



Salton Sea Authority Key Messages

Who is the Salton Sea Authority?

- The Salton Sea Authority (the Authority) is a Joint Powers Agency (JPA), formed in 1993 to bring together key public agencies to pursue Salton Sea solutions.
- The Authority's mission is to protect human health and revitalize the environment and economy of the Sea. The Authority recognizes this requires an integrated approach to recognizing old problems and potential new solutions to deliver multiple benefits with thoughtful strategies that integrate economic opportunity and environmental stability.
- The Authority is comprised of five member agencies, including:
 - Imperial Irrigation District
 - Coachella Valley Water District
 - Riverside County
 - Imperial County
 - Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
- The Authority Board of Directors includes two publicly elected officials from each member agency who have long represented community stakeholders on issues relating to the Salton Sea. As a local government whose elected board members represent every man, woman, and child in the Imperial and Coachella valleys, the Authority serves as the table around which critical conversations addressing public health and restoring vitality of the Salton Sea and region take place.
- Collaboration is key to everything the Authority does. The Authority aligns state, federal and local government restoration efforts to ensure that a revitalized Salton Sea and its surrounding communities address the needs and concerns of residents and wildlife that call it home.
- The Authority's jurisdictional boundaries parallel the historic shoreline, but its "sphere of influence" includes the communities from the Banning Pass in Riverside County to the Mexican Border in Imperial County, and its work has far-reaching impacts across the state and throughout the west.
- Together, our member agencies work closely with state and federal governments to achieve consensus on much-needed solutions for the Salton Sea and is actively pursuing funding and partnerships for projects.


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- The Authority envisions the Salton Sea as more than a body of water — it is a cultural anchor. The Salton Basin has served thriving communities for 10,000 years, and the Authority believes in the power of partnerships and progress to ensure the vitality of the Salton Sea today, tomorrow and into the future.
 - Working in coordination and collaboration with the state and its SSMP team, the Authority is working to ensure the successful implementation of key projects including dust suppression and vegetation enhancement under development by the SSMP, which will improve the health risk of residents across the region.
 - The Salton Sea was once a bustling resort area and restoring recreation opportunities is a priority for the Authority. Recreation provides the community with essential benefits such as physical activity, enhanced mental well-being, cultural enrichment, and social connection.
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Three Priorities of the Salton Sea Authority - Health, Habitat & Opportunity

- **Health** and safety are the Authority's highest priorities. No child should go to bed at night or parent go off to work in the morning concerned about whether the air they breathe or the water they drink might be negatively impacting their health.
- For over a century the Salton Sea has served as critical **Habitat** along the Pacific Flyway, a stopping point for hundreds of species – many threatened or endangered – who no longer have coastal wetlands to traverse due to urbanization. As a critical habitat for wildlife, including waterfowl and the endangered desert pupfish, the Salton Sea's restoration is vital. The Authority is working closely with state and federal partners to restore, enhance and support habitat across the region.
- **Opportunity** is the lifeblood of any thriving community. Jobs, housing, education, services, and community touchpoints are all part of a vibrant, sustainable region. Ensuring opportunities for the residents, businesses and visitors at and around the Sea which have long been impacted by its decline is essential – both for the betterment of the area and to provide an economic engine ensuring the future sustainable success of efforts to protect human health and revitalize habitat.
- Together these three priorities – **Health, Habitat, and Opportunity**, form the framework upon which all the Authority's efforts rest and are what we call

Salton Sea H2O

- The Salton Sea region is made up of distinct communities, each with its own traditions, customs, priorities, and values. And like those communities, the five member agencies of the Authority each have their own purpose and function which extends far beyond Salton Sea revitalization. Boundaries, whether they are community, county, tribal, or legal, have long been an impedance to regional collaboration.
 - Though the North end of the Sea is divided from the South by the Riverside/Imperial County line, the Authority views the Sea from its shoreline – more akin to a circle, never ending and unifying all parties in interest who will benefit from mitigating the adverse impacts taking place and bringing forth renewed vitality within the ecosystem and the communities of the region.
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Salton Sea and the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA)



- The QSA's purpose is to improve water security in the west, particularly Southern California, as a part of a broader effort to bring California into alignment with its water rights on the Colorado River.
- In 2003, Imperial Irrigation District (IID), Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA), Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MET) and the State of California (State) entered into the QSA.
- Collectively, SDCWA, IID and CVWD are known as the "Transfer Parties".
- Through the implementation of increased conservation measures in the Imperial Valley, 200,000 acre-feet of water was transferred from IID to SDCWA, and additional accommodations were made between IID, CVWD and MET.
- The Transfer Parties agreed to contribute \$133 million (in 2003 dollars) towards mitigating impacts associated with the transfer.
- To ensure the success of the agreement, the State agreed to restore the Sea following the signing of the QSA.
- Due to the State's delays in meeting its QSA obligations, IID prompted the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to issue a formal Order in 2017 (Order), requiring the State to:
 - Immediately develop and implement a 10-year plan to ensure
 - 15,000 acres of habitat
 - 15,000 acres of mitigation
 - Outline required acreage in the 10-year plan by year
 - Develop a long-range plan for the Sea by December 2022
- In August 2018, the newly formed Salton Sea Management Program published its Salton Sea Management Plan (SSMP), outlining its strategy to meet the SWRCB Order.
- Though consistently behind Order requirements and often underfunded, the SSMP continues to implement projects, publish an annual report updating its progress, and regularly present results to the SWRCB.
- In December 2022, the State delivered a Long-Range Plan which reflects multiple project concepts that will inform the Imperial Streams Salton Sea and Tributaries Feasibility Study.

Imperial Streams Salton Sea and Tributaries Feasibility Study – a comprehensive plan for Salton Sea ecosystem restoration

- In pursuit of a unifying vision for the Salton Sea, the Authority has long sought federal support for addressing the regional challenges. Building on authorizations secured by the Authority in 2007 and informed by congressional action in 2016, the Authority was able to secure a “new start feasibility study” for ecosystem restoration at the Salton Sea in the 2020 Water Resources Development Act.
- At a formal ceremony held on December 2022, in North Shore, a Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement between the Authority and California Department of Water Resources (together as “Joint Local Sponsors”), along with the Department of the Army, Los Angeles District was signed, marking a major milestone where federal partners join state and local stakeholders in advancing and ultimately funding projects at the Sea.
- Initially authorized as a 3-year, \$3 million study, a revised scope was developed that allows for the entire ecosystem to be evaluated for restoration opportunities. This revised scope is expected to take an additional 5-6 years to complete at an estimated cost of over \$20 million, to be split between the federal partner and the local sponsors.
- Recognizing the need to implement projects sooner, the scope revision also included a provision to allow two projects – one on the north, the other on the south – to move forward ahead of the overall effort. This should facilitate shovel ready projects in the next 3 to 4 years.
- The study area encompasses the entire Salton Sea, its tributaries, and the playa and surrounding areas that can be restored. The project’s scope is far-reaching and has the potential to vastly improve the lives of residents and wildlife across the region.
- Informed by the Salton Sea Management Program’s (SSMP) Long-Range Plan document, the planning process was developed with local support including Tribal leadership, community-based organizations, and other local, state and federal agencies. The effort will continue to consider public input as an ultimate preferred plan is identified. This process will also necessarily take into consideration available resources (including land, water, and cost to benefit) in identifying the alternative to be recommended.
- Once the study is fully complete, the project will be eligible for 65% federal matching funds. Given that the 2006 State preferred plan for Salton Sea restoration was priced at \$9 billion, this federal partnership will be enormously important to ensure the successful revitalization of the region. Irrespective of the plan ultimately selected, restoring the Salton Sea ecosystem will be a multi-billion dollar undertaking.

Understanding the Salton Sea Conservancy and Proposition 4

- Working with our State partners on the North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project, the Salton Sea Authority recognized a need to identify a vehicle that could assume responsibility for the operations and maintenance of SSMP projects once they were completed. In November 2022, Authority staff began working with Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia's office to explore the creation of a conservancy for that purpose. Modeled after the Balwin Hills conservancy, several drafts of legislative language were prepared.
- In February 2023, Senator Steve Padilla came alongside this effort to champion the cause for the benefit of local stakeholders. Concerns arose in the initial drafting of the conservancy language that had the potential to interfere with the work of the Department of Water Resources under the SSMP and that of the Authority, particularly as it related to outreach and engagement on projects under development, and advocacy in Sacramento and DC for resources necessary to ensure a successful Salton Sea revitalization.
- To mitigate those potential conflicts in its final drafting, the purposes of the conservancy were very narrowly defined by the legislature as follows:
 1. To operate, maintain, and manage projects, as they are completed, that are planned or built under the authority of the Salton Sea Management Program to fulfill the state's obligations as detailed in State Water Resources Control Board Order WR 2017-0134.
 2. To acquire, hold, and manage land and property rights, including easements and water rights, within the Salton Sea region after restoration or mitigation projects are built.
- The creation of the conservancy was also contingent on the approval by voters of Proposition 4 funding, which set aside a total of \$10 million for the Salton Sea Authority and the conservancy. On November 5, 2024, Proposition 4 passed and the conservancy was created.
- The Authority is collaborating with the State to secure sufficient funding from Proposition 4 to ensure the successful startup of the conservancy. This funding will also support the Authority's efforts in the communities around the Sea. Key projects include the North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project, Desert Shores Restoration, and general funding to facilitate the Authority's work on the feasibility study and community engagement.
- The conservancy exists under the umbrella of the California Natural Resources Agency.

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- The Conservancy is governed by a Board of Directors comprising 15 voting members, including one each from of the Authority's five member agencies (and includes the Authority's current President), with the remaining 10 members to be political appointees of the State. The Board will also include seven non-voting ex officio members.
 - The board will be in place by January 2026, and will hire an executive officer by January 2027.
 - The Authority will continue to play a key role in the conservancy, as fully one-third of the conservancy's board is comprised of appointees from Authority member agencies.
 - Each year, the Conservancy will submit an annual report to the Governor and Legislature detailing its progress, expenditures, and future work plans. This transparency supports collaboration and accountability operations and maintenance on completed SSMP projects.
 - The Conservancy is backed by the Salton Sea Conservancy Fund, which will be used primarily to meet operations and maintenance obligations for completed projects.
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The Impact of the Colorado River Operations on the Salton Sea

- The Salton Sea is part of the historic Colorado River delta. Waters from the Colorado have flown into the Salton Basin since time immemorial.
- As a result of infrastructure investments on the Colorado River – and most notably the Hoover Dam, the modern-day Salton Sea is fed principally by return flows from agriculture in the Imperial and Coachella Valleys.
- At the end of 2026, several agreements that govern Colorado River operations are set to expire, including:
 - The 2007 Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead
 - The 2019 Drought Contingency Plans
 - International agreements between the United States and Mexico under the United States-Mexico Treaty on Utilization of Waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande
- Seven U.S. states — Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming and Mexico are negotiating a set of revised guidelines to establish Colorado River operating policies going forward.
- These negotiations are difficult and complex, and The U.S. Department of the Interior has expressed hope that the seven basin states and Mexico can come to a consensus to protect water security for 40 million people dependent on the Colorado River.
- As evidenced by the QSA impacts, any changes to local agricultural practices to improve Colorado River reliability could have a significant impact on the Salton Sea, including increasing exposed playa, degraded water quality, elevated dust emissions, and potential increased health risks to the residents in the region.
- As the alternatives for the post 2026 Colorado River operations are debated, stakeholders must consider impacts on the Salton Sea. A measurable understanding of associated impacts and an achievable, properly funded mitigation strategy to address air and water quality declines is essential to avoid further degradation to the Sea and region.
- The Authority supports any successful outcome to the post 2026 guideline negotiations which ensures a resilient Colorado River water supply that responsibly takes into consideration and appropriately prevents or mitigates all potentially adverse impacts.

History of the Salton Sea

- The Salton Sea, once a part of the Gulf of California, was formed by deposits laid down by the Colorado River as it carved out the Grand Canyon, forming what is now the Colorado River Delta.
- Native Americans, including the ancestors of the present-day Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, have inhabited the region for thousands of years, and have relied heavily on the Sea for their sufficiency, their culture, their tradition, their way of life.
- As water wound through the Colorado River Delta, it often flowed north into the Salton Basin, creating a large inland body referred to in modern times as “Ancient Lake Cahuilla”. When the meander moved southerly towards the Gulf of California, inland flows would decline. But whether native flows ran north or south, water both from the Colorado River and the vast local watershed would routinely flow into the basin, sustaining a critical ecosystem.
- Beginning in 1901, Colorado River was diverted to the Imperial Valley for agricultural purposes by the California Development Company who had earlier established high priority rights to waters of the Colorado.
- The most recent filling of the Sea occurred in 1905, when unregulated flows turned into the valley, and the entire flow of the Colorado River poured into the Salton Sea for nearly two years. This diversion was turned back to the south through the work of the Southern Pacific Railroad, which for a time acquired the water rights of the California Development Company. These water rights were later acquired by the Imperial Irrigation District, formed in 1911.
- During World War II, the Salton Sea saw extensive use for military training, with seaplanes routinely visiting the Sea, and pilots using the Sea for target practice. Most notably were the flights of Lt. Col. Paul Tibbets and his crew who would depart from a base in Utah to fly their B-29 known as the Enola Gay high over the Salton Sea and drop dummy bombs as practice for a much more fateful journey in the Pacific Theater.
- By the late 1950s and into the 1960s the Salton Sea became a booming recreation destination for movie stars and tourists alike. Resort towns were built up around the Sea, and at one point, the Sea attracted more visitors than Yosemite Park.
- In the 1970s, increasing agricultural development coupled with a series of tropical storms persistently raised water levels, ultimately inundating shoreline communities.

- In the 1980s, the highly eutrophic nature of the Sea caused summertime oxygen depletion, resulting in massive fish kills. The Sea's avian population was impacted by biological toxins, with episodic die-offs in the 80s and 90s. The 90s saw increasing salinity levels begin to dramatically affect fish reproduction, which in turn impacted local tourism.
- In 1993, the Salton Sea Authority (the "Authority") was formed in response to the increasing declines at the Salton Sea. Since its inception, the Authority has remained committed to revitalization of the Sea and region and ensuring that adverse impacts resulting from its evolution and other causes are timely and responsibly mitigated.
- To address increasing demands being placed on the Colorado River, the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) was signed in 2003 between the Imperial Irrigation District (IID), Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA), and Metropolitan Water District (MET). The State of California and the US Department of Interior were also key partners in the agreement. Through the implementation of conservation measures in the Imperial Valley, this agreement facilitated the transfer of some 300,000 acre-feet of water from IID to SDCWA and CVWD. This transfer reduced water flowing into the Sea, accelerating the Sea's shrinkage and hastening its increase in salinity.
- In 2014, a Pacific Institute report projected that inaction at the Sea could cost the area \$70 billion over 30 years due to increased health issues and falling property values.
- Over the last decade, numerous studies, mitigation and ecosystem restoration projects have advanced to escalate progress on revitalizing the Sea, including:
 - Salton Sea Authority Funding and Feasibility Review in 2016, evaluating a Perimeter Lake Concept, Seawater Importation, and Infrastructure Financing
 - Salton Sea Management Program's (SSMP) Dust Suppression Action Plan projects in 2020
 - Species Conservation Habitat Project groundbreaking in 2021
 - North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project design initiated in 2022
 - Desert Shores Channel Restoration Project funding secured in 2022
 - Expansion of the Species Conservation Habitat Project in 2023
 - Greater North Lake Project design initiated in 2024

And most recently and substantively, the Imperial Streams Salton Sea and Tributaries Feasibility Study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District, and the Salton Sea Authority and California Department of Water Resources, as joint local sponsors, kicked off in 2022. A revised authorization was secured in 2024 which includes a comprehensive ecosystem restoration plan.




Enduring Change: Salton Sea Projects

Species Conservation Habitat Project

- Nearing completion, phase one of the Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) Project represents the first large-scale project at the Sea, restoring approximately 4,100 acres of shallow water habitat.
- The project commenced in 2021 in response to the Salton Sea's increasing salinity and receding shoreline.
- The SCH project will create a network of ponds and wetlands that provide critically important fish and bird habitat. It works to suppress dust emissions and improve regional air quality as the Salton Sea recedes.
- Implemented as part of the Salton Sea Management Program's (SSMP), the SCH project was chosen because water-balance models reveal the southern end of the sea to experience the earliest playa exposure as the lake recedes.
- The SCH project will develop deep-water habitat to support fish-eating birds common to the Pacific Flyway, a route long supported by the Salton Sea ecosystem, but greatly impaired due to recent changes at the Sea.
- The optimal marine environment is achieved through mixing brackish water from the New River with hypersaline water from the Sea.
- With targeted salinity, the marine environment will not only support fish for the birds to forage on but also the endangered desert pupfish while significantly managing vegetation growth.




Vegetation Enhancement Projects as Part of the Dust Suppression Action Plan

- In July 2022, the SSMP released its Dust Suppression Action Plan (DSAP) to accelerate projects that minimize dust emissions and recover habitat at the Sea. The DSAP identifies up to 9,800 acres of exposed or soon-to-be-exposed lakebed and provides the roadmap for dust suppression implementation.
 - Through vegetation enhancement, these projects can reduce dust emissions from the exposed lakebed around the Salton Sea. Vegetation enhancement includes:
 - Native vegetation reestablishment
 - Enhancement of existing vegetation stands
 - Stabilization of the lakebed to allow seed germination and plant growth
 - These projects are prioritized for areas around the lake where developing aquatic habitats, such as ponds or wetlands, are not possible and require 1/10th the water needed for aquatic habitat creation.
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U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and SSMP Collaborative Projects: Clubhouse, Tule Wash, and West Bombay Beach

- Three sites — Clubhouse, Tule Wash, and West Bombay Beach — have been prioritized for dust suppression due to their emissive potential and proximity to established shoreline communities.
 - Collectively, the three sites total 1,709 acres of high-priority land for dust suppression. Site access for these projects was granted by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in 2020.
 - Vegetation enhancement was identified as the best approach for restoring the three sites due to the plants stabilizing the ground surface and creating the conditions for additional plant germination and growth.
 - As native species and when properly established, the plants are expected to grow without supplemental watering and when mature will reduce dust emissions with limited human intervention.
 - Growing vegetation on the exposed lakebed of the Salton Sea requires careful planning and plant selection due to several factors:
 - Exceptionally limited rainfall, totaling approximately three inches per year
 - Punishing heat, with temperatures well over 100°F for months at a time
 - High salt content in soil and the presence of salt crusts
 - High wind speeds
 - Currently, the focus for the three sites includes dust suppression using grass bales and furrows, while longer-term focusing on vegetation enhancement, targeting 30 percent vegetative cover through seeding and planting with native species with drip irrigation.
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San Felipe Fan


- The San Felipe Fan is an area of exposed lakebed where the San Felipe Creek flows into the Salton Sea, with approximately 90 to 95 percent of the site unvegetated (or less than 15 percent plant cover).
 - A dust suppression and vegetation enhancement project has been developed which will spread inflowing water from the creek to support vegetation. Stormwater flooding from the San Felipe Creek will be used to support local habitat for the endangered desert pupfish.
 - This project will be covered by the National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Assessment (NEPA EA) being developed for the SSMP's Phase 1: 10-Year Plan, addressing complex environmental compliance issues.
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The Salton Sea North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project

- The North Shore Beach and Yacht Club is an historic marina developed in 1960 for recreational benefit of the community. A popular attraction in its early days fell victim of neglect during the 1980s.
- In 2010 Riverside County restored the historic structure which now serves as a heavily trafficked community facility.
- The Salton Sea Authority was awarded \$19.25 in Proposition 68 funding to address challenges at Salton Sea. At the time, it was assessed that the funds would allow for an approximate 160-acre lake to be developed, providing habitat and dust mitigation.
- Four sites were evaluated from the mouth of the Whitewater Storm Channel to the Salton Sea State Park.
- In the end, and based on community stakeholder input, it was determined maximum benefits could be achieved by situating this project adjacent to the Yacht Club, reestablishing a linkage to the water.
- Riverside County, who coincidentally owns the Yacht Club, and serves as the “Implementing Agency,” has led project development since inception, with the Authority acting as grantee and collaborative project partner.
- Geotechnical and hydrologic assessments indicated that the initial 160-acre lake concept was technically and financially challenged due to its proximity to the San Andreas fault, liquefaction, structural concerns due to required berm heights, and limited water availability either from groundwater or the agricultural drains.
- A revised project concept was developed in 2024 that would create 40 acres of managed wetlands flowing into a smaller, 30-acre lake fronting the Yacht Club. The reduced berms and the integrated water treatment capabilities provided by the wetlands greatly improved the project feasibility.
- Work continues in assessing water quantity, quality, and seasonal availability, with a targeted project groundbreaking in 2026.




Desert Shores Channel Restoration Project

- Desert Shores is an unincorporated, shoreline community in northern Imperial County. This Marina-oriented community was developed in 1959 to meet the need of recreation-oriented residents.
 - The 5 “keys” of Desert Shores were historically connected to the Salton Sea, and residents could easily travel by water from their residence to the Sea unabated.
 - Due to increasing conservation and accelerated by the water transfers, water levels in the Sea have dropped considerably, and the keys were completely severed from the Sea a decade ago and have been left completely drained and unmitigated
 - The project to “build a berm, drill a well, fill the keys” was conceived nearly a decade ago by community leaders, sometimes supported by university professors and students. But due to limited funding and technical resources, the project floundered.
 - Imperial County stepped in to provide technical assistance, and the Authority joined the effort in 2021.
 - In 2022, \$1.25 million was secured by the Authority from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to design and build the project.
 - After efforts to locate existing groundwater and other technical data were unsuccessful, engineering services were formally engaged in 2024.
 - Geotechnical and hydrological work is under way and is expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2025. This data will inform the final project feasibility, concept, and design.
 - Due to delays in advancing the project and technical challenges identified, it is anticipated that the final design will indicate that additional funding may be necessary to complete the project.
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North Lake Project

- Situated to the immediate north of the North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project (NLPDP), this project shares resources and will be informed by NLPDP technical work.
 - In 2022, the SSMP completed the Project Description for the North Lake Project, which when completed will restore approximately 1,600 acres of aquatic habitat.
 - In 2023, biological surveys and reports revealed that much of the site has yet to be exposed and is currently inundated with water and wetland habitat.
 - The next steps include refining the footprint and aquatic features of the North Lake Project. The project is covered by the recently completed NEPA EA developed for the SSMP's Phase 1: 10-Year Plan.
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Species Conservation Habitat Expansion Project

- The Species Conservation Habitat Expansion Project aims to create aquatic habitat downstream and near the Species Conservation Habitat project.
 - Currently, portions of this area are underwater but are expected to be exposed as the Salton Sea recedes.
 - By constructing additional berms, the project would provide additional aquatic pool habitat for local wildlife. It would leverage existing water conveyance, pumping facilities, and diversion infrastructure constructed for the Species Conservation Habitat project.
 - In 2023, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation granted the State \$70 million to expand the Species Conservation Habitat project to speed up dust suppression and habitat restoration efforts. The funding is part of \$250 million in federal funding commitments from the 2022 Commitment to Support Salton Sea Management Related to Water Conservation in the Lower Colorado River Basin Agreement. The \$70 million was released after IID's actions to conserve water in 2023.
 - Berm construction is expected to be completed in 2025. A pond will create up to 1,000 acres of additional aquatic habitat, while the SSMP is working to expand the western area of the current Species Conservation Habitat project by an additional 4,000 acres.
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Audubon Bombay Beach Wetland Enhancement Project

- This project aims to stabilize, preserve, and enhance an existing 564-acre emergent wetland near the Bombay Beach community.
 - The SSMP is coordinating with Audubon California to integrate public access components into Phase I of the project, using existing maintenance and monitoring roads for pedestrian access.
 - Audubon, the State, IID, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation have conducted outreach with the local community to understand their needs as the project progresses.
 - In 2024, progress goals on the project included:
 - Finalizing land access agreements between Audubon, the State, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and IID
 - Complete 100 percent design
 - Complete geotechnical exploration
 - Complete NEPA EA coverage
 - Develop a schedule for the start of construction
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Imperial Wildlife Area Wister Unit Marsh Bird Habitat Restoration Project

- This project restores bird habitat at 150 acres of the Wister Unit of the Imperial Wildlife Area. Historically, the area has served waterfowl and other wildlife with a series of reservoirs and ponds that gravity flow from east to west. The Unit is managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.
 - Wetland species such as Ridgway's rail, black rail, secretive marsh birds and other avian species may benefit from the ponds. The SSMP is also exploring opportunities to include a desert pupfish pond.
 - Three main components define the project:
 - Wetland Restoration – Unit Y16 – This is an effort to restore waterfowl ponds that have been fallowed due to an overgrowth of invasive vegetation. Increased habitat quality would support waterfowl and marsh birds, while a walkway would provide additional opportunities for public engagement and recreation.
 - Wister Unit – Invasive Vegetation Removal – Invasive species line this area and consume excessive water, reducing the water available downstream for the Salton Sea and for future projects. This project will remove invasive tamarisk and phragmites to improve habitat quality.
 - Greenhouse Facilities – The SSMP will construct a greenhouse with an associated outdoor hardening off the growing ground, seed collection, and seed storage facilities to support restoration work.
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Species Conservation Habitat Vegetation Project


- Covering 537 acres south of the current Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) project, this vegetation project would serve as a buffer between aquatic habitat and the agricultural lands and duck clubs south of the SCH project.
 - The project includes wetland and upland vegetated habitat restoration, with vegetation type varying by elevation of individual parcels, water source and quantity available.
 - In 2024, the SSMP worked toward formalizing water and land use agreements with IID and implementing design-build contracts for the wetland mitigation parcel construction.
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Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) Mitigation Implemented by IID

- As part of the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) water transfer, IID continues to conduct ongoing environmental mitigation.
- IID's important mitigation projects include:
 - Managed Marsh – This marsh habitat creation restored 959 acres of aquatic habitat, including 341 acres of non-emergent vegetation and 618 acres of open water/emergent vegetation. IID considers this project completed.
 - Burrowing Owl Conservation – Near completion, this project requires periodic population studies and pre-inspection surveys to mark potential burrows before operation, as well as maintenance activities within IID's irrigation and drainage system.
 - Desert Pupfish Refugium and Monitoring – Built in 2010 and stocked in 2015, the desert pupfish refugium includes ongoing monitoring of pupfish. Use of direct-to-sea drains occurs annually. IID drafted a pupfish connectivity plan in 2023 for review by the Habitat Conservation Program Implementation Team. The review and finalization of this plan occurred in 2024.
 - Salton Sea Air Quality Mitigation Program (SSAQMP) – This comprehensive approach to addressing air quality mitigation requirements associated with the QSA water transfer includes mapping playa exposure, modeling wind conditions, and estimating annual emissions. Data from this program informs proactive dust control projects on areas that have the potential to become emissive.



Torres Martinez Wetland and Vegetation Restoration Projects

- Through a series of projects, the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians (TMDCI) aim to preserve and enhance desert habitat around the Sea. These projects also contribute to re-developing, expanding, and upgrading Tribal lands to benefit Tribal members and area residents.
 - As a member agency, the TMDCI Indians work closely with the Authority to revitalize the Salton Sea.
 - TMDCI implemented a project near the mouth of the Whitewater River, funded by a grant to the Authority, to restore and rehabilitate wetlands on Tribal land impacted by a major flood in 2012 which destroyed the initial project site.
 - TMDCI is also currently exploring and developing additional revegetation projects along the Sea to reduce dust emissions on barren lands and to provide habitat for fish and birds. These projects will support several endangered, threatened and sensitive species, such as desert pupfish, eared grebe and black skimmer.
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New River Improvement Project

- The project is currently in development and will encase the New River's polluted water in the Calexico area, minimizing direct or indirect human contact. Approximately \$28 million in state funding (including \$10 million secured under Proposition 68 by the Authority) supports the New River Improvement Project (NRIP).
 - The New River, which flows through Calexico, CA to the Salton Sea, contains untreated wastewater and pollutants from Mexico. This contaminated waterway poses a risk to human health and the local ecosystems and hampers economic development in Imperial Valley.
 - In addition to encasing the New River, the project includes an automated trash screen for the river downstream from the United States-Mexico International Boundary to remove solid waste.
 - To supplement flow in the river, the project will also reroute treated wastewater from the Calexico treatment plant. This will maintain floodplain wetlands and improve water quality.
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