

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0552

September 18, 2017

Alexis Strauss, Acting Regional Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9
75 Hawthorne St. (ORA-1)
San Francisco, CA 94015

Dear Ms. Alexis Strauss,

Since early 2017, the Public Health Services Division in the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, has been investigating a local Hepatitis A outbreak. Though the investigation is ongoing, their current data shows that 378 people in San Diego County have contracted Hepatitis A this year and that it's being spread person-to-person and through contact with a fecally contaminated environment. No common sources of food, beverage or drugs have been identified as contributors. Most of these cases have occurred within the homeless population - men and women who may not be aware of the vaccinations available to them at free community clinics.

Due to this alarming outbreak, recent sanitizing procedures have begun in downtown San Diego. However, an estimated 20% of San Diego's homeless population currently reside along the San Diego River. Therefore, I am writing to raise awareness of this issue especially given the amount of trash, debris, and human feces that still exist within these environmentally sensitive habitats. There is rising fear of the Hepatitis A pathogen spreading through the San Diego River Valley and through urban water pathways such as Chollas Creek and Nestor Creek as a direct result of these unsanitary conditions.

Based on the EPA Water Division's expertise, are the concerns of contaminated water pathways contributing to this outbreak warranted? If so, I urge the EPA to take the immediate steps necessary to help address this issue important to the safety and well-being of all San Diegans currently at risk.

Thank you for your prompt attention; I ask you to please provide me with a quick response. If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email Howard Ou of my staff at (858) 455-5550 or Howard.Ou@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Scott Peters
Member of Congress

SP/ho