



First state-funded project completed at the Salton Sea

(News Release -- For Immediate Release)

The Salton Sea Authority (SSA) and its partners have achieved historic progress with completion of the first state-funded project at the Salton Sea, the largest lake in California.

The fully functional project was celebrated with a Water Flowing Ceremony at the Torres Martinez Wetlands adjacent to the Whitewater storm channel and the Salton Sea on April 12.

The SSA served as lead agency on the project in partnership with the Torres Martinez Tribe. The first phase, which was funded through grants issued by the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, consists of creating a system of ponds, pumps, and solar arrays capable of pumping water to 46 acres designed to cover dusty playa while providing habitat for migratory birds. Because the Salton Sea has no outlet and is growing saltier, the relatively freshwater wetlands on Torres Martinez tribal lands can help offset loss of wildlife habitat.

The Wetlands Project is a precursor to the Salton Sea Management Plan designed to restore health to the Salton Sea which is California's largest lake and a major stopover on the Pacific Flyway. California law requires the California Natural Resources Agency to develop the plan in cooperation and consultation with the SSA.

"As Board President of the Salton Sea Authority and resident of the Coachella Valley, I am pleased to see the first phase completed for this wetlands project on tribal land. This progress is reason for hope at the Salton Sea. Not only is this the first state-funded project to be completed at the Salton Sea, the project itself was driven by the leadership of the Salton Sea Authority and its member agencies," stated SSA Board President Patrick G. O'Dowd.

Water transfers brokered by the state, along with drought and conservation measures, have reduced flows to the Sea, resulting in negative impacts to wildlife habitat and exposure of dusty lakebed. For generations, the Salton Sea has sustained one of the nation's largest and most diverse populations of migratory waterfowl as a nesting ground of vital importance to the Pacific Flyway. Wetlands projects like the one at Torres Martinez are intended to help maintain this wildlife presence at the sea and protect public health from air quality deterioration.

The Salton Sea Authority (SSA) and the Torres Martinez Tribe joined forces to launch the first test case of this approach using state funds provided through the California Natural Resources Agency.

"Successful completion of the first phase of this wetlands project demonstrates that genuine progress is being achieved on the ground at the Salton Sea. This is a direct result of the

interagency cooperation among the partners and stakeholders at the Sea," observed Phil Rosentrater, GM/Executive Director for the SSA.

The SSA partnership with the Tribe and the State on this project is a prime example of what can be done when those partners cooperate to accomplish the greater good. We have all come a long way in the past couple of years. We must remain committed to build momentum so that we can create a healthier and more prosperous future for the Salton Sea."

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