City of San Diego
COUNCILMEMBER DAVID ALVAREZ
Eighth District

MEMORANDUM

DATE: **December 30, 2010**

TO: **Council President Anthony Young**

FROM: **Councilmember David Alvarez, Chairman of the Committee on Natural Resources and Culture**

SUBJECT: **Committee on Natural Resources and Culture 90-Day Action Plan Summary**

I have begun to reach out to my colleagues on the Council, the Mayor's Office, City staff, and other stakeholders to solicit their input on the Committee on Natural Resources and Culture's action plan. My hope is to complete this process quickly and have the action plan fully drafted by the end of January 2011. That said, as requested in your memorandum on December 22, 2010, below is a summary of my initial top three priorities for the Committee.

Promoting Water Conservation

Even in the middle of a very wet winter, the future availability of water remains a critical issue for our city and region. We shouldn't wait for the next drought to start working on a better way to promote water conservation in San Diego. While much work is ongoing and remains to be done to identify additional water supplies, San Diego has a huge opportunity to reduce the need for additional supply by more effectively managing demand.

The City must do more to promote water conservation and our most powerful tool is the price mechanism. It is difficult to convince residents and businesses to make significant investments of time and money to conserve water if they will not realize a significant reduction in their water bill as a result. While there are many practical and legal restrictions on the City's freedom to alter water rates, my hope is that the City Council and the Mayor can reach consensus on a new rate structure that rewards San Diegans who conserve with a lower water bill. Additionally, we should explore the possibility of targeting conservation rebates and investment incentives

towards low income households. Many low income residents of San Diego would want to invest in water efficient appliances and fixtures (such as washing machines or low flow toilets) but cannot afford to do so.

Flood Protection and Environmental Preservation

In addition to augmenting our water reservoirs, the recent wet weather has brought flooding in neighborhoods from Mission Valley to Logan Heights. The cost of flooding is great both in terms of economic losses and in suffering, and serves as a reminder that the City's obligation to maintain an effective and environmentally sensitive storm water system must not be taken lightly. In addition to receiving informational briefings from staff on flood emergency response planning and performance, we also need to explore long-term watershed management strategies. I don't believe that flood control and environmental protection are mutually exclusive. I am confident we can develop watershed management strategies that minimize the risk flooding poses to residents and businesses while preserving vital wetland and riparian habitat.

Promoting Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

The City has made great strides in promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy but more remains to be done. We should seek out additional opportunities to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy projects at City facilities. Also, we should explore additional policy options to promote private investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. This is particularly important given that programs that finance residential solar through property tax assessments, such as the one developed by Mayor Sanders, are in limbo because of decisions made by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the Federal Housing Finance Agency. My hope is that the Committee on Natural Resources and Culture can work with the Mayor's office, City staff and other stakeholders to overcome these obstacles and develop policies that enhance energy efficiency and renewable energy throughout San Diego.