



March – April 2010

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## **Contact Us**

P. O. Box 2374

Calexico, CA 92231

Ph: (760) 357-8389

Fax: (760) 357-8779

### **Email:**

[info@calexiconewriver.com](mailto:info@calexiconewriver.com)

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[www.calexiconewriver.org](http://www.calexiconewriver.org)

## **State Water Board awards \$400K for New River project**

In recent news on April 20<sup>th</sup> the New River Improvement Project secured additional state support with the approval of a \$400,000 funding award by the State Water Board. Awarded from the Board's Cleanup and Abatement Account (CAA), the funds will be jointly managed by the City of Calexico and the California Mexico Border Relations Council primarily for the development of the strategic plan to guide the New River clean-up pursuant to the requirements of AB 1079. It also provides for the involvement of the regional Water Resources Control Board in water quality monitoring and testing.

This reflects the continued support received from state and federal agencies to help remediate the public health threats posed by the New River in Calexico. Not only does the State Water Resources Control Board's \$400,000 CAA invest-

ment serve as the foundation for the implementation of AB 1079, it likely acts as a springboard to secure additional funds. For example, there is currently \$10 million authorized in the 2007 federal Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) for New River treatment and clean-up. It is important to note that WRDA is an authorization bill only; appropriations for projects authorized under WRDA must come from the annual Energy and Water Appropriations bill, which is yet to occur.

There is also a \$20 million authorization for the New River in the water bond going before the voters in November 2010. By identifying, in priority order, the needed tasks and action items to guide the New River clean-up, the strategic plan will justify the need for additional funding, such as through WRDA and water bond funds.

## **Funding secured for New River Improvement Project**

Since 2001, the CNRC's vision has harnessed community support and marked major milestones, such as important legislative advances, securing funds for cleanup of the New River and valuable support from government representatives.

The adoption of legislation and the genuine support of elected officials have secured state and federal funds to help execute a phased New River Improvement Project. Although funding has been secured it has not been used because of matching fund requirements that have taken time and resources to collect. An example of these efforts is AB 1079 (Assemblyman V. Manuel Perez), a bill that calls for a state body to draw up a plan geared toward the eventual cleanup of the New River. The sooner work can begin to identify additional funding the sooner the full cleanup and restoration of the river can begin. There is little doubt that the New River water quality needs to be restored to meet California

Water Quality standards and to become an asset to the City of Calexico and other communities along the River's edge.

At this time, funding specified in the FY 2009-2010 State Budget Act (\$800,000) and AB 1079 cannot be provided until a new round of general obligation bond sales is conducted by the State Treasurer. It also must be noted that the \$800,000 approved for the New River Improvement Project in the FY 2009-2010 Budget was used successfully as a match for \$3.2 million in federal funding for the City of Calexico for the New River secured by Congressman Bob Filner in 2005; these monies will be used to conduct environmental review and to create pathways and recreational areas adjacent to the river, once an alternative is identified. While the New River Improvement Project will provide the environmental review and "preferred alternative" framework for the eventual cleanup of the New River, it must first start with the strategic plan specified in AB 1079.

# 7.2 earthquake strikes Imperial Valley

On April 4, 2010 a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck Imperial Valley and Mexicali. As a result of this natural disaster the New River lining in Mexicali suffered significant damage that severely impacted the river in Calexico. The images displayed in this newsletter reflect the effects the earthquake on the New River on both sides of the border.



Above: Water level increased at the international boundary as a result of the lining damage in Mexicali.

Below: The river flooded the land that separates the Westside households and the water treatment plant.

The images below were taken on April 5, 2010, a day after the earthquake hit Mexicali. The pictures reflect the damage done to an expressway known as the "New River boulevard." Numerous buildings have been built in recent years adjacent to the encased New River in Mexicali, according to geologists much of the damage observed in these pictures is the result of poor structural design and engineering on the New River encasement. The surrounding households were flooded with New River water for days before Mexican authorities could fix the leak in the New River lining.

Mexican officials estimate that the damages sustained to the New River lining are in the "million of dollars," there is yet to be a timeline for the repair project to begin. Mexican authorities are expecting federal relief funds to help pay for the repairs. Undoubtedly the New River lining damage in Mexicali is a big reason why a New River cleanup project is needed for Calexico and Imperial Valley.



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