

Tijuana River Valley Water and Odor Issues

Government Roles and Partnerships

This fact sheet outlines multi-agency efforts to address air and water quality issues in the Tijuana River Valley that are impacting San Diego area communities. It is being provided to help inform the public, press and elected officials and help direct inquiries to the appropriate agency.







Flowing from Mexico into the United States, the Tijuana River Valley is a small portion of the Tijuana River's 1,700 square mile watershed. The valley runs through parts of Southern San Diego County and empties into the ocean at Imperial Beach.

It has faced significant environmental challenges from pollution, sedimentation, cross-border waste, and population growth for many decades. These challenges have reduced water and air quality, caused strong odors and created health concerns for those living and visiting adjacent areas, particularly among vulnerable populations.



Photo: Tijuana River Estuary - Map courtesy of EPA Region 9 - Tech Center

Ongoing Efforts

-  **Partnerships with Multiple Agencies:** Support the region in implementing responsive and coordinated public health and environmental strategies.
-  **Enhanced Monitoring Networks:** Provide expertise to expand public health, air and water quality monitoring and public awareness.
-  **Funding and Resources:** Seek additional funding to support ongoing and new projects to improve water quality.
-  **Sustainable Infrastructure:** Collaborate on projects to upgrade wastewater treatment facilities, on both sides of the border.
-  **Community Engagement:** Maintain two-way communication with community members, elected officials and the press to better understand community needs and convey good information, keeping the public informed and aware of efforts.
-  **Research:** Continue investigating the health impacts of water and air pollution.

For More Information

Air Quality - SD Air Pollution Control District - Email: airinfo@sdapcd.org

Beach & Bay Water Quality - SD County Environmental Health and Quality - Email: beachandbay@sdcounty.ca.gov

Public Health - SD County Public Health Services - Email: [pfs.southregionhealth.hhsa@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:phs.southregionhealth.hhsa@sdcounty.ca.gov)

Wastewater Infrastructure Planning - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Email: Tijuanawater@epa.gov

Wastewater Infrastructure Operations - U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission - Email: PAO@ibwc.gov

Water Quality - SD Regional Water Quality Control Board - Email: rb9_questions@waterboards.ca.gov

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Multi-Agency Coordination

Community Concerns

Air Quality:

Cross-border flows generate odors and impact air quality.

Public Health:

Health impacts related to water and air quality.

Infrastructure:

Impacts related to untreated sewage flows.

Water Quality:

Cross-border flows have impacted local resources and way of life.

Lead Agency Roles

San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD):

Monitors air quality in San Diego County, including near the Tijuana River Valley and ensures air quality meets federal and state standards. Its primary role is to enforce federal, state, and local air quality laws and regulations to reduce air pollution. SDAPCD also responds to air quality complaints and issues air quality advisories.

County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency:

Monitors and analyzes data, investigates health concerns, provides education and outreach for prevention of disease, and provides public health recommendations based on air and water quality monitoring.

U.S. Section International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC):

Runs the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant and coordinates with the Mexican Section IBWC to eliminate transboundary flows. Helps implement Minute 328 projects.

San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (SDRWQCB):

Regulates water quality and protects the beneficial uses of the Tijuana River, Estuary, and coastal waters through permits and requires monitoring of water quality. Leads the Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team and coordinates state, local, and federal efforts to mitigate impacts of cross-border pollution.

Support Agency Roles

California Air Resources Board (CARB):

Provides technical assistance and guidance on air monitoring and air filtration for hydrogen sulfide and other harmful emissions.

US EPA – Air Division:

Provides technical guidance on regional and community-scale air quality monitoring.

US EPA Superfund Emergency Management Division:

Available to respond as necessary to provide monitoring data and serve as a force-multiplier for emergency response efforts.

California Department of Public Health & US Center for Disease Control:

Provides health impact research, technical advice, and resources for public health initiatives related to waterborne diseases and air quality concerns, particularly in vulnerable communities.

US EPA – Water Division:

Provides funding and oversight for wastewater infrastructure projects to further reduce cross-border flows into the U.S. Shares data and research findings to inform decision-making and policy development.

San Diego County Department of Environmental Health and Quality (DEHQ):

Monitors recreational beach and bay water quality daily and issues water contact closures and advisories to inform, educate, and protect the public.