



Cultivating Conservation

MEMO

TO: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors and G. Patrick O'Dowd
FROM: Lisa Moore
RE: Federal Report
DATE: March 18, 2022

The February report noted that we have been working with the State to cooperatively move our federal funding initiatives forward. This report discusses our progress regarding that coordination with respect to both USDA and Corps of Engineers funding streams, as well as an update on additional federal legislation which was recently enacted that advances our federal advocacy efforts with respect to Bureau of Reclamation funding. We are also actively working with our delegation on a way to coordinate all these funding efforts, and will have a report for our Directors in this regard for the next board meeting.

Reclamation:

Our federal Salton Sea advocacy is framed, in part, around the premise that the federal government must increase federal investment at the Sea because it is a major landowner and bears tribal trust responsibilities to the Torres Martinez Tribe. When we began our federal funding advocacy in earnest in 2015, this argument was not widely accepted in the federal family.

The administration notably accepted that premise in the Trump administration's FY 21 budget request to Congress. In that document, Interior officially recognized its responsibility and estimated a \$332.5 million near-term cost to manage exposed or anticipated to be exposed federal Salton Sea lands, with an estimated \$4.5 million in annual operations and maintenance costs.

Following up on this estimate, Congress included relevant language/direction in the Consolidated Appropriations Act (PL 117-103) signed by the President on March 15, 2022. In particular, Congress directs Reclamation "to provide to the Committees not later than 90 days after enactment of this Act a briefing on Reclamation's plan for managing the air quality impacts of the estimated 8.75 square miles of lands it owns that will emerge from the receding sea over the next decade."

Corps of Engineers:

We conducted two very productive meetings to advance the Corps/Authority/CNRA long-term Salton Sea Feasibility Study. First, we conducted a teleconference with the Corps and CNRA to discuss moving forward with the required cost-share agreement to begin the study. That meeting reflected an agreement to do so in partnership.

Related to the study, the recently enacted Consolidated Appropriations Act discussed above includes \$200,000 requested by our Congressional delegation and the Authority to be earmarked for

the Corps of Engineers to undertake the first year of this study. Because the passage of this FY22 legislation was delayed, we had also advocated that the Corps include funding for the study in its work plan to spend funding provided to the Corps via the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act legislation enacted in 2021. The Corps included \$1.5 million for the Sea study in that work plan. In our discussion with the Corps this month, they indicated it would be their intention to maintain both pieces of funding to ensure we have adequate resources to undertake the feasibility study.

Second, as you may recall, CNRA had expressed interest in securing new Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) language to modify the description of the feasibility study enacted in WRDA 2020. Based on our discussion with the Corps and CNRA, it was agreed that additional legislation is not needed at this time.

USDA:

We also productively discussed the status of the USDA Watershed Plan with CNRA. As you will recall, work on that plan is nearly complete. We discussed the process for moving that plan forward for an approval and/or waiver process. Once approved, activities described/evaluated in that plan should be eligible for USDA 100% design funding and 50/50 cost share. Based on this information, I reached out to USDA HQ to express the Authority's strong support for moving the plan forward so that we may secure project implementation funding via USDA.