

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES
California-Mexico Border Relations Council

Friday, September 12, 2025 | 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Locations:

- San Diego: California Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Sacramento: California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)
- Virtual: Zoom teleconference

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Yana Garcia called the meeting to order at **9:15 a.m.** . A quorum was established with the following members present :

- **Chair Yana Garcia**, Secretary, CalEPA
- **Secretary Kim Johnson**, California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS)
- **Diana Dominguez**, Trade and Investment Representative, GO-Biz (Virtual)
- **Deputy Director Yvonne Dorantes**, California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (CalOES)
- **Deputy Secretary Noaki Schwartz**, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)
- **Senior Advisor Giles Gioviniuzzi**, California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA)
- **Deputy Regional Administrator Cheree Peterson**, U.S. EPA (Ex-officio)
- **Under Secretary Melinda Grant**, Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency (BCSH)
(Joined after roll call)

Absent: Under Secretary Christine Birdong, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA).

2. Meeting Logistics and Minutes Approval

- **Logistics:** Chair Garcia announced simultaneous English/Spanish interpretation was confirmed for in-person and Zoom attendees.
- **Approval of Minutes:** The Council reviewed the draft minutes from the **April 8, 2025** meeting.
 - **Action:** A motion was made by Secretary Johnson and seconded by Advisor Gioviniuzzi to approve the minutes. **The motion passed.**

3. 2024 Annual Report to the Legislature

Staff provided an executive summary of the **2024 California-Mexico Border Relations Council Draft Annual Report**.

- **Action:** Secretary Johnson moved to approve the report and delegate authority to the Chair to finalize and submit it to the Legislature. Deputy Director Dorantes seconded the motion. **The motion passed.**

4. Special Recognition

Chair Garcia led a **moment of silence** for the late **Sabine Talaugon**, former Deputy Secretary for Intergovernmental Relations at CalEPA, honoring her for her dedicated work for tribal sovereignty and environmental justice in the border region.

5. Tijuana River Coordination and Response (Item 7 - Moved Up)

The Council received extensive updates on transboundary pollution efforts.

- **San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board:** Executive Officer Dave Gibson reported that the Tijuana River has flowed with sewage-dominated water for 1,139 consecutive days . He detailed the **International Treatment Plant expansion plan**, aiming for 50 million gallons per day (MGD) capacity by **December 2027** .
- **U.S. EPA:** Deputy Regional Administrator Peterson highlighted a recent MOU with Mexico's SEMARNAT to accelerate infrastructure projects, funded by \$600 million from Congress .
- **Health and Human Services:** Secretary Johnson discussed health impact studies and technical assistance for odor-related symptoms.
- **San Diego Air Pollution Control District:** Deputy Director Domingo Vigil updated the Council with "Update on Efforts to Address Ongoing Sewage Odors in the Tijuana River Valley" detailing the distribution of over **6,200 air purifiers** to impacted households.
- **Public Comment:** Tiffany Curry (Outdoor Outreach) advocated for increased staffing for the San Diego Water Board to manage these complex projects.

6. Cross-Agency Collaboration (Item 6)

Member agencies presented highlights of binational partnerships:

- **BCSH:** Under Secretary Grant highlighted the **Licensed Physicians from Mexico Program**, bringing doctors to rural California.
- **CalOES:** Deputy Director Dorantes discussed disaster preparedness summits and emergency notifications for cross-border spills.

- **CalSTA/Caltrans:** Advisor Giovinazzi reported the completion of **State Route 11** and progress on the **Otay Mesa East Port of Entry**.
- **CHHS:** Secretary Johnson highlighted the CPDH's Binational Border Infectious Disease Surveillance program, a cross-agency collaboration focused improving early detection of binational disease outbreaks.
- **CNRA:** Deputy Secretary Schwartz discussed advancing projects such as: Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration program, the Nelson Sloan Quarry Project, and the Smugglers Gulch Improvement Project.
- **GO-Biz:** Representative Dominguez presented the "**California Jobs First**" initiative, which awarded \$4.9 million for 19 projects in the southern border region focusing on trade, manufacturing, and clean energy.
- **Baja California:** Representative Anely Fernandez Robledo from the Secretariat for Environment and Sustainable Development expressed their commitment to ongoing binational workgroups.
- **USEPA:** Deputy Regional Administrator Peterson thanked the San Diego Air Pollution Control District's partnership and highlighted their hydrogen sulfide monitoring dashboard.
- **CalEPA/CalRecycle:** Reported the removal of over **23,000 illegal tires** in 2024 and shared goals for a circular economy.

7. Future Meeting Dates and Council Changes

- **Next Meeting:** Proposed for **Spring 2026**.
- **Council Expansion:** Pursuant to **AB 655**, two new ex-officio legislative members (one from the Senate and one from the Assembly) are expected to join the Council starting in 2026.

8. General Public Comment

- **Kimberly Collins** (Good Neighbor Environmental Board) expressed interest in re-establishing formal California representation on the board .
- **Waylon Matson** and **Mario Lopez** commented on binational repurposing centers and the need for better private-sector outreach regarding waste tire management.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at **11:25 a.m.** by Chair Garcia.