



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
May 15, 2008

USIBWC ANNOUNCES DECISION TO UPGRADE EXISTING INTERNATIONAL WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

After considering a report by the Government Accountability Office assessing timelines and costs for two options for wastewater treatment, the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has decided to upgrade the existing South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP) to secondary standards. The USIBWC has determined that upgrading the existing plant in San Diego is the quickest and most cost-effective means of achieving compliance with the Clean Water Act and provides better utilization of U.S. taxpayer funds.

“Our design will be completed next month and Congress has already appropriated funds for the project. We are ready to move forward with construction to complete this upgrade as soon as possible,” said USIBWC Commissioner Carlos Marin.

The SBIWTP currently provides advanced primary treatment for 25 million gallons per day (mgd) of sewage from Tijuana, Mexico. The Clean Water Act requires cleaner secondary treatment. Under the selected alternative, activated sludge secondary treatment facilities will be constructed at the SBIWTP. The capacity of the facilities will be expanded to accommodate peak flows of up to 50 mgd.

The USIBWC decided to upgrade the SBIWTP for the following reasons:

- Funding has been appropriated to start construction
- Costs less than the option of constructing secondary facilities in Mexico
- Earlier completion date (January 2011) than secondary facilities in Mexico
- Greater certainty in completing the upgrade within the estimated timeframe; fewer uncertainties than the option of constructing secondary facilities in Mexico
- Allows for potential expansion of up to 100 mgd to meet long-term needs of the San Diego-Tijuana region
- Consistent with existing agreements with Mexico (Minutes 283 and 311)
- No additional approvals required from governmental entities in Mexico

The Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations bill provided funding to the USIBWC for construction of secondary treatment facilities but specified that none of the funds could be obligated before the Government Accountability Office (GAO) completed a report on two proposed upgrade projects – secondary treatment at the SBIWTP or in Mexico as proposed

by Bajagua, LLC. The GAO submitted its report in April 2008, noting that the SBIWTP upgrade has lower estimated costs. The GAO also indicated that the estimated timeline for the SBIWTP upgrade has fewer unresolved issues that could delay construction as compared to the proposed plant in Mexico. After considering the GAO report, the USIBWC decided to move forward with construction of activated sludge secondary treatment facilities in the United States.

Additional information about the SBIWTP upgrade and the proposed Mexican treatment plant is available on the USIBWC web page at:
http://www.ibwc.state.gov/Files/IBWC_TJsewage_rprt_042408.pdf

For more information:

Sally Spener
915-832-4175
sallyspener@ibwc.gov