



## Taking Leadership on Consumer Protection and Environmental Stewardship

*By City Attorney Mara W. Elliott*

Clear coastal waters, breathtaking beaches, and rugged desert trails are just a few of the natural features that define San Diego and draw people here from all over the world. As City Attorney, I work to protect our environment by fighting for tough laws and holding violators accountable. I count you as a partner in this effort.

As you read these highlights of the work my office does, remember: We need you to speak up when you see potential environmental violations. I've included reporting information below:

**WATER POLLUTION:** Our office is suing Monsanto, the chemical manufacturing behemoth, for the polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in San Diego Bay and the waterways leading to it. Monsanto manufactured PCBs for years despite overwhelming evidence of their public health risk. In August, a judge allowed our claim to move forward, bringing us one step closer to ensuring the company pays to clean up our watershed and bay.

**LEAD PAINT:** Our office is part of statewide coalition of prosecutors who won a long-running case against paint manufacturers that knowingly sold toxic lead paint to California families. Lead, when ingested by children, can damage the central nervous system and cause lifelong learning disabilities. The companies tried to appeal this decision to the United States Supreme Court, but the court wouldn't take the case. The companies must now pay into a \$409 million fund to remove toxic lead paint from affected homes, including many in San Diego.

**ILLEGAL DUMPING:** Lead paint can also contaminate our rivers and ocean. A citizen complaint led our office to successfully prosecute a Riverside County-based painting company that power-washed painted curbs in Del Cerro, allowing toxic paint chips to flow into the street and storm drains. Two employees and the CEO were ordered to pay more than \$12,000 in fines and restitution, and perform community work service.

**HAZARDOUS WASTE:** The unlawful handling of hazardous waste puts us all at risk. That's why my office joined 21 other prosecuting agencies in a successful lawsuit against Whole Foods, which was illegally disposing of hazardous waste in our landfills. With inadequate safety protocols to protect customers, employees, or the public, Whole Foods improperly disposed of ignitable liquids, cleaning agents, aerosol products, and other flammable, reactive, toxic, and corrosive materials, at its California facilities. Stores in Hillcrest and UTC were implicated in the complaint. San Diego will receive more than \$110,000 in civil penalties, including funds to support the work of the San Diego County Department of Environmental Health.

**WILDLIFE POACHING:** Our office also targets individuals who harm the environment. Within the past two years, we have prosecuted more than 15 marine wildlife poachers, many of them repeat offenders poaching lobster and abalone in protected areas. Citizens reported them to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and we brought them to justice. A portion of the damages we collect go toward critical preservation efforts.

**YOU CAN HELP:** To strengthen our ability to enforce environmental regulations, I recently created the Nuisance Abatement Unit to oversee cases related to illegal dumping, hazardous waste, fish and wildlife, illegal grading, lead paint, and the destruction of environmentally sensitive lands.

You can report environmental violations to our [Nuisance Abatement Unit](#) by contacting us at (619) 533-5500, [cityattorney@sandiego.gov](mailto:cityattorney@sandiego.gov).

Whether we are taking on powerful interests accustomed to operating above the law, or prosecuting individuals who threaten our precious ocean ecology, my office is committed to protecting the environment for the safety and enjoyment of all.

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