

## Talking Points – Phil Rosentrater

### A.B. 71 (Perez) -- Support

#### Asm Water Parks & Wildlife Hearing 4-2-13

- The Salton Sea Authority wishes to convey unanimous support for AB 71, a bill that requires the state Resources Agency to consult and coordinate with the Salton Sea Authority (SSA) in an integrated manner to restore the Salton Sea.
- The Salton Sea poses great promise as home to America's most diverse and potentially massive renewable energy powerhouse, including solar, geothermal, biofuel and mineral resources found nowhere else on earth in such simultaneous bounty.
- At the same time, if these enormous resources are not harnessed in a way that allows economic development to restore health to the Sea environment, grave ecosystem impacts, and public health and economic consequences are predicted for the region around the Sea -- and for millions of Southern California residents and businesses located downwind.
- The Salton Sea is California's largest inland body of water. At 227 feet below sea level, the Sea is located in a sunny valley between Riverside and Imperial Counties. The Sea has no outlet, causing minerals that flow in to become more concentrated. It is home to the largest migratory waterfowl in America outside the Everglades.
- Reduced water inflows over the past decade due to drought and conservation will accelerate with a major water transfer in 2017. Unless responsible parties implement successful mitigations, the rapid drop in Sea elevation is predicted to impose potentially disastrous impacts to the environment, economy and human health.
- Of particular concern are impacts on human health and agricultural productivity delivered by dust particles swept into the winds from exposed lakebed. On September 11 last year, a hydrogen sulfide cloud belching from the depths of the Salton Sea wafted westward to the homes of tens of millions of people in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. The 911 switchboards lit up all the way from Thermal to Simi Valley as alarmed citizens reported an intense "rotten egg" aroma. This time, the low concentration of hydrogen sulfide served as an unpleasant reminder that a more ominous air quality impact may become airborne in the future, unless the state takes action to begin implementing solutions in a coordinated fashion with the Salton Sea Authority.
- State attempts to address these serious environmental concerns include legislation passed in 2010 to create a Salton Sea Restoration Council (SB 51, Chapter 303, Statutes of 2010) was established in the Natural Resources Agency to oversee the restoration of the Salton Sea. The Council was comprised of a 16-member executive committee which was to serve as a governing body and provide guidance and oversight for the Sea's restoration program.

The Council was required to review restoration plans and report back to the Governor and the Legislature with a recommended Salton Sea restoration plan by June 30, 2013.

- Given that the Council never convened a meeting since its creation in 2010 coupled with the state's dismal financial position, the Council was eliminated during the 2012 budget process
- A new governance model to fill the void left by the Council is needed to comprehensively guide the Sea's restoration, while ensuring the inclusion of all stakeholder voices. AB 71 will provide that new governance.
- AB 71 would provide the Salton Sea Authority, a local joint powers authority, a participatory role in seeking solutions for restoring the sea. The bill augments local participation relative to coordinating with the state on restoration efforts, while striving for a balanced restoration partnership that involves key state agencies.
- All SSA entities have been officially listed as sponsors.
  - Coachella Valley Water District
  - Imperial County
  - Torres Martinez band of Cahuilla Indians
  - Imperial Irrigation District
  - Salton Sea Authority
- Passage of AB 71 is necessary for restoration efforts to move forward, particularly due to legislative action last year that eliminated the Salton Sea Restoration Council (SRC). The state-appointed SRC never held a single meeting.
- Most important, AB 71 empowers the SSA to lead a funding feasibility review study in consultation with the state and a technical advisory group. The feasibility review would be funded from no less than \$2 million in existing bond moneys in the Salton Sea Restoration Fund.
- The funding and feasibility review study will implement the intent of the original restoration legislation (SB 1214 (2004)) directing the Resources Agency to develop a restoration plan backed with a feasible funding plan. To date, no such plan has been developed. The lack of a feasible and fundable restoration plan precludes any meaningful progress in achieving critical state and local restoration goals.
- Support of the SSA and its member agencies is pledged in good faith that the state will cooperatively engage on the completion of the financial feasibility review in timely manner as defined in AB 71.
- AB 71 offers hope that this state/local partnership will generate new local financial resources from economic development required to transform the troubled Salton Sea region into an environmentally stable economic powerhouse.