

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 28, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We strongly urge you to declare a Federal State of Emergency for the Tijuana River Valley. The influx of sewage, trash, and industrial waste from the Tijuana River – flowing across the U.S.-Mexico border and into San Diego County – have contributed to some of the most polluted beach areas in the country. The surge in toxic pollution has severely impacted San Diego County's economy and environment and is a serious health hazard for the Navy sailors who train in our waters.

The Tijuana River has remained one of the most pressing environmental issues in our region. Despite a decades-long discussion, more progress has yet to be made to permanently address these ongoing problems. Our communities have faced the brunt of the Tijuana River's ecological effects. In 2017, the Environmental Protection Agency attributed over 34,000 illnesses to water quality pollution. Researchers continue to monitor its heightening impact on local air quality, coastal water pollution, and levels of chemicals and pathogens.

Due to these health concerns, the Cities of San Diego and Imperial Beach have maintained an ongoing State of Local Emergency. These local emergencies accompany the County of San Diego's Public Health Crisis declaration. Unfortunately, the resources of our state and local governments have not sufficiently protected impacted communities. And while we are proud to have secured \$300 million for the International Boundary and Water Commission via the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement and the FY23 Appropriations bill, we know that more is required for a long-term solution to this crisis. We respectfully request a Federal Emergency Declaration to create a multi-agency response to address this matter and open avenues for additional federal funding. This isn't simply a request, but a necessity.

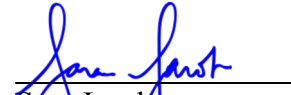
The ongoing disaster of the Tijuana River warrants the same federal resources and attention as any other natural and environmental disaster. Left unaddressed, a pollution crisis of this scale will continue to wreak havoc on our region. We cannot afford to wait months, or even years, as the environmental and economic integrity of the Tijuana River Valley fades away. Enclosed is a letter the Mayor of Imperial Beach sent to the White House Council of Environmental Quality echoing the need for a Federal Emergency declaration.

As the delegation representing the San Diego region, we strongly urge you to continue uplifting your commitments to support environmental justice communities and take action to address the ongoing crisis in the Tijuana River.

Sincerely,



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress



Darrell Issa
Member of Congress