



Imperial Beach
Chamber of Commerce
Founded 1951



March 28, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Tijuana River Public Health Emergency

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the undersigned business organizations and regional stakeholders from both sides of the border, and speaking for a variety of industries and small, medium, and large employers in our region, we write to urge you to mitigate the severe pollution crisis impacting the Tijuana River Valley (TJRV). As the leading advocates for the binational business community, we are deeply concerned by transboundary pollution posing a grave threat to public health, the environment, tourism, the economy, and the well-being of communities and federal agencies in the region. The pollutants flowing through the Tijuana River Valley adversely affect our beaches, diminish tourism and property values, harm wildlife, create a massive public health problem for surrounding communities, and have caused devastating economic harm to small businesses. We strongly urge the Biden-Harris Administration to take decisive action to mitigate the dire situation affecting the TJRV and its surrounding areas.

San Diego State University's School of Public Health recently put together a white paper that provides new evidence of the escalating public health crisis throughout our region¹. The report reveals the impacts of Tijuana River pollution from toxic chemicals and microbes in raw sewage, industrial waste, and urban runoff. The detrimental effects extend far beyond water quality and impacts local air quality, as evidenced by studies monitoring levels of industrial chemicals and pathogens in aerosol sea spray generated by wind and ocean waves. The findings underscore the critical nature of the situation, prompting the cities of Imperial Beach and San Diego to maintain ongoing States of Local Emergency, in addition to the County of San Diego which declared a Public Health Crisis.

While the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed comprehensive solutions are commendable, the timeline for implementation is unacceptable. Our community cannot afford to wait years for these projects to materialize while the health and safety of our residents, environment, and local

¹ SDSU White Paper on the Severe Pollution Crisis in the Tijuana River: <https://www.sdsu.edu/files/tijuana-sewage-contamination-public-health-crisis-white-paper-021424.pdf>

economy continues to deteriorate. The Tijuana River pollution crisis is inflicting dire economic ramifications, with more than 800 days of continuous beach closures diminishing tourism revenue and property values, while simultaneously causing businesses to end their leases in Imperial Beach. Additionally, transboundary pollution directly jeopardizes national security, including agencies like U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Navy, whose personnel are often exposed to hazardous contaminants.

Over 750,000 residents of San Diego County are impacted by pollution in the Tijuana River, prompting all 18 mayors in San Diego County to petition California Governor Newsom and President Biden for a declaration of emergency². The collaborative endeavors between local and federal agencies have laid a foundation for comprehensive solutions, but further assistance is imperative. Our community and economy are in dire need. We urge the Biden-Harris Administration to prioritize the health and well-being of our communities and take swift and decisive action to alleviate this pressing threat.

Respectfully,



Jerry Sanders
President & CEO
San Diego Regional Chamber of
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CEO
Chula Vista Chamber of
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South County EDC



Mark Cafferty
President & CEO
San Diego Regional EDC



Jason M-B Wells
Executive Director
San Ysidro Improvement Corp

² San Diego County Mayors Letter to White House:

<https://www.imperialbeachca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1524/06-13-2023-County-of-SD-Mayors--Letter-Request-for-Federal-State-of-Emergency-for-the-Tijuana-River-Transboundary-Pollution-Crisis>



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Cc: Hon. Brenda Mallory, Chair, White House Council of Environmental Quality