

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 15, 2024

The Honorable Michael Regan
Administrator
U.S Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

We write to urgently request that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provide support to the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) as they work to monitor potentially harmful gases emanating from pollution in the Tijuana River Valley. Recent reports have raised questions whether increased levels of potentially harmful gases pose a threat to the long-term health and safety of our residents in South San Diego communities.¹ We are requesting additional federal support to combat these potential health threats.

As you may know, millions of gallons of sewage, trash, and industrial waste have flowed daily from Tijuana, Mexico into the Tijuana River Valley located in South San Diego, California. These daily flows have made San Diego's beaches the most polluted in the country and have led to the closure of beaches for more than 1,000 consecutive days at a time.²

While this crisis is not new, it has intensified over the past two years. In the past year, researchers discovered that toxins and bacteria from the Tijuana River can be aerosolized and become airborne— unveiling an apparent threat not only to our water ecosystems, but the air in our communities. A recent heat wave in the region intensified the odors, and led constituents to report that the fumes have caused them to wake up in the middle of the night.³

In response to the intensified odors emanating from the Tijuana River, the APCD issued an advisory urging people to stay indoors if they smelled strong odors.⁴ The APCD further advised that certain groups – including children, the elderly, and those with health issues – should avoid exercise.⁵

The San Diego congressional delegation is committed to combating this issue which stems from the lack of rehabilitation to the implemented wastewater treatment infrastructure. Recently, the San Diego congressional delegation was proud to secure over \$400 million to modernize and expand the existing federal wastewater treatment plant, South Bay International Wastewater Treatment plant, located in South San Diego. While these efforts addressed a long-term solution, our communities need an immediate short-term solution, and additional support in measuring and managing the effects of the pollution on air quality.

While the APCD has been actively responding to the crisis, the agency needs additional resources to ensure that they can properly measure and respond to the reported increase of noxious fumes. It is important that the agency

1 Elmer, MacKenzie. "[Scientists May Transform Border Sewage Crisis Into Air Pollution Crisis with Enormous Stakes.](#)" Voice of San Diego. September 20, 2024.

2 City News Services. "[San Diego County beaches top list of California's dirtiest beaches due to Tijuana River sewage.](#)" NBC7 San Diego. July 17, 2024.

3 San Diego County Air Pollution Control District Funding Request Letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. September 23, 2024.

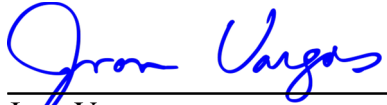
4 [San Diego County Air Pollution Control District Advisory](#). Twitter. September 8, 2024.

5 Id.


has proper equipment to continually track levels of the multiple toxic gases that emanate from the Tijuana River Valley and in multiple locations around the South San Diego region. That is why we are requesting that the EPA deploy whatever available federal resources to assist the San Diego County APCD with establishing a network of reference-grade monitoring equipment that can provide precise and real-time data.

We look forward to continuing to work with the EPA on this critically important issue for our region.


Sincerely,




Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress