

Memorandum

To: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors
From: G. Patrick O'Dowd, Executive Director /GM
Date: May 23, 2025

Re: Feasibility Study USACE Funding

Working with the US Army Corps of Engineers and the State team on the Salton Sea Imperial Streams and Tributaries Feasibility Study, CA, an additional "capability" of \$1.76 million was identified for work to be performed in 2026. To meet that financial requirement, we submitted appropriations requests through our delegation in both the Senate and the House.

The attached resolution is in the furtherance of that important request.

Recommendation:

Approve Resolution as presented.

SALTON SEA AUTHORITY
RESOLUTION NO. XX

RESOLUTION OF THE SALTON SEA AUTHORITY IN SUPPORT OF THE U.S. ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS SALTON SEA IMPERIAL STREAMS FEASIBILITY STUDY

WHEREAS, the Salton Sea Authority (Authority) is a joint powers authority established in 1993 under California law for the purpose of developing local consensus and support for efforts to revitalize the Salton Sea, with membership comprised of the Imperial Irrigation District (IID), Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), Riverside and Imperial Counties, and the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians;

WHEREAS, since the early 2000s inflows to the Salton Sea have been decreasing due to drought, urbanization, reduced inflows from Mexico, variability in cropping patterns and water conservation and transfer programs, and other factors;

WHEREAS, the resulting declining Sea inflows have led to the exposure of roughly 30,000 acres of Salton Sea playa, leading to significant environmental and public health concerns, particularly regarding asthma and respiratory diseases;

WHEREAS, the State of California, is legally obligated to undertake Salton Sea restoration, with the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) designated to lead this effort;

WHEREAS the California State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) issued a stipulated revised order in 2017 requiring CNRA's Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) to include restoration milestones to address public health and environmental concerns at the Salton Sea, including the development of 14,200 acres of projects, with at least half of this acreage to provide habitat benefits, by the end of 2024;

WHEREAS, the SSMP is making progress on meeting its project acreage milestones but has yet to meet an annual requirement as required by the Water Board order;

WHEREAS, because drought has continued to affect the Colorado River Basin the Authority directed the development of a federal funding strategy to address potential future Salton Sea impacts;

WHEREAS, the Authority, working with the California Congressional delegation, secured federal legislation and administrative approvals providing the State with access to U.S. Department of Agriculture and Environmental Protection Agency funding for projects at the Sea;

WHEREAS, the Authority supported efforts to secure a \$4 billion in Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 funds for the Department of the Interior (Interior) to address western drought, securing language that would allow funds to be used for ecosystem and habitat restoration projects such as the Salton Sea;

WHEREAS, the Imperial Irrigation District negotiated with federal authorities and the State to designate \$250 million from the \$4 billion drought funding to accelerate SSMP projects, including the Species Conservation Habitat project, if additional conservation programs were implemented by IID and CVWD to protect critical reservoir elevations at Lake Mead;

WHEREAS, the Authority worked with the California Congressional delegation to secure Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) authorization for the Corps Salton Sea Imperial Streams Feasibility Study (Corps Salton Sea study), signed into law by President Trump, one of only three new studies authorized by Congress in WRDA 2020;

WHEREAS, upon completion, Salton Sea projects evaluated in the Corps study will be eligible for 65% federal funding cost-share once completed, likely by 2027;

WHEREAS, the Authority worked with the California Congressional delegation to secure FY21 federal appropriations to launch the study, and secured federal legislation in 2023 to enable the Corps to increase its investment in the Salton Sea study, resulting in the addition of \$3.8 million in federal funds – the largest federal investment for any study in that year;

WHEREAS, after securing the Corps Salton Sea study, the Authority worked with the State to secure its support for the work, harmonizing the Corps study with the State's processes;

WHEREAS, the Authority led the advocacy effort to secure Corps administrative approval to expand the study to comprise the entire Salton Sea Basin and to advance the development of two early implementation projects for the Alamo and Whitewater Rivers;

WHEREAS, the Authority is currently advocating for additional federal resources for the Corps Salton Sea study, working closely with the California Congressional delegation and the Corps of Engineers, as well as working towards WRDA 2026 legislation to advance policies needed to improve project implementation;

WHEREAS, the Authority is representing local interests as required by Congress to advance federal appropriations for the Corps Salton Sea study;

WHEREAS, significant Congressional engagement will be required to secure the approval of the Corps project alternative by Congress and federal appropriations for project construction.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Directors of the Salton Sea Authority strongly supports the development and full funding of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Salton Sea Imperial Streams Feasibility Study and the leadership of the Authority in that effort as a joint local sponsor of this study.