



# OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

## SALTON SEA AUTHORITY

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

November 16, 2023

#### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Salton Sea Authority (“Authority”) Board of Directors (“Board”) was called to order by Altrena Santillanes, President, at 10:00 a.m., November 16, 2023, at the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians Tameka Gymnasium, and via Zoom Webinar.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Led by President Santillanes. President Santillanes also read a Tribal Land Acknowledgement in English and in their Traditional Cahuilla language.

#### **ROLL CALL:**

##### **DIRECTORS PRESENT ON SITE**

Altrena Santillanes, President  
Gina Dockstader, Secretary  
Cástulo R. Estrada, Vice-President  
John Aguilar, Director

##### **AGENCY**

Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians  
Imperial Irrigation District  
Coachella Valley Water District  
Coachella Valley Water District

##### **DIRECTORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM**

Alex Cárdenas, Director

##### **AGENCY**

Imperial Irrigation District

##### **DIRECTORS ABSENT**

Ryan E. Kelley, Director  
Luis A. Plancarte, Director  
Thomas Torte, Director  
V. Manuel Perez, Director  
Yxstian Gutierrez, Treasurer  
Ex-Officio Samantha Arthur

##### **AGENCY**

Imperial County  
Imperial County  
Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians  
Riverside County  
Riverside County  
CNRA

##### **SALTON SEA AUTHORITY STAFF PRESENT**

G. Patrick O’Dowd, Executive Director/GM (in person)  
Bob Hargreaves, Best Best & Krieger, Legal Counsel (in person)

## **MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT**

On Site: Jasmyn Phillips, Desert Shores Oversight Committee/Eco Media, Phil Rosentrater, SSA Retired Executive Director, Rick Daniels, Former SSA Executive Director, Darren Simon, SDCWA, Belen Lopez and Thomas Brinkerhoff, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District, Stella Jimenez, District Director of Congressman Ruiz's Office, Miguel Hernandez, CNRA, Pat Cooper, Deputy Chief of Staff for Supervisor Perez, Riverside County, Juan DeLara, Federated Insurance and SSAC, Bob Wright, EDA, Riverside County, Joselyn Ramirez, Senator Padilla's office, Paul Najjar and Bryan Benso, Gafcon.

Via Zoom: Susie Ming, Army Corp of Engineers, Nathan White, Agess, Inc. and Michael Cohen, Pacific Institute and 17 others.

## **II. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Nathan White expressed appreciation to the Torres Martinez Community for hosting the meeting, and anticipates more engagement opportunities within the communities around the Sea. He also requested future agendas include implementable solutions and projects focused on water quality.

Pat Cooper spoke on behalf of Former Senator Ducheny who sends her regrets that she could not attend. She thanked everyone for their efforts on behalf of the Salton Sea. Ducheny was one of the Senators of the ratifying documents for the QSA.

Dr. Timothy Kratz has been engaged with the Salton Sea for 27 years and is very pleased that the Authority is still pursuing its important work.

## **III. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

President Santillanes has been on the Authority's Board for 7 years and it has added to her experience, wisdom, and the knowledge of my tribe and the history of it. She considered it an honor to sit on this board, to be able to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of her tribe and community. The Salton Sea Authority has created a platform to be that voice for our communities in the Coachella Valley.

Director Estrada has been with the Authority for 10 years; it's been an honor to serve. There's a lot of positive going, we have funding, and projects and we're more engaged now with the state and federal partners more so than 10 years ago. Congrats to everyone that has been a part of the Authority.

Director Dockstader, it's been an honor and a privilege to be on this board.

Director Aguilar, looking forward to representing the water district.

Director Cardenas thanked the Torres Martinez Tribe for their hospitality in hosting this meeting. He thanked the community for being engaged in public comment, they have made our agency strong, and also recognized staff for some significant milestones achieved by the Authority, including WRDA and the Feasibility Study.

#### **IV. ITEMS FOR BOARD DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION**

##### **A. CONSENT CALENDAR – Approve, Receive, and File**

1. Minutes of Salton Sea Authority Board Meeting October 19, 2023
2. Salton Sea Authority Warrant Register Ratification for October 31, 2023
3. Salton Sea Authority Internal Financial Report for: 7/01/2022 – 09/30/2023

*On motion by Dockstader second by Aguilar, the Board approved the Consent Calendar to be received, and filed.*

**Approved by the following vote:**

**AYES:** President Santillanes, Vice-President Estrada, Director Aguilar and Secretary Dockstader.

**NOES:** None

**ABSENT:** Directors Kelley, Torte, Gutierrez, Perez and Plancarte

**ABSTAINED:** None

**MOTION PASSED:** 6 – 0\*

*\*In keeping with the Salton Sea Authority Bylaws, a single director carries the vote of both directors of the agency when the second director of the same agency is absent.*

- ##### **B. Desert Shores Project Update – Introduction of Gafcon, Inc. and ratification of Consulting agreement dated October 24, 2023. Paul Najar and Bryan Benso gave a brief overview. Gafcon is a family-owned business, they specialize in waterfront projects. In the next couple of weeks, they will be putting together a work plan and project charter of how to move this project from where it is today into an execution stage.**

*On motion by Aguilar and second by Estrada, the Board approved the Consent Calendar to be received, and filed.*

**Approved by the following vote:**

**AYES:** President Santillanes, Vice-President Estrada, Director Aguilar and Secretary Dockstader.

**NOES:** None

**ABSENT:** Directors Kelley, Torte, Gutierrez, Perez and Plancarte

**ABSTAINED:** None

**MOTION PASSED:** 6 – 0\*

*\*In keeping with the Salton Sea Authority Bylaws, a single director carries the vote of both directors of the agency when the second director of the same agency is absent.*

- C. Imperial Streams and Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study update  
Susie Ming, representing USACE gave a presentation on the Imperial Streams and Salton Sea ecosystem restoration feasibility study. The project was recently approved as a “Mega Study” which will require enhanced resources and additional oversight. They are in the process of forming a workshop to include a technical and policy team with a range of experts and stakeholders and develop improved inflow scenarios to evaluate and compare alternatives and provide an accurate assessment of the project performance.

Michael Cohen inquired of the next hydrology workshop. Ms. Ming indicated no dates have been set. Michael also suggested having workshops south of the border, and inquired if only CNRA’s long range plan options were being evaluated, since their project was not included in that.

Director Estrada thanked Ms. Ming for being open to the Mega Study. He asked if the budget was secured, and per Ms. Ming, it’s a 50/50 share, and the federal cost share for the \$3 million has been secured. The balance will need to be appropriated.

- D. Outreach, Engagement and Education progress report, Israel Cruz, Authority’s Director of Outreach, Engagement & Education gave a brief update. The Authority has attended many events, one in particular, the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Environmental Health Leadership Summit. We will be seeing a stronger presence of the Authority within the community, future opportunities including ways to collaborate together with CNRA and to better inform and better serve our community.
- E. Monitoring, Mitigation, and Accountability – ED O’Dowd gave a brief update on efforts to provide assurance of health and safety. He acknowledged the important work being done by the Imperial County Air Pollution Control Board, South Coast Air Quality District, CARB and the work that the QSA- JPA and IID is doing on monitoring work along with the Tribe and Comite Civico del Valle, Inc. We are advocating with Senator Padilla and Assemblymember Garcia’s office to create a framework that will allow the data that is being collected (including the community-based monitoring efforts) to create a consolidating framework that people can know at least with respect to the changes occurring from the historic shoreline inward are not causing harm. There was a Monitoring Assessment Plan (MAP) that was prepared in 2013 which was a precursor document to the Monitoring Implementation Plan (MIP) approved in 2022, which contemplates an annual plan for monitoring which has not yet been implemented. We are informed that the state recently initiated the process for next year’s monitoring. But it’s only a monitoring program and doesn’t really track human health and safety. What we are striving for at least as it relates to human health and safety, is to build a Health Assurance Plan, which we believe can be accomplished in many ways. One would be to have the Authority work with the different agencies, universities, and others to make sure that information that is taking place is being properly consolidated and assessed. ED O’Dowd suggested it could be called a “Health Assessment Plan”, but really wants to call it the “Health Assessment Plan for People like You” and then call it the “Happy Plan” because people haven’t been happy in a long time.

## **V. REPORTS**

*(Due to the Special Program, no oral reports will be provided)*

### A. Federal

1. Federal Activities – Lisa Moore Lehman, Partner, Cultivating Conservation
2. US Bureau of Reclamation – No Report

### B. State

1. State Advocacy Report – Oracio Gonzalez, Principal, Ollin Strategies
2. State of California – Mr. Miguel Hernandez, Public Affairs Officer, California Natural Resources Agency
3. Salton Sea State Recreation Area Update on Activities – Andrew Ahlberg, Interim District Superintendent, California State Parks

### C. Local

1. Salton Sea Action Committee – Alan Pace, SSAC President

### D. Executive Director’s Report and Comments - G. Patrick O’Dowd, Executive Director/GM, Salton Sea Authority

## **VI. SPECIAL PROGRAM**

### **A. Salton Sea Authority – 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration.**

Former Executive Directors, Tom Kirk, Rick Daniels and Phil Rosentrater spoke of their tenure at the Salton Sea Authority.

Bob Hargreaves of Best Best and Krieger spoke about when SSA was initially formed and how the Authority brought on the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indian Tribe to the Board.

Tom Kirk was the 1<sup>st</sup> Executive Director of the Authority in 1993. He started out at CVAG. The Authority didn’t have a staff, they had a technical crew advisory committee that was made up of the 4 agencies at the time, so CVAG was hired to take minutes and address Brown Act related issues and administrator the meetings. The Authority was interested in working with the Bureau of Reclamation identifying and prioritizing key objectives at the Salton Sea, so they asked CVAG and Kirk to manage this effort. One of the biggest challenges he had was that we have people in Washington D.C. that are representing a place far far away. EPA came out to visit the Salton Sea on a typical gorgeous day, when they got there, they said to Tom, “what is the problem here”? Tom said it’s not a bad place, water, mountains, it certainly can be a place for more people in the future to put more communities.

Rick Daniels, when he came on board there were no plans, Imperial and Riverside Counties had never worked on anything together. He met with former Congresswoman, Mary Bono, she told him that she would work to get him money but no more studies, just money for projects and actions. We had success but the State ended up keeping all the money. Rick said his tenure at the Authority represents one of his most rewarding work experiences in his 50-year career.

Phil Rosentrater, it was a privilege to have worked with the Salton Sea Authority and genuinely uplifting to hear the progress has been continuingly made or what his signature line has been and will remain for a Healthier and more Prosperous Salton Sea. That is the encapsulation of what the Salton Sea Authority has embraced in their policies, plans and procurement activities. It's what drives progress, it is what brings the members of the Authority the perfect entity.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

### **NEXT MEETING TIME & LOCATION:**

The Salton Sea Authority Board is scheduled to meet on:

Thursday, January 18, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.  
Imperial County BOS Chamber  
940 W. Main Street  
El Centro, CA 92243  
442-265-1020

*Any public record, relating to an open session agenda item, that is distributed within 72 hours prior to the meeting is available for public inspection in the lobby at the front desk of the County Law Building located at 82995 Highway 111, Indio, CA 92201.*