

Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva Statement - Arizona 03
WRDA Statement
March 14, 2022

Thank you for your long-standing commitment to improving transportation and infrastructure of our nation, and your work on the reauthorization of WRDA.

International Outfall Interceptor

The International Outfall Interceptor (IOI) is the infrastructure that transports wastewater from Sonora, Mexico and Arizona to the Nogales International Wastewater Treatment Plant. The IOI pipeline covers approximately 8.5 miles. Under a 1944 water utilization treaty, Mexico can treat water in the United States. The International Border and Water Commission (IBWC) is tasked with managing international infrastructure negotiations and operates the Nogales International Sanitation Project.

On average, 92% of the water treated daily at the Nogales International Wastewater Treatment Plant is from Mexico and 8% from the surrounding community. Unfortunately, due to damage and aging infrastructure, the IOI needs costly and urgent repairs. Wastewater constantly emerges from the IOI and pollutes surrounding rivers and streams. Rains carry the polluted stormwater into Nogales, Arizona and exposes downstream populations to extraordinary public health risk.

In 2017, the Governor of Arizona declared the Disaster Declaration process for the State of Arizona to secure immediate federal assistance to remedy and prevent raw sewage exposure to Arizona residents. Every year during the monsoon season the health of residents along the Arizona southern border are put at risk, due to this ongoing issue. While Arizona residents are very familiar with this issue, other communities along the United States – Mexico border experience similar health risks due to similar issues. In July 2021, the IBWC awarded an \$13.8 million contract to begin the first three phases of a five-stage repair process. A groundbreaking for the repairs occurred in January 2022.

I appreciate the Chairs past support to address the issues surrounding IOI and ask that you use this vehicle to include provisions to settle the last remaining items of the longstanding IOI pipeline issues. I encourage you to work with my office and the IBWC to include authorization and full funding to continue repairs and clarify that the IBWC is responsible for future maintenance of the IOI to prevent raw sewage from spilling into waterways. It is my understanding that the IBWC is now prepared to accept this role, provided they are authorized and allocated the funding necessary. After years of neglecting much-needed repairs, repairs have begun, and we now have the opportunity to settle the maintenance issue once and for all.

There is clear precedent for this language to be included in WRDA. The project was originally authorized for \$11,100,000 by WRDA 1990, Section 101(a)(4), Public Law 101-640. The project was again authorized for \$25,410,000 by WRDA 2007, Section 3008. Recently, S. 2848, WRDA, included Section 8008 International Outfall Interceptor Repair, Operations and Maintenance.

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We should not leave a city in the United States susceptible to the risk of raw sewage spills, especially when preventative rehabilitation improvements have already started. I greatly appreciate you and your staff's past support of inclusion of the IOI and encourage you to once again work to provide a final remedy for this situation.

Thank you for your leadership, and consideration. My staff and I stand ready to work with you to ensure these items are included.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raúl M. Grijalva". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress