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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Juan Vargas
51st District, California

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTOR PROTECTION,
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CAPITAL MARKETS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING,
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WESTERN HEMISPHERE, CIVILIAN SECURITY,
AND TRADE
MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA,
AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

April 28, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger:

I am requesting funding for the “Smuggler’s Gulch Dredging” project in fiscal year 2023, in the amount of \$4,000,000. The entity to receive the funding is the County of San Diego, located at 1600 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92101.

Significant amounts of sewage, trash, and sediment have entered the Tijuana River Valley (TRV) in the U.S. While the U.S. and Mexico have enacted treaties and policies towards addressing this international issue, the Tijuana River remains the most polluted river in the San Diego region. In 2017, California Senate Bill 507 provided funding to the County of San Diego to conduct a study focused on the improvement and protection of natural lands in TRV. The study identified projects on the U.S. side of the border to intercept and divert transboundary flows to protect properties, habitats, and communities as well as human and environmental health in the TRV and coastal waters.

In May 2021, the California State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) funded the Smuggler’s Gulch Improvements Project (\$10 Million), which is a combination of Projects 10 and 11 from the study. While the SCC has funded the implementation of a sedimentation basin, trash booms, and improvements to the culvert under Monument Road, there is still a need for dredging of the channel prior to, or shortly after, implementation of the improvements. While the City of San Diego and County of San Diego have regularly dredged these areas, there is a need for a more extensive and coordinated effort to collect the decade’s worth of sediment and trash that has accumulated. Completing this dredging prior to implementation of the SCC-funded Smuggler’s Gulch Improvements will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of those solutions.

The requested funding (\$4 Million) is a valuable use of taxpayer resources because it will serve all residents and visitors of the TRV and will also benefit nearby residents in Imperial Beach. Currently, this area in the TRV is subject to regular flooding during rain events which could leave residents and visitors to the local, state, and federal facilities stranded without a safe opportunity to leave. The project will also address sediment in TRV and could lead to positive downstream impacts to beachgoers and recreational users.

This project has received written support from City of San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria and SD County Board of Supervisors Chairman Nathan Fletcher.

I certify that neither I nor my immediate family has any financial interest in this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Juan Vargas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress