

April 30, 2021

Via e-mail

Mayor Todd Gloria
mayortoddgloria@sandiego.gov

Sean Elo-Rivera, Chair
 Environment Committee
 San Diego City Council
seanelorivera@sandiego.gov

Marni von Wilpert, Vice Chair
 Environment Committee
 San Diego City Council
marnivonwilpert@sandiego.gov

Joe LaCava, Member
 Environment Committee
 San Diego City Council
joelacava@sandiego.gov

Chris Cate, Member
 Environment Committee
 San Diego City Council
chriscate@sandiego.gov

Dear Mayor Gloria and Members of the Environment Committee:

I'm writing on behalf of PETA and its more than 6.5 million members and supporters to urge you to take action to end frequent fireworks displays in the City of San Diego.

The San Diego County Democratic Central Committee recently passed a resolution calling on the San Diego City Council to ban fireworks displays at SeaWorld San Diego because they are harmful to wildlife, companion animals, and the environment. Indeed, PETA has been contacted by residents who live near the facility and report that the frequent displays—which are generally conducted *more than 100 times per year* over Mission Bay—are deafening, rattle their windows, and terrify their companion animals. They came to PETA after city authorities informed them that the government could not provide any assistance or relief because permits had been issued for the displays.

Firework shows inflict lasting damage on San Diego's wildlife populations. For instance, fireworks displays are physiologically stressful for birds who, panicked by the light and noise, often erupt in large groups into the night sky when fireworks are set off, resulting in birds dying after crashing into trees, billboards, or other solid objects.¹ According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, fireworks can cause wildlife species of all kinds to escape to other areas with which they are not familiar, abandoning their young and leaving them exposed to predators.² Firework debris can also pose choking hazards, contain chemicals toxic to wildlife if ingested, and ignite wildfires.³ In addition, the noise and light from fireworks can impose stress on captive wild animals, such as those kept in zoos, because they are unable to carry out the same escape behaviors they would in their wild habitats.⁴

¹ *How Do Fireworks Harm Wild Birds?*, Forbes (Dec. 30, 2017), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/grlscientist/2017/12/30/how-do-fireworks-harm-wild-birds/?sh=69c1f1ec118c>.

² *Keeping Wildlife Safe This Independence Day*, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Serv. (June 29, 2020), <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/news/IndependenceDay.html>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Bang Out of Order: Fireworks Frighten Animals*, Royal Soc'y for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, at 5 (2019), <https://www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/fireworks> (click "Bang out of order - fireworks frighten animals").

PEOPLE FOR
 THE ETHICAL
 TREATMENT
 OF ANIMALS
 FOUNDATION

Washington
 1536 16th St. N.W.
 Washington, DC 20036
 202-483-PETA

Los Angeles
 2154 W. Sunset Blvd.
 Los Angeles, CA 90026
 323-644-PETA

Norfolk
 501 Front St.
 Norfolk, VA 23510
 757-622-PETA

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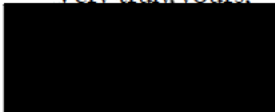
Fireworks also terrify companion animals. One study found that nearly seventy-five percent of companion animals were afraid of fireworks, and human guardians involved in the study reported that over three hundred animals had been physically injured as the result of fireworks.⁵ In trying to escape the explosions, dogs have jumped over fences, broken off chains, torn through screens, and smashed through glass doors in fits of panic.⁶ These petrified animals often end up lost, in shelters, or hit by cars.⁷

Firework displays also take a toll on the environment, to the detriment of both human and non-human animals. The California Regional Water Quality Control Board of the San Diego Region has explained that exploding fireworks release chemical pollutants and other materials into water below, including aluminum, antimony, barium, carbon, calcium, chlorine, cesium, copper, iron, potassium, lithium, magnesium, oxidizers including nitrates, chlorates and perchlorates, phosphorus, sodium sulfur, strontium, titanium, and zinc.⁸ Fireworks also release particulate matter and other material, such as paper, wires, and fuses, which degrade water quality.⁹ In fact, studies have detected common firework pollutants, such as aluminum, copper, mercury, and lead in the bodies of sharks.¹⁰ In areas where fireworks displays occur, scientists have also found perchlorate, a chemical found in rocket fuel and other explosives, which can impair the function of the thyroid gland in humans if ingested through drinking water.¹¹

Fireworks also pollute the air—one study found fireworks introduced forty-two percent more pollutants into the air than those found on a regular day.¹² Another study found inhaling firework smoke and pollution may cause long-term health damage, even if people are exposed to it for only a short amount of time each year, as “they are much more toxic than the pollutants we breathe every day.”¹³ These negative effects are exacerbated by the fact that SeaWorld puts on fireworks displays on a regular basis.

Accordingly, we urge you to prohibit frequent fireworks displays, and particularly the displays at SeaWorld, to prevent continuing harm to residents, wildlife, companion animals, and San Diego’s air and water.

Very truly yours,



Jared Goodman
Vice President and
Deputy General Counsel for Animal Law
(323) 210-2266 | JaredG@petaf.org

⁵ M.C. Gates et al., *Owner Perceptions and Management of the Adverse Behavioural Effects of Fireworks on Companion Animals: an Update*, 67 N.Z. Veterinary J. 323 (2019), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31262239/>.

⁶ *Warning for DMV Residents: Fireworks Are Illegal—and Can Hurt Animals*, PETA (June 11, 2018), <https://www.peta.org/media/news-releases/warning-for-dmv-residents-fireworks-are-illegal-and-can-hurt-animals/>.

⁷ *For Their Sakes, ‘Get’ the Fireworks*, PETA, <https://www.peta.org/action/forget-fireworks/> (last visited Apr. 22, 2021).

⁸ Tentative Order No. R9-2010-0124, NPDES No. CAG999002, Question and Answer Information Sheet, Cal. Reg’l Water Quality Control Bd., San Diego Region, 2 (2010), https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/rwqcb9/water_issues/programs/npdes/fireworks/docs/Fireworks_Question_and_Answer.pdf.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Jen Viegas, *Common Firework Pollutants Detected in Shark Bodies*, Seeker (July 4, 2016), <https://www.seeker.com/common-firework-pollutants-detected-in-shark-bodies-1902621162.html>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Kenzi Abou-Sabe, *Study: Fireworks Release High Levels of Pollution on July 4 Weekend*, PBS News Hour Weekend (July 4, 2015), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/fireworks-bad>.

¹³ *Common Fireworks Release Lead, Copper & Other Toxic Metals Into the Air*, NYU Langone Health (July 2, 2020), <https://nyulangone.org/news/common-fireworks-release-lead-copper-other-toxic-metals-air>.