

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
San Diego National Wildlife
Refuge Complex
1080 Gunpowder Point Dr.
Chula Vista, CA 91910

News Release



Phone: (619) 476-9150
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/san_diego_bay

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 6, 2018

Contacts: Brian Collins, Refuge Manager
brian_collins@fws.gov cell (619) 778-2003

Tijuana River Mouth Dredging Project Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge, Imperial Beach, CA

For further information, please contact the following:

- Brian Collins, Refuge Manager, Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge, 619-575-2704 x. 302, brian_collins@fws.gov
- Andrew Yuen, Project Leader, San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 619-476-9150 x100, andy_yuen@fws.gov

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex plans to implement a sand removal project at the mouth of the Tijuana River. The project will be conducted over the weekend, on Saturday, March 10 and Sunday, March 11, 2018. Up to 8,000 cubic yards of beach sand will be excavated from and around the river mouth using heavy equipment. The excavated sand will be loaded into and transported by trucks and redeposited along the dune crest line north of the river mouth beginning approximately ½ mile south of the southern terminus of Seacoast Drive in the City of Imperial Beach.

The beach will be closed to public access during all construction activity. The closure will be in effect starting approximately 2,500 feet south of the end of Seacoast Drive and extending south to the Tijuana River mouth. The work area will be delineated clearly in the field. In the interest of public safety, we ask all members of the public to comply with closed area markers.

Biological and Kumeyaay cultural monitors will be present during construction activities. The nesting season for the western snowy plover, a threatened bird that nests at the Tijuana Estuary is approaching. USFWS biologists will ensure no impacts to plovers or other sensitive species will occur as a result of the project.

Enclosed: Additional Background Information

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/cno>. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube Channel](#), and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).

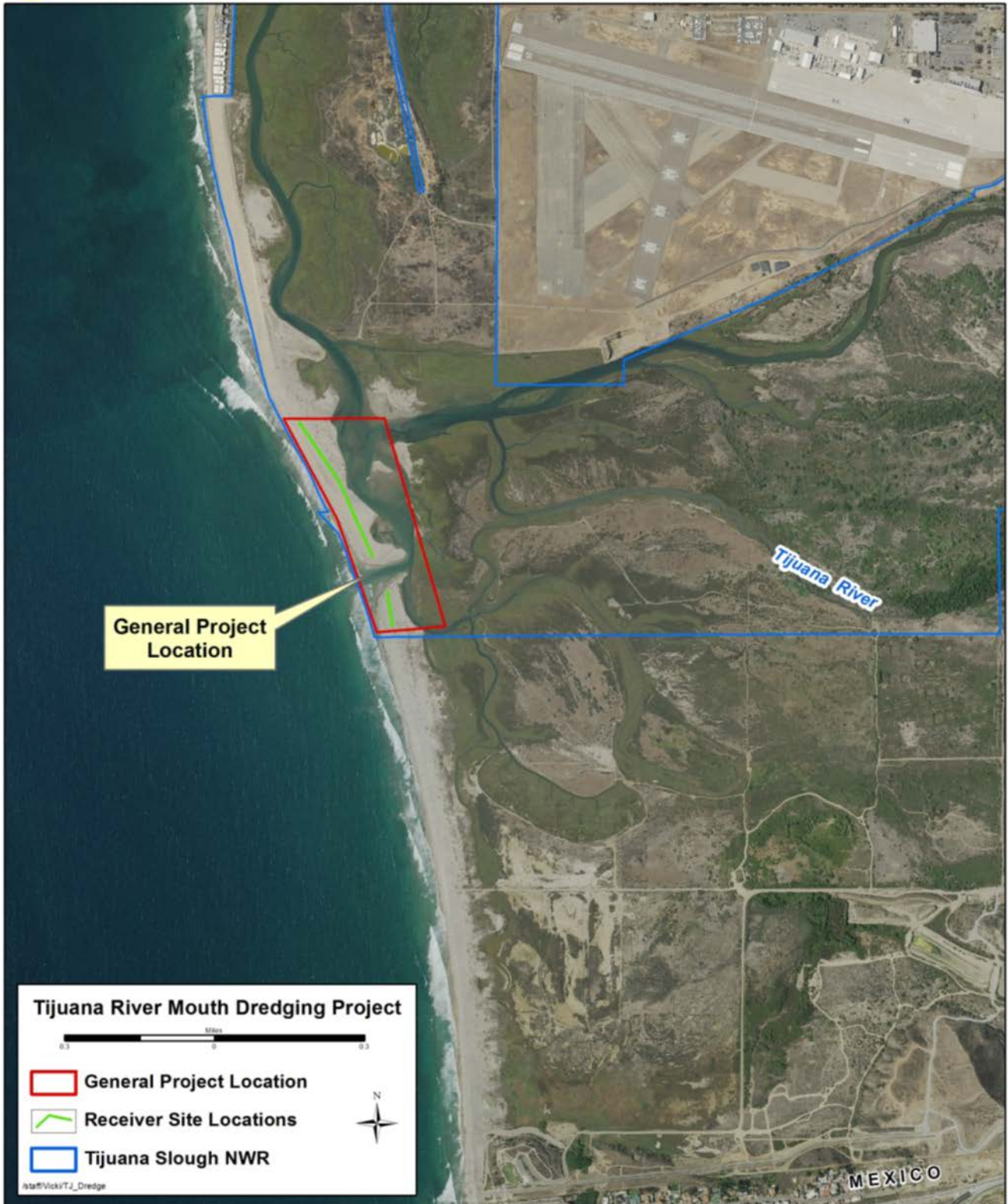


Figure 1: Tijuana River Mouth Dredging Project General Project Location

Tijuana River Mouth Dredging Project

Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge, Imperial Beach, CA

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) has obtained a five-year permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to allow dredging and related inlet maintenance at the Tijuana River mouth on the Tijuana Slough NWR for the purpose of maintaining an open inlet and facilitating adequate tidal exchange within the Tijuana Estuary (Figure 1). The permit allows inlet maintenance dredging of up to 10,000 cubic yards per year of sandy material that would then be beneficially used to enhance an existing barrier sand dune system that protects the Tijuana Estuary's coastal salt marsh habitat.

The mouth of the Tijuana River is highly susceptible to closure due to the present condition of the estuarine tidal prism and the activity of the imported and native sand on the beach and in the near shore environment. The most recent closures occurred in 2010; March - April, May and September, 2016; and April 2017.

In late March, 2016, the Tijuana River mouth was blocked by sand carried by ocean waves and nearshore currents, with sand depths ranging from four to six feet. Closure of the Tijuana River mouth lead to severely degraded water quality as nutrient rich flows of freshwater lead to hypoxic conditions in the estuary causing a die-off of fish and benthic invertebrates. The blockage also resulted in street flooding of sewage contaminated water within the City of Imperial Beach. Tidal exchange was restored on April 11, 2016. The mouth closed again in May and September 2016, and April 2017, requiring quick responses to restore tidal exchange during these additional closure events to avoid hypoxic conditions that would negatively impact the estuarine ecosystem.

The proposed project is scheduled for March 10 and 11, 2018 and is intended to reduce the likelihood that the river mouth will close to tidal circulation during the upcoming 2018 nesting season for the threatened western snowy plover, endangered California least tern, and endangered light-footed Ridgway's rail, and many other species. The nesting season runs until mid-September of any given year.