



April 1, 2024

The Honorable Michael L. Connor
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20314


Dear Assistant Secretary Connor,

We are writing regarding the Imperial Streams and Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study (Feasibility Study) to request an exception from the USACE 3x3 policy, the selection of recommended course of action 2 (COA 2), and the provision of \$400,000 in funding in the FY24 USACE work plan to advance COA 2.

The Salton Sea Authority (Authority) is comprised of locally elected leaders representing Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, Imperial and Riverside Counties, Imperial Irrigation District and Coachella Valley Water District. The Authority worked with the California Congressional delegation in 2020 and 2021 to secure both the authorization and initial funding to launch the Feasibility Study. In December 2022, the Authority and the California Department of Water Resources joined together to become the joint local sponsors of the Feasibility Study.

At the outset, the USACE Los Angeles District and local sponsors recognized that to comply with USACE policies, Biden administration environmental justice orders, and to address local and regional public health concerns, the Feasibility Study would require an exception from the USACE 3x3 policy. The subsequent development and evaluation of Feasibility Study COAs confirmed this judgment and led the USACE Los Angeles District, the USACE Pacific Division, and the local sponsors to select COA 2 which will require a longer study duration and an additional \$6.5 million in federal funding.

COA 2 will investigate the feasibility of alternatives identified in the State of California's Salton Sea Long-Range Plan for restoring the degraded ecosystem structure, function,

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and dynamic processes at the Salton Sea, as well as addressing air quality, in conjunction with ecosystem restoration.

As the Authority and its partners advocated to advance COA 2, USACE Headquarters advised that federal law prohibited the agency from providing additional funding into the Feasibility Study to accomplish the mutually agreed upon COA 2. This has resulted in a shortfall to advance the study this year in the amount of \$400,000. To ensure the Feasibility Study may proceed without interruption or diminution, the Authority requested that our Congressional delegation remove this legal limitation. This was recently accomplished in the FY24 Energy and Water Appropriations law.

That legislation also provides roughly \$4 million in unallocated, unearmarked resources to the USACE from which the USACE could provide the \$400,000 needed by the USACE Los Angeles District to continue to advance COA 2.

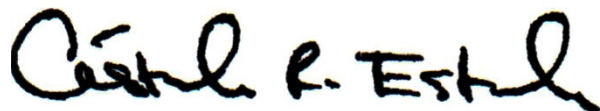
Accordingly, given that there is now no legal barrier to providing the additional funds needed and given that sufficient funds are now available in the FY24 appropriations law, we ask that you issue the 3x3 exception, select COA 2, and provide the funding the USACE Los Angeles District has identified as needed to do so via the USACE FY 24 work plan. The Authority has submitted a Congressionally directed spending request for the needed funds for COA 2 in FY25, but this bridge funding of \$400,000 is critically important to ensure work proceeds without interruption until FY25 appropriations are provided by Congress.

The Authority greatly appreciates our partnership with USACE and your commitment to the Feasibility Study. Our joint effort is critical to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Salton Sea region, to protecting federal interests and assets in the region, to addressing significant environmental justice and public health concerns.

Sincerely,



Altrena Santillanes
Authority President
Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians

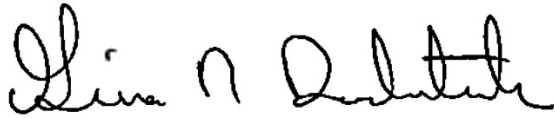


Cástulo R. Estrada
Authority Vice President
Coachella Valley Water District

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Gina Dockstader
Authority Board Secretary
Imperial Irrigation District



Yxstian Gutierrez
Authority Treasurer
County of Riverside



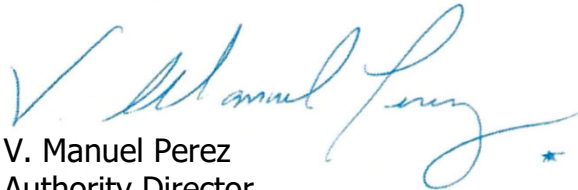
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County of Riverside



Thomas Torte
Authority Director
Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians



John Aguilar
Authority Director
Coachella Valley Water District

cc: Major General William H. Graham
Deputy Chief of Engineers/Deputy Commanding General