

San Diego State University report calls Tijuana River contamination 'a public health crisis'

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[Mouth of Tijuana River](#). Credit: Rickbramhall, Wikimedia Commons. CC-BY-SA-4.0

A new report from researchers at San Diego State University, citing

"untreated sewage, industrial waste, and urban run-off due to inadequate infrastructure and urbanization," calls the Tijuana River "a public health crisis" that imperils the good health of a wide range of people who live, recreate and work near the polluted waterway, particularly when wet weather causes floods to spread.

In a [white paper](#) that is not itself peer-reviewed research, authors synthesize the multiple studies that have documented pollution over the years, pausing on a recent paper documenting that the threat also extends to ocean-going mammals. Bottle nose dolphins stranded in San Diego, the white paper notes, died from infection by *Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae*, a bacteria "generally transmitted through contact with feces or urine in [contaminated water](#), food or soil."

In addition to drug-resistant pathogens in river water, a graduate student study analysis last year of river water at the border detected the presence of 392 organic chemical contaminants, 175 which "appeared in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agencies Toxic Substance Control Act."

Contaminated air from the region, researchers found, could potentially "increase the health risks of local community members without any direct water contact," a statement that references the potential aerosolization of polluted water in sea spray, a possibility documented by UC San Diego biochemist Kim Prather in 2023.

Researchers call for better monitoring of environmental contaminants and a deeper investigation of "nearby community exposures and health effects," including investments "by Congress and federal and state agencies " to "slow and prevent. the ongoing and egregious contamination" and also to assess local environmental harm.

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