

2003 QUANTIFICATION SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



WHAT IS THE 2003 QUANTIFICATION SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT (QSA)?

Signed in 2003, the QSA is a series of agreements that limit California's draw on the Colorado River to 4.4 million acre-feet per year. Central to this agreement is the largest agricultural-to-urban water transfer in the nation's history: approximately 400,000 acre-feet per year of conserved water from Imperial Valley farms to urban water agencies, primarily in the San Diego region. The parties that signed this agreement include the Imperial Irrigation District, the Coachella Valley Water District, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the San Diego County Water Authority, the U.S. Department of Interior and California State agencies.

HOW DOES IID CONSERVE WATER FOR THE QSA?

IID's approach to conserving water is multifaceted – focusing on both in-system and on-farm conservation. Multiple conservation programs are in varying stages of implementation and will continue to ramp-up and create the approximately 400,000 acre-feet per year amount the QSA eventually requires.

WHAT DOES THE QSA HAVE TO DO WITH THE SALTON SEA?

Beginning in January 2018, the conserved water flowing to the coastal regions from Imperial Valley will no longer be able to come from land fallowing and will need to come from system-wide and on-farm efficiency conservation measures. At the same time, a requirement imposed by the State Water Resources Control Board – that Imperial Irrigation District deliver "mitigation water" to replace reduced inflows to the Sea – will cease. These changes will significantly reduce inflows to the Sea, further exacerbating the already dwindling inflows to the Salton Sea and will significantly increase the amount of exposed lakebed and associated public health and environmental impacts. In fact, by 2030 more than 50,000 acres of lakebed will be exposed causing harmful dust to affect air quality and destroying wildlife habitat if action is not taken.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN THE PAST DECADE TO RESTORE THE SALTON SEA?

Plans to restore the Salton Sea have been published by the State of California and the Salton Sea Authority (SSA), a regional joint powers authority. Some habitat restoration projects have begun. Governor Brown gave restoration efforts a boost in 2013 by signing a budget bill that included \$2 million to conduct a new feasibility study and by signing AB 71, which authorizes the SSA to lead the study in coordination with the State Natural Resources Agency. However, to date, no integrated and meaningful efforts have been undertaken to carry out restoration of the Sea to fully address air quality and environmental impacts associated with the dwindling inflows to the Sea, which are expected to get exponentially worse starting in 2018.

WHAT IS IID DOING FOR THE SALTON SEA?

IID – in partnership with Imperial County – has launched the Salton Sea Restoration & Renewable Energy Initiative to spur development of new clean energy projects at the Salton Sea. Funds generated by new renewable energy projects would help bolster the State's obligation to fund restoration at the Sea. The initiative, which was formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding with Imperial County and the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District in October 2013, will focus on developing up to 1,700 megawatts of new renewable energy at the Sea primarily from geothermal resources, but including other renewable energy resources such as solar, wind, algae and solar gradient ponds, particularly those that can be located on exposed lakebed to help reduce dust and protect wildlife.

HOW IS THE INITIATIVE DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUS EFFORTS MADE BY THE SALTON SEA AUTHORITY AND THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA?

The initiative is not separate and apart from the previous efforts made by the SSA and State of California toward restoration of the Salton Sea. The initiative includes efforts to build on the SSA's restoration plan, published in 2006, by updating that plan taking into account environmental, economic and other factors that have changed or arisen since 2006 and including restoring the Sea to a smaller, sustainable resource.

WHY IS IID DOING THIS NOW?

It has been a decade since the QSA was signed and at that time the State of California made a commitment to plan for and fund restoration of the Salton Sea. Today, the Sea faces a crisis and will reach a tipping point at the end of 2017. IID can no longer wait for the State to act on its commitment. While full restoration of the Sea will depend on the State honoring its commitments, IID endeavors to avert a public health and environmental disaster by pursuing the initiative to provide the foundation upon which the State can honor its commitments.

CAN IID AND THE COUNTY FUND THE RESTORATION OF THE SALTON SEA WITHOUT STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING?

No. For full restoration of the Salton Sea to occur, the State must fulfill its commitment to finance restoration of the Salton Sea. Importantly, the initiative anticipates a restoration plan for a smaller, sustainable Sea that would be less costly. Further, the initiative identifies funding sources for the generation of monies for restoration activities to bolster State financing and ensure meaningful restoration can begin as soon as possible.



Visit us on Facebook at

SALTON SEA RESTORATION AND RENEWABLE ENERGY INITIATIVE



IID

A century of service.