

City of Imperial Beach

Agencias Gubernamentales y Desafíos Locales en la Cuenca / Government Agencies and Local Challenges in the Watershed
Gestión de la Cuenca Binacional del Río Tijuana: Un Taller / Managing the Binational Tijuana River Watershed: A Workshop
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City of Imperial Beach Information

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The City of Imperial Beach has the distinction as the most southwesterly beach community in the continental United States. The City serves a residential population of approximately 26,000 people and is bordered by the City of Tijuana to the south, San Diego Bay and Coronado to the north, and City of San Diego to the east. The City brands itself as a classic Southern California beach-oriented community with a safe, small town, family atmosphere that is rich in natural and cultural resources. Approximately 40% of the City's 4.4 square mile land area is environmentally protected open space habitat in the Tijuana River watershed, which includes a portion of the Tijuana National Estuarine Research Reserve and Border Field State Park. The remaining urban portion of the City is almost entirely built out and includes the U.S. Navy Outlying Landing Field helicopter training facility.

Imperial Beach has an important part of the early history in San Diego starting in the 1880s as a summer vacation destination for farmers and land owners from Imperial Valley. Over time, the local population and business activity grew to such an extent that on June 5, 1956, Imperial Beach voted to become its own independent city. The City is now well known as a beach destination where visitors can walk along 4 miles of open beach, surf, swim, build sand castles, fish in the ocean, or just take in the view from the end of the ¼ mile long wooden pier. Visitors also come to the City to view the rare birds and wildlife at the internationally recognized Tijuana Estuary and to utilize the recreational opportunities for bicycling, hiking, and horseback riding in the Tijuana River Valley.

The City of Imperial Beach is already completely developed out and future growth in the City is dependent upon redevelopment of its urban core. In the last 10 years, Imperial Beach has undergone significant redevelopment in the community to revitalize its commercial corridors, improve safety of roads for bicyclists and pedestrians, enhance public parks, and replace aging infrastructure. Many of these recent investments aim to attract new visitors and businesses to the community by leveraging upon the existing ecological assets in the City, which include the beachfront, Tijuana Estuary, and south San Diego Bay Wildlife Refuge. To a large degree, the environmental health of the Tijuana River is vital to the continued economic growth in the City. The most pressing issue for Imperial Beach is to ensure safe water quality along the beach. It is important to have clean beaches and safe water quality in the Tijuana River in order to attract visitors and new businesses to the City. While much progress continues to be made for water quality in the Tijuana River, the City is still concerned about the negative image that is associated with beach closures that persist at a higher rate along the Imperial Beach shoreline than the rest of San Diego County. Beach closures are not good for any coastal community but for Imperial Beach it has resulted in the undeserving image of poor water quality that does not recognize the significant improvements that continue to be made in the watershed.

The City of Imperial Beach is actively involved with multiple stakeholders in the watershed working towards the incremental improvement on the many environmental issues that are impacting the Tijuana River Valley. It is important to address the problems related to trash, sediment, and bacteria first because these pollutants have an immediate impact on public health, flood control, and wildlife habit in the River Valley. We all share a common interest of improving the environmental health and restoring the ecological function of the Tijuana River so that we can fully achieve a regional park in the Tijuana River Valley that provides lasting social, economic, and environmental benefits to the community.