



SAN GORGONIO CHAPTER

Regional Groups Serving Riverside and San Bernardino Counties: Los Serranos, Tahquitz, San Bernardino Mountains, Mojave, Moreno Valley, Big Bear

September 15, 2020

Board of Directors
Salton Sea Authority

BY EMAIL RE NORTH LAKE PILOT PROJECT

Chairman and Members of the Board:

I am writing for the Tahquitz Group of the Sierra Club and its 1500 members in and around the Coachella Valley. I'd like to express our pleasure that the Authority has been allocated \$19.5 million to construct a pilot for the North Lake project. The North Lake is an extremely important project to sustain fish-eating birds which comprise half of the 400 species that rely on the Salton Sea.

We understand that this task entails public engagement as well as wildlife agency involvement if it is to achieve sorely needed deep-water ecosystem benefits but also hopefully multiple community benefits. Considering the serious health issues affecting adjacent residents (issues which are compounded by the dust from exposed playa), as well as the steep decline of the Salton Sea fishery, that means time is also of the essence. Sierra Club stands by to assist in making the public input process as efficient and effective as possible.

We do have one significant concern: the state budget language does not indicate how this pilot project will actually prove up the North Lake concept. The thing that distinguishes the North Lake from other SSMP projects is that this project will be substantially deep water, to sustain not only recreation but a meaningful fishery. These attributes are something none of the other projects offer. We urge the Authority to focus on these key attributes to ensure that this is truly a pilot project that will test the construction techniques, engineering challenges, etc. involved in building a levee system to capture Whitewater flows into an actual lake. This is as opposed to shallow water with pockets of deeper water which is slated to be provided by the SCH.

It would be helpful if the North Lake Pilot were a standing item on the agenda, in order to highlight its importance and urgency. Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Very truly yours,

Joan Taylor, Chair
Tahquitz Group, Sierra Club