



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

TODD GLORIA

MAYOR

August 7, 2023

Chair Donne Brownsey
California Coastal Commission
455 Market Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: Agenda Item 6 -- Executive Director's Report

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to you today to urge the Commission to prioritize the environmental disaster occurring at the Tijuana River Valley (TJRV). This crisis is having a profound impact on communities throughout San Diego County and has resulted in over 500 consecutive days of beach closures in some of our County's beach communities due to sewage, industrial discharges, and trash.

As you know, the TJRV has been plagued by sewage pollution for decades and it has had a devastating impact on the environment and public health in San Diego County. It is caused by a combination of factors including inadequate wastewater treatment facilities in Tijuana and illegal dumping. The result has been a continuous flow of untreated sewage and other pollutants into the Tijuana River and the Pacific Ocean.

The extent of this pollution has been studied for decades including recent research from the Scripps Institute of Oceanography with funding from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that attributes 34,000 illnesses in calendar year 2017 to water quality pollution along the Imperial Beach coastline. The high levels of coastal water pollution are even impacting local air quality. Researchers are monitoring the airborne transmission pathways for coastal water pollution and documenting concerning levels of industrial chemicals and pathogens from aerosol sea spray generated from wind and ocean waves.

Over the past decade, local agencies have forged a strong partnership with federal agencies to develop comprehensive solutions. Our collaborative efforts have resulted

in an initial allocation of \$300 million through the United States, Mexico, and Canada Agreement (USMCA) to identify and implement a comprehensive approach to solve the longstanding pollution problem in the Tijuana River. The EPA has already prepared a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and identified the preferred list of projects that are necessary to ultimately control the discharge of wastewater, trash, and sedimentation into the TJRV. Unfortunately, more funding and coordination is needed to address this environmental disaster.

In 1993, the City of San Diego took action to pass a State of Emergency Resolution and that declaration has been subsequently reaffirmed in 2019 and 2021 to reflect the worsening environmental disaster. The City continues to expend anywhere between two to eight million dollars annually to remediate solid waste and sediment in the TJRV having a direct impact on San Diego taxpayers. The continuous flow of untreated sewage and other pollutants into our waters is unacceptable and must be addressed immediately.

The City of San Diego stands shoulder to shoulder with our regional allies in requesting the State of California follow suit and declare this crisis an emergency. We support the Commission's efforts to shine a brighter spotlight on this issue that is impacting so many San Diegans.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



TODD GLORIA
Mayor
City of San Diego