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August 2, 2022

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

I write regarding the ongoing environmental disaster at the Oasis Mobile Home Park (Oasis). For nearly three years, dangerous levels of arsenic have been present in the residents' tap water. Residents have been provided one gallon of water per person per day, but with soaring temperatures due to climate change, I do not believe that this amount of water is sufficient. I strongly urge the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to force the owners of Oasis to provide more water to its residents.

Starting in 2019, Oasis has been under a series of EPA Emergency Orders for levels of arsenic in the drinking water that exceed the Maximum Contaminant Level of 10 parts per billion. The most recent Emergency Order, issued on September 15, 2021, requires the owners of Oasis to provide each resident with a gallon of drinking water per day. Residents are expected to use this water for all of their cooking and drinking needs, as well as for brushing their teeth.

While this amount of water is often the standard amount that government agencies believe a person needs per day,¹ this calculation has not been updated to reflect higher temperatures due to climate change. In Thermal, CA, where Oasis is located, temperatures for the next ten days are all expected to be over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and on some days the temperature is expected to approach 110 degrees.² Further exacerbating the issue, many Oasis residents are farmworkers, and they will remain outside during the hottest parts of the day without the aid of air conditioning. With all of these factors, one gallon of water is simply not enough for a person to drink, cook, and brush their teeth.

¹ See, for example, Federal Emergency Management Agency's guidance for storing water in an emergency, <https://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/f&web.pdf>

² <https://weather.com/weather/tenday/l/Thermal+CA?canonicalCityId=ec61d606dc6692e314f8bdefab94aeea05a5664795eb2913bd21372bae0ab96>. Accessed August 1, 2022.

Failure to provide enough water to residents under Emergency Orders can have dire consequences. Residents may also be tempted to not follow the EPA's guidance and use the water, risking increased chances of lung, bladder, and skin cancers, as well as heart disease, diabetes, and neurological damage. Children who use the water also risk developmental issues. Alternatively, insufficient water could lead to people not drinking enough and suffering from dehydration. Neither of these outcomes are acceptable.

This issue has been a priority for me since it first came to my attention in 2019 when the EPA issued the first Emergency Order. I strongly believe that mobile home parks that have a history of repeated violations should be closed, but I remain concerned about the residents' health while we find preferential housing options. I appreciate your strong commitment to environmental justice and ask that you require the owners of Oasis to provide an adequate amount of water to residents.

Water is life and access to it is a human right. No person should ever have access to so little clean water that they are tempted to drink contaminated water. Please reach out to my staff with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Raul Ruiz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress