

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
BUDGET
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
JUDICIARY
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

May 7, 2024

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20503

The Honorable Michael Connor
Assistant Secretary for Civil Works
Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310

Lieutenant General Scott A. Spellmon
Chief of Engineers and Commanding General U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20314

Dear Director Young, Secretary Connor, and Lt. General Spellmon:

As you finalize the Fiscal Year 2024 Work Plan for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), I urge you to provide \$400,000 to advance the recommended “course of action 2” and that you provide an exemption to USACE’s 3x3 policy for the Imperial Streams and Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study (Salton Sea Feasibility Study).

As you know, the Salton Sea Feasibility Study is currently authorized as a 3-year, \$3 million study and aims to address the significant public health and environmental challenges caused by gradual receding of the lake, and which are impacting disadvantaged communities surrounding the Salton Sea. Dust from exposed Salton Sea playa is linked to elevated instances of asthma and other respiratory ailments in the region, particularly among children.

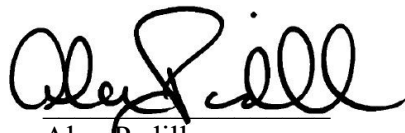
USACE Los Angeles District, local sponsors, the Salton Sea Authority, and the California Department of Water Resources conducted a robust study scope and public outreach effort since the launch of the study in December 2022 and selected “course of action 2” (COA 2), recognizing that to comply with the Biden administration’s environmental justice goals, to address local priorities, and to reduce uncertainty about future hydrologic conditions, the Feasibility Study will require an exemption from the USACE 3x3 policy, a longer study duration, and an additional \$6.5 million in federal funding.

While the lion’s share of the funds for the expanded study will be sought via future appropriations, there is a current shortfall of \$400,000 needed in FY24 to enable USACE Los Angeles District to continue to advance COA 2. Although USACE was restricted from augmenting this needed funding by a provision of prior law, that restriction was recently removed in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024* (PL 118-42). In addition, that law provides USACE with over \$4 million in unallocated funding from which you may now provide the \$400,000 in funding needed via the FY24 Work Plan.

Therefore, I ask that USACE grant an exception from the 3x3 policy for the Salton Sea Feasibility Study and include \$400,000 in the FY24 Work Plan to advance COA 2.

Thank you for your ongoing support of restoration efforts at the Salton Sea. This effort is vitally important to protect the public health and environment of the region, and to mitigate the impacts of the receding lake.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex Padilla". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

Alex Padilla
United States Senator