

Bordering Sewage

Surgeries and sewage – what do they have in common?

Living as an American means being able to travel almost anywhere in the world with few restrictions. San Diego, California residents are no strangers to this. They can travel across the border to their neighboring city Tijuana, Mexico to enjoy commodities at a fraction of the price, including surgeries. But besides sharing its surgeons with Americans, Tijuana also shares a sewage pollution problem.

Sewage pollution coming from Tijuana's River to San Diego has been an ongoing issue for over 20 years, yet nothing has been done. At what point will residents begin to care for their health and environment? You've heard of the committees that talked about the problem. The result: two lines of text on Congress' meeting agenda archived into their files.

You've also likely heard about the EPA's (Environmental Protection Agency) most recent plan to prevent pollution from coming in, but will this be yet another failed plan when it comes time to negotiate with Mexico? It is time for San Diego residents to get involved and demand concrete plans.

Tijuana grew in large part when the U.S. began recruiting from Mexico's labor force. People flooded the city to be closer to jobs, but the city was not prepared for the fast growth. San Diego at some point considered Tijuana part of its city and their economies were connected. Yet despite

these economic gains, San Diego did not invest into managing the waste from Tijuana that would flow into the river that leads to San Diego and the Pacific Ocean.

Unless we invest into cleaning and improving the areas around the Tijuana River, San Diego residents will continue to be exposed to waste and other polluting chemicals. Developing countries have been known to not manage waste well. Lack of resources combined with an unexpected growth made it harder for Tijuana to cope with its increased waste.

Now, you might be thinking this issue doesn't matter if you have a water filter at home. There's more to it. When beaches must close most of the year due to pollution, you start to wonder if maybe the pollution is traveling to more places. Pollution affects the wildlife in the water and the food we eat.

Pollution in water can travel through the air and can get to you even if aren't right next to the water. To top things off, sewage pollution is the worst kind you could ask for. Think of all the diseases that people have getting washed away into the coastal San Diego. Chemicals and diseases join forces to spread through the air.

Some might say this is simply an issue Tijuana must deal with, but this is beyond borders. Residents of San Diego must do their part in asking their legislators to take this sewage and pollution problem seriously. Residents are being exposed to chemicals, sewage waste, and have had their quality of life impacted for far too long.

Considering all that Tijuana has provided, is it not right to take a larger responsibility for the waste problem we have contributed to? I propose an agreement where the U.S. offers to finance most of the costs to improve sewage treatment plans and areas surrounding the Tijuana River. San Diego residents would not have to worry about these costs.

One idea is a small border crossing tax to raise funds to pay for ongoing costs of maintenance since the San Diego-Tijuana border is so widely used. Tijuana has a similar tax for people who use their airport to travel. People who are crossing the border would help contribute to the border's upkeep and San Diego residents would experience better health and safer beaches.

San Diego residents will continue experiencing the effects of pollution if the EPA's plans fall through once again. What residents must do now is get involved in the politics affecting their health. Contact your legislators to demand that this problem is finally taken care of. Offer them ideas. I challenge you to ask that negotiations are made public so you can see what your health is truly worth to the government.

Citations:

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