



Local leadership gains momentum at the Salton Sea

(For Immediate Release)

Recognizing that close cooperation between local land-use agencies at the Salton Sea is pivotal to progress among all parties with shared interests at the Salton Sea, Riverside and Imperial Counties have forged an historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for cooperative planning at the Salton Sea.

“This MOU adopted by the Counties is born of a spirit of cooperation that is welcomed at the Salton Sea Authority. It is through genuine cooperation and consultation that amazing new progress is being accomplished at the Sea,” stated Thomas Tortez, President of the Salton Sea Authority and Chairman of the Torres Martinez Band of Cahuilla Indians.

The MOU outlines a good faith commitment of collaboration between both counties. Architects of the agreement – Riverside County Supervisors V. Manuel Perez and Marion Ashley, and Imperial County Supervisors John Renison and Ryan Kelley – noted that infrastructure financing strategies in each county will be far more effective when reinforced by integrated planning efforts between the two counties and among the Salton Sea Authority members.

“This MOU is intended to serve as a catalyst for change to improve the Sea in a way that benefits all stakeholders,” stated Supervisor Manuel Perez, who serves as a Director on the SSA Board. “The MOU sends a message to our state and federal partners that the locals are united and ready to lead the restoration effort.”

The Salton Sea Authority is empowered by the Governor and state legislature to work in cooperation and consultation with the state of California on plans and projects needed to revitalize the Salton Sea. The Salton Sea is the largest lake in the California, a vital stop for migratory birds on the Pacific Flyway and the top tourist destination in the state decades ago.

Lowering water elevations and rising salt concentrations at the sea pose harm to human health, ecosystem habitat, and economic opportunities for communities around the Sea, potentially impacting the water security of the entire Southwest if nothing is done to improve conditions. In the MOU, County leaders call for cooperation to fully implement a Perimeter Lake concept that would address air quality concerns by stabilizing the shoreline while providing habitat for waterfowl as well as enhancing economic opportunities in recreation and renewable energy.



“Imperial County and Riverside County have a vested interest in the long-term solution for the Salton Sea. This MOU common vision will be shared with Imperial Irrigation District, Coachella Valley Water District, Torres Martinez Indian Tribe, and ultimately the State of California,” said Imperial County Supervisor Ryan Kelley, who serves on the SSA Board.

The formal revitalization plan, proposed by the California Natural Resources Agency and endorsed by the Salton Sea Authority, already includes portions of the Perimeter Lake in its list of projects prioritized for funding. But the state has only designed and funded the first sections in a larger project intended to eventually cover exposed shoreline with water that continues to flow from agricultural lands that surround the Sea.

The Counties want to accelerate the pace of progress on the Perimeter Lake by working more closely together to establish complementary infrastructure investments like the Enhanced Infrastructure Finance District (“EIFD”) that was proposed as a local financing tool in the Financial Feasibility Action Plan adopted by the Salton Sea Authority in 2016. That financing mechanism is designed to stimulate economic development around the Sea that can eventually support a healthier, more prosperous Salton Sea.

At the monthly meeting of the Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors, county representatives called upon their peers to join in supporting the MOU, eventually providing state and federal partners as well as other stakeholders with greater certainty of success in addressing multiple challenges shared at the Sea.

“The Salton Sea Authority board adopted Guiding Principles that insist upon investing scarce public funds in a way that will deliver the biggest bang for the buck. The Sea has multiple challenges, so that means we need to creatively develop solutions that deliver multiple benefits from a single investment” commented Phil Rosentrater, GM/Executive Director for the Salton Sea Authority. That is what the Counties are calling for in the MOU supporting interagency cooperation for a Perimeter Lake at the Salton Sea.

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