



**MEMO**

**TO:** Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors and G. Patrick O’Dowd  
**FROM:** Lisa Moore  
**RE:** **Federal Report**  
**DATE:** March 20, 2023

Authority Executive Director O’Dowd, along with several Authority Directors, visited Washington, D.C. as part of the Association of California Water Agencies events the week of February 27. We met with staff for Senators Feinstein and Padilla, Congressman Ruiz, and headquarters and regional Bureau of Reclamation 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.

**Congressional Meetings**

We thanked our Congressional delegation for including the \$4 billion drought fund in the IRA legislation and the direction that this fund address Salton Sea mitigation needs associated with water conservation undertaken in our region. We discussed the lack of clarity around the impact analysis associated with the current call for short-term water conservation, the apparent lack of intent to evaluate such impacts associated with long-term water conservation measures expected to be included in Reclamation’s effort to update the Interim Storage Guidelines for Mead and Powell, and the need to better understand such impacts so that funding is set aside to mitigate them. We discussed several follow up options in this regard. Staff also directly asked us to ask Reclamation how it intends to address these issues.

**Reclamation Meeting**

We met with both headquarters and regional Reclamation officials. We discussed the need to better understand the impact analysis underlying the current call for water conservation from our region in order to ensure federal funding is sufficient to address those impacts. We also discussed whether and how the impacts for future water conservation were being evaluated in the context of the Bureau’s effort to update the Interim Storage Guidelines. We were not provided with direct answers to these questions. Rather, regional Reclamation officials indicated these issues would be discussed as part of the quarterly principals meetings called for in the Interior/CNRA Salton Sea agreement intended to provide mitigation funding for short-term water conservation measures from our region. Executive Director O’Dowd has been invited to those meetings.

**Farm Bill**

As you may recall, the Authority advocated for and secured numerous new authorities in the 2018 Farm Bill to enable USDA to provide mitigating funding to the Salton Sea. Farm Bills are written every

five years and accordingly we are again in a Farm Bill reauthorization year. The Authority followed up its 2018 legislative work by securing the State funding from USDA to undertake the legally required planning to access USDA funds for the Sea. While the State has not taken full advantage of this work, USDA is currently reengaged in the issue. In particular, I have been asked by both Congressional staff and USDA officials concerning how the provisions secured by the Authority in 2018 could be used to help address both Colorado River drought and to mitigate the impacts of that conservation on places like the Salton Sea.