

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 1, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker of the House
Speaker's Office
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Committee
H-307
United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
H-307
United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker McCarthy, Leader Jeffries, Chairman Granger, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We write to urgently request \$310 million for the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant (SBIWTP) in the upcoming emergency supplemental. Hurricane Hilary has dramatically increased the flow of untreated wastewater from the Tijuana River Valley through SBIWTP and onto San Diego's coastline and into coastal waters. In fact, just this week the [treatment plant completely failed](#) causing raw sewage to rush onto streets and to seep into canyons and neighborhoods in San Diego County. This sewage pollutes our seas, causes illness, damages the local and state economy, and complicates our national and homeland security and the situation today is worse than it ever has been.

In 2021, the San Diego Congressional delegation secured \$300 million in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement which was supposed to fund an expansion of the SBIWTP from 25 million gallons per day (mgd) to 50 mgd. However, [in June of this year we learned](#) that the SBIWTP is in such dire shape that significantly more funding is needed to rehabilitate the plant before the U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) can expand it. These new costs jeopardize the United States' ability to fulfill its international obligations under the treaty known as [Minute 328](#).

Heavy rains, like the ones caused by Hurricane Hilary, cause massive transboundary wastewater to flow into Southern California beaches. The beaches of [Imperial Beach](#) and [Coronado](#) offer the nearest and often most affordable access for many of San Diego's more disadvantaged communities. However, these beaches – their beaches -- have been closed extensively for two summers in a row due to dangerous contamination. This is a serious public health threat. Excess flows, filled with toxins, dry up on the marshlands and on the sand. The winds pick up this bacteria-filled sediment and carry into these communities, [exposing residents to public health hazards](#). Studies conducted by the Scripps Institute of Oceanography show that sprays from contaminated waves also [produce aerosol pollutants](#).

Additionally, The US Naval Special Warfare Command, which trains in Coronado, is often forced to [move ocean training](#) events to different locations in Southern California to ensure our warfighters are not sickened due to training in polluted waters. Similarly, federal Homeland Security agents assigned to the region have [identified](#) extensive hazards they confront when patrolling in Tijuana River Valley and the detrimental effect these [conditions](#) have on their health. An inability to train for military operations or patrol our nation's border represents an unacceptable risk to our national security.

Years of underinvestment have left SBIWTP in dire need of emergency repairs and expansion to treat increased flows resulting from extreme weather events, such as Hurricane Hilary, and population growth in the region. Securing emergency funding is crucial to rehabilitate and expand the plant in order to protect public health and the environment, and to stop the economic damage cross-border sewage flows have had on our communities for far too long.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress