but that is not the bulk of what is smelling, what's smelling is coming down the main channel to the sewage ponds under the bridge and at Saturn Blvd. where it forms rapids and goes west. And that is where it is affecting the community, but the pump station is being blamed in the media. So maybe somebody official could be writing in and correcting that.

Answer D.Liden : He can relay that message right now to IBWC and would not argue that the river with the amount of sewage in it would be pretty smelly.

J.Zarem, member of the public

Comment: He sent Morgan Rogers and Frank Fisher the PAO for IBWC a message about that, and he was at an event last week for a Chula Vista commissioner had a discussion with the mayor and chief of staff and has had several complaints about the smell in south Chula Vista. They were also blaming the Hollister pump station and he told them it is not Hollister and told them how to get signed up for M.Rogers' email distribution. They are getting several complaints every day about smell.

**7. Future Agenda Considerations & proposed change in August Meeting Date**

No future agenda items were given. Please email C.Peregrin and L.Warner-Lara with any future agenda items (*see emails at top of minutes*).

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

Future TRNERR Advisory Council meetings:

- Tuesday, November 5, 2024

**9. TRNERR Trails Committee meeting**

- Tuesday, August 27, 2024 at 9:30am
- Suggestions included: E-bikes on trails and speed. As well as condition of trails at the end of Sunset especially as it regards mosquitos.

**10. Adjourned at 2:30 PM**

The meeting was adjourned.