



LEAGUE OF  
**CALIFORNIA  
CITIES**

◆ San Diego County Division

**2022-2023  
DIVISION OFFICERS**

August 29, 2023

**President**

Dr. Priya Bhat-Patel  
*Mayor Pro Tem*  
Carlsbad

Governor Gavin Newsom  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President**

Maria Nunez  
*Council Member*  
San Marcos

**Subject: Request to declare State of Emergency due to impacts of ongoing cross-border pollution in San Diego County**

Dear Governor Newsom,

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President**

Vacant

**Board Representative**

John Minto  
*Mayor*  
Santee

On behalf of the San Diego County Division of the League of California Cities (Cal Cities), comprised of the 18 cities within San Diego County, we are urging you to **Declare a State of Emergency** for the transboundary water pollution crisis in the Tijuana River and surrounding area. This Southern California water channel desperately needs sufficient funding and resources to address decades long negative impacts on the region's health, environment, and safety.

**Board Representative**

Teresa Acosta  
*Council Member*  
Carlsbad

Since December 2018, over 100 billion gallons of untreated toxic wastewater has crossed our border, with 35 billion coming just this year alone. The South San Diego coastline has been closed to recreational beach access for over 21 months due to the ongoing catastrophe. The continuous influx of transboundary pollution is wreaking havoc on the local community, economy, and environment along the coastline of South San Diego County, and impacting California's State Beaches.

**Board Representative**

Todd Gloria  
*Mayor*  
San Diego

**Board Representative**

Racquel Vasquez  
*Mayor*  
Lemon Grove

In 2019, Cal Cities San Diego County Division spearheaded a statewide resolution at their Annual Conference calling upon the Federal and State governments to restore and ensure proper funding of the Border Water Infrastructure Program (BWIP) to address the devastating impacts of international transboundary pollution flows into the waterways of the southernmost regions of California (San Diego and Imperial Counties) and the Pacific Ocean. Since that time, the situation has only gotten worse with billions of gallons of sewage, chemicals and trash debris flowing through the Tijuana River into the Pacific Ocean.

We understand there have been recent studies to evaluate the effects of mitigation proposals and plans over a long-time frame. But the worsening disaster needs urgency, and we cannot risk further delays in funding and implementation. It is imperative that federal, state, and local governments recommit to working together to solve this crisis now and not in the future.



Therefore, we join members of our San Diego County Legislative Delegation in respectfully requesting the following action be taken:

- 1) A State of Emergency Declaration due to the severe impacts of cross-border pollution.
- 2) Suspend any statutes or regulations that may hamper an immediate response to the disaster.
- 3) Direct the California Office of Emergency Services to work with relevant agencies in the United States and Mexico to respond to this disaster.
- 4) Urge President Joseph R. Biden to issue a federal emergency declaration.

The Cities of Imperial Beach and San Diego already maintain an ongoing State of Local Emergency related to the impacts of cross-border pollution in the Tijuana River. In addition, County of San Diego has declared a Public Health Crisis for the Tijuana River Valley.

A California State of Emergency Declaration will open the doors to much-needed state and federal assistance, allowing us to tackle agency coordination issues. Our communities cannot afford to wait for years for these projects to be implemented while the health and well-being of our residents and the environment continue to suffer. Multi-agency collaborative work has laid the foundation for comprehensive solutions, but additional funding, agency coordination, and political will are necessary to move forward.

The League of California Cities, San Diego County Division urges you, Governor Newsom, to assist us in bringing forward coordinated efforts and resources from the state and federal governments to address the devastating impacts of international transboundary pollution flows into the waterways of the southernmost regions of California.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Priya Bhat-Patel*

Dr. Priya Bhat-Patel  
Mayor Pro Tem, City of Carlsbad  
President, San Diego County Division, League of California Cities

cc: San Diego County Legislative Delegation  
Cities of San Diego, Imperial Beach, Coronado  
County of San Diego, County Board Chair Vargas  
League of California Cities