

July 2025

Honorable Steve Padilla
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 7630
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Scott Wiener, Chair
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8630
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Benjamin Allen, Chair
Senate Budget Subcommittee #2
1021 O Street, Suite 6610
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Jesse Gabriel, Chair
Assembly Budget Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Steve Bennett, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee #4
1021 O Street, Suite 4710
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Proposition 4 – Salton Sea Funding Allocation – Salton Sea Authority

Dear Senator Padilla, Budget Chairs Wiener and Gabriel, and Subcommittee Chairs Allen and Bennett:

I am writing to strongly urge an equitable allocation of the Salton Sea funding available in Proposition 4 (climate bond) that includes the Salton Sea Authority (Authority). Despite the Salton Sea Authority representing key local government partners (Coachella Valley Water District, the Imperial Irrigation District, Riverside County, Imperial County and the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians) the currently proposed spending plan provides no funding to the Authority. We respectfully request the following allocation:

- **\$5 million** to the Salton Sea Authority to continue its work relating to the Salton Sea Management Program, including in partnership with the Department of Water Resources (together as “joint local sponsors” and the United States Army Corps of Engineers) continued pursuit of a comprehensive ecosystem restoration plan which when completed will facilitate access to 65% matching funds for all work thereafter relating thereto, collaboration with the state in accordance with AB71 (2013 Perez) on the creation and implementation of the Salton Sea conservancy, and related environmental, public safety, and economic revitalization efforts.
- **\$5 million** to California Natural Resources Agency to fund the creation of the Salton Sea Conservancy which was established through the 2024 statute.

While the State has recently described this allocation recommendation as necessary to expedite the important work of the Conservancy, it fails to recognize that key, time-sensitive work of the Authority also requires support. The proposed funding allocation jeopardizes the Authority’s work and the significant benefits it provides the State. This is simply not a workable solution.

The Authority is the statutorily designated local government entity in the region that advocates for and implements restoration and economic revitalization projects at the Salton Sea in partnership with the State and federal government. Of note, the Authority fills a critical niche in Salton Sea restoration efforts by providing focused, prioritized advocacy at the federal level. To be qualified for federal authorizations and appropriations to benefit the Sea – and to ensure the federal government shares in the State’s Sea financial obligations -- local support is required by Congress. The Authority, with its local member agencies, satisfies this requirement. And, while the State engages in advocacy at the federal level for a wide range of California priorities, the Authority has no competing priorities or cumbersome internal clearances to navigate. This has allowed the Authority to be nimble and proactive on behalf of the Salton Sea.

Among other Authority efforts, the Authority’s value in this regard is clearly demonstrated by our role in securing the federal authorization and funding for the Salton Sea Imperial Streams Feasibility Study being conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the Authority as joint local sponsor.

This project will authorize Salton Sea restoration projects at a 65% federal cost-share. The Authority led the advocacy effort to secure the Corps engagement at the Salton Sea during the first Trump administration, secured legislative and administrative improvements and funding for this work during the Biden administration, and continues to lead the advocacy effort to keep this critical work on track. As this work proceeds, additional Congressional authorizations and funding measures will be needed to bring the project to fruition. The Authority has the key relationships in Congress and within the administration to ensure this work reaches its full potential.

The relatively small costs of Proposition 4 investment in the Authority will help to keep these federal efforts on track and deliver substantial benefits by reducing the State’s financial burdens for long-range management.

The Authority’s decades of leadership must continue seamlessly, especially as the Salton Sea Conservancy begins to establish and get its footing and important efforts begin to be undertaken to synchronize the collaborative efforts of both the Authority and Conservancy. To that end, it is critical that the limited resources available in Proposition 4 for the work being undertaken by the Authority and the Conservancy be shared on an equal basis to adequately provide for their complementary efforts. These activities are much too important to the continuity of the environmental, public health, and economic programs within the region to neglect funding for the Authority’s critical work.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We look forward to working with you and your staff to help advance these specific requests. **Please don’t hesitate to contact me at**

Sincerely,