



May 20, 2020

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair  
Senate Budget Sub 4  
State Capitol Room 5052

Assemblymember Jim Cooper, Chair  
Assembly Budget Sub 4  
State Capitol, Room 6025

**Re: Support for Governor Newsom’s Proposal to provide significant funding to Salton Sea Restoration Activities**

Dear Senator Caballero and Assemblymember Cooper:

On behalf of the Salton Sea Authority, a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) consisting of the Coachella Valley Water District, the Imperial Irrigation District, Imperial County, Riverside County and the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, we write in enthusiastic support of the Governor’s proposed investments for the Salton Sea. Specifically, the Governor’s May Revise calls for:

1. New River Improvement Project—\$18 million one-time General Fund and \$10 million Proposition 68 bond funds to support the New River Improvement Project, which will address solid waste and pollution exposure challenges in the City of Calexico, and support health, recreation, and economic benefits in the area.
2. Salton Sea Management Plan—\$19.3 million Proposition 68 bond funds to address the air quality and habitat restoration objectives at the Salton Sea through implementation of the North Lake Pilot Project.

These critical investments will go a long way toward helping California meet its moral and legal obligations to the Salton Sea. In this time of Covid distress, these crucial economic investments will help anchor the economic recovery in one of California’s most economically distressed regions.

The New River is a dangerously polluted waterway that flows north across the United States-Mexico border, through the city of Calexico, and then empties into the Salton Sea, some 60 miles away. Water flowing across the border often contains raw sewage, industrial, domestic and agricultural wastes, trash and other solid pollutants, owing mostly to Mexicali’s overburdened

and deteriorated infrastructure. In August 2019 levels of fecal coliform at the New River were found at levels 790 times above the legal federal limit. Once at the Salton Sea, contaminants in the river continue to degrade the state's ability to protect and restore the Salton Sea's ecosystem as required under the Quantification Settlement Agreement, and further hinders the economic revitalization of Imperial and Riverside Counties.

With this historic investment, the State will be taking a monumental step toward addressing this unacceptable situation. With respect to the New River, the investment of \$28 million will support the New River Improvement Project, a comprehensive proposal that protects vulnerable residents living in communities bypassed by the river by installing a trash screen, encasing and piping dirty river flow around the City of Calexico, and enabling the pumping of a portion of water treated by the City of Calexico back into the channel to restore some of the River's flows.

On the northern end the Salton Sea, the investment of \$19 million will launch the first northern phase of the Perimeter Lake, a concept proposal supported by the SSA and all of its member agencies as well as all cities and tribal councils in both Imperial and Coachella Valleys. This northern component of the larger Perimeter Lake, will be designed to provide deep-water habitat along the perimeter shoreline of the sea to support fish and bird populations while covering exposed playa and suppressing fugitive dust emissions. In addition, the lake will also enable the revitalization of shoreline communities that were the number-one recreational tourist destination in California a few decades ago. This economic recovery will be transformational to one of the most environmentally distressed and economically depressed areas of California.

In closing, we understand and appreciate you are faced with some very tough decisions as you try and develop a balance budget during the worst economic collapse since the Great Recession. Maintaining the Governor's investment in the Salton Sea, however, is critical to enabling the state to meet its moral and legal obligations to the region. For these reasons, we urge you to support this critical investment.

Sincerely,

Castulo Estrada  
Chairman

Alex Cardenas  
Vice Chairman