



MEMO

TO: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors and G. Patrick O’Dowd
FROM: Lisa Moore
RE: **Federal Report**
DATE: February 21, 2023

Authority Executive Director O’Dowd will be visiting Washington, D.C. in connection with the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) meeting next week. We will be meeting with the California Congressional delegation and other officials to discuss Authority priorities including implementation of the Colorado River drought fund included in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the associated \$250 million pledge to the Salton Sea, Congressional engagement in Colorado River drought, and progress on the Corps of Engineers Salton Sea feasibility study.

Bipartisan Infrastructure and IRA Legislation Implementation

Reclamation has received roughly \$12 billion in new financial resources to address drought across the West. Approximately \$8 billion will be directed through existing authorities and which the agency is expending through competitive grant programs like WaterSmart. The \$4 billion drought fund is more flexible and directed specifically to addressing Colorado River drought. While the legislation does not foreclose other drought impacted regions from seeking funds from the \$4 billion fund, the Commissioner’s briefings on the fund have underscored Reclamation’s intention to focus the funding on the Colorado River Basin. According to recent briefings by Reclamation, roughly \$1 billion of the fund has been committed in some form to addressing Colorado River drought. The recent \$250 million Salton Sea commitment is part of that \$1 billion thus far committed.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) also received substantial IRA funding — roughly \$20 billion. This funding was directed by Congress to focus specifically on helping growers to adopt climate-smart practices (*e.g.*, nitrogen reduction, cover cropping, no tillage systems) to sequester greenhouse gasses. Recognizing the significant Congressional interest in drought, however, USDA Secretary Vilsack recently formulated a Western Water Framework focused on directing USDA funding to help growers conserve water, restore wetlands and streams, and protect agricultural productivity. As part of his announcement of the framework, Vilsack announced that USDA will be dedicating resources to partner with Reclamation on drought. We are following up with both agencies concerning this partnership and the opportunities for the Salton Sea region.