

DRAFT

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Rehabilitation of Wastewater Collection Main Lines Phase II Poniente Collector in Tijuana, Mexico

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9 intends to award a Border Environment Infrastructure Fund (BEIF) grant to the Comisión Estatal de Servicios Públicos de Tijuana (CESPT) in Tijuana, Mexico for rehabilitation of the Poniente Collector which is the major sewer collection line within Tijuana.

EPA Region 9's award of a grant for the proposed project is a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC §§4321-4370f. In accordance with NEPA, Council of Environmental Quality Regulations at 40 CFR §§ 1500.1-1508.28, and EPA NEPA regulations at 40 CFR Part 6, EPA Region 9 has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) describing the potential environmental impacts associated with, and the alternatives to, the proposed project. This finding of no significant impact (FONSI) documents EPA Region 9's decision that the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

Project Location and Description

The proposed project is located in the City of Tijuana, in the state of Baja California in northwestern Mexico. The City of Tijuana is within the larger municipality of Tijuana, which has a population of 1,641,570 people with an area of 339 square miles. The proposed project is in the vicinity of the Tijuana River approximately five miles south of the U.S./Mexico border.

The project would replace 5,894 meters of concrete pipeline with 76 and 107 centimeter (cm) or 30 and 42 inch diameter PVC pipeline with necessary modification to the associated manholes. The proposed project would aid 86,974 residents within the 23,500 households.

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Project

The Poniente Collector has had a history of collapses, which has resulted in raw sewage leaks to ground and surface water within the Tijuana River watershed potentially affecting human health and the environment. Rehabilitating the Poniente Collector will improve public health and water quality concerns by eliminating the discharge of raw sewage to Tijuana streets. Public safety concerns will also be addressed by reducing the risk and potential for collapse of a major sewer collector and associated manholes and ground subsidence.

In addition, the lack of reliable wastewater collection lines in Tijuana can have a detrimental impact on the water quality within the U.S. The Tijuana River crosses from Mexico into the U.S. in southern San Diego County. If the volume of untreated sewage in the Tijuana River exceeds the capacity to divert it for treatment, it can flow into the U.S. The Tijuana River ultimately discharges into the Pacific Ocean, thus untreated wastewater can contaminate U.S.-side beaches.

In preparing the EA, EPA examined a range of several alternatives for the rehabilitation of the Poniente Collector. However, with the exception of the preferred alternative, other alternatives were deemed not feasible, such as those options that would require extended closures to the Tijuana's most important roads or would be prohibitively expensive.

Environmental Consequences

In compliance with NEPA, EPA has prepared an EA that analyzes the environmental impacts of the proposed action. After carefully considering the regulatory, environmental (both natural and human) and socio-economic factors as described in the EA, EPA Region 9 did not identify any significant impacts to the environment that would result from the implementation of the proposed project.

Public Review

The EA is on file and available for public review at the EPA Region 9 Office at 75 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, California 94105 by contacting Elizabeth Borowiec at (415) 972-3419. The EA and FONSI will also be posted on the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) website at <http://www.becc.org>. Comments on the EA and FONSI may be submitted to the EPA until January 3, 2017 and can be sent via letter or email to:

EPA Region 9 WTR-3-3
Attn: Elizabeth Borowiec
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, California 94105-3901
Telephone: 415-972-3419
Email: borowiec.elizabeth@epa.gov

EPA Region 9 will not take administrative action on the proposed project prior to the close of the comment period. If, after considering public comments, EPA Region 9 concludes the proposed project will not have significant environmental impacts, EPA Region 9 will revise this FONSI by adding a summary of the comments received and EPA Region 9's responses. The revised FONSI will be forwarded to the Water Division Director for review and signature. The FONSI will be final upon signature. EPA Region 9 will not recirculate the signed FONSI for public review, but will make it available to any individual upon request.

