



Nora Vargas

CHAIRWOMAN

San Diego County Board of Supervisors

October 7, 2024

The Honorable Alex Padilla
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Padilla:

On behalf of the County of San Diego, I am writing to express the County's support for the Border Water Quality Restoration and Protection Act (S. 5075), which would designate the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as the lead agency to oversee the resolution of the water pollution crisis in the Tijuana River Valley and the restoration of the area's ecosystem.

The ongoing water pollution crisis in the Tijuana River Valley continues to impact the lives of thousands of South San Diego County residents, a crisis that is further exacerbated by the need for continued funding to repair the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP) and rehabilitate the local ecosystem. Local governments, state government, federal government, and international agencies must work together to address ongoing issues and challenges related to the transboundary water pollution crisis.

The Board of Supervisors declared a state of emergency for the water pollution crisis over a year ago, and some beaches in South County have remained closed for over 1,000 consecutive days due to unhealthy levels of bacteria in our beach water. Nearby residents continue to be impacted by the crisis, whether from sewage-related odors impacting public health or economic impacts on those whose livelihood depends on the area's beach tourism. This crisis has gone on for decades, and designating one sole agency to lead the remediation efforts will streamline the necessary work to best coordinate the rehabilitation of the Tijuana River Valley.

The County looks forward to working with you and your legislative staff to ensure the County's priorities are adequately reflected in the bill's text. The County would also like to share its subject-matter expertise with your staff as the bill continues to move through the legislative process.

The County of San Diego supports the Border Water Quality Restoration and Protection Act and appreciates your leadership on this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if San Diego County can provide any additional information on this issue.

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 part.

NORA VARGAS
Chairwoman, San Diego County Board of Supervisors
Supervisor, First District