



County of San Diego

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PATTY KAY DANON
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER

March 27, 2024

Mayor Paloma Aguirre
825 Imperial Beach Blvd
Imperial Beach, CA 91932

Dear Mayor Aguirre,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Agenda item 5 and the recent meetings with the City of Imperial Beach staff over the past week regarding this issue. The County continues to work and advocate toward a solution to the transboundary pollution and on June 27, 2023, the Board of Supervisors issued a Proclamation of Local Emergency as a result of the continued conditions for detrimental impacts to the environment, economy, and property within San Diego County, caused by persistent impacts from cross-border sewage pollution and sewage impacted ocean waters.

Over 100 billion gallons of sewage have impacted our water since 2018. From December 28, 2022, through February 13, 2024, over 58 billion gallons of sewage crossed the international border per the International Boundary and Water Commission. As of March 25, 2024, some of the beaches in the region have been closed for 838 consecutive days due to the poor water quality. The ongoing sewage crisis is an environmental catastrophe with significant negative impacts on the regional economy and U.S. military preparedness.

When there are known sewage impacts to ocean waters, the County of San Diego is required to issue water contact closures. Between January 1, 2023 to March 25, 2024, Imperial Beach locations have been impacted by sewage and under closure for 406 of 449 days, Silver Strand closed for 371 of 449 days, and Coronado shoreline closed for 256 of 449 days.

Additionally, advocacy efforts continue to focus on funding and regulatory opportunities at the federal level as the recently enacted federal budget only allocated a portion of the \$310 million previously sought by the County and our Congressional Delegation.

From a public health perspective, the County of San Diego, including the Public Health Services (PHS) Department, takes every report of illness seriously. On September 27, 2023, PHS was alerted about a possible increase in gastrointestinal (GI) illnesses being seen by a local South Bay urgent care practice. Since being alerted, PHS has:

- Reviewed San Diego County data and regional data for trends in GI illnesses and continue to do so. The data reviewed to date reveals no significant increases in reportable

GI illnesses and no increases in related emergency department visits in the South Bay Region.

- The County began monitoring the illness reports in August 2023 and is now issuing a Surveillance Bulletin on South Region Gastrointestinal Illness that is updated weekly on Thursdays.
- Public Health Services also is reviewing data collected by County medical professionals who were embedded for nearly two weeks with a South Bay clinic.
- Met with local agencies, including the Department of Environmental Health and Quality (DEHQ) and Air Pollution Control District (APCD) and continue to do so.
- Met with state agencies, including the State Public Health Officer, California Department of Public Health (CDPH); Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); and the Coastal Commission about the local concerns raised and continue to provide updates.
- Met with you and your staff about the local concerns and to provide data and answer questions.

Surveillance and investigation of GI illnesses are ongoing. PHS has developed a website with FAQs, data, and information that is routinely updated at:

https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/phs/community_epidemiology/GI-Concerns.html. PHS will continue efforts to determine public health risks to keep San Diegans

healthy, safe, and thriving.

We appreciate the ongoing partnership between Imperial Beach and the County to address the root cause of this issue, the transboundary sewage contamination. Should you have any questions related to this information, we are happy to schedule a meeting with City staff or attend future meetings, given advance notice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eric C. McDonald". The signature is written in a cursive style.

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Interim Agency Director
Health and Human Services Agency