

**REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
SAN DIEGO REGION**

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT  
MARCH 11, 2026**

**ITEM 9**

**SUBJECT**

Binational Resilience Initiative: Program Overview and Local Projects (*Riley Nolan*)

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Informational item only. No action will be taken.

**KEY ISSUE**

The San Diego-Tijuana region faces unique vulnerabilities stemming from its binational geography, binational governance and its interconnected ecosystems – all of which amplify the impacts of climate change and transboundary pollution. Rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, extreme weather events, and inadequate wastewater infrastructure strain shared water resources and exacerbate pollution in the Tijuana River watershed and near shore coastal waters. As a result, untreated domestic and industrial wastewater regularly crosses the border, threatening public health and coastal ecosystems. Insufficient funding for large-scale infrastructure and resilience projects results in critical gaps in addressing these challenges. The non-profit sector plays a vital role by financing smaller, community-based initiatives on both sides of the border, promoting local resilience and cross-border collaboration.

**PRACTICAL VISION**

Consistent with our Practical Vision values of leadership, stewardship, and communication, this item furthers [Practical Vision Chapter 8: Provide Effective Community Engagement and Communication](#) by informing the San Diego Water Board and public of binational efforts in the non-profit sector to address coastal resiliency in the face of climate change and transboundary pollution.

**DISCUSSION**

The Assistant Director of the San Diego Foundation's Binational Resilience Fund will give a presentation on the Binational Resilience Initiative (BRI), a partnership between the San Diego Foundation and the International Community Foundation, which focuses on the California-Baja California coastline region, from Oceanside, California to Ensenada, Baja California. The BRI aims to increase the capacity of this coastal region to survive and thrive in the face of shocks and stresses driven by climate change, as well as other natural, economic, and social pressures. The BRI supports high-impact, multi-benefit projects and programs that strengthen the region's capacity to anticipate, mitigate, and adapt to a changing climate. Through a community-guided process, the BRI recognizes the interdependent environmental, economic, and cultural relationship between the coastal communities in the California-Baja California region. In 2025, the San Diego Foundation awarded over \$650,000 through the BRI to 18 non-profits in the United States and Mexico. Recipients of 2025 BRI funding include:

- \$102,250 to San Diego Coastkeeper and Proyecto Fronterizo de Educación Ambiental to develop a joint water quality monitoring system and expand a public

- data platform for the Tijuana River watershed's One Coastal Community;
- \$103,000 to Universidad Autónoma de Baja California and 4 Walls International to create a binational hydrological model of the watershed to improve water quality and stormwater management;
- \$99,977 to Institute of the Americas and Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental to “advance water re-use literacy” and policy collaboration across the border;
- \$101,065 to Tijuana Estuary Foundation and Fundación La Puerta to promote green infrastructure and small-scale water treatment solutions in the upper Tijuana River basin in Tecate;
- \$100,000 to Reef Check Foundation and Ecologia, Cielo, Mar y Tierra to assess the health of kelp forests in San Diego and Tijuana as natural defenses against climate change and ocean conditions around the water treatment outflows; and
- \$100,000 to Fish Reef Project and Acuacultura AC to restore kelp forests in northern Baja California with potential expansion into San Diego, while generating blue carbon credits.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

The San Diego Water Board included this item in its notice and agenda for the March 11, 2026 Board meeting. The agenda notice for today’s meeting was posted on the San Diego Water Board’s website and sent to subscribers to the email list for Board meetings. This satisfies the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act requirements to publish the meeting notice and agenda.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

None