

**CLERK OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**  
**EXHIBIT/DOCUMENT LOG**

**MEETING DATE & AGENDA NO. 10/22/2024 #28**

**STAFF DOCUMENTS (Numerical)**

No.	Presented by:	Description:
1	Staff	25-Page PowerPoint
2		
3		
4		
5		

**PUBLIC DOCUMENTS (Alphabetical)**

No.	Presented by:	Description:
A	N/A	
B		
C		
D		
E		
F		

# **Item #28: Update on Task Force Options and Recommendations Relating to Expanding Mobilization Against the Tijuana River Sewage Crisis**

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Ankita S. Kadakia, MD, Interim Public Health Officer, Public Health Services, Health and Human Services Agency

Heather Buonomo, REHS, Division Director of Environmental Health, Land Use and Environment Group

October 22, 2024



# Collective Response to Crisis



- Coordinate, Collaborate, and Communicate
- Engage the Community
- Stand County Incident Command Structure
- Legislative Advocacy



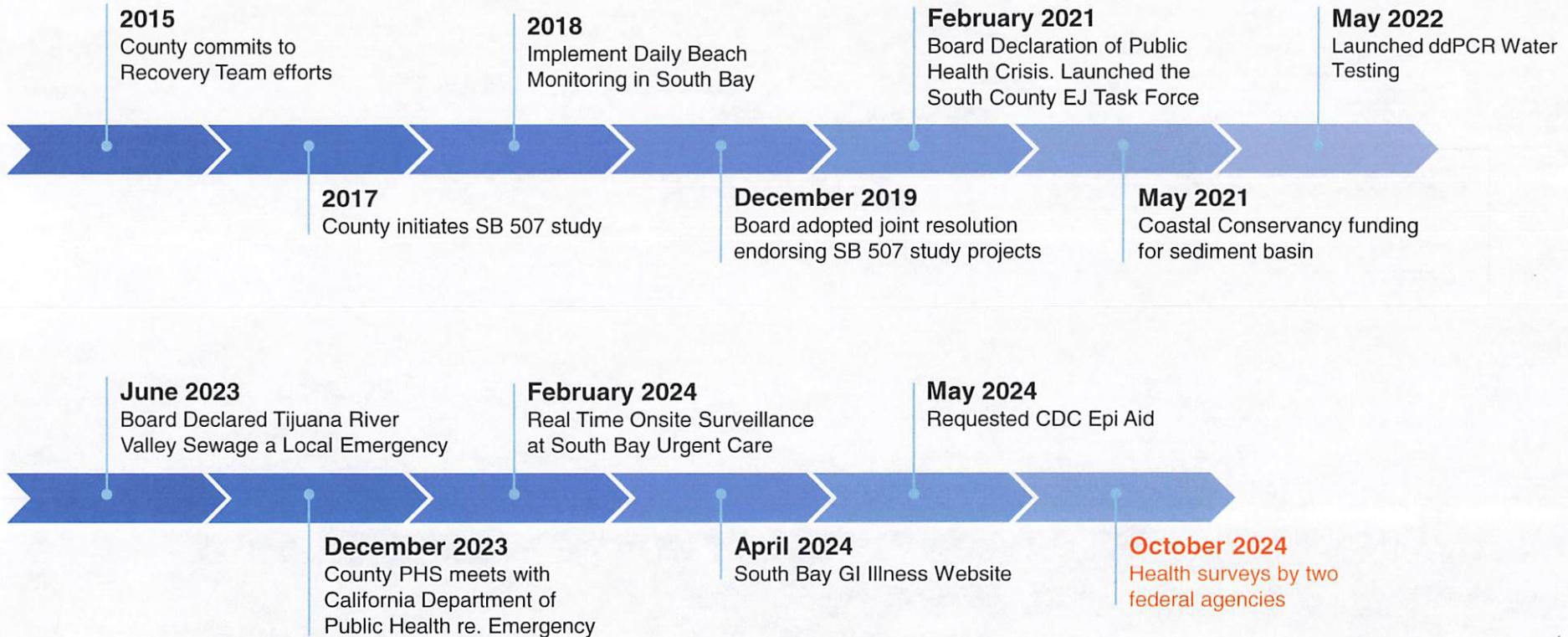


**Sewage is Harmful To Health**

**South Bay residents are experiencing health  
symptoms from the pollution**



# Key Efforts



# All Agency Effort



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- **County Departments**

- Department of Environmental Health and Quality
- Office of Economic and Governmental Affairs
- Parks and Recreation
- Public Health Services
- Office of Emergency Services

- **Local Government**

- Imperial Beach Mayor and Staff
- City of San Diego
- Board Offices
- Air Pollution Control District (MOU)

- **Federal and State Government**

- California Department of Public Health
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- Coastal Commission
- Legislative Officials
- Military Partners

- **Academic Institutions**

- **South Bay Healthcare & Clinic  
Community**
- **South Bay School Districts**

# Roles and Responsibilities



San Diego County  
Air Pollution  
Control District

- Has jurisdiction over air quality and monitoring
- Develops and implements strategies to measure air pollution and reduce health impact to comply with state and federal Clean Air Acts



- Public health authority
- Reviews air pollution measures, analyzes health surveillance data, and develops public health actions based on the data

# Public Health Strategies



Prevention



Surveillance

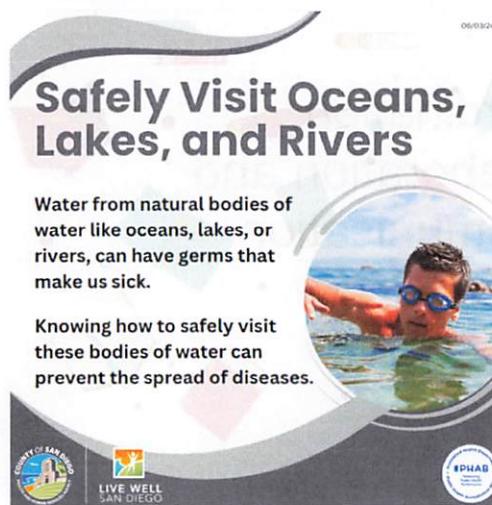


Investigation and  
Response



Coordination,  
Collaboration and  
Communication

# Prevention



## Beach and Bay Program



## Community Education



## Health Alert (9/13/24)



## Academic Detailing

# Surveillance



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- Communicable disease data monitoring
- Syndromic surveillance
- Onsite surveillance
- South Bay clinics
- School surveillance



# Investigation and Response



## Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER)

- Interview households to assess short-term and ongoing impacts on their lives
- Information distributed to almost 7,000 households in early October
- Conducted household interviews October 17-19
- Results are pending CDC analysis and clearance



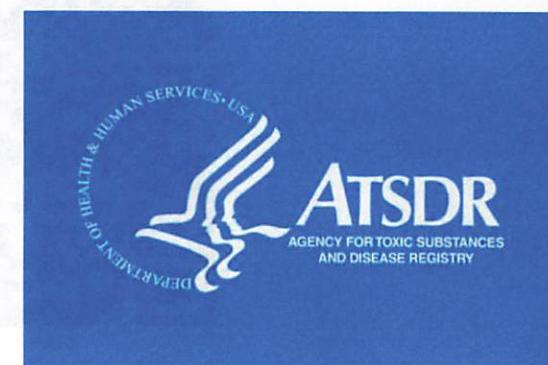
# Investigation and Response



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## Assessment of Chemical Exposures (ACE) Survey

- CDC/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
- Interview people who work in high exposure areas or come in frequent contact with sewage pollution
- Exposure histories, related symptoms, health impacts, health services used, and medical history will be elicited



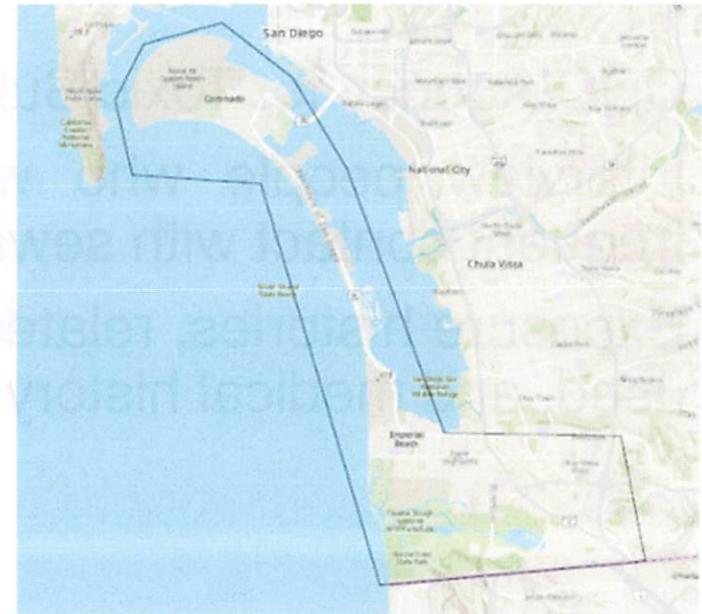


# Investigation and Response

## Assessment of Chemical Exposures Survey

- Started October 21st, goes through November 22nd
- Online in English and Spanish

QR Code



# Investigation and Response



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- Implemented regular, frequent meetings with Air Pollution and Control (APCD)
- Brought in CDPH Medical Toxicologist and hired external medical toxicologist
- Initiated mutual aid requests on APCD's behalf
- Provided APCD with public health recommendations to develop a community hydrogen sulfide guidance system
- Provided Hazardous Incident Response Team expertise for urgent concerns
- Distribution of Air Purifiers in South Bay Community
- Focused mitigation of hot spot area

# Coordination, Collaboration, and Communication



## South Region Health Concerns

Page originally published 02/16/2024. Last updated 10/09/2024.

The County of San Diego empathizes with South Region residents and others who are experiencing episodes of worsening pollution in the Tijuana River watershed and beaches due to a variety of factors including weather, population growth, and infrastructure issues. This website provides information and resources on the health concerns and impacts from sewage and pollution in the Tijuana River Valley and surrounding communities.



What the County is Doing



Public Health Data



CDC Health Survey



About Environmental Odors



About Contaminated Water



Information for Schools



Check Beach Water Quality



Check Air Quality  
San Diego County Air Pollution Control District

Top of Page

For more information, send an e-mail to the Epidemiology Unit.

## Environmental Odors & Your Health

Hydrogen Sulfide can smell like rotten eggs. This smell is released when raw sewage is breaking down.



Website:  
[sandiegocounty.gov/southregionhealth](http://sandiegocounty.gov/southregionhealth)



Questions?  
[phs.southregionhealth.hhsa@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:phs.southregionhealth.hhsa@sdcounty.ca.gov)

A screenshot of a Twitter post from the account sandiegocountyhhsa. The post features a graphic about hydrogen sulfide odors and their relation to raw sewage. It includes a reply from tammyjenkins with a link to a state of emergency notice. The post has 12 likes and was made 2 days ago.

## Volunteers Fan Out in Sewage Impacted South County Neighborhoods



# Educational Information

## Resources for Schools



[Return to South Region Health Concerns Homepage](#)

Page originally published 09/13/2024. Last updated 09/30/2024.

- [Recommendations for Schools Guidance | Flyer](#)
- [Air Quality in Schools](#): Resources on modifying school activities to protect the health of children from air pollution.
  - [Ventilation Information | Flyer](#)
  - [Guidelines for Schools and Wildfire Smoke](#) (California Department of Education)
  - [Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools](#) (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
- [Ways to Prevent Diseases](#): Diseases can spread in school settings in many ways. Learn more about steps to prevent diseases in schools, including:
  - [Epidemiology School Response Team](#)
  - [Preventing the Spread of Infection in K-12 Schools](#) [Presentation](#) | [Flyers](#) | [Social Media](#)
- [Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units \(PEHSU\)](#): A national network of experts in child health issues caused by environmental exposures.

## Report Air Quality Concerns

[San Diego County Air Pollution Control District](#): Actively investigating numerous odor complaints from communities surrounding the Tijuana River Valley.

- Report odor complaints to the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District
  - Mobile app (available on [Google Play](#) and the [App Store](#)),
  - Phone at (858) 586-2650,
  - Email to [apcdcomp@sdapcd.org](mailto:apcdcomp@sdapcd.org), or
  - Visit [online](#).



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**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS IMPACTED BY ENVIRONMENTAL ODORS IN THE COMMUNITY**

County of San Diego

### OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND

For more than half a century, cross border flows containing untreated sewage, sediment, Have been entering the Tijuana River Valley. This impacts local recreation, damages natural habitat, threatens public health, and causes beach water contact closures.

- There have been more concerns in recent years about water quality in the Tijuana Valley, leading to more frequent infrastructure failures and increased transboundary flow.
- Trans and raw sewage flowing from the Tijuana River Valley into San Diego waterways have led to more than two years of record-high rainfall and infrastructure failure on both sides of the border.

The County of San Diego Public Health Services is issuing the following guidance for schools that may be impacted by environmental odors detected in the vicinity of Tijuana River Valley and surrounding communities.

- Hydrogen sulfide is measured, but not toxic, concentrations (levels) of hydrogen sulfide, smells like "rotten egg", have been detected in the air in the same areas.
- Hydrogen sulfide occurs naturally in some environments and is also released during decompositional breakdown, such as from sewage treatment plants and in sewage sludge.
- The County of San Diego continues to work with the California Department of Public and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to evaluate hydrogen sulfide concentrations in the Tijuana River Valley area. The San Diego Air Quality Control District investigates air quality concerns including odors, truck idling, smoke, dust, improper air

This guidance is for informational purposes only. This guidance is not a regulation or standard. It is not a recommendation or a requirement. It is not a quality control or quality assurance procedure.

### HEALTH IMPACT

The health impact of hydrogen sulfide on a person, intensity of the impact, and duration of the impact, depends on the concentration of hydrogen sulfide in the air.

Hydrogen sulfide is detected and cause health effects at low concentrations. Low concentrations of hydrogen sulfide have been detected, though

## OLEOS AMBIENTALES Y ORIENTACIÓN ESCOLAR

### IMPACTOS EN LA SALUD

El sulfuro de hidrógeno es un gas incoloro. A niveles bajas, tiene una fuente similar a las huevos podridos. El impacto sobre la salud de los olores ambientales depende de la sensibilidad de la persona, la intensidad de la actividad y la duración de la exposición. Las personas pueden experimentar náuseas, dolores de cabeza, irritación de ojos y problemas respiratorios.

### PASOS A SEGUIR

Mientras prosiguen los esfuerzos para hacer frente a los olores ambientales, hay medidas que los centros escolares pueden adoptar para proteger la salud de los alumnos y del personal.

#### Reducir la exposición

- Límite las actividades al aire libre de los alumnos cuando los olores sean especialmente intensos.
- Proporciona a los alumnos y al personal acceso gratuito a mascarillas desechables.
- Las mascarillas deben cambiarse al menos dos veces al día durante el horario escolar.
- Mantenga las ventanas y puertas cerradas cuando los olores del exterior se hayan intensificado a niveles dañinos.

#### Mejorar la calidad del aire

- Use sistemas de calefacción, ventilación y aire acondicionado (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, or HVAC) con filtro HEPA con carbón activado. Use filtros portátiles HEPA verificados con carbón activado en edificios sin sistemas de HVAC.
- Ventile las aulas cuando no haya olores.

#### Estar atento a los síntomas

- Los alumnos con alergia deben tener sus medicamentos disponibles en las oficinas escolares.
- aconseja a los padres que tengan hijos con alergias respiratorias o cardíacas que hablen con su médico de cabecera.
- Algunos servicios médicos para manejar persona en la escuela con síntomas persistentes o que empeoran.

### INFORMAR LOS MALOS OLORES

El personal escolar puede informar quejas de olores al Distrito de Control de Contaminación del Aire del condado de San Diego (San Diego County Air Pollution Control District, SDAPCD) de las siguientes maneras:

- teléfono: (858) 586-2650
- correo electrónico: [apcdcomp@sdapcd.org](mailto:apcdcomp@sdapcd.org)
- [www.apcd.org/onlineform](http://www.apcd.org/onlineform)

**MÁS INFORMACIÓN**  
Escanee este código QR o visite [sandiegocounty.gov/southregionhealth/](http://sandiegocounty.gov/southregionhealth/)

## ENVIRONMENTAL ODORS & SCHOOL GUIDANCE



### HEALTH IMPACTS

Hydrogen sulfide is a colorless gas. At low levels, it has a strong smell similar to rotten eggs. The health impact of environmental odors depend on the sensitivity of the person, intensity of the activity, and length of exposure. People may experience nausea, headaches, throat irritation, and breathing problems.

### STEPS TO TAKE

While the effort to address environmental odors continues, there are steps schools can take to protect the health of students and staff.

#### Reduce Exposure

- Límite las actividades al aire libre de los alumnos cuando los olores sean especialmente intensos.
- Proporciona a los alumnos y al personal acceso gratuito a mascarillas desechables.
- Las mascarillas deben cambiarse al menos dos veces al día durante el horario escolar.
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#### Impactos en las aulas

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El impacto sobre la salud de los olores ambientales depende de la sensibilidad de la persona, la intensidad de la actividad y la duración de la exposición. Las personas pueden experimentar náuseas, dolores de cabeza, irritación de ojos y problemas respiratorios.

#### Pasos a seguir

Mientras prosiguen los esfuerzos para hacer frente a los olores ambientales, hay medidas que los centros escolares pueden adoptar para proteger la salud de los alumnos y del personal.

#### Reducir la exposición

- Límite las actividades al aire libre de los alumnos cuando los olores sean especialmente intensos.
- Proporciona a los alumnos y al personal acceso gratuito a mascarillas desechables.
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#### Estar atento a los síntomas

- Los alumnos con alergia deben tener sus medicamentos disponibles en las oficinas escolares.
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- [www.apcd.org/onlineform](http://www.apcd.org/onlineform)

# Review of Prior Board Letter Direction



1. Support Task Force Community Health Survey
2. Develop of a Public Health Dashboard
3. Develop Decontamination Protocols
4. Develop List of Additional Data Sources
5. Compare Data from California Breathing Program
6. Request Enhanced Water Quality Testing and Communication
7. Options for Additional Funding to Address Root Cause (Infrastructure)

# Review of Prior Board Letter Direction



## 1. Support the Task Force in launching a Community Health Survey, dissemination, and data analysis

- Tijuana River Pollution Task Force is collaboration between local government, community members, medical providers, and academic institutions
- Attended two Task Force meetings, July 23 and September 5, 2024
- Provided written input on *Healthy Water Healthy Community Survey*

**SDSU**

College of Health and Human Services  
School of Public Health



**UC San Diego**  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

# Review of Prior Board Letter Direction



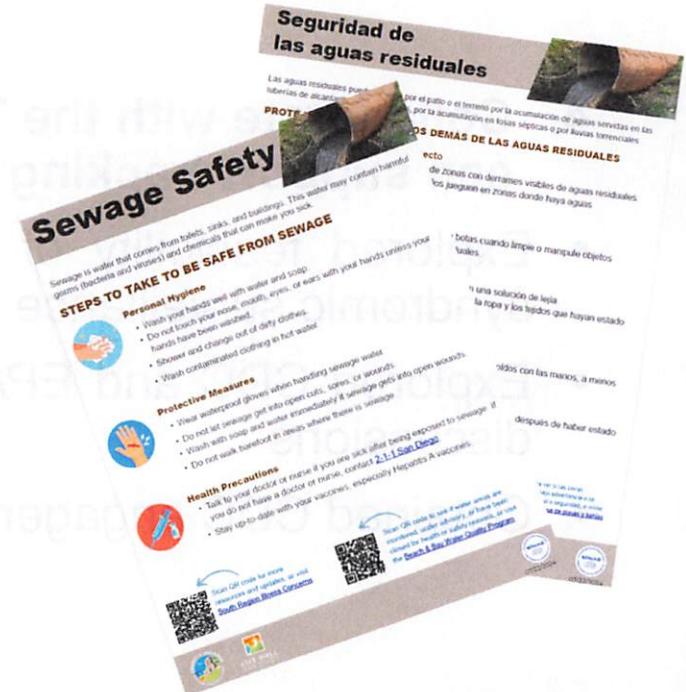
## 2. Develop a Tijuana River Public Health Dashboard

- Discussed with SDSU to host the landing page
- *South Region Health Concerns*, the County's "go-to" source for data and other information
- UCSD Forecasting and Modeling Website in process
  - Air, Transboundary Flows, Community Complaints, Water Quality



# Review of Prior Board Letter Direction

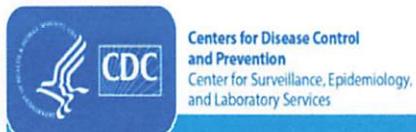
3. Develop local decontamination protocols for sewage contaminated floodwaters in parks, roadways, and other public spaces
  - Developed best practices guidance for decontamination protocols
  - Published FAQs for Tijuana River Valley Sewage Situation Public Health Services South Region Illness Concerns Webpage
  - Sewage Exposure and Sewage Safety flyers developed are available online and delivered with 414 Air Purifiers



# Review of Prior Board Letter Direction



4. Collaborate with the Task Force to develop a list of data sources that can support tracking sewage-associated, non-reportable diseases
  - Explored feasibility of adding urgent care and outpatient clinic data to syndromic surveillance
  - Explored CDC and EPA data and support international sewage treatment discussions
  - Obtained CDC engagement for health surveys in the South Bay



Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention  
Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology,  
and Laboratory Services

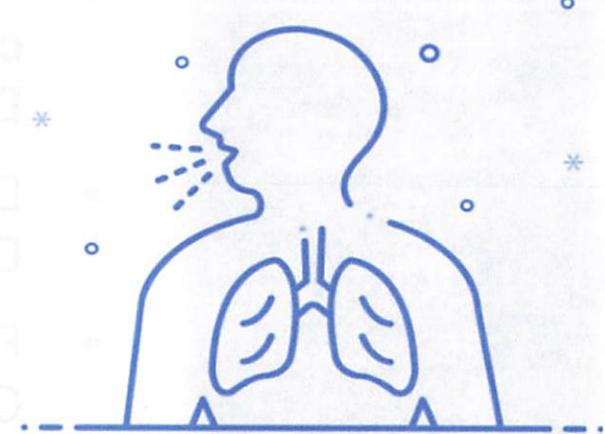


# Review of Prior Board Letter Direction



## 5. Request zip-code level asthma and respiratory illness data from California Breathing Program

- Obtained zip-code level data through 2022
- Data aligns with asthma syndromic surveillance data already monitored by the County
- Asthma syndromic surveillance data added to *South Region Health Concerns* website



# Review of Prior Board Letter Direction



6. **Request enhanced water quality testing and enhanced communication from other agencies, including the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board**
  - Daily beach water quality monitoring managed by the Department of Environmental Health and Quality
  - Requested fish testing from the State's Water Quality Control Board – San Diego Region
  - Water and air sampling data reviewed with Centers for Disease Control Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

# Review of Prior Board Letter Direction



- 7. Identify options for additional funding to assess the economic and health impacts of the Tijuana River Sewage Crisis and secure the necessary infrastructure repairs to permanently fix the problem**
- Engagement with Tijuana River Pollution Task Force and community partners to advocate for:
  - Funding
  - Addressing economic and health impacts
  - Securing necessary sewage treatment infrastructure

No One Should be Living in an Environment Next to Raw Sewage Flows, Where Odors and the Closing of Beaches are the Norm.

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Continued Funding is Needed to Fix the Root Cause, the Broken Sewage Systems While Addressing Ongoing Community Concerns.



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