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The Honorable Jamieson Greer
United States Trade Representative
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Re: Any Extension or Renewal of USMCA Must Include Binding Solutions to the Tijuana River Pollution Crisis

Dear Ambassador Greer:

As discussions continue regarding the future extension and renewal of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), we urge the Office of the United States Trade Representative to ensure that any extension of the agreement includes enforceable environmental protections and long-term solutions to the ongoing Tijuana River pollution crisis.

For decades, cross-border trade has fueled economic growth and prosperity throughout North America. However, inadequate wastewater infrastructure, insufficient funding, and a lack of accountability have contributed to one of the most severe environmental and public health crises along the U.S.-Mexico border. The ongoing contamination of the Tijuana River Watershed has closed beaches, harmed public health, damaged ecosystems, and imposed significant economic costs on communities on both sides of the border.

We support free and fair trade when trade and environmental protection work hand in hand. As President Trump has indicated that no immediate extension of USMCA should be assumed, negotiators now have a historic opportunity to ensure that any future agreement aligns economic prosperity with environmental responsibility.

The environmental crisis affecting the Tijuana River Watershed is directly connected to decades of trade-driven industrial growth and inadequate infrastructure investment. Any extension or renewal of USMCA must therefore include binding commitments to address transboundary sewage pollution and ensure accountability for environmental harms resulting from cross-border economic activity.

Specifically, we urge inclusion of the following provisions:

1. Enforceable Environmental Standards with Consequences for Failure

The United States, Mexico, and Canada should establish measurable environmental benchmarks, timelines, and accountability measures to eliminate transboundary sewage pollution. Continued participation in USMCA should be contingent upon demonstrated compliance with these commitments. Infrastructure failures that result in pollution discharges must trigger meaningful and enforceable penalties.

2. A Rapid Response Mechanism for Environmental Violations

USMCA should include a rapid response environmental enforcement mechanism modeled after the labor enforcement provisions added following NAFTA. Such a mechanism should investigate and address environmental violations in a timely manner and ensure prompt corrective action.

In addition, the agreement should establish a dedicated environmental oversight body—or empower an existing entity such as the Environment Committee—to meet regularly, assess environmental impacts of the agreement, monitor emerging concerns, including pollution associated with maquiladora operations, and recommend corrective actions. Consideration should also be given to establishing a regional Joint Powers Authority or comparable binational governance structure focused on watershed protection and infrastructure accountability.

3. Mandatory and transparent monitoring and reporting requirements.

USMCA should require comprehensive, standardized, and publicly accessible monitoring and reporting of wastewater infrastructure performance, water quality, and transboundary pollution flows. The United States and Mexico should be required to collect, share, and publish data in a timely manner through a common binational reporting platform.

4. Sustained Operations and Maintenance Funding

Long-term funding mechanisms must be secured to ensure existing wastewater infrastructure is properly operated and maintained. This should include dedicated support through the North American Development Bank (NADBank) and other binational funding mechanisms to prevent future system failures.

5. Funding and Construction of Critical Infrastructure

Both governments must commit to planning, funding, constructing, operating, and maintaining projects that divert polluted flows into treatment facilities instead of the river, commonly referred to as “river diversion” projects and advanced wastewater treatment facilities capable of capturing and treating sewage before it reaches shared waterways.

This commitment should be guided by a comprehensive watershed approach that integrates stormwater capture, sediment management, trash and solid waste interception, habitat restoration, flood mitigation, public health protections, and long-term watershed resilience planning.

6. A Multi-Year Mexican Border Water Infrastructure Program

Mexico should establish a dedicated multi-annual funding program—a Mexican Border Water Infrastructure Program (BWIP)—to provide reliable and predictable financing for wastewater infrastructure projects necessary to eliminate transboundary sewage flows.

7. Improved Coordination Between EPA and NADBank

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should be authorized to utilize NADBank loans as matching funds for Border Water Infrastructure Program grants. This approach would improve oversight, leverage additional investment, and increase accountability throughout the life cycle of infrastructure projects.

8. Increased Border Water Infrastructure Funding

The United States and Mexico should jointly support increasing annual Border Water Infrastructure Program appropriations at \$100 million annually to demonstrate a long-term commitment to solving transboundary pollution flows and protecting public health.

8. Strengthen and Fund IBWC Minutes 320, 328, and 333

The United States and Mexico should strengthen and fully fund the implementation of International Boundary and Water Commission Minutes 320, 328, and 333, which provide the foundation for binational watershed cooperation and long-term solutions to cross-border wastewater management challenges.

The communities that live, work, and recreate along the U.S.-Mexico border deserve clean water, healthy beaches, thriving ecosystems, and a safe environment. Extending or renewing USMCA without meaningful environmental accountability will only perpetuate the cycle of pollution and environmental degradation that has plagued the Tijuana River watershed for decades.

We respectfully urge your office to ensure that any extension, renewal, or renegotiation of USMCA includes the tools, funding commitments, and enforcement mechanisms necessary to finally resolve the Tijuana River pollution crisis and protect the health and well-being of communities on both sides of the border.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

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