

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS**  
**SALTON SEA AUTHORITY**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**  
**January 18, 2024**

**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 10:10 a.m., January 18, 2024, at the County of Imperial Board of Supervisors Chamber, and via Zoom Webinar.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL**

**DIRECTORS PRESENT ON SITE**

Altrena Santillanes, President  
Luis A. Plancarte, Director  
Alex Cárdenas, Director

**AGENCY**

Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians  
Imperial County, Arrived after IV.B  
Imperial Irrigation District

**DIRECTORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM**

V. Manuel Perez, Director  
Yxstian Gutierrez, Treasurer

**AGENCY**

Riverside County  
Riverside County

**DIRECTORS ABSENT**

Cástulo R. Estrada, Vice-President  
John Aguilar, Director  
Ryan E. Kelley, Director  
Thomas Torte, Director  
Gina Dockstader, Secretary  
Ex-Officio Samantha Arthur

**AGENCY**

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

**SALTON SEA AUTHORITY STAFF PRESENT**

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

## MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT

On Site:

Via Zoom: Jessica, Humes, IID, Tina Shields, IID, Joanna Hoff, IID, Antonia Ortega, IID, Mario Llanos, CNRA, Jesus Gonzalez, Assemblymember Garcia's office and 24 others.

### II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Nathan White, Chief Environmental Officer, Agess, Inc discussed a Binational event, highlighted a tour conducted with U.S. EPA and Mexico's Secretary of Education. He advised Mexico was interested in regional hydrology, and reiterated his personal interest in water importation.

### III. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Director Cardenas recognize Mr. Nathan White for his efforts and commitments to our shoreline communities.

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

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

1. Minutes of Salton Sea Authority Board Meeting November 16, 2023
2. Salton Sea Authority Warrant Register Ratification for November 2023
3. Salton Sea Authority Warrant Register Ratification for December 2023
4. Salton Sea Authority Internal Financial Report for October 2023
5. Salton Sea Authority Internal Financial Report for November 2023

*Motion made by Cardenas, second by Gutierrez, the Board approved the Consent Calendar to be received and filed.*

*Approved by the following vote:*

*AYES: President Santillanes, Treasurer Gutierrez, Director's Cardenas and Perez.*

*NOES: 0*

*ABSENT: Directors Torte, Kelley, Plancarte, Aguilar, Dockstader and Estrada*

*ABSTAINED: 0*

*MOTION PASSED: 4-0*

#### B. Review and accept fiscal year 2023 Audited Financial Report - Shannon Ayala, CPA / Partner, Davis Farr, LLP gave an overview. Directors Cardenas and Perez asked Ms. Ayala to clarify the Best Practice recommendations, and directed staff to:

1. Update State and Federal advocacy by the next Board meeting;
2. Reconcile the Authority's GM's accrued vacation policy with RIVCO policy.

***Motion made by Cardenas, second by Perez, the Board approved the Fiscal Year 2023 Audited Financial Report to be received and filed.***

***Approved by the following vote:***

***AYES:*** President Santillanes, Treasurer Gutierrez, Director's Cardenas, Plancarte and Perez.

***NOES:*** 0

***ABSENT:*** Directors Torte, Kelley, Aguilar, Dockstader and Estrada

***ABSTAINED:*** 0

***MOTION PASSED:*** 5-0

- C. Update on Imperial Irrigation District (IID) Salton Sea mitigation efforts - Jessica Humes, Senior Environmental Project Manager, IID gave a presentation on the Salton Sea Air Quality Mitigation Program. This program was developed in 2016 to provide a comprehensive mitigation adaptive approach to assess air quality. The funding comes from the QSA JPA who administers funding for QSA transfers environmental mitigation requirements. Directors Perez, Cardenas Santillanes, Tom Sephton, Jasmyn Philips, Nathan White and Jeremy Brooks commented on the presentation.
- D. Review of Governor's Proposed 2024/2025 Budget - Oracio Gonzalez, Ollin Strategies gave an update on the 2024-2025 State Budget. Bonds are still part of the conversation, including new money proposed for Salton Sea, including a bond proposal from Assemblymember Garcia from last year which included \$400 million for the Salton Sea. Director's Cardenas and Plancarte noted that there will be a substantial deficit in the state budget. Mr. Gonzales recommended we draft a letter, Director Cardenas agreed and requested the letter be provided to member agencies for their review, and place this item on their legislative calendar.
- E. US Army Corps of Engineers "Imperial Streams and Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study" Status Report – Executive Director O'Dowd

In December 2022, the state delivered its Long Range Plan, which became the foundational document to inform the Corp Feasibility Study. Against that backdrop, the Authority and California Department of Water Resources (DWR) as "Local Sponsors" of the planning effort, working for the past year with the Corps team as the federal sponsor to develop a scope to complete the study in a responsible fashion. The 2020 WRDA authorization provides a 3-year, \$3 million framework, which we knew since the onset was insufficient. In the past, waivers have been granted in order to allow certain project to proceed as a "Mega Study", a designation within the Corps which provides both greater resources and increased time. However, the Mega Study has been challenged due to interpretation of policy which would strictly limit the effort to the \$3 million initial appropriation and its 3-year timeframe. Ms. Moore provided some historical context on such studies, and noted this Corps Mega Study was always likely to take longer and cost more than one more conventional. The state and the Authority agreed to pursue the necessary waivers and funding to implement the Mega Study, expected to take 6 to 8 years and cost approximately \$16 million (or \$8 million each from the federal and state sponsors). In the meantime, the existing

appropriations are being used to address the front end, technical components of the effort.

F. CNRA Agreement # 0CA21020 - “Public Outreach and Engagement Services” - Status Report and Update – Staff - Executive Director O’Dowd, highlighted a contract that was signed between CNRA and the Authority September 2022, providing some history and context for its negotiation, drafting, and subsequent implementation - and the challenges associated therewith. The state contract is divided into 3 tasks, of which only Task 3, a joint effort with CNRA and a group that the onboarded to do some studies, called the Better World Group, has been operationalized in any material sense to date. As contemplated by the contract, and after a long search we were able to onboard a qualified Public Relations Director, but due to market forces and other opportunities, just one month after date of hire that individual resigned to take a position elsewhere. Recruiting to fill this position has resumed, but want to firm up this contract before any new hire is made. Per the terms of th contract, the Authority is requesting a 2-year extension to allow for the full implementation of tasks 1 and 2.

G. Project Updates-

- a. North Lake Demonstration Pilot Project - Executive Director O’Dowd gave a brief update. Dudek is working on Geotechnical surveys, with equipment on site. We are expecting a revised budget and schedule as early as next month. At that point we will be able to begin designing this project, including a robust public engagement process.
- b. Desert Shores, Executive Director O’Dowd gave a brief update. At our last meeting we approved Gafcon as a consultant. They have made significant process in analyzing the current state of the activities there. Gafcon has outlined additional tasks to help scope out the project more fully. At our next board meeting we intend to bring back a revised agreement to carry this effort through the design phase. As part of their feasibility study, Gafcon will also be conducting a Charrette, a gathering of all stake holders, which will take place as soon as schedules and facilities allow.

**V. REPORTS**

A. Federal

1. Federal Activities – Lisa Moore Lehman, Partner, Cultivating Conservation gave her report during item # IV.E. Spoke in detail about the Mega report.
2. US Bureau of Reclamation – Jeremy Brooks, gave an update on the commitment agreements they are working on. \$72 million awarded from the \$250 million, \$70 million of that has been allocated to the state of CA, CNRA and DWR for expansion of the SCH, \$2 million to the Torres Martinez Cahuilla Indian Tribe to expand and support the states 10 year plan that award was mandated last year in August and announced in December. BOR and the state issued a land use agreement to expedite issuance of land use.

Quarterly Salton Sea principal meetings are being held, including Secretary Crowfoot and Commissioner Touton. The Authority ED/GM also attends thos meetings.

B. State

1. State Advocacy Report – Oracio Gonzalez, Principal, Ollin Strategies gave an update on the State Budget in item IV.D. and also mentioned that the conservancy legislation remains on the Senate floor and is technically eligible for action at any time.
2. State of California – Mr. Miguel Hernandez, Public Affairs Officer, California Natural Resources Agency – No Report
3. Salton Sea State Recreation Area Update on Activities – Enrique Arroyo, District Superintendent, California State Parks – No report

C. Local

1. Salton Sea Action Committee – Alan Pace, SSAC President gave an update on the Salton Sea Summit being held October 18-19.

- D. Executive Director’s Report and Comments - G. Patrick O’Dowd, Executive Director O’Dowd gave a brief update and emphasized on how important it is to continue to collaborate in putting the community engagement tours together so that we can achieve the best objective and align messaging. The Authority has also been working with Assemblymember Garcia on an “Assurance Program” for health and safety, as discussed in November.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting Adjourned 11:50 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING TIME & LOCATION:**

The Salton Sea Authority board is scheduled to meet on:

Thursday, February 15, 2024, at 10:00a.m.  
Coachella Valley Water District  
Steve Robbins Administrative Building  
75515 Hovley Lane East  
Palm Desert, CA 92260  
760-398-2651

*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.*