



County of Santa Cruz

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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FIFTH DISTRICT

October 24, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
State Capitol
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Tijuana River Transboundary Pollution

Dear Governor Newsom:

In my capacity as Chair of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to convey the Board's recent vote expressing unanimous support for state assistance to address the mounting environmental and public health crisis faced by South San Diego communities due to Tijuana River Transboundary Pollution. We appreciate the actions you have taken thus far to advocate for critical federal resources to upgrade the South Bay International Treatment Plant (ITP). While we recognize the constraints associated with a State Declaration of Emergency, we urge you to take additional actions within your authority to respond to this crisis.

As you know, the Tijuana River has been a long-standing source of concern due to cross-border flows carrying a significant amount of untreated sewage, industrial waste, and other pollutants from the Tijuana area into California. The pollution from these flows poses a severe threat to public health and safety, the environment, access to coastal resources, and the economic well-being of southern coastal communities heavily reliant on tourism and outdoor activities. The City of Imperial Beach, a low-income and historically disadvantaged community, has been particularly affected, raising significant environmental justice concerns. As of Monday October 23rd, the community has

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endured 692 consecutive days of beach closure and is now considered the most polluted stretch of sandy beach in the entire country. Additionally, the pollution creates impacts for nearby naval operations and the military families living in that area.

Southern coastal communities are grappling with an unprecedented crisis that extends beyond the realm of local control. Over the past decade, local agencies have worked in close partnership with federal agencies to develop comprehensive solutions. However, more funding and coordinated efforts between state and federal agencies are needed to move these projects forward. We consider the protection of the California coast and its coastal communities as a shared responsibility. In conjunction with the request from Mayors representing cities within San Diego County and other coastal communities, we request your continued advocacy at the state and federal level to affected local jurisdictions to address this profound environmental and public health crisis.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



ZACH FRIEND, Chair
Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

ZF:cs