



## ***State Accountability Improves at Salton Sea***

(News Release -- For Immediate Release)

Salton Sea revitalization efforts led by the state of California will now accelerate under improved accountability and performance milestones, thanks to the State Water Resources Control Board action to accept a major agreement (WRO 2002-0013) to deal with the decline of California's largest inland lake.

The Salton Sea, home to the largest and most diverse population of migratory waterfowl outside the Gulf Coast Everglades, continues on its decline as a result of reduced water inflows – a product of improved agricultural efficiencies, historical changes in the climate, decreased inflows from Mexico, and increasing transfers for the benefit of urban customers. As the largest inland lake in the state of California, the Salton Sea is home to nearly two thirds of all migratory waterfowl traveling the Pacific Flyway. The Sea's ecosystem and neighboring economy are threatened by rising salinity levels and lowering water elevations.

“The decision by the State Board brings greater accountability to its commitments at the Salton Sea. Now comes the hard part where the state must find the resources to fund those commitments for the sake of public health, ecosystem survival, and water security for California and the arid Southwest,” commented G. Patrick O’Dowd, President of the Salton Sea Authority (SSA). The SSA Board of Directors voted unanimously to support the Order at its recent Board of Directors meeting. The SSA is a joint powers authority empowered by the legislature and governor through AB 71 to work in consultation and cooperation with the California Natural Resources Agency to revitalize the Salton Sea.

“The good news is the SSA and its partner agencies and stakeholders are working more effectively with the state than ever before,” stated Phil Rosentrater, GM/Executive Director of the Salton Sea Authority (SSA). “For the first time in the history of the Sea, the state is aligned with local leaders and regional stakeholders in a consensus plan that is realistic and achievable, with projects that are feasibly designed and permitted and with real funding to begin to improve the Sea. This sets the stage for SSA and the state to forge new cooperative agreements with federal agencies and other capable stakeholders,” observes Executive Director Rosentrater.

The agreement, initiated by Imperial Irrigation District, Imperial County, and San Diego County Water Authority, brings greater assurance of state commitment to live up to its responsibilities under previously negotiated water transfer agreements and state law. The new agreement lays out specific yearly acreage goals for the state's Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) as well as defining the State Board's oversight role in the process. The state's SSMP 10 year plan calls for the State to build habitat and dust suppression projects over the next 10 years to combat harmful exposed playa and to provide habitat for birds of the Pacific Flyway. The SSMP 10 year plan also calls for the development of a long term plan for the Sea by at least 2022, if not sooner.

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