



Executive Director's Report To the Board of the Directors March 24, 2022

Eating an Elephant

Desmond Tutu once wisely said that "there is only one way to eat an elephant: a bite at a time". Indeed, for years we have discussed tackling the projects at the sea "incrementally", to phase them into digestible components that were both financeable and achievable. But one thing we all know about the Sea is that it is large, and the challenges and opportunities associated therewith are of equal scale. Numerous projects have been proposed and are being proposed to address the changes long occurring in the Sea and region, including a "backbone" project that will tether the stabilization of the Sea with that of the adjacent communities and the region as a whole. But whether the region is stabilized by way of a small subset of projects or, more likely, a wide array of strategies implemented both at the Sea and in and around the communities, it's going to take an enormous amount of effort and resources.

It is also well said that "time is money" (often attributed to Benjamin Franklin), and nowhere has that expression been more pronounced than in the water space. To be sure, if the Hoover Dam wasn't built when it was, it is doubtful we could afford it today. Similarly, though it will be necessary to compartmentalize the important works in the region, delaying their full and final implementation will certainly cause them to be much more expensive, and may indeed compromise their likelihood of success. That is why it is essential that we do not tarry in addressing the immediate, intermediate, and long-range challenges and opportunities in the region. And for all the good intentions expressed, eating an elephant one bite at a time takes a very long time, and also subjects the meal to degradation and ultimately, waste.

The Salton Sea Authority believes, rather than tackling this task discreetly, "one bite at a time" if you will, working in conjunction with our State and Federal partners, effectively utilizing the resources of our members, and harmonizing with the needs and aspiration of our local, regional, national, and global partners, many projects can be identified, funded, and developed simultaneously, so that the long neglected needs of this region can be fully and finally addressed. So, rather than eating the elephant "one bite at a time", we believe a more prudent approach would be to invite over all our family, neighbors, and friends – even some we might not always get along with, carve this "elephant" up, and have a banquet!

Funding has historically also been a challenge. But rather than fighting over thinner and thinner slices of the same pie, we have found it more productive to in essence, open a bakery and bake a whole bunch of pies. Through the diligent efforts of the Authority and its advocates, working with our members, again in coordination with our partners including the State and the Federal family, and with the strong voice and support of our stakeholders, we have been successful at identifying and securing numerous near- and long-term funding opportunities. And through outreach, education, and collaboration we have been able to draw attention to not just the problems that exist, not just the cost of addressing those problems, but the benefits and importance of making timely investments to address those opportunities and challenges. Extensive work has been undertaken at the Federal level, producing opportunities under the Watershed Act, in WRDA legislation, and through Farm Bill, among others. And by working with the State of California to secure commitments that provide hundreds of millions of general fund dollars for work at the Sea, and actively educating and informing the people of California, resulting in voter authorization of Bond funding for this important work, the Authority and its advocates have placed the Sea and region in a position to actively and aggressively pursue transformative work with a reasonable expectation that it really can happen.

Finally, economic development activities occurring throughout the region – including but not limited to geothermal and lithium development, will continue to draw attention to the Sea. By extension, it will be essential that member agencies, in coordination and collaboration with the Authority, ensure that the infrastructure needs and community impacts of these changes are properly identified, evaluated and addressed. And know that anything that helps facilitate a transition of the Sea and region – including the communities therein – from what it once was to what it sustainably can be is part and parcel of what the Authority stands for. We continue to work for our members, with our partners, and alongside our many stakeholders to ensure a brighter, more prosperous future for the Sea, the region, and the people who live here.