



# CITY OF IMPERIAL BEACH

## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

PALOMA AGUIRRE, MAYOR

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September 3, 2024

Governor Gavin Newsom  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: Urgent Action Needed – Tijuana River Pollution Crisis Reaches Breaking Point of 1,000 Days of Consecutive Beach Closures**

Dear Governor Newsom,

I am writing once again to urgently request that the State of California take decisive action to address the ongoing cross-border pollution crisis in the Tijuana River. I urge you to fiercely defend our border communities and issue a resolution, proclamation, or executive order and please join the 120 California Legislators and 18 mayors in San Diego County in our call to President Biden to declare a state of emergency due to the ongoing Tijuana River pollution. Preliminary results from ongoing air and water studies show alarming levels of contaminants that can have serious public health implications. After three years of continuous sewage flows, communities in south San Diego County, particularly Imperial Beach, are confronting an unprecedented environmental and public health emergency.

The sewage flows in the Tijuana River remain at a staggering level of over 60 million gallons per day. These unprecedented and ever-increasing cross-border sewage flows are devastating public access and causing significant impacts to the environment and public health of our communities. On September 7<sup>th</sup>, Imperial Beach will reach the unfortunate milestone of 1,000 days of consecutive beach closures.

This crisis has caught the attention of research institutions from around the country, including UC San Diego, San Diego State University, UC Riverside, UT Austin, and the National Center for Atmospheric Research, that are currently monitoring the aerosolization of pathogens, viruses, chemicals, and gases from the Tijuana River. The preliminary monitoring results, coupled with alarming spikes in respiratory illnesses, are extremely concerning and merit further intervention from the California Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

We strongly believe that the State of California has the power to influence the planning, implementation, and timeline for a comprehensive infrastructure solution for the Tijuana River. While we appreciate the



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federal leadership at the International Boundary and Water Commission, the proposed federal timeline of up to five years to repair and expand the international treatment plant is unacceptable. Even more disheartening, federal officials are only now beginning discussions for a critical project that would capture and treat flows from the Tijuana River, the largest source of pollution for the coastal waters of California.

It is not too late for your office to use its influence and lead the charge for a comprehensive solution to the Tijuana River pollution crisis. While we recognize the recent declaration of a state of emergency in Rancho Palos Verdes to assist 300 affluent residents affected by shifting land, it is deeply frustrating that a similar level of urgency has not been applied to the ongoing sewage crisis in the Tijuana River, which impacts the health and safety of 750,000 people in south San Diego County. Your leadership in recognizing the severity of pollution in the Tijuana River as a national emergency is crucial for prioritizing a comprehensive solution to control the cross-border sewage affecting our region.

Respectfully,

Paloma Aguirre  
Mayor  
City of Imperial Beach