



Nora Vargas

CHAIRWOMAN

San Diego County Board of Supervisors

September 9, 2024

Hon. Liane M. Randolph, Chair
California Air Resources Board
1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Randolph:

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors of San Diego County, I am urgently requesting that assistance be provided immediately to the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) to monitor and mitigate toxic gases, strong odors, and ongoing air pollution affecting communities impacted by the transboundary water pollution crisis in the Tijuana River Valley. As a Board Member of the California Air Resources Board (CARB), I share CARB's belief that the California-Mexico border region is connected by common cultural history, familial ties, ecological resources, and economies. CARB also understands that improving air quality in the border region is critical to meeting our air quality and climate goals. The pollution crisis in San Diego County remains the environmental crisis of our lifetime, with over 100 billion gallons of sewage dumped into our waterways in the last six years that have raised health concerns and closed local beaches for over 1,000 days. The sewage and associated air pollution pose a grave public health threat that is only exacerbated by the current excessive heat wave impacting San Diego.

Over the weekend, the APCD advised people, especially those with health issues, the elderly, and families with kids, to stay indoors due to strong odors being documented from the Tijuana River Valley. Air quality impacts caused by this sewage crisis are well known by residents of impacted areas, and I have tirelessly advocated for more resources to address the impacts of this pollution. In May, I wrote to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Mandy Cohen to formally request the CDC to investigate the public health impacts of the sewage crisis. Specifically, I asked the agency to deploy resources on the ground in San Diego County to study the prevalence of contaminants in the air, water, and soil caused by the excessive pollution. We received confirmation from the CDC in August that they, along with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, will conduct a timely and thorough review of the relevant pollution data over the coming months.

The County greatly appreciates the continued support from Governor Newsom to address this conflict, but at this time, APCD needs more immediate resources to further monitor and respond to air pollution

in the Tijuana River Valley and prevent adverse health impacts. Extreme heat in San Diego County, combined with high levels of ongoing sewage pollution, is resulting in extreme odors that greatly impact the lives of those living in cities like Imperial Beach. In an effort to improve air quality, I led the first installation of air monitor sensors in the region, but more must be done and can only be done with the support of your agency.

San Diego County remains committed to working with all partners to end the transboundary pollution crisis once and for all, and we request your agency's immediate assistance to address ongoing air pollution with more support for the APCD.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nora E. Vargas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nora" being the most prominent.

NORA VARGAS,
Chairwoman, San Diego County Board of Supervisors

Cc: Hon. Yana Garcia, Secretary, CalEPA
Hon. Nancy Ward, Director, CalOES
Members of the San Diego State Legislative Delegation