



United States Senate

May 6, 2024

His Excellency Esteban Moctezuma Barragán
The Ambassador of Mexico
1911 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Ambassador Moctezuma:

I write to request your urgent attention to the flow of wastewater pollution entering the United States through the Tijuana River and adjacent canyons, as well as the release of raw sewage from the San Antonio de los Buenos (SAB) treatment facility in Punta Bandera. As you know, both sources of pollution continue to foul beaches in both the United States and Mexico, creating health hazards and negatively impacting the region's economy and environment. As Congress and the Biden-Harris Administration work to expedite repairs and improvements to treatment and conveyance infrastructure north of the border, I ask that the Government of Mexico urgently finalize planned infrastructure improvements to address these issues at their source.

Since 2018, more than 100 billion gallons of toxic wastewater has entered the United States through the Tijuana River, with untold billions entering through adjacent canyons. These flows bring with them untreated sewage, trash and sediment that impact water quality, health and the environment in San Diego County. Additionally, billions of gallons of raw sewage continue to be released from SAB directly into the Pacific Ocean, impacting California cities and closing beaches. During a recent visit to the region, I observed firsthand the devastation this pollution is causing, and heard directly from affected communities enduring toxic pollution in their water, air and soil. The impact on communities in northern Mexico is no less dire, as highlighted by a recent COFEPRIS report which found the top six most polluted beaches in Mexico are located in Northern Baja near the Punta Bandera facility, with fecal contamination in the water posing an immediate health risk to visitors and residents alike.

I am pleased that both of our countries are working to implement infrastructure improvements included in the Minute 328 agreement to reduce wastewater flow into the Tijuana River and prevent untreated wastewater from being discharged into the ocean. In particular, I am encouraged that Mexico has broken ground on a replacement for the SAB facility and expects to complete that project later this year. However, upgrades to SAB and the planned expansion of the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plan will only be effective if Tijuana's wastewater collection and conveyance systems are upgraded and appropriately maintained. In order to better understand what the Government of Mexico is doing to address this broader need and to learn what I can do to support those efforts, I respectfully request a meeting at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laphonza Butler".

Laphonza Butler
United States Senator