

SWRCB PETITION: A CALL TO ACTION FOR THE SALTON SEA

IID recently submitted a petition to the State Water Resources Control Board to exercise its continuing authority over the nation's largest agricultural-to-urban water transfer and avert an emerging environmental and public-health crisis at the Salton Sea. IID and Imperial County recently partnered on a joint presentation to the State Water Resources Control Board to ensure that the Board hears a unified message from the Imperial Valley.

Time is running out on the state's unmet obligation to restore the Salton Sea

- In 2003, the Legislature recognized that the benefits of the Quantification Settlement Agreement flow to all Californians and committed the state to assuming the cost of Salton Sea restoration.
- The serious and far-reaching environmental effects of the QSA on the Salton Sea were widely known at the time. Absent the Legislature's statutory commitment, which the QSA parties relied on in approving the agreement, the nation's largest agricultural-to-urban water transfer could not have moved forward.
- Under the State Water Resources Control Board's revised order (WRO 2002-0013), the Imperial Irrigation District has been fallowing land to generate mitigation water for the Salton Sea. In 2017, that mitigation water, which was intended to provide the state sufficient time to select, adopt and fund Salton Sea restoration, will end and any real hope of building a smaller but sustainable sea will end with it.

The failure to act now will have devastating impacts on the region, its economy and way of life

- Windblown dust emissions from as much as 100,000 acres of exposed lakebed will dramatically worsen the already-poor air quality in the Imperial and Coachella valleys and imperil the region's largely agricultural economy, which accounts for nearly 50 percent of all local employment.
- The incidence of asthma, heart and lung disease and even premature death among the working-class population of this mainly rural and economically disadvantaged region can be expected to increase exponentially in the years ahead.
- The environment at the Salton Sea, including what the Audubon Society calls an environmental stronghold because it contains some of the most important bird habitat in the hemisphere, will be lost if the state continues to shirk its restoration commitment.

At a time of water scarcity, IID stands behind the QSA and for a smaller but sustainable Salton Sea

- IID is mindful of the challenges posed by the ongoing drought and is focused on solving the problem at the Salton Sea without upending the QSA or the water transfers it authorized.
- The QSA is a cornerstone of sound water policy in the state, a delicate compromise that must be enforced in its entirety and the state's unequivocal Salton Sea restoration obligation remains an essential component of that compromise.
- The development of renewable energy resources in and around the Salton Sea represents a true water/energy nexus and can serve as a springboard to a smaller but sustainable body of water that can also help to advance the state's climate change goals.

The high cost of doing nothing at the Salton Sea demands nothing less than action — and urgency

- A recent study by the Pacific Institute estimates that continued inaction by the state in meeting its restoration obligation at the Salton Sea could cost up to \$70 billion over the life of the QSA.
- IID and its urban partners have met all of their milestones under the QSA, even though doing so has been difficult and fraught with uncertainty.
- SWRCB should require the state, the QSA parties and other stakeholders to work together to identify a realistic and durable funding mechanism for Salton Sea restoration. Dialogue among the parties is a necessary first step in the process, followed by an order by SWRCB conditioning the water transfers on restoration of the Salton Sea, according to a specific timetable, and in a manner that averts the dire public-health, environmental and economic consequences that loom for the region.



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