



April 29, 2024

The Honorable Alex Padilla
United States Senator
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lophonza Butler
United States Senator
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Raul Ruiz
United States Congressman
2342 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
United States Congressman
2205 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Padilla, Senator Butler, Congressman Ruiz and Congressman Calvert:

I am writing to convey the Salton Sea Authority's (Authority) strong support for the FY25 Energy and Water Appropriations request that \$2.2 million be provided to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to continue the Salton Sea Feasibility Study (USACE study). The Authority is a California joint powers entity comprised of the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, Riverside and Imperial Counties, Imperial Irrigation District and Coachella Valley Water District.

The USACE study is off to a very promising start and the requested funds are needed to ensure it proceeds without delay.

The USACE study will lead to significant federal investment to address the public health and environmental challenges in the Salton Sea region. As you know, the federal government has significant interests in our region, including in federally protected endangered species; in the Sonny Bono National Wildlife Refuge and the Chocolate Mountain Gunnery; in major additional federal landholdings; and in our region's renewable energy and lithium stores. In addition, the Department of the Interior has acknowledged that it has major landownership liability associated with Salton Sea playa exposure, conservatively estimated at \$330 million.

The USACE study was authorized in section 203 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2020. Since its initiation in December 2022 with the signing of the required cost sharing agreement, study cosponsors USACE Los Angeles District, the Authority, and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) have evaluated distinct courses of action (COAs). These parties evaluated multiple COAs for their

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Senator Padilla, Senator Butler,
Congressman Ruiz and Congressman Calvert
April 29, 2024
Page 2 of 2

effectiveness to address the purposes of the USACE study, to meet the USACE's mission, to meet state and local needs, to be scientifically sound, and to meet Corps environmental justice mandates.

This evaluation led the parties to select COA 2 as the preferred course of action. COA 2 will investigate the feasibility of alternatives identified in the State of California's Salton Sea Long-Range Plan for improving public health and air quality and restoring the degraded ecosystem and function. Most important, COA 2 was determined to be necessary to address the significant environmental justice concerns of the surrounding community.

To arrive at COA 2, 14 alternatives were identified and narrowed to 6 as worthy of further consideration. The requested funds will be paired with required cost share funding from joint local sponsor DWR to progress from currently scoped alternatives into the tentatively selected plan. Embedded within this work will be continued public outreach to area disadvantaged communities and required hydrologic modeling to aid in this refinement and the tentatively selected plan.

To implement COA 2, \$2.2 million will be needed to be provided to USACE in FY25.

As you know, the federal government is likely to require additional water conservation from the Salton Sea region. The Bureau of Reclamation has acknowledged these requirements will accelerate Salton Sea playa exposure. The USACE study will provide a means for the federal government to invest in the health, safety, and environment of the Salton Sea region in anticipation of these and other challenges.

Thank you for your consideration our request.

Sincerely,



G. Patrick O'Dowd
Executive Director/General Manager
Salton Sea Authority