

Memorandum

To: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors
From: G. Patrick O'Dowd, Executive Director /General Manager
Date: July 17, 2025

Re: Framework of Assurance Task Force

The Salton Sea Authority (Authority) is committed to understanding public health risks from the Salton Sea's changes, including dust emissions and toxins. Since our [initial memorandum on November 16, 2023](#) and subsequent updates to the Board, including [one dated November 14, 2024](#), significant progress has been made toward the defining a Health Assurance Framework for the purpose of ensuring public trust and community safety. This memo outlines advancements and recommends forming a task force to align existing monitoring efforts, assess the need for additional testing, and create a transparent framework.

Background

The Salton Sea's shrinking lakebed, driven by reduced inflows and conservation measures, has increased dust (PM10, PM2.5) and toxin exposure, raising concerns about respiratory and other health issues. At the Authority's November 2023 meeting, public trust was given additional consideration, noting that residents lack confidence in whether health risks are fully known and mitigated. It was noted then that while the State's Monitoring Implementation Plan (MIP, November 2022) tracks ecosystem changes it is not in and of itself a mitigation strategy. In November, 2024 we discussed ongoing efforts by the Imperial Irrigation District (IID), local air boards, universities, and the Pacific Institute, with a call for stakeholder alignment informed by the Owens Valley's oversight by the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (GBUAPCD).

Current Research

UCR, through the work of Dr. David Lo, has for some time been investigating the impact of biological toxins at the Salton Sea on Human Health. His work, [presented and discussed at several earlier meetings of the Salton Sea Authority board](#), established that laboratory mice did in fact experience an adverse reaction from ingesting toxins present in Salton Sea emissions. Dr. Lo reminded the board, however, that a reaction in mice

does not necessarily translate to a comparable human outcome, but suggested that additional research was required.

At today's meeting, Diego Centeno will present his research findings on hydrogen sulfide levels at the Sea. Though Mr. Centeno is a PhD student at UCLA, the study was conducted while he was attending Brown University; and supported by a reputable competent team of professionals. The work also highlights the use of community-based science, which will be discussed in today's presentation.

Recommendation: Task Force Formation

To address these challenges and answer these questions, Authority Staff is recommending the formation of a task force with representatives from ICAPCD, SCAQMD, other aligned public agencies, engaged members of the medical community, researchers, and local community stakeholders. The task force should:

1. Inventory all agencies whose work directly impacts or tangentially relates to public health and safety and the Salton Sea.
2. Catalog methods, frequency, and scope of current testing (e.g., PM levels, hydrogen sulfide).
3. Assess the adequacy of current testing efforts, identifying gaps.
4. Recommend strategies to standardize data and testing, ensuring equal weighting and indexing of risks throughout the region.
5. Develop a Health Assurance Framework, to provide transparent, reliable data for stakeholders. Informed by GBUAPCD's Owens Valley oversight, the implementation of this framework should be trustworthy, durable, and long-lasting.

This framework will enhance public trust by ensuring health risks are understood and being responsibly mitigated, aligning with the Authority's mission. The framework should also be foundational to a robust public relations effort to educate and inform local stakeholders of risks and resources.