

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2026**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 15

SUBJECT: RECEIVE UPDATE FROM THE AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE ON TIJUANA RIVER SEWAGE CRISIS INCLUDING SATURN BOULEVARD INFRASTRUCTURE AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL HEALTH STUDY (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

The Tijuana River Valley (TJRV) and surrounding South Bay communities continue to experience severe impacts from untreated sewage, urban runoff, and toxic airborne emissions, resulting in recurring contamination of coastal waters and nearby neighborhoods. These conditions continue to pose significant risks to public health, environmental resources, and economic activity across affected cities and unincorporated communities.

In response, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board), has proclaimed a local emergency and in coordination with regional, State, and federal partners, has advanced a series of actions. Since the Board's most recent update, efforts have focused on advancing studies and implementation planning intended to better quantify impacts and inform near- and long-term response strategies.

On September 30, 2025 (3), staff returned to the Board with updates on multiple actions, including air quality interventions, the County Pollution Crisis Chief position, planning for the epidemiological health study, and the Saturn Boulevard feasibility study. At that time, staff committed to continuing work through the Ad Hoc Subcommittee to refine implementation plans for priority initiatives, ensuring alignment with Board direction and community needs.

Building on prior Board actions including the adoption of a five-point response framework, under the leadership of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on the Tijuana River Sewage Crisis, staff have made progress on a number of key initiatives as directed by the Board. These include identifying a path forward for an epidemiological public health impact study, initiation of an economic impact study to assess losses associated with the sewage crisis, and advancement of a feasibility study for infrastructure improvements at Saturn Boulevard to mitigate harmful emissions.

Since November 2025, the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on the Tijuana River Sewage Crisis has convened on a monthly basis to receive updates, discuss emerging issues, and provide guidance on the coordination and implementation of priority actions related to this ongoing environmental and public health crisis. Today's item, presented by the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on the Tijuana River Sewage Crisis, provides an update on the epidemiological public health impact study and the feasibility study for infrastructure improvements at Saturn Boulevard, directs the Chief Administrative Officer to refer the items to the Unlocked Reserves Framework, and authorizes a competitive procurement for a long-term health study.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHAIR TERRA LAWSON-REMER AND CHAIR PRO TEM PALOMA AGUIRRE

1. Receive this update on ongoing efforts to strengthen the County's response to the Tijuana River sewage crisis including long-term epidemiological study, retrospective health study, and the infrastructure project at the Saturn Boulevard hotspot.

2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to include the following items within the Unlocked Reserves Framework:
 - a. \$2.0 million for the long-term health study, contingent on the remaining funds in the amount of \$4.0 million being contributed from other funders;
 - b. \$250,000 for a retrospective health study; and
 - c. \$2.5 million for the capital costs to construct a temporary pipe extension at Saturn Boulevard. Should alternative funding be identified, the \$2.5 million will support immediate needs for the Tijuana River Valley.
3. In accordance with Section 401, Article XXIII of the County Administrative Code authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to issue a Competitive Solicitation for a long-term health study, and upon successful negotiations and determination of a fair and reasonable price, award contracts for an initial term of two years, with three option years and up to an additional six months if needed, and to amend the contracts as needed to reflect changes to services and funding.
4. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer, or designee, to begin working with the City of San Diego and the United States Navy on an agreement to move forward in partnership for the environmental, permitting, design, and construction work and access, implementation, and maintenance necessary for the temporary infrastructure pipe extension project at Saturn Boulevard.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Residents of South Bay communities, including Imperial Beach, Chula Vista, National City, Bonita, and East Otay Mesa, have been disproportionately affected by the Tijuana River sewage crisis. The November 2024 Assessment of Chemical Exposures by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and County of San Diego found that nearly two-thirds of surveyed households reported physical health symptoms and a decline in quality of life linked to contamination from the Tijuana River Valley. These impacts are concentrated in neighborhoods with higher proportions of low-income and vulnerable populations, highlighting disparities in environmental health outcomes within the region.

The initiatives presented in today's item support the County of San Diego's (County) efforts to better understand the health impacts of this crisis and address inequities through focused interventions within communities facing the greatest health risks. Through focused deployment of resources, implementation of environmental and health protections, and ongoing study to guide responsive strategies, the County is working to reduce exposure disparities, improve public health outcomes, and ensure safer, healthier environments for all residents.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed actions advance the County of San Diego's commitment to sustainable development by protecting public health, conserving water resources, and supporting responsible land management. These measures correspond with Sustainability Goal #4, which emphasizes health and well-being for all residents; Sustainability Goal #5, which focuses on the protection and stewardship of water resources; and Sustainability Goal #6, which promotes land management practices that maintain ecosystem integrity, preserve habitats and biodiversity, and support soil health while enhancing opportunities for outdoor access countywide.

Through collaboration with local, State, and federal partners, the County's efforts focus on addressing both the ongoing effects of the Tijuana River Valley sewage crisis as well as its underlying causes. By prioritizing environmental restoration, safeguarding natural resources, and mitigating public health risks, these actions ensure that residents, visitors, and future generations can continue to benefit from the region's diverse landscapes and ecological resources.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are not included in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan. If approved, this request will be included in the Unlocked Reserves Framework which will result in a total one-time cost of \$4.75 million in Fiscal Year 2025-26 including \$2.0 million for the long-term health study, \$250,000 for the retrospective health study, and \$2.5 million for a temporary pipe extension at Saturn Boulevard. Funds for the long-term health study are contingent on \$4.0 million of the study's total cost of \$6.0 million being contributed by other funders. Should alternative funding sources be identified for the pipe extension project, all or a portion of \$2.5 million will support immediate needs for the Tijuana River Valley. The funding source is prior year Unrestricted General Fund Balance made available as unlocked reserves. There will be no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

The Tijuana River sewage crisis continues to affect local economic activity, particularly small businesses and tourism-dependent operations in coastal and border-adjacent communities. Conditions in these areas have contributed to operational challenges and instability for local commerce.

By directing resources and implementing targeted interventions, the County of San Diego is working to stabilize commercial activity, reduce business disruptions, and support the long-term economic resilience of affected communities.

ACTION 15.1:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Aguirre, seconded by Supervisor Lawson-Remer, the Board of Supervisors took the following actions:

1. Directed the Chief Administrative Officer to include the following items within the Unlocked Reserves Framework [Board Letter Recommendation No. 2]:
 - c. \$2.5 million for the capital costs to construct a temporary pipe extension at Saturn Boulevard. Should alternative funding be identified, the \$2.5 million will support immediate needs for the Tijuana River Valley.
2. Directed the Chief Administrative Officer, or designee, to begin working with the City of San Diego and the United States Navy on an agreement to move forward in partnership for the environmental, permitting, design, and construction work and access, implementation, and maintenance necessary for the temporary infrastructure pipe extension project at Saturn Boulevard. [Board Letter Recommendation No. 4]

AYES: Aguirre, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe, Desmond

ABSENT: Anderson

ACTION 15.2:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Aguirre, seconded by Supervisor Lawson-Remer, the Board of Supervisors took the following actions:

1. Received this update on ongoing efforts to strengthen the County’s response to the Tijuana River sewage crisis including long-term epidemiological study, retrospective health study, and the infrastructure project at the Saturn Boulevard hotspot. [Board Letter Recommendation No. 1]
2. Directed the Chief Administrative Officer to include the following items within the Unlocked Reserves Framework [Board Letter Recommendation No. 2]:
 - a. \$2.0 million for the long-term health study, contingent on the remaining funds in the amount of \$4.0 million being contributed from other funders;
 - b. \$250,000 for a retrospective health study
3. In accordance with Section 401, Article XXIII of the County Administrative Code authorized the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to issue a Competitive Solicitation for a long-term health study, and upon successful negotiations and determination of a fair and reasonable price, award contracts for an initial term of two years, with three option years and up to an additional six months if needed, and to amend the contracts as needed to reflect changes to services and funding. [Board Letter Recommendation No. 3]

AYES: Aguirre, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe

NOES: Desmond

ABSENT: Anderson

State of California)
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed
by Andrew Potter