



Governor signs bill to create Blue Ribbon Commission

Salton Sea gets boost to tap vast lithium supplies

(News Release -- For Immediate Release)

The Salton Sea, epicenter of the largest and most diverse portfolio of renewable energy opportunities in North America, gained support from the state of California to boost lithium extraction from geothermal brines found in vast quantities at the Salton Sea.

Governor Gavin Newsom has signed into law legislation by Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia that will establish a Blue Ribbon Commission to develop strategies to extract lithium for electric batteries from geothermal brines.

AB 1657 directs the California Energy Commission (CEC) to establish a 14-member commission to help develop an action plan to accelerate plans and programs to extract lithium from geothermal brine near the Salton Sea. The Commission would include appointees by the Assembly Speaker and the Senate Rules Committee and would also include a member of the Public Utilities Commission, a representative of the automobile manufacturing industry, the geothermal industry, and a local government representative.

"The vast lithium reserves of the Salton Sea region have the potential to anchor the state's climate goals while also creating thousands of good paying union jobs in one of the most economically depressed areas of the state. The SSA thanks the Governor for taking this action, and our very own Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, an unabashed champion for the Salton Sea, for introducing and moving forward this important legislation" said Alex Cardenas, President of the Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors.

Among the tasks the Commission will undertake is the evaluation of possible federal, state and local incentives to encourage economic investment in the development of lithium extraction and potential lithium ion manufacturing industries. In addition, the Commission will recommend ways to streamline permitting of lithium-related facilities. The Commission is directed to make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on creating a favorable regulatory and investment climate for lithium extraction from geothermal, and report to the Governor by October 1, 2022.

Phil Rosentrater, General Manager of the Salton Sea Authority (SSA), said the CEC's commitment to develop renewable energy and lithium extraction around the Sea brings new hope for a healthier and more prosperous Salton Sea region. The SSA agencies support cooperative planning to develop a Perimeter Lake project that can cover dusty playa and restore habitat in harmony with economic opportunities in recreation and renewable energy.

The SSA, a joint powers agency empowered to work cooperatively with state and federal entities to restore the Salton Sea, is comprised of Imperial and Riverside Counties, Torres Martinez Band of Desert Cahuilla, and Imperial Irrigation District and Coachella Valley Water District.

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