



County of San Diego

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HEATHER BUONOMO
DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

January 15, 2025

TO: Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer, Vice Chair
Supervisor Joel Anderson
Supervisor Monica Montgomery Steppe
Supervisor Jim Desmond

FROM: Amy Harbert, Director
Department of Environmental Health and Quality

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND QUALITY ADVISORY BOARD – 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Provided for your information is a copy of the County of San Diego, Environmental Health and Quality Advisory Board's 2024 Annual Report. The County of San Diego's Administrative Code, Section 249.8, Article XV-A requires this report be submitted to the Board of Supervisors annually.

The Environmental Health and Quality Advisory Board (EHQAB) is comprised of 17 talented and highly qualified professionals from County industry and community groups some of which serve at your appointment. EHQAB was established to advise and provide technical input to the Board of Supervisors, the Chief Administrative Officer and the Director of the Department of Environmental Health and Quality (DEHQ) on the development and implementation of programs that address the environmental needs of San Diego County. The County is very fortunate to have such a dedicated and diverse group of community leaders willing to volunteer their services as advisors.

The attached 2024 EHQAB Annual Report contains recommendations for programs and projects within the scope of the DEHQ and identifies the areas of interest EHQAB intends to focus on in the upcoming year.

Please feel free to contact me at (858) 505-6671, if you have any questions regarding the Environmental Health and Quality Advisory Board's Annual Report or their observations.

Respectfully,

Amy Harbert, Director

Attachment: Environmental Health and Quality Advisory Board 2024 Annual Report



Scott Snyder, Chair

County of San Diego

Environmental Health and Quality Advisory Board

Toby Roy, Vice Chair

January 15, 2025

Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer, Vice Chair
Supervisor Joel Anderson
Supervisor Monica Montgomery Steppe
Supervisor Jim Desmond

ANNUAL REPORT - 2024

Dear Honorable San Diego County Board of Supervisors:

Section 249.8, Article XV-A of the County of San Diego Administrative Code requires the Environmental Health Quality Advisory Board (EHQAB) to submit an annual report of its recommendations concerning the Department of Environmental Health and Quality (DEHQ) to the Board of Supervisors.

In accordance with the above requirement, this letter constitutes EHQAB's Annual Report, and is submitted for the period of January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024. During this past year, EHQAB met 12 times on the following dates: January 24th, February 28th, March 27th, April 24th, May 15th, June 12th, July 24th, August 28th, September 25th, October 23rd, November 20th, and December 18th.

EHQAB consists of 17 professional, industry and community members appointed by the Board of Supervisors and usually meets monthly throughout the year. EHQAB was established to advise and provide technical input to the Board of Supervisors, the Chief Administrative Officer, and the Director of DEHQ on the development and implementation of programs that address the environmental public health needs of the San Diego County region.

DEHQ enhances San Diegans' quality of life by protecting public health and safeguarding environmental quality, educating the public to increase environmental awareness, and implementing and enforcing local, state, and federal environmental laws. DEHQ regulates the following: retail food safety; public housing; public swimming pools; state small drinking water systems; body art; mobile home parks; recycled water systems; wells and monitoring wells, onsite wastewater treatment systems; recreational water; aboveground petroleum storage; underground storage tanks, including cleanup oversight; hazardous materials business plans; and management and disposal of medical and hazardous wastes. In addition, DEHQ serves as the Solid Waste Local Enforcement Agency (LEA), reduces diseases carried by rats and mosquitoes through implementation of the Vector Control Program (VCP), and helps to ensure safe workplaces for County employees through the Occupational Health Program.

This EHQAB Annual Report highlights and recognizes program areas of environmental and public health significance and recommends continued focus on these areas.

EHQAB recognizes and supports DEHQ's focus on preparedness and statewide leadership and engagement in emerging issues and regulations.

EHQAB recognizes and supports DEHQ's:

- Collaboration with the Health and Human Services Agency (HHS), multiple other county departments and local jurisdictions to comply with state and local Health Officer Orders.
- Active coordination with other city, state and federal agencies, as well as other County departments, for the prevention of illness related to environmental health and public health risks.
- Leadership in emergency response and disaster recovery benefited not only San Diego County, but also other agencies throughout the state. DEHQ's emergency response efforts included response to the winter floods early in 2024 which impacted local businesses and residents in the San Diego Region; as well as collaborative efforts to address concerns in the Tijuana River Valley, resulting in a declared local emergency and federal funding being awarded.
- Efforts by the Vector Control Program to address significantly increased mosquito breeding due to flooding in the Tijuana River Valley. This surge in mosquito populations was nearly 140 times the historical average in the TJRIV following the 2024 storm that caused widespread flooding and accumulation of large areas of standing water, creating ideal conditions for mosquito breeding. Since April 2024, VCP has been applying EPA-approved larvicides by helicopter and ground treatments to over 100 acres of floodwaters which resulted in successful mosquito abatement.
- DEHQ's Hazardous Incident Response Team's (HIRT) technical expertise, emergency response capabilities, and recovery efforts, in collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies supported response efforts during the floods that affected the County early in 2024.
- Staff participated on the Marijuana Enforcement Task Force, to relay guidelines for hazardous materials to cannabis businesses operating without a Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA). This collaboration with other County departments, city agencies and law enforcement agencies ensures both local and state laws are met and helps to identify and manage health and environmental risks associated with illegal cannabis business activities.
- Efforts to provide outreach and support to first responders on the handling of lithium-ion battery fires to ensure safety for emergency personnel and the public. HIRT has responded to 52 lithium-ion battery related incidents in 2024. Because of DEHQ experience responding to lithium-ion related fires, DEHQ was able to provide mutual aid assistance to Maui last year in response to the fires, which produced lithium-ion battery hazards.
- Leadership of statewide working groups and collaboration with professional organizations, industry, and stakeholders to engage on emerging issues and trends that impact regulatory programs and provide technical feedback on proposed new legislation.
- Efforts to look for emerging and endemic vectors for investigation of vector-borne infectious disease cases such as through collaboration with the County Department of Public Health Services, other government agencies, and academic institutions on surveillance and monitoring of vector-borne diseases such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever.
- Development and implementation of a mosquito pesticide resistance monitoring program.
- Continued collaboration with County Department of Public Health Services to provide seamless County response in the investigation of vector-borne illnesses. This resulted in nearly 70 disease investigations and four rapid mosquito adulticide vector response to kill adult mosquitoes and prevent the spread of vector borne disease. Out of these four treatments, two were in response to local dengue transmission, which marked the first known detections of local transmission within the region. These responses involved hundreds of door-to-door interactions prior to mosquito treatment, community outreach and education, enhanced mosquito surveillance to monitor disease risk, and comprehensive mosquito treatment using

both backpack applicators and truck-mounted equipment. Through these efforts, mosquito populations were successfully reduced to help prevent the spread of dengue in these communities.

- Continued collaboration with the County Department of Public Health Services and Public Health Laboratory in the response and investigation of foodborne and waterborne illness reports, cases, and outbreaks. This included two large scale foodborne illness outbreaks that required a rapid initial response by DEHQ to control the spread of the illness by removing product from retail sale and ongoing communication between other state, federal and international public health organizations to address the identify and remove the source from production to protect public health. The outbreaks involved Salmonella linked to raw milk consumption (statewide), and one that involved Norovirus linked to raw oysters (statewide and international).
- Continued efforts in US-Mexico border environmental health activities such as hazardous materials and hazardous waste transporter inspections.
- Continued efforts to improve the beach water quality monitoring program through the digital droplet Polymerase Chain Reaction (ddPCR) testing method which reduces the time to notify the public of water quality results from 24 hours down to same day public notification for enhanced beach water quality monitoring communication and protection of public health.
- Continued enhanced beach water quality monitoring along the south county coastline to proactively assess potential ocean water impacts from cross-border sewage spills or Tijuana River flows that may cause increased risk of human illness for swimmers, surfers or other recreational water contact users. Supported County efforts in the Proclamation of a Local Emergency for U.S.-Mexico Transboundary Pollution Environmental Crisis.
- Continued collaboration on region-wide technical advisory groups and involvement on the review of proposed statewide regulations regarding permanent food facilities, mobile food facilities, public swimming pools, body art, camps, solid waste, underground storage tanks, aboveground petroleum storage, hazardous waste, hazardous materials business plans, emergency response, accidental release prevention, enforcement, and training.
- Efforts to support development in communities and reduce barriers to building housing, from modernizing regulations to streamlining permitting processes and guaranteeing timely onsite wastewater treatment system reviews, in order to help facilitate the production and provision of housing in the unincorporated county.
- Continued efforts in promoting environmental justice by actively participating on the CUPA Forum Board Environmental Justice Committee, which supports efforts to coordinate state and local environmental justice projects that seek to protect public health from hazardous material releases in underserved communities.
- Efforts to support County Department of Public Health Services and the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District to address air quality concerns in the south county communities.

EHQAB recognizes and supports the County's ongoing planning efforts and operational changes as a result of climate change.

EHQAB supports DEHQ's efforts to:

- Continue to respond to the effects of climate change and impacts to DEHQ's regulatory programs.
- Provide ongoing emergency planning to respond to extreme weather events.
- Improve local vector- and food-borne illness surveillance to better monitor and proactively respond to emerging environmental public health risks.

- Satisfy the long-term goal of electrifying 100% of DEHQ's fleet vehicles with planned replacements, as feasible, and in accordance with the EV Roadmap.

EHQAB supports DEHQ's emphasis on public health and regulatory education and outreach to its stakeholders, the community and the public.

EHQAB supports and encourages DEHQ's:

- Continued efforts to seek input from stakeholders and to provide educational workshops, including virtual meetings, to increase awareness of environmental and public health and improve regulatory compliance for DEHQ programs, with a focus on identifying how department services can be more inclusive to better serve all members of the diverse community and region.
- Continued efforts to offer stakeholder and technical outreach sessions in the nine threshold languages through the use of simultaneous translations and live caption language translations.
- Continued work on Community Needs Assessments, including the Vector Control Program's increased focus on outreach efforts in underserved communities and to speakers of languages other than English. In addition, new efforts have begun to focus on sustainability, equity, and social justice, by evaluating the needs of Mobile Home Parks communities and provide any necessary education on services of the County Enterprise.
- Efforts to develop metrics to monitor usage of online services and to continue expanding and/or advancing all online services including: California Environmental Reporting System (CERS) computer-based training; online public records; online training; online scheduling of underground storage tank plan check inspections; and online submission of food facility and public pool construction plans to meet the needs of businesses and the public.
- Continued efforts to educate, train, and provide a compliance-based incentive program (EPIC+) for facilities in the Biotechnology and Research and Development industries in San Diego County.
- Engagement with gun range operators and facilities with aboveground petroleum storage tanks to facilitate communication and collaborate on topics related to hazardous materials compliance.
- Efforts to facilitate trainings and outreach with industry groups, home-based business operators, and local jurisdictions to thread on the Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) program. On December 6, 2023, the Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance authorizing the continuation for a permanent MEHKO program effective January 5, 2024.
- Efforts to educate and engage the public and stakeholders on the Local Agency Management Program (LAMP) evaluation and revision process to gather feedback to modernize the LAMP and provide more flexibility than state law, while ensuring protection of local groundwater. DEHQ conducted six virtual and in-person outreach sessions, collecting over 280 comments, including over 130 comments with suggested changes. DEHQ additionally attended two Community Planning and Sponsor Group Chair meetings and engaged with the Regional Water Quality Control Board on seven occasions to provide ongoing updates to proposed changes. On August 8, 2024 (09) the Board approved the ordinance updates relating to Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems and received the LAMP. Revised LAMP was approved by the Regional Board on November 13, 2024.
- Continued focus on regulatory education to achieve compliance, while implementing enforcement when necessary to achieve state mandates.

EHQAB recognizes and supports DEHQ's efforts to streamline and innovate processes.

EHQAB recognizes and supports DEHQ's:

- Implementation of a more streamlined process of conducting asbestos-related enforcement cases by sending out settlement proposal letters to first-time violators mitigating the need for a Show-Cause meeting. On average, this saves 9 hours per case and DEHQ conducts approximately 10 of these cases per year saving 45 total hours and approximately \$9,100 per year.
- Efforts to develop metrics to monitor usage of online services and to continue expanding and/or advancing all online services including online permit billing and fee payment (41.0% of all DEHQ payments, up from 37.2% last year).
- Implementation of a new eye gnat trap design that reduced the workload involved in service and maintenance of the traps by over 50%, from 16-20 staff hours per week to service the eye gnat traps to only 6-8 staff hours per week, resulting in over \$70,000 savings in staff time per year.
- Implementation of a new PCR lab test that can analyze mosquito samples for three viruses (Zika, chikungunya and dengue) in one test which is anticipated to create efficiencies by saving staff time and cost of reagents by 33%.
- Use of lighter and more efficient rechargeable batteries for traps. This resulted in cost savings of approximately \$2,000 a year. The batteries were also 1/3 the weight of previous batteries creating a more ergonomic solution for field staff.
- Utilization of an in-house technology such as, 3D printing and additive engineering to manufacture parts for mosquito traps, dippers and other field equipment. This resulted in approximately 50% cost savings and additionally increased efficiency. As the use of this technology grows in the future, it additionally creates opportunities for continued innovation and flexibility to create new or improved pieces of equipment that would not be readily available otherwise.
- Completed the program environmental impact report for the integrated vector management program, which was released it for public for review and comments.
- Efforts to leverage Power BI to create dashboards to automate data calculations and visualization for Beach and Bay Water Quality Monitoring, resulting in savings of 20 hours of staff and management's time each month with a cost savings of approximately \$46,560 a year.

EHQAB recognizes and supports DEHQ's efforts to maintain fiscally sustainable programs for public health protection.

EHQAB recognizes and supports DEHQ's:

- Efforts to assess full cost recovery fees to support program mandates, a level of service expected by stakeholders and customers, and efforts to analyze costs, implement ongoing cost containment measures and business process improvements, and bring forth more frequent fee proposals to ensure full cost recovery of services provided.
- Successfully completed countywide footprint reduction project and reduced DEHQ footprint 25%.
- Successfully completed three county internal audits without any findings.
- Evaluation of state mandates, program efficiencies, and cost containment measures that resulted in changes and streamlined requirements for small quantity medical waste generators throughout the region who had demonstrated consistent operational compliance.
- Continued efforts to conduct ongoing in-depth program analysis of operations, service levels, permits, and fee structures to determine programmatic efficiencies.
- Continued efforts to utilize technology as a means of identifying program efficiencies and contain costs.

- Continued daily synchronization of inspection information from DEHQ's data system to the California Environmental Reporting System (CERS), allowing businesses to see the most recent compliance information regarding their facilities.
- Efforts to retain, maintain and recruit qualified, highly skilled staff, acknowledging the value and expertise experienced staff provide.

EHQAB acknowledges recent awards and recognition DEHQ has received:

- **NACo Achievement Award: Mobile Food Facility Plan Check Template (2024)** - This award was received for the creation of a Mobile Food Facility Plan Check Template to simplify the permit process. The templates help low-risk mobile food facilities such as prepackaged ice cream trucks, prepackaged compact mobile food operations (CMFO), and limited food preparation CMFO facilities, easily submit plan information for review. The templates allowed for faster review and processing times to help get the businesses their permits faster. The plan check program oversees new construction and remodeling of food, public swimming pool, massage, and body art facilities. It provides guidance and verifies facility compliance with laws. DEHQ staff review plans that consist of the facility layout, materials and equipment, and inspect construction projects for proper installation. The templates have saved approximately 12 minutes per prepackaged option (ice cream trucks and CMFO), and about 54 minutes per limited food prep CMFO. Out of the 72 plans that were submitted this past fiscal year, 23 utilized the template (13 – prepackaged, 10 – limited food prep) saving a total of 2.6 hours of time for prepackaged reviews, and 9 hours of time for limited food prep reviews.
- **California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health (CCDEH) Excellence in Environmental Health Award: Acknowledges outstanding programs that are innovative, creative, and effective in protecting environmental health.** This year DEHQ's Beach Water Quality Monitoring Program was awarded the 2024 Excellence in Environmental Health for ddPCR implementation. Through innovation, productivity improvements, decreased economic impacts of beach closures/advisories, sustained excellence, and effective stakeholder involvement, ddPCR has significantly enhanced the County's ability to protect public health and ensure the safety of its beaches. This initiative not only sets a new benchmark for environmental health practices but also serves as a model for other regions facing similar challenges.

EHQAB also recognizes and supports the following issues within the scope of the County, but not within DEHQ:

EHQAB recognizes and supports:

- The goals of the County's Strategic Plan to Reduce Waste and the County's efforts to encourage the development of organics recycling infrastructure, the use of food donations as a means to divert organic waste, and the use of waste conversion technologies to minimize the amount of waste being disposed and ease the burden on current and proposed landfills.
- The County's efforts to conduct outreach and education on the topics of source reduction, pollution prevention, and recycling of a variety of materials.
- The County's *Live Well San Diego* Food System Initiative that is building better health, living safely, and thriving through implementation of: the Food System Donation Action Plan which seeks to support and improve food donation in the region to help address nutrition insecurity, while also reducing food waste; and the Food Justice Community Action Plan which seeks to support an increase in food access to counteract food insecurity security throughout the region.
- The County's efforts in developing a Climate Action Plan and Regional Decarbonization Framework, to reduce the region's overall contribution of greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere, to conserve energy and water resources, and to improve air quality and community health

- The County's Electric Vehicle (EV) Roadmap that invests in EV technology by installing EV charging stations at County facilities accessible to the public, building out EV charging infrastructure in the unincorporated area, collaborating with regional partners to encourage they buy and use more EVs, and replacing more than 500 existing gasoline-powered County vehicles with EVs by 2027. The long-term goal is to electrify 100% of DEHQ's fleet vehicles with planned lithium-ion battery replacements, as resources become available, and in consideration of all best-practice safety and disposal measures for lithium-ion battery use. Strive to use the most current battery technology.
- The County's Strategic Energy Plan that provides both long- and short-term goals to reduce County Operations utility usage and costs, minimize its impact on the environment, and assimilate sustainable practices throughout the organization.
- The County's Kresge Initiative to prepare a Memorandum of Agreement between County Public Health Services and local municipalities to clearly delineate health program roles and responsibilities, to improve health emergency-related communication, and to support mutual goals for improved regionwide health outcomes.
- The County's Public Health Services department's re-accreditation achievement from the national Public Health Accreditation Board.
- The County Board of Supervisor's strategic initiatives which prioritizes communities and populations in San Diego that have been historically left behind. The frameworks focus on policies surrounding racial justice, behavioral health, health equity, economic opportunity, homelessness, housing accessibility and affordability, environmental protection, government transparency, and community investments.
- The County's actions to comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and increased focus on water resources in designated at-risk areas, as hotter and drier weather conditions spurred by climate change could reduce water supply in San Diego County.
- The County's status as a pro-housing jurisdiction and the County Board of Supervisor's actions to assist development in unincorporated communities, from modernizing regulations and streamlining permitting processes, to waiving fees for certain types of housing, establishing a regional funding source and creating a Housing Blueprint to explore everything that the County can do to facilitate the production and provision of housing to all people, at all income levels.
- The County's commitment to reducing opioid addiction through outreach, education, surveillance, prevention tactics and partnerships with local health partners and law enforcement agencies. The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency departments, which include Public Health Services, Behavioral Health Services, and Medical Care Services, are committed to encouraging healthy behaviors, which include the prevention of substance use and abuse. Additionally, DEHQ HIRT partners with first responders to support the decontamination of clandestine drug laboratories. The County's multi-agency collaboration to address issues along the U.S-Mexico border that are connected to public health, disease investigation, food safety, water, and the environment and international security.

Additional EHQAB Findings of Support for specific DEHQ Program Areas are also attached in Appendix A and DEHQ's Fiscal Year 2023-24 Operational Highlights are attached in Appendix B of this report.

In conclusion, the members of EHQAB (see Appendix C – EHQAB Membership Roster) are pleased to be of assistance to DEHQ in their protection and support of a healthy community and environment. DEHQ is to be congratulated on their continued fiscal discipline, perseverance during a challenging labor market, continued efforts to assess potential ocean water impacts from cross-border sewage spills, as well as their proactive leadership and approach to seeking efficient and innovative solutions to traditional and emerging issues in environmental and public health.

This report was discussed and unanimously approved at the EHQAB Meeting held on December 18, 2024. I am available to discuss this report or answer any questions, please call me at (858) 505-6794 or email scott@snydergeologic.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Snyder', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Scott Snyder, Chair
Environmental Health and Quality Advisory Board

Attachments: Appendix A – EHQAB Findings of Support for DEHQ Program Areas
Appendix B – DEHQ’s Fiscal Year 2023-24 Operational Highlights
Appendix C – EHQAB Membership Roster

cc: Environmental Health and Quality Advisory Board Members
Ebony Shelton, Chief Administrative Officer
Dahvia Lynch, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Land Use and Environment Group
Amy Harbert, Director, Department of Environmental Health and Quality

APPENDIX A – EHQAB FINDINGS OF SUPPORT FOR DEHQ PROGRAM AREAS

Food Safety:

- EHQAB recognizes the potential adverse public health effects of foodborne illness and the importance of working with the food industry to improve employee behaviors and food handling practices. The County should continue efforts in pursuing compliance through education and improved food facility practices and procedures.
- EHQAB recognizes DEHQ's efforts to successfully continue the implementation of process improvements in the Food Plan Check Program that results in increased efficiency and enhanced customer service in support of the local economy.
- EHQAB recognizes DEHQ's collaboration with the *Live Well San Diego* Food System Initiative and its work in supporting the food insecure population by promoting safe food donations through support and education to industry donors, markets, and local food banks and associated pantries.
- EHQAB recognizes DEHQ's efforts in providing improved notification procedures of food facilities through their implementation of a countywide grading program for fixed and mobile food facilities, offering the public the ability to make safe dining choices. EHQAB also recognizes DEHQ's smart phone application, *SDFoodInfo.org*, for enhanced access to restaurant and food safety information.
- EHQAB supports continued communication and food safety educational outreach efforts with public school nutrition directors to ensure the safety of children while in school.
- EHQAB recognizes DEHQ's continued support for the local fishing industry and DEHQ should continue working with the local fishing industry as their operations evolve.
- EHQAB recognizes the potential adverse public health and safety effects caused by improper operation and oversight of retail food facility operations and DEHQ's leadership in the California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health (CCDEH) Food Technical Advisory Committee. The CCDEH Food Technical Advisory Committee brings together Environmental Health Specialists from counties throughout Southern California to work together to promote consistent application of the California Retail Food Code laws and regulations.
- EHQAB recognizes DEHQ's participation in the Southern California Food Technical Advisory Committee, state Food Policy Committee, and the Mobile Food Facility subcommittee, under the sponsorship of the CCDEH to promote consistent application of the California Retail Food Code (CRFC) and serve as industry and regulatory leaders in CRFC implementation.

Public Health and Safety:

- EHQAB recognizes DEHQ staff's role in the outreach efforts for the Public Safety Power Shutdowns, including proactive guidance on food, swimming pools, hazardous materials, state small water systems, and response efforts including boil water advisories and other environmental health functions.
- EHQAB recognizes the potential adverse public health effects caused by improper body art application procedures and DEHQ's partnership with the body art industry through education and outreach. DEHQ should continue participating in the CCDEH Technical Advisory Committee and contributing to legislative updates to the Safe Body Art Act.
- EHQAB recognizes DEHQ's participation in the Southern California Organized Camp Technical Advisory Committee under the sponsorship of the CCDEH to promote consistent application of Organized Camp laws and regulations. DEHQ should continue their participation in the consistent implementation of Organized Camp laws and regulations to protect the thousands of children that attend those camps every year and collaborate in CCDEH's efforts to extend protection to children who attend day camps.
- EHQAB recognizes the potential adverse public health and safety effects caused by improper operation, maintenance, and oversight of public swimming pools by pool operators and DEHQ's leadership in the

CCDEH California Recreational Health Technical Advisory Committee to promote consistent application of swimming pool laws and regulations.

- EHQAB supports DEHQ's efforts to bring unpermitted facilities within their jurisdiction into compliance.
- EHQAB supports continued community outreach and education to increase awareness of environmental concerns within the San Diego region.

Responsible Waste Management:

- EHQAB supports continued efforts to require extended manufacturer responsibility (EPR) for products that contain hazardous materials and products that become hazardous waste at the point of generation. Statewide legislation over the past few years has resulted in the establishment of EPR programs for items such as home-generated sharps and pharmaceuticals, architectural coating (paint), mattresses and carpets, which increases recycling opportunities and can reduce costs to local governments and rate payers.
- EHQAB supports continued efforts to require solid waste source reduction, recycling, and organic diversion to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, expand solid waste recycling efforts, reduce the potential for nuisance generation, and to expand the opportunity for additional recycling services.

Hazardous Materials/Waste and Medical Waste:

- EHQAB supports the continued implementation of inspections and enforcement to protect human health and the environment by ensuring the proper management of hazardous materials, hazardous waste, aboveground petroleum storage tanks, underground storage tanks, and medical waste.
- EHQAB supports the CERS Help Desk to provide assistance to businesses in complying with state-mandated electronic reporting requirements.
- EHQAB supports the continued collaboration with local stakeholders and other regulatory agencies to address complex environmental issues that can impact local and statewide laws and regulations.
- EHQAB supports the continued implementation of contract services with the State Department of Toxic Substances and Control (DTSC) to inspect northbound and southbound trucks at the US/Mexico Border.
- EHQAB supports DEHQ's hazardous materials program participation in statewide committees, groups, and organizations to adopt policies and regulations which promote a consistent and uniform approach for regulations throughout the state that will assist businesses in their compliance efforts.

Emergency Response:

- EHQAB supports the continued implementation of DEHQ's Radiological Health Program to provide protection from radiation sources in the San Diego region and for emergency preparedness during the decommissioning efforts at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS).
- EHQAB supports informational community updates/announcements on the Local Emergency Preparedness Committee (LEPC) and its member agency programs in improving coordination and effective emergency response preparedness.
- EHQAB supports the Hazardous Materials Incident Response Team (HIRT) response to local hazardous materials-related emergencies and after-hours environmental health activities.
- EHQAB supports DEHQ's annual participation in emergency preparedness exercises for department operations center activation and response operations, as well as active participation in disaster recovery drills and exercises for the unincorporated communities.

Vector Control:

- EHQAB supports DEHQ's actions to inform the public about invasive *Aedes* mosquitoes in the San Diego region, and to use an integrated vector management approach to reduce mosquito breeding and mosquito-borne illness.
- EHQAB supports the public outreach efforts of the Vector Control Program (VCP) in raising awareness of controlling and/or eliminating mosquito-breeding in neglected swimming pools and other backyard and urban sources.
- EHQAB supports VCP's efforts for the early detection of public health threats, such as West Nile virus and dengue, through comprehensive vector surveillance which includes weekly mosquito and other vector trapping throughout the county.
- EHQAB supports DEHQ's efforts to rapidly test for vector-borne diseases to promote the detection of and response to vector-borne diseases.
- EHQAB supports DEHQ's efforts to develop and implement mosquito pesticide resistance monitoring for mosquito-control efforts.
- EHQAB supports the VCP Disease and Diagnostic Laboratory as a regional resource that other counties and districts can rely on for their diagnostic services.

Water:

- EHQAB supports the development of programs to use alternative water sources (graywater, treated graywater, rain capture and reuse) instead of potable water supplies in a manner that prevents public and environmental health risks.
- EHQAB supports the continued oversight provided for the use of recycled water and the prevention of cross connections to potable water supplies.
- EHQAB supports the continued implementation of the Regional Water Quality Control Board approved Local Agency Management Program (LAMP) to protect surface water and groundwater from impacts associated with onsite wastewater treatment systems.

APPENDIX B – DEHQ’s Fiscal Year 2023-24 Operational Highlights

Department Description

- The vision of DEHQ is environmental and public health protection through leadership, partnership, and science. DEHQ enhances San Diegans’ quality of life by protecting public health and safeguarding environmental quality, educating the public to increase environmental awareness, and implementing and enforcing local, state, and federal laws. DEHQ has regulatory oversight of more than 40 environmental programs in the region, unincorporated area and some cities, which also includes investigations of foodborne and mosquito-borne illnesses, substandard housing, exposure to or incidents of hazardous materials, and beach water quality monitoring.

Mission Statement

- Protecting the environment and enhancing public health by preventing disease, promoting environmental responsibility and, when necessary, enforcing environmental and public health laws. Our goal is “Healthy People in Healthy Communities Free from Disease due to the Environment.”

Program Highlights

Policy, Outreach and Data (POD)

- Employees specializing in legislation, community engagement, and data integration and reporting make up a relatively new POD team at DEHQ. Innovation abounds in this 10-person workgroup; the team works with other County departments, government agencies and partners to achieve strategic goals, improve operational efficiency and enhance customer service.
- Streamlined several processes to improve information accuracy and timeliness while reducing staff time. Innovations include a legislation tracker, a Beach and Bay Water Quality dashboard, and central libraries for policies and cross-department/agency communications connected to TRV. The team also built custom workflows with automatic updates in systems like Accela and SharePoint, for better data visualization and insights.
- Increased public outreach efforts to share key messages with diverse audiences. For example, a new editorial calendar organizes stories for web and social media that highlight people and projects across 40 programs. Staff also attended 11 campus career fairs, produced several explanatory and day-in-the-life videos, and have made regular updates to the DEHQ website to enhance inclusivity and accessibility.
- Oversees the Community Event Permit (CEP) process, along with related workshops, personalized training and customer support. In FY 2023-2024, staff led three virtual workshops for dozens of internal and external stakeholders. During this timeframe they evaluated 232 comprehensive permit applications and issued 173, requiring collaboration with nine County departments and 13 divisions.
- Ensures all programs and applications are in compliance with the County of San Diego’s information security standards.

Vector Control Program (Regionwide)

- The Vector Control Program (VCP) monitors and controls vectors and the diseases that they carry. The VCP has been reducing and controlling mosquitoes and other vectors since the 1930’s by doing the following:
 - Conducting surveillance for diseases carried by vectors such as mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus, mice carrying hantavirus, and ticks carrying Lyme disease.
 - Monitoring mosquito-borne diseases in San Diego County.
 - Educating the public to help residents protect themselves from the disease’s vectors can carry.
 - Implementing proactive mosquito control efforts for potential breeding areas such as neglected green pools, aerial application of larvicides, and regular treatment of known mosquito breeding sources.

- Implementing prevention and control of fly breeding on commercial poultry ranches and prevention and control of eye gnats associated with commercial organic farms.

Occupational Health Program (Regionwide)

- The Occupational Health Program (OHP) assists County departments with maintaining safe and healthy workplaces for County employees. As part of this effort, OHP is the lead for various County programs, including asbestos and lead management, respiratory protection, and hazard communication. In addition, OHP works with the County's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program to conduct environmental investigations at the homes of children with elevated blood lead levels.

Radiological Health Program (Regionwide)

- The Radiological Health Program implements state and federal regulations at facilities that possess sources of radiation. This includes inspecting the storage, use and disposal of radioactive materials and the safe use of x-ray producing equipment through a contract with the Radiological Health Branch of the State Department of Public Health.

Food Program (Regionwide, Health Officer Program)

- Regulates and annually inspects retail food facilities in San Diego County including restaurants, markets, and mobile food facilities.
- Permits temporary events (annual and single-event organizer permits), for events such as December Nights and the Fallbrook Avocado Festival.
- Collaborates with local foodbanks to educate, register and permit Charitable Feeding Organizations.
- Implements the Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation (MEHKO) program, providing a low-cost opportunity for persons from all socioeconomic statuses to initiate a food business from home.

Nonprofit Community Event Permits (Unincorporated)

- Lead agency responsible for the Community Event Permit Program, which permits events run by nonprofit organizers. Coordinates with nine other local agencies, serving as the single point of contact for the organizer, guiding them through the permit process.

Housing Program (Unincorporated and Contracted Cities, Health Officer Program)

- Regulates public housing sites and conduct inspections every 18 months.
 - Contracted cities include: Carlsbad, Coronado, Del Mar, Encinitas, Escondido, La Mesa, Poway, San Marcos, Santee, Solano Beach and Vista.
- Incorporates the Healthy Housing principles identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to ensure that residents of public housing have access to rental units that are kept in safe and sanitary conditions.

Pools Program (Regionwide, Health Officer Program)

- Permits public pool and spa facilities, ensuring all public swimming pools, spas, and spray grounds are maintained in safe, sanitary and healthful condition.

Organized Camps Program (Unincorporated, Health Officer Program)

- Regulates organized camps in the county, inspecting annually for safe and sanitary conditions and safe food and water for the camp visitors.

Body Art, Massage, and Detention Facility Programs (Regionwide, Health Officer Programs)

- Regulates health and safety standards and conducts annual inspections for body art (tattooing, permanent cosmetics, body piercing and branding) facilities.
- Regulates and inspects permitted massage facilities through local codes in the cities of Carlsbad, Chula Vista, Del Mar, El Cajon, Encinitas, Imperial Beach, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, Poway, San Marcos, Santee and Solana Beach.

- Regulates detention facilities and holding cells, inspecting the housing units and food operations.

Beach and Bay Water Quality Monitoring Program (Regionwide, Health Officer Program)

- Coordinates routine sampling at public beaches during the peak summer season and notifies the public when monitoring indicates bacteria levels exceed state standards, or during other events that may pose a risk to public health.
- Collects or evaluates water samples to ensure beach water quality was safe for recreational water contact by residents and visitors to San Diego's beaches.
- Conducts enhanced beach water monitoring at nine locations year-round achieving a daily sampling frequency in South County to notify the public when sewage-contaminated Tijuana River flows or other cross-border sewage spills may pose an increased risk of illness from water contact.

Small Drinking Water Systems Program (Regionwide, Health Officer Program)

- Provides oversight of state small water systems with 5 to 14 service connections, to protect public health by ensuring pure, safe and reliable drinking water supplies are provided to customers.

Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (Septic Systems) Program (Regionwide)

- Ensures that septic systems are properly designed, sited, installed, and maintained to protect public health and the environment.

Wells Program (Regionwide)

- Provides oversight for implementing state standards and local ordinances pertaining to the construction, alteration, maintenance, and destruction of monitoring wells, inclinometers, vapor probes, cathodic protection wells, and enhanced leak detection systems.
- Permits the installation and destruction of borings and monitoring wells; and minimize risk to public health by bringing deficient monitoring wells into compliance.
- Issues water well permits and ensures they are properly designed, sited, installed, and maintained to protect public health and the environment.

Mobilehome Parks and Recreational Vehicle Parks Program (Unincorporated)

- Permits and inspects mobilehome parks and recreational vehicle parks in the unincorporated county to ensure compliance and safe and livable conditions.

Recycled Water Program (Regionwide, Health Officer Program)

- Regulates the use of recycled water for the San Diego region through a delegation agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board.
- Protects the public from health risks associated with cross-connections of recycled water and drinking water supplies, as well as to prevent health risks from body contact with recycled water, by conducting recycled water project plan checks and recycled water inspections, including spray coverage tests, valve tag reviews and cross connection inspections.

Sewage Haulers Program (Regionwide, Health Officer Program)

- Ensures that public health risks are prevented from the improper collection, hauling and disposal of sewage from septic tanks and chemical toilets by registered sewage hauler vehicles in the region.

Solid Waste Local Enforcement Agency (Regionwide, excluding City of San Diego)

- The County of San Diego Solid Waste Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) is certified by the State Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) to ensure the proper operation, permitting and closure of solid waste facilities, operations and disposal sites (landfill, transfer station, composting, and construction, demolition and inert debris).
- Regulates active and closed solid waste facilities, operations, and disposal sites.

Certified Unified Program Agency (Regionwide)

- DEHQ is the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) for the County of San Diego, and it is responsible for regulation of hazardous materials business plans and inventory, ensuring facilities with highly toxic chemicals have robust programs and plans in place, ensuring hazardous waste is managed properly, and ensuring underground storage tanks and aboveground petroleum storage tanks are properly monitored to prevent releases of hazardous materials.
- Permits and inspects businesses, and when needed, pursues formal actions, through criminal, civil or administrative enforcement cases.

Site Assessment and Mitigation Program (SAM) (Regionwide, Health Officer Program)

- Provides oversight of assessments and cleanups to protect public health, water resources, and the environment from releases of contaminants through the Voluntary Assistance Program (VAP). Certified by the State Department of Toxic Substances Control to implement and locally enforce environmental assessments and corrective actions to clean up hazardous waste spills within the San Diego region.
- Assists property owners with sites contaminated by hazardous substances, including clandestine methamphetamine/fentanyl laboratories, to ensure pollution is cleaned to reduce risk to human health for property redevelopment or reoccupation.
- Provides assistance to businesses in complying with state-mandated electronic reporting requirements including reporting hazardous materials inventory, amount of hazardous waste being generated, emergency response plan information, underground storage tank component details, release prevention information, and more.

Hazardous Emergency Response

- The Hazardous Incident Response Team (HIRT), a joint DEHQ and City of San Diego Fire-Rescue Department team, provides response to radiological, biological and chemical emergencies throughout the county, 24 hours per day, seven days a week as well as being an active participant in the Border 2020 project.

Department Stakeholders

- Biocom
- Building Industry Association
- California Restaurant Association
- Environmental Health Coalition
- Groundwater Association
- Gaslamp Association
- North County Civil Engineers and Land Surveyors Association
- San Diego County Farm Bureau
- Industrial Environmental Association
- San Diego County Lodging Association
- San Diego County Sewage Haulers Association
- San Diego County Taxpayers Association
- San Diego County Disposal Association
- San Diego Food and Beverage Association
- Southern California Rental Housing Association

Department Statistics

Number of Staff: 344 FTE **FY23-24 Budget:** \$63.9 million

Sources of Revenue: Fees and Deposits - \$37.6 million

Vector Benefit Assessment - \$15.0 million

Revenue Agreements – State and Other - \$4.3 million

Realignment Revenue (share from HHSA) - \$1.4 million

Other (Reserves; Fund Balance; Settlement for 1-time projects; GPR) - \$5.6 million

Department Awards and Accomplishments

- California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health (CCDEH) Excellence in Environmental Health Award: Implementation of ddPCR (2024)
- National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award: Plan Check Inquiry Form (2023)
- NACo Achievement Award: Beach and Bay ddPCR Testing (2023)
- NACo Achievement Award: Eye Gnat Trap Improvements (2022)
- NACo Achievement Award: Plan Check Digital Review Portal (2022)
- California Restaurant Association: Exceptional Partners Award (2021)
- NACo Achievement Award: Underground Storage Tank Plan Check from Paper to Virtual (2021)
- NACo Achievement Award: Simultaneous Dengue Virus 1-4 Testing (2020)
- NACo Achievement Award: SDFoodInfo.org (2019)
- Continuing Challenge Award - Responder of the Year: San Diego HIRT Team (2019)

County Partnerships

- Partnered with County Public Health Services to protect public health by reducing the risk of vector, water, and food-borne illnesses by:
 - Maintained preparedness to respond to all confirmed vector-borne disease referrals.
 - Collected or evaluating 10,988 beach water samples
 - Obtained final approvals from US EPA, CDPH, and ELAP to implement digital droplet Polymerase Chain Reaction (ddPCR) as an alternative beach water quality testing method for faster sample analysis (i.e., less than 24 hours)
 - Responded to 376 food-borne illness complaints
 - Investigated 32 childhood lead poisoning cases
 - Partnered to address the public health crisis in the Tijuana River Valley through daily monitoring of beach water quality in South County

By the Numbers

Community Health Division

- Monitored and treated, when needed, 1,594 known mosquito breeding sites
- Responded to 4,412 complaints and requests for service about mosquitoes, rats, flies, and other vectors
- Investigated 398 aerial identified neglected swimming pools
- Regulated over 2,800 x-ray machines and over 125 radioactive materials licensees (Hospitals, Veterinarians, Biotech, Research, Academic Institutions and Industry)
- Conducted 111 investigations involving radioactive materials or x-ray units

Food, Water, and Housing Division

- Over 22,066 permitted facilities including retail food, public pools, public housing, body art and massage facilities
- Conducted over 56,115 inspections of these facilities
- Issued 1,947 new health permits, not including temporary event permits
- Renewed/processed 128 annual temporary event organizer permits and 631 temporary single-event organizer permits
- Renewed/processed 1,420 annual temporary event food vendor permits, and 1,975 temporary single-event food vendor permits
- Inspected 2,676 temporary event food vendors
- Permitted 200 community events run by nonprofit organizers
- Responded to 109 food recalls, advising retailers of the recall and coordinating with them to ensure that affected foods were taken off the shelves
- Responded to 1,007 complaints with an average response time of 1.7 days

- Regulated 24 organized camps
- Inspected 39 temp event food vendors at San Diego County Fair (did not contract with DEHQ this year due to COVID-19)
- Coordinated routine sampling at 114 public beaches during the peak summer and conducted enhanced beach water monitoring at nine locations year-round achieving a daily sampling frequency in South County
- Collected or evaluated 12,242 beach water samples
- Provided oversight for 16 small drinking water systems
- Issued 815 septic system permits and conducted 670 installation inspections for new construction and repairs
- Reviewed 174 water well permits for new construction and destructions
- Issued 310 monitoring well permits for new construction and destructions
- Provided oversight for 187 mobilehome and RV parks with 16,260 spaces
- Completed 65 new and 44 existing system plan checks for recycled water projects and 120 cross connection inspections
- Inspected 54 registered sewage haulers
- Conducted 534 solid waste facility inspections

Hazardous Materials Division

- Regulates 14,982 facilities
- Completed 5,741 inspections
- Initiated 152 formal enforcement actions
- Investigated or responded to 482 complaints and HIRT responses
- Responded to 8,611 customer service calls and emails
- Accepted 18,574 Hazardous Materials Electronic Reporting submittals
- Received and processed 675 calls at the CERS Help Desk
- Processed 1,023 plan check applications for hazardous materials facilities undergoing new construction or tenant improvements
- Processed 189 Underground Storage Tank (UST) plan check applications; 33 for UST removals, 16 for new UST installations, and 140 for UST repairs/modifications
- Guided 201 unpermitted facilities with hazardous materials, hazardous waste, and medical waste towards compliance with permitting requirements.
- Oversight of 138 VAP hazardous waste spill cleanups
- Closed 5 VAP cases upon completion of cleanup objectives

APPENDIX C

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND QUALITY ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Established 1989

APPOINTMENT DATES & CURRENT TERM EXPIRATION DATES

Seat 1	Vizzier, Joseph Michael	Appointment	4/30/2024
District 1 appointed		Expiration	4/30/2027
Hazardous Material Regulatory Industry			
Seat 2	<i>vacant</i>		
District 2 appointed			
Restaurant Industry			
Seat 3	Hanna, Cliff	Appointment	8/27/2024
District 3 appointed		Expiration	8/27/2027
Occupational and Radiological Health			
Seat 4	Austin, Quinnton	Appointment	7/16/2024
District 4 appointed		Expiration	7/16/2027
Retail Food			
Seat 5	<i>vacant</i>	Appointment	
District 5 appointed		Expiration	
Land Use/Housing Industry			
Seat 6	Sabellico, Kevin	Appointment	5/21/2024
District 3 appointed		Expiration	5/21/2027
Public Member			
Seat 7	Roy, Toby	Appointment	1/9/2024
District 5 appointed		Expiration	1/9/2027
Public Member			
Seat 8	<i>vacant</i>	Appointment	
District 2 appointed		Expiration	
Public Safety			
Seat 9	Conner, Jesse	Appointment	6/29/2024
District 4 appointed		Expiration	6/29/2027
Public Safety			
Seat 10	<i>vacant</i>	Initial	
District 1 appointed		Expiration	
Community Environmental Organization			
Seat 11	Snyder, Scott	Appointment	8/27/2024
DEHQ appointed		Expiration	8/27/2027
Water Quality/Liquid Waste Disposal			
Seat 12	<i>vacant</i>	Appointment	
DEHQ appointed		Expiration	
Toxicologist			
Seat 13	Watson, LaRosa	Appointment	1/9/2024
DEHQ appointed			1/9/2027
Epidemiologist			

Seat 14	<i>vacant</i>	Appointment	
DEHQ appointed		Expiration	
Land Use/Housing Industry			
Seat 15	<i>vacant</i>	Appointment	
DEHQ appointed		Expiration	
Vectorborne Disease Expert			
Seat 16	<i>vacant</i>	Appointment	
DEHQ appointed		Expiration	
State Agencies			
Seat 17	Chowdhury, Zohir	Appointment	1/9/2024
DEHQ appointed		Expiration	1/9/2027
Academia			