



September 14, 2023

Governor Newsom
Office of the Governor
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Tijuana River Sewage Emergency

Dear Governor Newsom,

As elected officials in San Diego County, we are reaching out once again in a second letter, with a mixture of deep concern and mounting disappointment regarding the absence of effective state leadership in addressing the ongoing pollution catastrophe in the Tijuana River. It is with a profound sense of urgency that we call upon the State of California to take a more substantial role to secure funding, resources, and political determination to urgently implement a comprehensive solution for the issues in the Tijuana River.

The coastal communities of south San Diego County find themselves grappling with an unprecedented crisis that extends beyond the realm of local control. This dire situation demands a coordinated State and Federal Emergency Declaration to bring a multi-agency response to address the escalating disaster at hand. The continuous flow of untreated sewage and pollutants into our waters is no longer tolerable and must be tackled with immediate resolve. The Tijuana River sewage crisis requires suspension of federal statute by executive order of the president to truly expedite the timeline for a comprehensive solution.

The magnitude of this crisis, with its far-reaching consequences, demands the full mobilization of every resource and enforcement authority at the state's disposal. Our state agencies, including but not limited to the State Water Resources Control Board, CalEPA, State Lands Commission, and the California Department of Public Health, must unite to confront the relentless pollution emanating from the Tijuana River. This pollution significantly impairs the natural resources and cherished values of our state. The chronic beach closures not only limit coastal access, constituting a fundamental violation of the State's Coastal Act, but they also inflict direct harm upon the Tijuana River Mouth State Marine Conservation Area and the adjacent state tidelands.

The continuous influx of trans-boundary pollution and persistent discharge violations at the ailing South Bay International Treatment Plant (ITP) persist as an acute environmental concern for the entire state. It is a stark environmental justice dilemma recognized and acknowledged by CalEPA, one that perpetuates the marginalization of underserved residents in southern San Diego County. Regrettably, it is the residents of south San Diego County who bear the brunt of this ongoing ecological disaster, grappling with the onerous burden of enduring over 635 consecutive days of sewage-related beach closures along Border Field State Park. This protracted crisis underscores the urgent need for comprehensive action to safeguard not only the environment but also the health and well-being of our communities.

We appreciate your letter to President Biden on August 9th requesting federal funding to support repairs and upgrades at the ITP and recent press release on September 1st. We also appreciate the more articulate letter from the State Secretary for Environmental Protection to federal officials on June 19th recognizing the environmental justice priority for the U.S. Department of State and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to fund and resolve cross-boundary pollution in the Tijuana River. Nevertheless, it is important to be clear that we are demanding a comprehensive solution that will ultimately fix the current damage at the ITP, expand its capacity to accept additional wastewater from Tijuana, and construct a new treatment facility to manage storm event flows.

The EPA, in collaboration with local agencies, has identified three big solutions that are necessary to have a meaningful reduction in sewage contamination along the coast:

- 1. Replacement of the San Antonio de los Buenos Treatment Plant in Mexico:** Addressing the critical need to replace the broken treatment plant in San Antonio de los Buenos that is discharging up to 50 million gallons a day of sewage onto the coast.
- 2. Repair and Expansion of the International Treatment Plant:** The repair and expansion that doubles the treatment capacity at the International Treatment Plant will help address adequate wastewater treatment for the rapidly growing population in Tijuana.
- 3. Construction of a New Tijuana River Diversion Treatment Plant:** The construction of a new Tijuana River Diversion Treatment Plant will capture contaminated river flows for treatment in the U.S.

The City of Imperial Beach welcomes the recent reaffirmation of Mexico's binational commitment to fund and construct a new treatment plant at San Antonio de los Buenos, emphasizing the importance of international cooperation in addressing this crisis. Furthermore, we commend Governor Newsom for his recent announcement on September 1st, which marks a significant step forward in addressing the repair and expansion needs of the International Treatment Plant.

However, it is crucial to highlight that these recent announcements have yet to include additional support for the construction of the new Treatment Plant for diverted Tijuana River flows. A comprehensive solution for the Tijuana River sewage crisis requires all three Big Solutions. Omitting any one of these essential projects could compromise our efforts to mitigate sewage contamination along the coast.

In the absence of prompt action, we are inevitably bound to ongoing pollution and beach closures in south San Diego County for many years to come. The gravity of this situation calls for a united front, bringing to bear every available resource and enforcing authority at the state to safeguard the well-being of our citizens and the environment. We echo the urgent appeal made by our community, in seeking immediate action that brings a comprehensive federal solution to the Tijuana River pollution crisis, as quickly as possible. Our shared commitment to environmental justice and the welfare of our state compels us to rise to this challenge.

We firmly implore the immediate issuance of a state of emergency and the unrestricted utilization the state's enforcement authority to compel federal action that supports a comprehensive solution for the Tijuana River. This is a pivotal moment that calls for resolute action to safeguard our communities, environment, and the principles we value. We look forward to your decisive response and collaborative efforts in confronting this critical issue.

Respectfully,



Mayor of Carlsbad



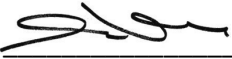
Mayor of Del Mar



Mayor of Escondido



Mayor of Lemon Grove



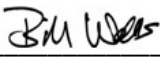
Mayor of Poway



Mayor of Santee



Mayor of Chula Vista



Mayor of El Cajon



Mayor of Imperial Beach



Mayor of National City



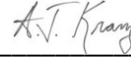
Mayor of San Diego



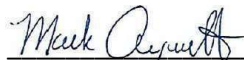
Mayor of Solana Beach



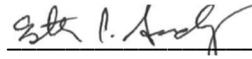
Mayor of Coronado



Mayor of Encinitas



Mayor of La Mesa



Mayor of Oceanside



Mayor of San Marcos



Mayor of Vista