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Environmental Report Card Given To Mayor And San Diego City Council

Average Grade Is C- On 2009 Environmental Issues

BY ED JOYCE
March 10, 2010

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groups are not happy with the politicians' grades.



Photo by Ed Joyce

Above: A coalition of 11 San Diego environmental groups announce results of first-ever Environmental Quality Report Card for San Diego Mayor and City Council on March 10, 2010.

councilmembers would likely be held back," said Reznik. "And hopefully the poor grades on this report card really serve as a wake-up call for our mayor and our council and frankly, for the people of San Diego, that we need to do a better job."

Councilman DeMaio, the only city official in the group to get an "F," wasn't available for an interview.

His office issued a written statement which said the coalition "is dominated by organized labor and partisan political operatives who have put out a flawed and misleading evaluation on environmental issues because they disagree with Councilmember DeMaio's efforts to reform city finances."

The statement goes on to say that DeMaio "has made protecting the environment a top priority and has led efforts on water conservation, energy efficiency and attracting clean tech jobs to San Diego."

Colin Parent with the San Diego League of Conservation Voters said Mayor Sanders has not made the environment a priority.

"San Diego is one of the only cities of its size without a point person in the Mayor's office to manage environmental initiatives," Parent said.

The mayor's office issued a response included in the report that says Sanders has supported

The San Diego City Council and Mayor Jerry Sanders were given mostly below-average grades in a [report card](#) this week based on environmental issues. It's the first time 11 San Diego environmental groups have worked together to evaluate the elected officials. And the

The letter grades ranged from an "A" for San Diego City Councilwoman Donna Frye to an "F" for Councilman Carl DeMaio. Mayor Jerry Sanders got a D-minus.

The average grade for the eight council members and the mayor: C-minus.

Bruce Reznik with San Diego Coastkeeper said the grades are based on decisions related to environmental health in 2009.

"If this environmental report card were truly a classroom on environmental protection for our elected officials, our mayor and our

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efforts to reduce storm-water pollution and has encouraged residents to use solar energy.

Two issues supported by the environmental groups carried more weight in the evaluation: a vote on a plan to recycle wastewater into useable drinking water, and a majority vote against appointing Diane Takvorian of the Environmental Health Coalition to the San Diego Port Commission.

The environmental groups pushed for Takvorian because of her decades-long work to clean up pollution in neighborhoods surrounding Port operations.

Nicole Capretz with the Environmental Health Coalition said the Council will appoint another Port Commissioner this year.

"So this is going to be an opportunity for the council to redeem itself and actually appoint a Commissioner with a record of fighting for social and environmental justice," said Capretz.

Bruce Reznik with Coastkeeper said the previous city council showed leadership in advancing the pilot project to recycle wastewater into drinking water.

But he said the current city council almost derailed the effort.

"This council was left with the relatively simple task of approving the contracts to move forward," said Reznik. "Unfortunately, they were sort of like the gang that couldn't shoot straight. They barely could get the contracts approved, every vote was a challenge and an uphill battle. We had to have hearing after rehearing. And while the pilot project did ultimately move forward, there were a lot of negative votes associated that went into the report card."

Jim Peugh with the Audubon Society said a lot of council members lost points for the way they handled a city plan to reduce flooding and storm water runoff.

The plan would clear soil and vegetation from city drainage channels and natural streams.

"Tear out all vegetation and they aren't doing analysis to see whether it really needs to be done," said Peugh. "There are plenty of wonderful ways to do it rather than basically having all the habitat value ripped out."

He said the plan could have negative impacts on wildlife habitat and water quality. Hearings on the plan are expected this spring.

The Report Card was produced for the environmental groups by Strategic Community Consulting, an independent group.

The coalition will track the San Diego City Council and the Mayor on environmental issues again this year.

Those issues include the city's proposed creek channel maintenance program and the appointment of a new Port Commissioner.

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Actually Mr. DeMaio, if you bother to take a look at the report, you'll find that the evaluation was done by Strategic Community Consulting at UCSD.

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