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California State Senate

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON CALIFORNIA-MEXICO COOPERATION

SENATOR STEPHEN C. PADILLA

1021 O STREET,
SUITE 6640
SACRAMENTO CA, 95814
TEL: 916-651-4018

“Addressing Cross-Border Pollution in the Tijuana River Valley”

Friday December 1st, 2023

**City of Chula Vista City Council Chambers
City Hall Building A, 276 Fourth Avenue,
Chula Vista, CA, 91910**

Biographies



**Sally E. Spener
Secretary**

U.S. International Boundary Water Commission

Since 2012, Ms. Spener has served as U.S. Section Secretary. In that capacity, she has managed the Foreign Affairs and Public Affairs Offices for the U.S. Section, providing foreign policy advice to the Commission, leading diplomatic matters with the Mexican Section of the Commission, negotiating, drafting and implementing international agreements, and overseeing translation and interpretation functions.

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She previously served 13 years as the U.S. Section's Public Affairs Officer, where she directed the communications, media relations, and public outreach activities for the U.S. Section. In that capacity, she established the U.S. Section's Citizens Forum outreach program, which includes five volunteer boards in border communities who conduct regular public meetings.

Prior to her government service, Ms. Spener served as Executive Director of Common Cause Florida, where she was a community organizer and lobbyist on issues related to campaign finance reform and government ethics. She also worked for over a decade as an award-winning broadcast journalist, including her job as News Director of WFSU FM, the National Public Radio station in Tallahassee, Florida.

Fluent in Spanish, Ms. Spener holds a B.A. in Latin American Studies and Theater from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. She also studied at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in Mexico City, the University of Salamanca in Spain, and St. Louis University.

A native of St. Louis, Missouri, Ms. Spener has lived in border communities in Arizona, Texas, and California, where she currently resides.

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Martha Guzman
Regional Administrator, Region 9
Environmental Protection Agency

Martha Guzman was sworn in as EPA Regional Administrator for the nation's Pacific Southwest Region (Region 9) on December 20, 2021. In this role she is leading EPA efforts to protect public health and the environment for the region spanning Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, the U.S. Pacific Islands territories, and 148 Tribal Nations. Her focus is on advancing President Biden and Administrator Regan's priorities in the areas of climate change, environmental justice and scientific integrity, and more broadly on achieving progress in making the air, land and water cleaner and safer for the residents of the Pacific Southwest. Notable in a region with a significant Hispanic/Latino population, Guzman is the first Latina to serve as Regional Administrator.

Martha Guzman came to this EPA position after having served as a Commissioner at the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for the previous five years. Her portfolio included fiscal oversight of utilities, broadband for all, water affordability, access to clean energy programs for disadvantaged communities, and prevention of disconnections of basic utilities. She spearheaded the Interagency Solar Consumer Protection Taskforce, the Tribal Land Policy, and Covid Arrears Response. She also represented the CPUC on the California Broadband Council and the Lithium Valley Commission.

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Prior to joining the CPUC Guzman served as Deputy Legislative Affairs Secretary in the Office of the Governor of California, where she worked on the legislative passage of the Human Right to Water and the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, reorganized the Safe Drinking Water Program, and advanced climate goals related to short-lived climate pollutants and renewable energy legislation. Earlier in her career, she was Sustainable Communities program director for the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation. She also worked for Swanton Berry Farm on human resource issues, and before that, she was the legislative coordinator for United Farm Workers.

Guzman earned a Master of Science degree in Agricultural and Resource Economics from the University of California, Davis, and a Bachelor of Science in International Economics from Georgetown University.

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Yana Garcia
Secretary for Environmental Protection
California Environmental Protection Agency

Yana Garcia was appointed California Secretary for Environmental Protection by Governor Gavin Newsom in August 2022. In this role, Secretary Garcia oversees the state's efforts to fight climate change, protect air and water quality, and advance environmental justice. As a member of the Governor's cabinet, she also advises the Governor on environmental policy.

Secretary Garcia is a nationally recognized environmental leader who has long worked to uplift voices from historically marginalized communities. Prior to her appointment, Secretary Garcia served as Special Assistant Attorney General to California Attorney General Rob Bonta, advising him on legal and policy matters pertaining to the environment, land law, and natural resources, and in various leadership roles at CalEPA focused on environmental justice and tribal affairs.

Prior to her state service, Secretary Garcia was as an attorney for Earthjustice in San Francisco and Communities for a Better Environment in Oakland and Huntington Park, focusing on environmental justice issues, civil rights, land use, toxics and chemical disclosure, oil and gas extraction, and crude transport.

Secretary Garcia holds a degree in politics from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a law degree from Northeastern University School of Law.

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Paloma Aguirre
Mayor
City of Imperial Beach

Paloma Aguirre is a first-generation Mexican American. She was born in San Francisco, CA and lived there until she was eight years old. Her family then moved to Mexico where she spent the rest of her formative years.

In 2001, she moved back to the U.S. in pursuit of a college degree and competitive bodyboarding. Upon arrival, she first surfed Imperial Beach and immediately fell in love with its people and its waves. Mayor Aguirre went on to compete in bodyboarding competitions, both locally and regionally. On occasion, she found herself competing in the men's category where she is known to have won a trophy or two.

After putting herself through college, she graduated from the University of San Diego (USD) with a B.A. in Psychology. She later earned a certificate in Nonprofit Management from Brandman University and obtained a Master of Advanced Studies in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation, from Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) in 2015.

Early in her career, Mayor Aguirre worked as a social-justice community organizer in South San Diego, helping low-income families address immigration, foreclosure, and predatory lending

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issues. Later, she joined WILDCOAST, a formerly Imperial Beach-based coastal and marine conservation non-profit where she worked for over 10 years. Aguirre's primary focus was fighting cross-border pollution of the Tijuana River Valley that directly impacts the coastal region of the San Diego-Tijuana border region, including Imperial Beach. Her bilingual and bicultural lived experience allows her to be a leading advocate in the fight against sewage pollution.

In 2014, Aguirre was named Woman of the Year for her outstanding leadership in environmental conservation and for her work restoring the Tijuana River Valley. In 2016, she was selected for the prestigious NOAA Sea Grant Knauss fellowship in Washington D.C. where she worked for U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ). Aguirre assisted him in drafting and passing bills to reduce trash in our oceans and improve math and science skills in minorities. In 2018, she was elected as the City's first Latina Councilmember for the City of Imperial Beach.

Mayor Aguirre represents the City of Imperial Beach on the San Diego Community Power Board of Directors, and as alternate on the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) Board. She also serves as Speaker Anthony Rendon's San Diego Coast appointee on the California Coastal Commission, and as Governor Newsom's appointee to the Good Neighbor Environmental Board, an independent federal advisory committee, which advises the President and Congress of the United States on good neighbor practices along the U.S. border with Mexico.

In her spare time, Mayor Aguirre enjoys bodyboarding and spending time with her husband and two dogs Dante and Dasha.

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Jeff Bowman

**Associate Professor, Integrative Oceanography Division
Scripps Institution of Oceanography**

Jeff Bowman is a biological oceanographer who studies the ecological role of marine bacteria and archaea. These microorganisms are key drivers of the marine carbon cycle and play an important role in sustaining fisheries and maintaining the health of marine ecosystems. They can also be the cause of disease outbreaks and hypoxia (low oxygen). The ubiquity, diversity, and small size of these microbes make them difficult to study with traditional ecological methods. Dr. Bowman uses a combination of molecular techniques, biogeochemical observations, and modeling approaches to understand the causes and consequences of marine microbial communities in coastal California environments and around the world