



AGENDA: **BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**
DATE: **Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.**
LOCATION: Imperial County BOS Chambers
940 W Main Street
El Centro, CA 92243

The following Salton Sea Authority Directors will be attending remotely via video/teleconference from the location(s) indicated:

Director V. Manuel Perez
Supervisor,
Riverside County
78015 Main Street, Suite 205
La Quinta, CA 92253

Vice President Castulo Estrada
Vice President, CVWD
City of Coachella Corporate Yard
53-462 Enterprise Way
Coachella, CA 92236

Remote participation for this meeting is accessible at:
<http://www.SaltonSea.com/meetings>

I. CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

A copy of the agenda and supplemental materials will be available for viewing or download from [SaltonSea.com/meetings](http://www.SaltonSea.com/meetings)

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

This Public Comments time is reserved for comments on any non-action agenda item and for matters not on the agenda. California law prohibits members of the Board from taking action on matters not on the agenda.

Members of the public may address the Board regarding any matter within the Authority's jurisdiction and are invited to speak to any specific action item in the agenda at the time it is called. All other remarks should be provided during this general public comment period.

Speakers should state their name for the record and address all comments to the Chair, limiting remarks to three (3) minutes.

In person attendees should complete a "request to speak" form and provide it to the Clerk of the Board. Remote speakers must use Zoom's "raised hand" feature (or if by phone, press *9) to be recognized.

Written comments may be emailed to **info@saltonseas.com**, or delivered by hand or mail to 82500 Highway 111, Suite 4, Indio, California, "Attn: Clerk of the Board, Salton Sea Authority". Please include "Public Comment, 03/19/2026 Board meeting" in the subject line, and also include your name, address (addresses will be redacted), referencing the specific agenda item if appropriate.

All written comments will be distributed to the Board, posted on **SaltonSea.com** for public viewing and, **if received before noon on Wednesday, March 18**, publicly acknowledged during the Board meeting. (Written comments will be included in the public record but not be read aloud.)

III. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

This time is set aside for members of the Board to share thoughts and concerns regarding general Authority matters not on the agenda, ask questions of staff, and request items to be added to a future agenda.

The Brown Act expressly prohibits lengthy Board Member discussion of matters not on the agenda. The Board may at its discretion (by 4/5 vote) add items deemed to be an emergency to the agenda to allow for public discourse.

IV. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION

- A. CONSENT CALENDAR – Approve, Receive, and File
 1. Minutes of Salton Sea Authority SPECIAL Board Meeting 02/19/2026
 2. Salton Sea Authority Warrant Register Ratification for February 1, 2026 through February 28, 2026
 3. Salton Sea Authority Internal Financial Report as of January 31, 2026
- B. Salton Sea Authority 5-Year Strategic Plan – Review, Discuss, Approve, and authorize implementation.
- C. Fiscal 2027 Budget Principals – Review and Board Direction
- D. Discuss reorganizational strategies for the Authority including leadership and membership qualification. Actions may include reorganization of board officers.

- E. Colorado River Post 2026 Operating Guidelines EIS Update
- F. Proposition 68 /North Lake Wetlands Funding Update and possible action
- G. USACE Feasibility Study
 - 1. RAPID Implementation
 - 2. Outreach, Education, and Relationships
 - 3. Appropriations
 - a. Federal
 - b. State
 - c. Other
- H. Desert Shores
 - 1. Grant Status
 - 2. Next Steps

V. REPORTS

- A. Federal
 - 1. Federal Activities – Lisa Moore Lehman, Partner, Cultivating Conservation
 - 2. US Bureau of Reclamation - Unassigned
- B. State
 - 1. State Advocacy - Nick Romo, Cruz Strategies and Glen Farrel, GF Advocacy
 - 2. State of California – Mr. Miguel Hernandez, Public Affairs Officer, California Natural Resources Agency
 - 3. Salton Sea State Recreation Area Update on Activities – Ray Lennox, Colorado District Superintendent.
- C. Local
 - 1. Salton Sea Action Committee – Alan Pace, SSAC President
- D. Executive Director’s Report and Comments - G. Patrick O’Dowd, Executive Director/GM, Salton Sea Authority

VI. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

VII. ADJOURNMENT

NEXT MEETING TIME & LOCATION:

The Salton Sea Authority board is scheduled to meet on:

Thursday, May 21, at 10:00 a.m.

at

Coachella Valley Water District

75515 Hovley Lane, East

Palm Desert, CA 92260

Any public record, relating to an open session agenda item, that is distributed within 72 hours prior to the meeting is available for public inspection located at 82500 Highway 111, Suite 4 Indio, CA 92201.

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
SALTON SEA AUTHORITY SPECIAL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
February 19, 2026

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Salton Sea Authority ("Authority") Board of Directors ("Board") was called to order by Chair Dockstader, at 10:10 a.m., February 19, 2026 at the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Tribe and via Zoom Webinar.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Led by Director Morreo

ROLL CALL

DIRECTORS PRESENT ON SITE

Gina Dockstader, President
Ryan E. Kelley, Director
Joseph Mirelez, Director
RoseMarie Morreo, Director
V. Manuel Perez, Director
Ex-Officio Joe Shea

AGENCY

Imperial Irrigation District
Imperial County
Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
Riverside County
California Natural Resources Agency

DIRECTORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM

Director Singh, Director

AGENCY

Imperial County

DIRECTORS ABSENT

Alex Cárdenas, Director
Yxstian Gutierrez, Treasurer
John Aguilar, Director

AGENCY

Imperial Irrigation District
Riverside County
Coachella Valley Water District

President Dockstader asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

No Changes

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT

On Site: Enrique Arroyo, Ocotillo Wells , Pat Cooper, Deputy Chief of Staff, Riverside County Supervisor V. Manuel Perez.

Via Zoom: Glenn Farrell, Nick Romo, Cruz Strategies, Larissa O Sinclair, Tom Sephton, Lisa Moore, Cultivating, Nick Romo, Cruz Strategies, Glenn Farrel, GF Advocacy, Evon Willhoff, DWR, Vicki Doyle, IID, Jennifer Barnakian-Poland, CV Strategies, Alan Pace, SSAC.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Comments

III. **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

President Dockstader commented on the \$400.00 Western Growers Dues, Patrick stated that it is beneficial, it involves the agriculture community, it's something we're trying out. Dockstader stated that she just did a video with them, Western Growers are doing community outreach right now and will check with them to see if they can do something with the Authority.

IV. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION**

- A. CONSENT CALENDAR – Approve, Receive, and File
1. Minutes of Salton Sea Authority Board Meeting 1/15/2026
 2. Salton Sea Authority Warrant Register Ratification for 1/31/2026
 3. Salton Sea Authority Internal Financial Reporting July 1, 2025 thru December 31, 2025

*On motion by Mirelez second by, Estrada the Board **approved** the Consent Calendar per staff recommendation.*

Approved by the Following Vote:

Ayes: 8

Noes: 0

MOTION PASSED: Unanimous

ABSTAINED: 0

- B. Authorize Distribution of Comment Letter on Draft Post-2026 Colorado River Operational Guidelines

Director O'Dowd introduced this item; Lisa Moore outlined the EIS letter focus and intent. O'Dowd acknowledged Ms. Moore for her time and effort in drafting this important document.

Vice-President Estrada advised that he draft letter was shared with the CVWD Board and Attorney's and no conflicts or concerns were raised. As acknowledged in the letter, the Bureau of Reclamation is relying on the feasibility Study to address and mitigation impacts to the Salton Sea from Post 2026 operations.

Treasurer Mirelez commented on the language and noted it highlights the federal responsibility to the Tribe.

Director Perez commented regarding adequate funding and Ms. Moore responded that funding has been requested from the remaining \$1 Billion Inflation Reduction Act funds.

President Dockstader provided 4 comments:

#1 - 1st page, 2nd sentence

Requested that the purpose should be as reflected in the JPA agreement

#2 - Page 3 at the very bottom

Stated there were more recent information in this regard, and would provide in order to update the letter.

#3 - Page 7

III. 2nd paragraph

Requested clarification on the Authority's early engagement in the Feasibility Study and its relationship to the Post 2026 Operating Guidelines. Lisa Moore provided a detailed historic accounting of the Authority's involvement.

#4 - Mitigation:

Requested clarification between mitigation and restoration. Ex Officio Shea agreed with this comment.

Director Kelley offered an amendment to motion and ask that the Colorado River Board and the CA Parks and Natural Resources be copied on the final document.

On motion by Dockstader second by, Mirelez the Board to approve revised to reflect President Dockstader's comments as noted and amended by Kelley as to distribution, and subject final board review prior to release.

Approved by the Following Vote:

Ayes: 8

Noes: 0

MOTION PASSED: Unanimous

ABSTAINED: 0

- C. Update on Proposition 68 Funds Dispensation and Possible Action Relating Thereto - Director O'Dowd gave a brief update on the remaining North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project Proposition 68 funds. The state and the Authority are working to integrate the Pilot Demonstration Project and associated funding into the greater North Lake Wetlands project being developed by the SSMP. It is expected this will advance as a collaborative effort with the Authority ensuring that community input is properly reflected in the developed project. In conjunction therewith, a tentative agreement to allocate \$200,000 annually to the Authority to fund this effort, along with collaborative work necessary to integrate this project into the USACE feasibility study effort. Ex Officio Shea indicated that this matter should be resolved before June 30.

V. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting Adjourned at 11:02 p.m.

NEXT MEETING TIME & LOCATION:

The Salton Sea Authority board is scheduled to meet on:

Thursday, March 19, at 10:00 a.m.

at

Imperial County BOS Chamber

940 W Main Street

El Centro, CA 92243

(442) 265-1020



Salton Sea Authority Warrant Register

February 1, 2026 through February 28, 2026

Date	Number			Amount
02/02/2026	ACH	Imperial Irrigation District	Utilities - 1/26	(72.33)
02/03/2026	ACH	Lee and Associates Property Management	Rent - 2/26	(1,250.00)
02/11/2026	ACH	Banc of California	VISA billing cycle ended 1/26	(3,903.66)
02/17/2026	ACH	BOR Grant Deposit	Due from BOR	6,538.63
02/20/2026	ACH	Best, Best & Krieger	Legal services 11/25	(2,368.00)
02/20/2026	ACH	SystemGo IT LLC	Consulting services 2/26	(418.49)
02/20/2026	ACH	ACWA	Bal due on 2026 Membership	(355.00)
02/20/2026	ACH	Steve Cruz	Consulting services 2/26	(7,000.00)
02/20/2026	ACH	Cultivating Conservation	Consulting services 2/26	(7,350.00)
02/20/2026	ACH	Coachella Valley WD	Board meeting recording/streaming costs 1/26	(750.00)
02/20/2026	ACH	Davis Farr LLP	FY 24/25 Audit	(12,750.00)
02/20/2026	ACH	Janice Rosenquist	Accounting Services 1/26	(2,585.00)
02/20/2026	ACH	Gafcon, Inc	BOR Grant Expenditures	(5,570.01)
02/27/2026	ACH	Frontier Communications	Internet service 1/26	(104.99)
Beginning Cash Balance				\$ 510,642.99
Monthly Activity				(37,938.85)
Ending Cash Balance				\$ 472,704.14



Salton Sea Authority Budget to Actual General Fund (Unaudited)

For the Period July 1, 2025 through January 31, 2026

								C	B / C	B - C	
	Jul 2025	Aug 2025	Sep 2025	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Jan 2026	YTD FY 2026	Budget FY 25	YTD Target 58%	\$ Variance
1 REVENUE											
2 Local Government / Member Assessments	210,000	200,000	-	-	200,000	200,000		810,000	\$ 800,000	101%	\$ 10,000
3 Other Federal / State / Local Contributions								-	525,000	0%	(525,000)
4 Sponsorships								-	10,000	0%	(10,000)
5 Other Grants								-	-	-	-
Interest Income					869			869	-	-	869
6 Miscellaneous Revenue	11	21	42	14	10	13	35	146	-	-	146
7 Grant and Other Reimbursements to General Fund			4,107			2,334		6,441	-	-	6,441
8 Grant Reimbursements and Other Income	11	21	4,149	14	-	2,347	35	6,577	44,300	15%	(37,723)
9 TOTAL REVENUE	210,011	200,021	4,149	14	200,869	202,347	35	817,446	1,379,300	59%	(561,854)
10 EXPENSES											
11 Total Salaries	18,770	18,770	18,770	28,155	18,770	18,770	18,770	140,773	238,995	59%	(98,222)
12 Total Employee Benefits	9,889	9,889	9,914	14,881	9,954	9,996	8,374	72,896	126,574	58%	(53,678)
13 Total Salaries & Benefits	28,659	28,659	28,683	43,035	28,723	28,766	27,144	213,668	365,569	58%	(151,901)
14 Contract / Professional Services											
15 DC Advocates	7,350	7,350	7,350	7,350	7,350	7,350	7,350	51,450	89,600	57%	(38,150)
16 Sacramento Advocates	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	49,000	84,000	58%	(35,000)
17 Attorney Fees	2,208	1,638	6,628	777	1,896	2,368		15,514	48,000	32%	(32,486)
18 Audit & Accounting	4,455	4,620	6,050	2,255	1,925	4,345	14,785	38,435	75,000	51%	(36,565)
19 Public Outreach & Engagement	5,000	5,000	5,000	20,000		10,000		45,000	60,000	75%	(15,000)
20 Total Contract / Professional Services	26,013	25,608	32,028	37,382	18,171	31,063	29,135	199,400	356,600	56%	(157,200)
21 Administration											
22 Travel/Mileage	3,183	3,188	5,034	91	(5,975)	3,065	3,000	11,586	35,000	33%	(23,414)
23 Conferences/Seminars/Summits		1,974	150	118			75	2,317	15,000	15%	(12,683)
24 Office Rent	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	8,750	17,400	50%	(8,650)
25 Utilities	147	181	178	373	10	169	125	1,183	4,000	30%	(2,817)
26 Repair and Service Maintenance	-		149					149	-	-	149
27 Office Rent, Utilities, and Repair/Maintenance	1,397	1,431	1,577	1,623	1,260	1,260	1,260	9,809	21,400	46%	(11,591)
28 Equipment / IT Maintenance	397	397	397	397	397	397	397	2,779	5,100	54%	(2,321)
29 Non-capitalized Office Equipment	-		-	52			1,663	1,715	5,000	34%	(3,285)
30 Insurance	1,147	1,147	1,147	1,147	1,147	1,147	1,147	8,028	14,000	57%	(5,972)

*No assurance is provided on these financial statements. The financial statements do not include a statement of cash flows. Substantially all disclosures required by accounting principles generally accepted in the U.S. are not included.



Salton Sea Authority Budget to Actual General Fund (Unaudited)

For the Period July 1, 2025 through January 31, 2026

									C	B / C	B - C	
		Jul 2025	Aug 2025	Sep 2025	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	Dec 2025	Jan 2026	YTD FY 2026	Budget FY 25	YTD Target 58%	\$ Variance
31	Bank Fees								-	-	-	-
32	Postage/Mail	60	60	48				60	228		-	228
33	Office Expense/Operating Supplies	1,267	1,472	125	125	675	162	1,328	5,154	5,400	95%	(246)
34	Office Expense/Online Services	(209)	1	90	90	90	90	30	182	5,400	3%	(5,218)
35	Dues, Subscriptions	1,501	1,128	713	1,098	1,097	1,098	1,566	8,201	10,000	82%	(1,799)
36	Operating Expenses/County Charges	405	286	149	52	874	(103)	48	1,711	6,000	29%	(4,289)
37	Board Room Usage and Recordings	105	105	805	150	1,368	105	345	2,983	3,600	83%	(617)
38	Interest Expense	-		-					-	1,231	0%	(1,231)
39	Total Administration	9,253	11,188	10,235	4,891	933	7,221	10,919	54,641	127,131	43%	(72,490)
40	TOTAL EXPENSES	63,925	65,454	70,946	85,309	47,828	67,050	67,197	467,709	849,300	55%	(381,591)
41	NET REVENUE / (EXPENSES)	\$ 146,086	\$ 134,567	\$ (66,797)	\$ (85,295)	\$ 153,041	\$ 135,298	\$ (67,162)	349,737	\$ 530,000	66%	(180,263)

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Salton Sea Authority
Budget to Actual
DWR - Proposition 68 Grant (Unaudited)

For the Period July 1, 2025 through January 31, 2026

	Jul 2025	Aug 2025	Sep 2025	Oct 2025	Dec 2025	Jan 2026	YTD FY 26	C	B / C	B - C
								Budget	YTD Target 58%	\$ Variance
1 REVENUE										
2 State of California Grant (Prop 68)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 186,997	\$ -	\$ 639,458		\$ 826,455	\$ 1,976,000	42%	\$ (1,149,545)
3 TOTAL REVENUE	-	-	186,997	-	639,458		826,455	1,976,000	42%	(1,149,545)
4 EXPENSES										
5 SSA Salaries & Contract Accounting			2,518		2,334		4,852	15,000	32%	(10,148)
6 Riverside County Salaries							-	-		-
7 Contractors			184,479		637,124		821,603	1,961,000	42%	(1,139,397)
8 Department of Water Resources-North Lake Demo							-			-
9 TOTAL EXPENSES	-	-	186,997	-	639,458		826,455	1,976,000	42%	(1,149,545)
10 NET INCOME / (LOSS)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	-

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Salton Sea Authority Budget to Actual BOR - DSR (Unaudited)

For the Period July 1, 2025 through January 31, 2026

	Jul 2025	Aug 2025	Sep 2025	Oct 2025	Dec 2025		YTD FY 25	Budget	B / C	B - C
									YTD Target 58%	\$ Variance
1 REVENUE										
2 Bureau of Reclamation Grant	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 39,734	\$ -	\$ 6,539		\$ 46,273	\$ 744,000	6%	\$ (697,727)
3 TOTAL REVENUE	-	-	39,734	-	6,539		46,273	750,000	6%	(703,727)
4 EXPENSES										
5 Riverside County Salaries							-	-		-
6 SSA Salaries & Contract Accounting			1,589		969		2,558	15,000	17%	(12,442)
7 Contractors			38,145		5,570		43,715	735,000	6%	(691,285)
8 Legal Expenses							-	-		-
9 Bureau of Reclamation-Desert Shores Revitalization							-	-		-
10 TOTAL EXPENSES	-	-	39,734	-	6,539		46,273	750,000	6%	750,000
11 NET INCOME / (LOSS)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	-	\$ -

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Salton Sea Authority
Balance Sheet
(Unaudited)
Jan 2026

1	ASSETS		
2	Checking/Savings	\$	510,643
3	Rivco Payroll		16,201
4	Rivco Investment		2,328
5	Rivco Investment FMV Adjustment		(152)
6	Checking/Savings		529,020
7	Accounts Receivable		-
8	Rent Deposits		1,250
9	Prepaid Items		9,848
10	Due from BOR		6,539
11	Due from DWR		989,038
12	Due from Grant Funds		26,604
13	Right to Use Asset		3,052
14	TOTAL ASSETS	\$	1,565,350
15	LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCE		
16	LIABILITIES		
17	Accounts Payable	\$	39,495
18	Accrued Expenses		12,000
19	Credit Card Payable		3,948
20	Accrued Payroll		5,109
21	Accrued Vacation		95,609
22	Accrued Sick		8,160
23	Lease Liability		3,713
24	Due to Other Funds		23,964
25	Due to BOR		-
26	Due to Riverside County		974,128
28	TOTAL LIABILITIES		1,166,125
30	Fund Balance		
31	Fund Balance		49,489
32	Net Income		349,737
34	FUND BALANCE		399,225
36	TOTAL LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCE	\$	1,565,350

*No assurance is provided on these financial statements. The financial statements do not include a statement of cash flows. Substantially all disclosures required by accounting principles generally accepted in the U.S. are not included.

Memorandum

To: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors
From: G. Patrick O'Dowd, Executive Director /GM
Date: March 19,2026
Re: Salton Sea Authority 5-year Strategic Plan

Recommendation

That the Board of Directors review, approve, and adopt, as presented or amended, the Salton Sea Authority Strategic Plan, which establishes strategic priorities, guiding principles, and implementation strategies to guide the Authority's work.

Background

The Salton Sea Authority (the "Authority") engaged CV Strategies, a public affairs and strategic communications consulting firm, to facilitate the development of a Strategic Plan to help guide the Authority's priorities and activities over the coming years. CV Strategies was retained to lead the strategic planning process, facilitate discussions with the Board, and assist in developing a framework that reflects the Authority's role in addressing the challenges facing the Salton Sea region.

As part of this effort, CV Strategies worked with Authority staff and the Board of Directors to develop a strategic planning framework that identifies key priorities and organizational goals. Representatives from CV Strategies will be available at the meeting to answer questions and provide clarification if requested.

As the only federally recognized local sponsor of Salton Sea restoration efforts, the Authority plays a unique role in coordinating regional collaboration, advancing restoration solutions, and advocating for policies that address the environmental and public health challenges associated with the Salton Sea.

Recognizing the evolving needs of the region and the importance of aligning organizational priorities with stakeholder expectations, the Authority undertook a collaborative and iterative planning process designed to incorporate the perspectives of Board members, partner agencies, and regional stakeholders.

An initial draft strategic framework was developed to establish a starting point for discussion. Following this initial development, the Authority conducted additional engagement with the Board to refine priorities and identify strategic pillars that reflect the Authority's role moving forward.

Strategic Planning Process

The strategic plan was developed through a multi-step process intended to ensure broad input and alignment with regional priorities. Key elements of the process included:

- Initial strategic framework development based on organizational priorities and operational needs
- Board and stakeholder engagement, including interviews and discussions to gather input on priorities and opportunities
- A facilitated strategic planning workshop with the Authority's Board of Directors to identify key themes and strategic directions
- Refinement of goals and strategies based on Board and staff feedback, as well as stakeholder input

Through this collaborative process, four strategic priorities emerged as the primary areas of focus for the Authority.

Strategic Framework

Governance

Strengthening the organizational structure, decision-making processes, and operational capacity of the Authority to ensure effective leadership, transparency, and accountability.

Stakeholder Collaboration

Enhancing coordination with local, state, federal, and community partners to advance restoration solutions and regional initiatives related to the Salton Sea.

Funding

Pursuing sustainable funding opportunities to support restoration, and programmatic initiatives, including state and federal funding sources, grants, and partnerships.

Public Health

Supporting efforts that address the environmental and public health impacts associated with the Salton Sea and the community's well-being.

Implementation

The Strategic Plan is intended to function as a living document that guides the Authority's priorities while allowing flexibility to respond to changing conditions and emerging opportunities.

Implementation will include:

- Integration of strategic priorities into annual work plans
- Coordination with regional, state, and federal partners
- Identification and pursuit of funding opportunities aligned with the strategic pillars
- Periodic progress updates to the Board of Directors

The Strategic Plan will also be periodically reviewed by staff and the Board of Directors to evaluate progress, adjust priorities as needed, and ensure continued alignment with regional needs and opportunities.

Fiscal Impact

Adoption of the Strategic Plan does not require an immediate fiscal commitment. However, the Strategic Plan identifies funding as a key priority and will guide the Authority's pursuit of grants, partnerships, and other funding opportunities to support restoration, research, and public health initiatives.

Specific funding requests or budget implications related to implementation of strategies may be presented to the Board for consideration in the future.

Conclusion

The Strategic Plan provides a clear and collaborative roadmap for the Salton Sea Authority's work moving forward. By focusing on governance, stakeholder collaboration, funding, and public health, the plan establishes a framework to strengthen the Authority's role in advancing solutions for the Salton Sea region.

As a living document, the Strategic Plan will be periodically reviewed by staff and the Board to ensure it remains responsive to emerging priorities and opportunities.

Staff recommends that the Board receive and file the Strategic Plan as a guiding framework for the Authority's future priorities and initiatives.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Salton Sea Authority Strategic Plan





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About the Salton Sea Authority

The Authority is led by representatives from six-member agencies across the Coachella Valley Region.



Gina Dockstader
President
Imperial Irrigation District
(Division 3)



Castulo R. Estrada
Vice-President
Coachella Valley
Water District



Martha Singh
Secretary
Imperial County
Board of Supervisors



Joseph Mirelez
Treasurer
Chairman
Torres Martinez Desert
Cahuilla Indians



Alex Cardenas
Board Member
Imperial Irrigation District
(Division 1 Director)



Yxstian Gutierrez
Board Member
Riverside County
Board of Supervisors
(District 5 - Supervisor)



Ryan E. Kelley
Board Member
Imperial County
Board of Supervisors
(District 4 - Supervisor)



V. Manuel Perez
Board Member
Riverside County
Board of Supervisors
(District 4 - Supervisor)



John Aguilar
Board Member
Coachella Valley
Water District
(Division 1 - Director)



Rosamarie Morreo
Board Member
Vice-Chairwoman
Torres Martinez Desert
Cahuilla Indians

Formation of the Salton Sea Authority

Formed in 1993, the Salton Sea Authority, hereinafter referred to as the “Authority”, is a Joint Powers Agency (JPA) established to coordinate and direct actions that improve water quality and stabilize water elevation at the Salton Sea. Its purpose is to enhance recreational use, support economic development and recognize the Salton Sea’s critical role in sustaining the agricultural economies of Imperial and Riverside Counties.

At its formation, the Authority brought together public agencies with direct jurisdictional, operational, and community interests in the Salton Sea region.

These member agencies include:

- Riverside and Imperial Counties
- Coachella Valley Water District
- Imperial Irrigation District

In 2003, the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Tribe of Indians joined the Authority as a full member.

Through the JPA, member agencies coordinate on planning, policy alignment, funding advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and collaboration with local, state, and federal partners on project implementation.



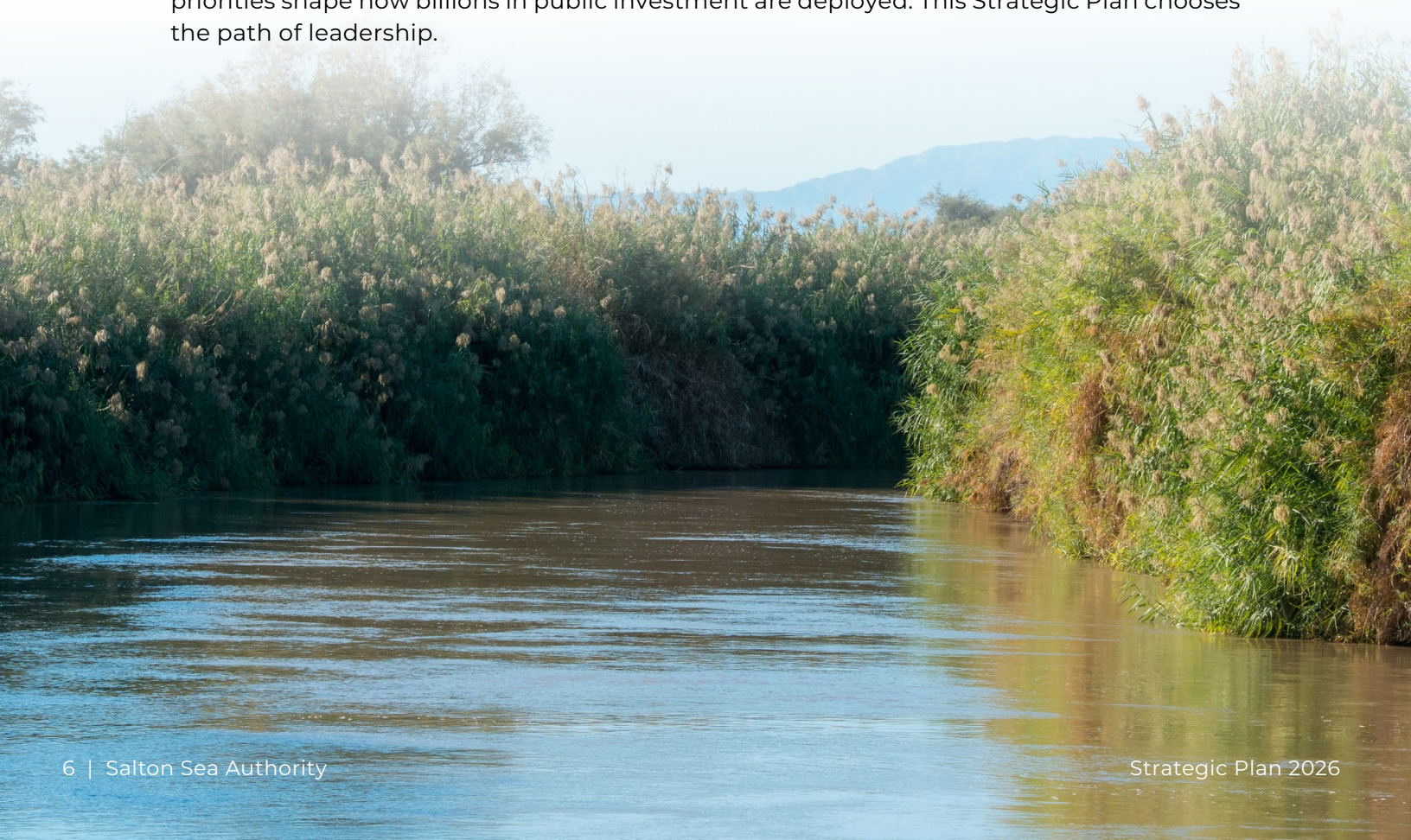
Executive Summary

The Salton Sea Authority exists for a single purpose: **to do what no individual agency can do alone**. For three decades, the Authority has served as the essential coordinating body, aligning counties, tribes, water districts, and communities around shared priorities.

Now, at a moment of unprecedented federal investment and institutional transition, the Authority must advance from a convening body into a governance powerhouse capable of ensuring billions in restoration funding delivers measurable improvements in public health, ecological function, and economic opportunity.

The Authority stands at an inflection point. The challenges presented by increased demands on Colorado River water, and the impacts of those demands on public health and economic security, coupled with the facilitation of a successfully implemented Salton Sea Conservancy, present opportunities of unprecedented scale for the Authority.

As membership evolves through additions and departures, the Authority's governance structure must adapt to sustain and strengthen its 30-year history of local leadership. As the procuring agency and Joint Local Sponsor for the U.S. Army Corps Feasibility Study, ensuring community trust and confidence in the process and product will be critical to the Salton Sea's future success. With proactive governance strengthening, the Authority will solidify its federally recognized role as the coordination backbone that ensures local priorities shape how billions in public investment are deployed. This Strategic Plan chooses the path of leadership.



The Cost of Governance Inaction

If the Authority fails to clarify governance structures now, it risks paying the cost of unintended consequences, which may include:

- Diminished outcomes for the U.S. Army Corps Imperial Stream and Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study, resulting from lost opportunities to effectively leverage JPA resources;
- Lingering inaction to address the most pressing concerns of local stakeholders – their health and safety;
- Lost Opportunity in informing the establishment of a maximally beneficial Salton Sea Conservancy¹ ;
- Funding misalignment causing agencies to compete for resources, duplicate efforts, and create permitting conflicts - wasting scarce dollars while critical projects and programs remain unfunded;
- Loss of Community trust and increased division, impeding the important work of the Authority.

This Strategic Plan was developed to respond to what's needed in this moment in time. It is intended to reaffirm the Authority's purpose, affirm its value as a coordinating and unifying entity, and provide a clear framework to guide decision-making, partnerships, and resource alignment for the coming years. Rather than duplicating the work of other entities, this plan positions the Authority to lead where coordination, alignment, and regional advocacy are essential to move forward with its mission through 2030, the duration of this Strategic Plan.

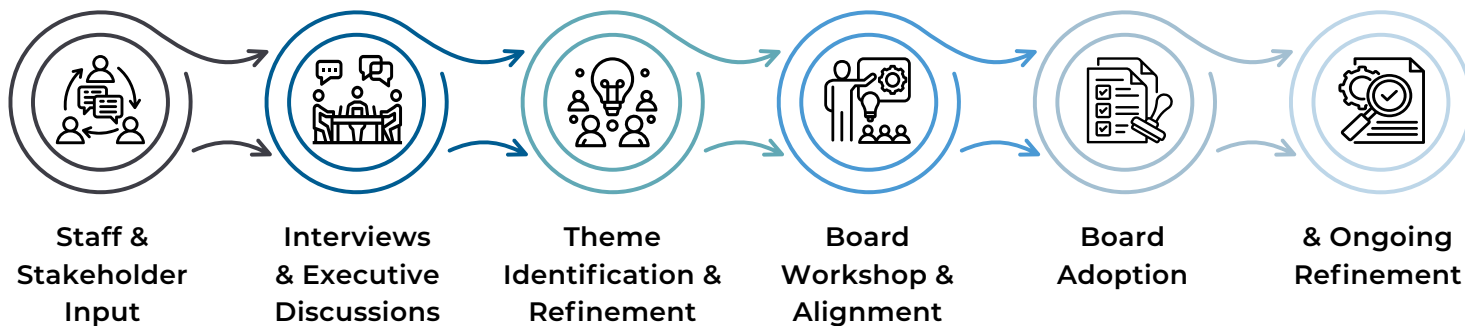
The development of this Strategic Plan was a collaborative process informed by direct engagement with the Board of Directors, Authority leadership and staff, member agencies, and regional stakeholders. Through interviews, planning discussions and ongoing dialogue, the planning process surfaced both the challenges facing the Authority and the opportunities available to strengthen its role, influence, and impact. Together, the Authority members and stakeholders set the foundation for a shared path forward and renewed commitment for the Salton Sea and its surrounding communities.



¹The Salton Sea Conservancy was created for two Purposes: (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, and (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.

Strategic Plan Development

The Strategic Plan was developed through a phased, iterative process that incorporated feedback, validation, and refinement at each stage.



Demonstrated Progress and Projects in Motion

Since its inception, the Authority has led efforts to drive meaningful progress in addressing Salton Sea challenges through sustained coordination and partnership. From its early success in securing federal support to more recent local, state, and federal wins, the Authority has been an active participant and material contributor to the progress being realized at the Salton Sea.

The Authority played an instrumental role in securing funding at both the Federal and State levels for work performed under the Salton Sea Management Program. It has also collaborated closely with member agencies, including Riverside and Imperial Counties and the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, as well as with community groups and others on outreach and education efforts.

Most notably, the Authority secured federal authorization in the 2020 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) for an ecosystem restoration plan for the Salton Sea. In 2022 the Authority, working with its Congressional delegation, the Authority secured funding for the study in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and formally initiated the study in December of that year, with the Authority and California Department of Water Resources serving as Joint Local Sponsors.

Following extensive scoping, the Authority successfully secured a “Mega Study” designation from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, expanding the effort to encompass the entire Salton Sea ecosystem. Upon completion and Congressional approval, the selected project will be eligible for 65 percent federal funding, subject to appropriation.

These accomplishments reflect the value of coordinated regional leadership and sustained collaboration with state and federal partners, including our Congressional delegation and collaboration with leadership from the entire federal family from current and past administrations.

Together, these efforts underscore the importance of maintaining continuity and alignment as restoration activities continue to scale.

An Evolving Governance Landscape

During the same period, the governance landscape surrounding the Salton Sea has continued to evolve. The establishment of the Salton Sea Conservancy has added new implementation capacity and should prove a valuable resource in maintaining projects completed by the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP).

In parallel, the Imperial Irrigation District's decision to transition its leadership role away from the Authority, along with emerging opportunities for the Authority to broaden its stakeholder leadership footprint, has highlighted the need to clearly articulate the Authority's legally and structurally well-defined role within the broader Salton Sea framework.

These changes do not diminish the Authority's relevance. Rather, they elevate the importance of its role as a convener, coordinator, facilitator, implementer, and stabilizing force that ensures regional alignment, institutional continuity, and sustained momentum as projects move forward.



Purpose of This Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan responds directly to this moment of change and opportunity. It is designed to do three things.



First, it clarifies the Authority's mission and role within an evolving governance landscape.



Second, it strengthens organizational focus, partnerships and internal alignment to support effective coordination.



Third, it establishes a practical and actionable guide that supports long-term stability, accountability and results.



Methodology



This Strategic Plan was developed through a comprehensive, phased, and collaborative process designed to capture both the complexity of the Salton Sea’s restoration landscape and the clarifying role of the Authority as the local leader in Salton Sea Restoration efforts.

Rather than relying on a single, static planning model, the process moved through cycles of draft development, stakeholder input, refinement and validation. Early plan drafts established a working framework that was intentionally tested and strengthened through engagement with Board members, Authority leadership and staff, and key partners.

This resulted in a hybrid, iterative strategic planning approach that emphasized governance role clarity, stakeholder-informed analysis, and continuous refinement.

This approach was intentionally selected to match the Authority’s expanding operating environment, where conditions are dynamic, institutional roles are shifting, projects are already in motion, and long-term success depends on clarity, coordination, and sustained momentum.



Strategic Planning Process Overview

The methodology unfolded in the following phases:

1. Initial Strategic Framing and Draft Development

The process began with the development of an initial strategic framework informed by existing Authority responsibilities, ongoing restoration efforts, and known governance and funding dynamics.

This early draft served as a working foundation, allowing key themes, questions, and areas of focus to be tested and refined through engagement rather than finalized in isolation.

This approach ensured the planning process remained grounded in current conditions, including projects already underway and evolving institutional roles.

2. Board Member and Staff Interviews

A central component of this methodology was a series of individual interviews with each member of the Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors and Authority staff.

These semi-structured conversations provided direct insights into Board members' priorities, concerns, and visions for the Authority. Topics included governance structure, stakeholder engagement, funding and resource mobilization, project delivery challenges, interagency coordination, and the evolving political context. All interviews were conducted confidentially to encourage candid input and facilitate trust.

3. Executive and Leadership Engagement

Additional one-on-one discussions with executive-level partners and leadership stakeholders provided broader context on institutional dynamics, decision-making authority, and regional expectations for the Authority's role moving forward. This step helped surface governance transition considerations and reinforced the need for clearly defined and well-aligned organizational purpose.

4. Board Workshop and Priority Identification

A facilitated Board workshop was conducted to collectively assess findings, validate themes emerging from interviews, and identify key areas of focus. This session emphasized shared understanding, alignment on priorities, and agreement on the Authority's core functions within the broader Salton Sea governance framework.

The workshop played a critical role in translating individual perspectives into one collective strategic direction.



5. Stakeholder-Informed Strategic Analysis

Rather than relying solely on a traditional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis, the process uses a stakeholder-informed analytical approach. Elements commonly associated with strengths, constraints, opportunities, and risks were examined through interviews, engagement, and document review, with particular attention to institutional capacity, governance alignment, funding conditions, and external policy dynamics.

This qualitative analysis was better suited to a multi-agency public-sector environment where success depends on coordination, clarity of roles, and sustained momentum.

6. Review of Ongoing Engagement and Institutional Context

The Strategic Plan also drew from a record of ongoing interactions, meetings, and engagement with Authority leadership, staff, partners, and stakeholders over several months. These discussions informed an evolving understanding of operational dynamics and shifting priorities.

This continuous dialogue ensured the plan reflects how the Authority functions within the broader Salton Sea governance ecosystem.

7. Document Review and Project Commitments

Relevant documents were reviewed to ensure alignment with ongoing efforts and to ground recommendations in existing commitments and legal frameworks. These included:

- Current and historical Authority planning documents
- Project delivery milestones and timelines
- State and federal policy frameworks (e.g., CNRA plans, Army Corps Feasibility Study)
- Budget and funding reports, including potential new sources

This review helped pull together key goals outlined in the Strategic Plan in continuity while identifying opportunities for refinement and alignment.



Why This Approach Was Used

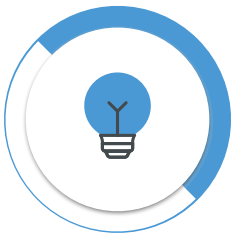
This hybrid methodology was intentionally selected to match the Authority's operating environment, where governance roles are evolving, projects are already in motion, and coordination across agencies is essential. By prioritizing iterative development, governance clarity, and stakeholder-informed analysis, the process produced a Strategic Plan that supports continued success over time.

Core Elements



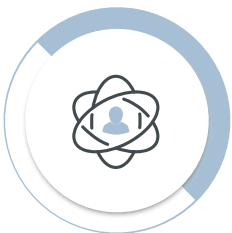
Our **Mission**

Protect human health and revitalize the environment and economy of the Salton Sea.



Our **Vision**

A revitalized Salton Sea and region that serves as a model for environmental restoration, economic resilience, and intergovernmental cooperation, where communities, ecosystems, and agencies succeed together.



Our **Values**

Inclusive

Committed to representing and engaging all communities, ensuring diverse voices are heard and respected in every decision.

Protective

Dedicated to pursuing and securing a Salton Sea region free from adverse health risks associated with an evolving Salton Sea ecosystem.

Transparent

Operates openly and honestly, providing clear information and fostering accountability in all activities.

Reliable

Consistently delivers on commitments, builds trust through action, and honors promises to partners and the public.

Collaborative

Works collaboratively with local, state, federal, tribal, and community partners to align goals and maximize impact.



Strategic Framework

The Salton Sea Authority's strategic priorities reflect the outcomes of the Board workshop and represent Board-driven priorities shaped through direct engagement with Board members. Through facilitated discussion, individual interviews, and collective planning, the Board identified four core priorities essential to the Authority's effectiveness, followed by supporting objectives that advance the Authority's mission through the planning cycle outlined in this plan.

Foundational Priority

Governance

Strengthen the Authority's governance structure to provide clarity of roles, accountability, and decision-making authority across member agencies and partners. Effective governance is the prerequisite for all other strategic work, enabling the Authority to carry out its mission and vision.



Mission-Driven Objectives



Local Leadership

Champion the voice and interests of local communities while working in partnership with state and federal agencies to fulfill obligations at the Salton Sea.



Planning and Resources

Maximize benefits through multi-agency coordination and the efficient use of limited resources, aligning ecological, economic, and public health goals.



Direct Community Impact

Secure long-term investments and plans that deliver measurable improvements in quality of life and environmental outcomes across the region.



A Framework of Assurance

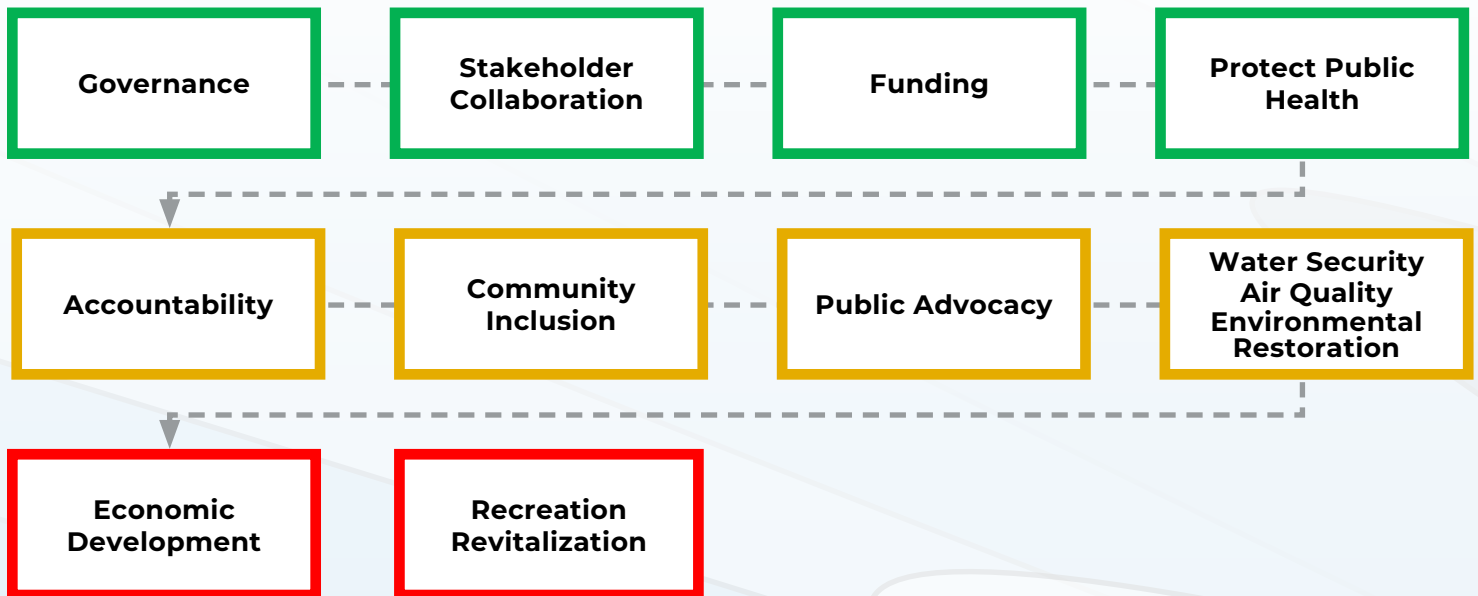
Promote agency alignment around a shared Framework of Assurance that places public health, environmental restoration, and accountability at the forefront of all actions.



Education and Community Engagement

Inform and empower residents, stakeholders, elected officials, legislators, and regulators through targeted education and engagement that fosters support and ownership of Salton Sea initiatives.

5-Year Priorities





**Strategic Action:
Governance**



Foundational Framework: Governance

Purpose

For three decades, the Salton Sea Authority has served as regional convener—bringing agencies together, aligning priorities, and advocating for the Sea and its communities. This role has been valuable, but it is no longer sufficient.

The Authority must evolve from convener to coordinator, from advocate to implementer, from advisory body to decision-making authority. This evolution is not optional. It is required by the federal partnership we have entered, demanded by the scale of funding we must coordinate, and owed to the communities who can no longer afford governance ambiguity.



As Joint Local Sponsor for the U.S. Army Corps Feasibility Study, the Authority must work in collaboration with its partners, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to make binding financial commitments, secure land access across jurisdictions, and coordinate decades-long implementation. These strategic objectives cannot be met through goodwill and coordination alone. They require governance infrastructure capable of enforcing member agency commitments.

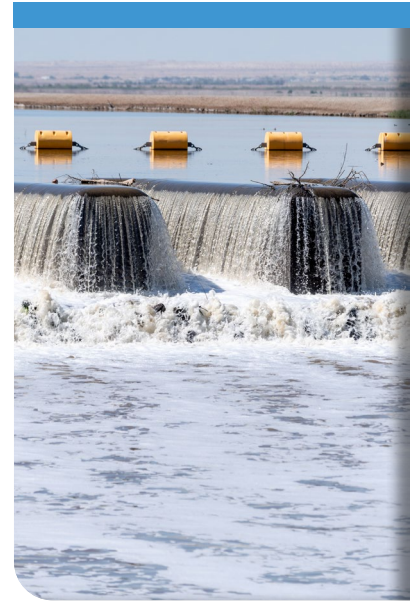
Governance is the infrastructure that makes everything else possible. Without clear authority, binding commitments, and enforceable accountability:

- Stakeholder collaboration becomes performative rather than authoritative
- Funding strategies fail when agencies cannot commit multi-year resources
- Public health outcomes remain aspirational rather than mandated
- Community trust continues to erode as promises go unfulfilled

This Strategic Plan positions governance evolution as Priority #1 because it is the prerequisite for all other success. The following strategies outline how the Authority will build the governance infrastructure needed to deliver on its commitments promised to the region.

Strategies:

- 1 Align Governance Structure to Match Regional Impact
- 2 Institutionalize Transparency and Public Accountability
- 3 Strengthen Board Operations and Decision-Making
- 4 Formalize Policy Leadership and Regional Voice
- 5 Stabilize Governance During Member Transitions



Governance In A Multi-Entity Ecosystem

The creation of the Salton Sea Conservancy represents a significant increase in state implementation capacity. This is a positive development, yet restoration at scale requires resources and authority the Authority alone cannot provide. The question is not whether the Conservancy should exist, but how the Authority and Conservancy can function as complementary partners rather than competing entities.



The Authority brings what the Conservancy lacks: regional coordination authority, local knowledge, community legitimacy, and the convening power to align agencies across jurisdictions. The Conservancy brings essential implementation capacity to a broader Salton Sea governance framework, serving as an operational entity that can address operations and maintenance of completed projects in perpetuity. The Authority can also help by advocating for the substantial and long-term resources required to operate and maintain completed projects at scale .

This synergistic relationship only works if governance and communications roles are clearly defined and mutually reinforcing. The Authority must continue to educate and inform partners and stakeholders about the unique, legally established, and mutually agreed-upon roles and responsibilities of all agencies working to ensure the successful revitalization of the Salton Sea and the region.

²For comparison, LADWP spends \$100 million on O&M at Owens Lake – which is 1/3rd the size and ONLY addresses PM¹⁰

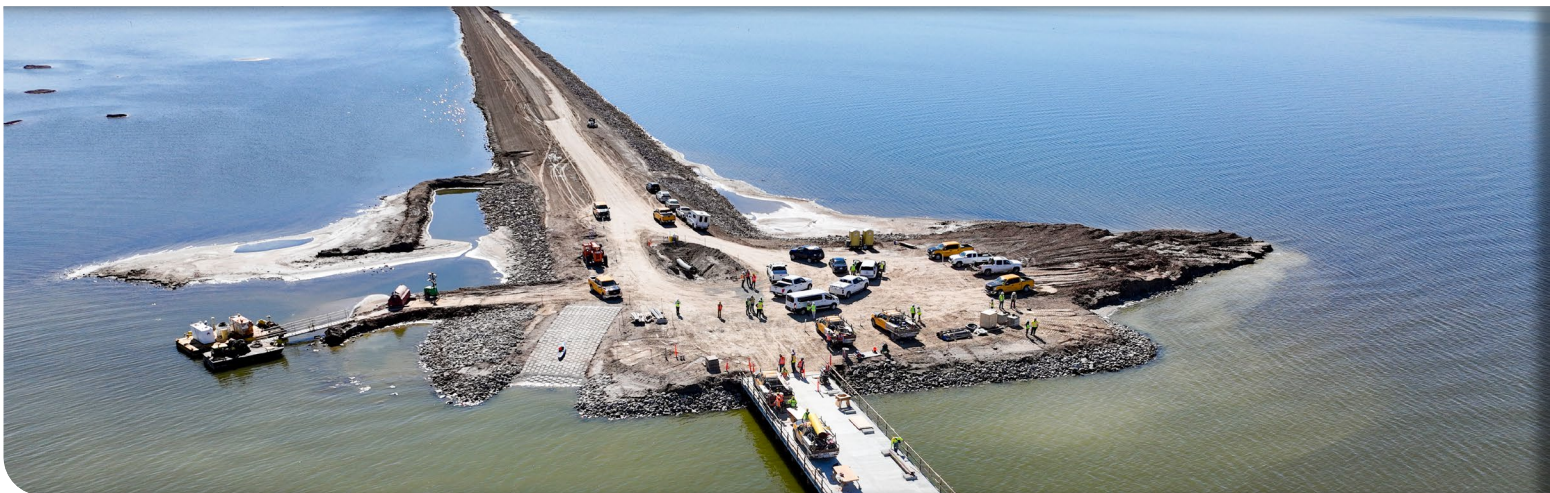
1 Strategy 1: Align Governance Structure to Match Regional Impact

Initiatives:

- Conduct comprehensive governance analysis to identify gaps in current representation, authority, and capacity
- Draft and adopt revised mission statement reflecting expanded scope of authority and responsibility
- Formalize relationship with the California Natural Resources Agency (CRNA) and Salton Sea Conservancy through Memorandum of Understanding clarifying complementary roles, information sharing opportunities, and collaborative decision-making procedures
- Evaluate and pursue expanded membership classes to include all entities with implementation authority, funding capacity, or jurisdictional responsibility (e.g., additional tribal nations, state agencies with Salton Sea mandates, federal partners)
- Secure dedicated, diversified funding stream for expanded governance role through member agency contributions, state budget allocation, or federal appropriations
- Build staff capacity to support coordination functions (minimum: Executive Director, Deputy Director/COO, Government Affairs Director, Community Engagement Coordinator, Administrative Support)

Metrics:

- Governance analysis completed and Board-adopted by Q3 2026
- Revised mission statement adopted by Q2 2026
- MOU with Conservancy executed by Q4 2026
- Minimum 3.5 FTE staff positions secured and filled by Q4 2026
- Annual operating budget secured for FY 2026-27 by Q2 2026
- New member agencies invited and onboarded by Q1 2027 (if applicable)



2 Strategy 2: Institutionalize Transparency and Public Accountability

Initiatives:

- Launch Authority projects³ dashboard tracking major initiatives, decision timelines, funding status, and other project milestones (updated monthly)
- Publish board packages 3 days before meetings in accordance with Brown Act requirements, including – to the extent available all collateral material associated with agenda items
- Create meaningful community advisory opportunities as allowed by law.
- Ensure active community participation in the development and implementation of all community-centric or community-affected projects
- Produce quarterly 'State of the Authority' reports to member agencies and the public
- Create member accountability framework for when member agencies fall short in meeting governance commitments (e.g., repeated absences, funding shortfalls, missed deliverables)

Metrics:

- Public dashboard launched by Q3 2026
- Community Advisory Committee established and first meeting held by Q4 2026
- Community impact review conducted for 100% of applicable projects
- Quarterly reports published on time for 4 consecutive quarters (100% compliance)

³This would include all efforts being undertaken by the Authority, either individually or in collaboration with Partners.



3 Strategy 3: Strengthen Board Operations and Decision-Making

Initiatives:

- Establish annual Board meeting schedule with dates published in March of each year for the next Fiscal Year (July – June) and maintain on-time meeting execution
- Implement Board package distribution protocol requiring all materials be posted 3 days before meetings with staff accountability for compliance
- Create Board member attendance tracking system with proactive outreach when members fall below 85% attendance threshold
- Develop an agenda review process to support timely progression of routine items from initial Board consideration to final action
- Establish standing committee structure to pre-vet complex items before full Board consideration, reducing meeting length and procedural delays
- Implement Board meeting efficiency metrics with monthly reporting to track meeting start times, duration, and agenda completion rates
- Create Board orientation and ongoing training program covering meeting procedures, Robert's Rules, open meeting law compliance, and decision-making protocols

Metrics:

- Board meetings held on schedule 100% of the time in FY27
- Average board member attendance rate of 85%+ maintained
- Board materials distributed at least 3 days before meetings with the goal of providing 100% of material at that time.
- Average time from agenda item introduction to board decision: <60 days for routine matters



4 Strategy 4: Formalize Policy Leadership and Regional Voice

Initiatives:

- Develop annual Board policy agenda identifying 4+ priority issues requiring formal resolutions (e.g., Feasibility Study positions, Colorado River negotiations, SSMP funding, state budget advocacy)
- Establish streamlined resolution drafting and Board adoption process to enable timely action on policy priorities
- Create policy communication protocol with designated staff responsible for distributing adopted positions to congressional delegation, state legislators, and federal/state agencies within 30-day timeline
- Designate Authority representative to serve as primary and secondary liaison with congressional delegation and state legislative leadership for policy communications⁴
- Maintain public-facing resolution repository on Authority website with search functionality and automated distribution lists

Metrics:

- Minimum 4 formal resolutions adopted annually addressing federal/state policy priorities
- Policy positions communicated to congressional delegation within 14 days of adoption
- Staff-developed policy recommendations that reflect member agency priorities, resulting in at least 85% support across adopted resolutions

⁴This could also be accomplished as a part of an ad hoc or standing committee process.



5 Strategy 5: Stabilize Governance During Member Transitions

Initiatives:

- Establish documented Board vacancy procedures including timeline expectations (60 days), interim representation protocols, and notification requirements to member agencies
- Develop comprehensive new Board member orientation program covering Authority history, current projects, governance structure, JPA requirements, roles and responsibilities, and key partnerships
- Create succession planning protocols for anticipated Board transitions, including advance notification to member agencies when terms are expiring
- Implement Board attendance tracking system with proactive outreach to members approaching quorum contribution thresholds
- Schedule all Regular Board meetings and locations in March for the next Fiscal Year and publish annual meeting calendar to facilitate member planning and attendance
- Maintain updated contact lists for all member agencies including primary representatives, alternates, and administrative contacts to ensure communication continuity during transitions
- Establish interim Board member appointment procedures to prevent quorum loss during vacancy periods
- Proactively evaluate, identify, engage, and pursue well-qualified new member agencies to join the JPA who can positively contribute to the work of the Authority, enhancing governance stability and regional representation

Metrics:

- Board quorum maintained for 100% of scheduled meetings through 2026
- Board vacancies filled within 60 days of occurrence
- New board member orientation completed within 30 days of appointment
- Zero cancelled meetings due to lack of quorum in 2026
- Establish a matrix of potential member agencies and their respective roles – Q2 26







**Strategic Action:
Stakeholder Collaboration**



Pillar 1: Stakeholder Collaboration

Purpose

Stakeholder Collaboration is the first pillar of this Strategic Plan because meaningful progress at the Salton Sea depends on early and sustained alignment among the agencies, Tribal Nations, communities, and partners involved in its restoration. The scale and complexity of the Salton Sea require coordinated decision-making, shared priorities and clearly defined roles to support completion of current and future restoration and funding initiatives.



By establishing a strong framework for collaboration at the outset, the Authority created the foundation necessary for effective funding coordination and long-term public health outcomes. Funding strategies are most successful when projects and priorities are supported across partners. This pillar ensures that subsequent investments and interventions are coordinated, informed, and positioned resulting in a stronger voice and representation on behalf of the region.

Strategies:

- 1** Lead Regional Alignment Around Shared Goals
- 2** Institutionalize Community-Based Implementation and Oversight
- 3** Align with Federal Restoration Leadership
- 4** Advance the Authority as a Regional Partner in Support of the Conservancy
- 5** Build Public Understanding of the Sea's Importance and Complexity
- 6** Engage Policy and Civic Leaders through Targeted Communications
- 7** Drive Local Support and Coordination for Restoration Planning
- 8** Coordinate a Regional Framework for Public Assurance

1 Strategy 1: Lead Regional Alignment Around Shared Goals

Initiatives:

- Develop shared project criteria to evaluate and prioritize investments across stakeholders focusing on restoration of the Salton Sea
- Monitor the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) interactive regional project map to track current and planned initiatives and identify gaps
- Coordinate project phasing across agencies to avoid permitting or land-use conflicts and minimize implementation delays
- Facilitate quarterly coordination meetings with all partner agencies to ensure alignment and information sharing
- Ensure tribal nations and community organizations are integrated early in project planning and decision-making processes
- Leverage SaltonSea.com as a centralized online resource hub consolidating multiple agencies' resources and digital tools into shared accessible platform

Metrics:

- Shared project criteria adopted by all member agencies by Q4 2026
- Quarterly coordination meetings with 80%+ partner attendance maintained
- Number of project conflicts identified and resolved through coordination (tracked quarterly)



2 Strategy 2: Institutionalize Community-Based Implementation and Oversight

Initiatives:

- Center Tribal Nations, disadvantaged communities, and frontline neighborhoods in all major project planning processes
- Advocate for early and sustained public involvement in project scoping, environmental review, and benefit analysis
- Establish formal community review process for all community adjacent or community-affected projects
- Assist the Conservancy in implementing community-based planning strategies to ensure local priorities are reflected in its care and maintenance of completed projects
- Create mechanisms for community feedback and meaningful input of projects directly impacting neighborhoods surrounding the Salton Sea
- Develop community input strategies to meaningfully inform Authority decision-making structures

Metrics:

- Community advisory framework implemented Q3 2026
- Community review process developed and implemented by Q1 2027
- Establish an advisory group of community representatives to provide feedback on Authority initiatives, with a minimum of 3 participants by Q4
- Percentage of projects with early public involvement (during scoping): 90% by Q4 2027
- Community satisfaction survey results: 75%+ satisfaction with engagement processes by Q4 2028



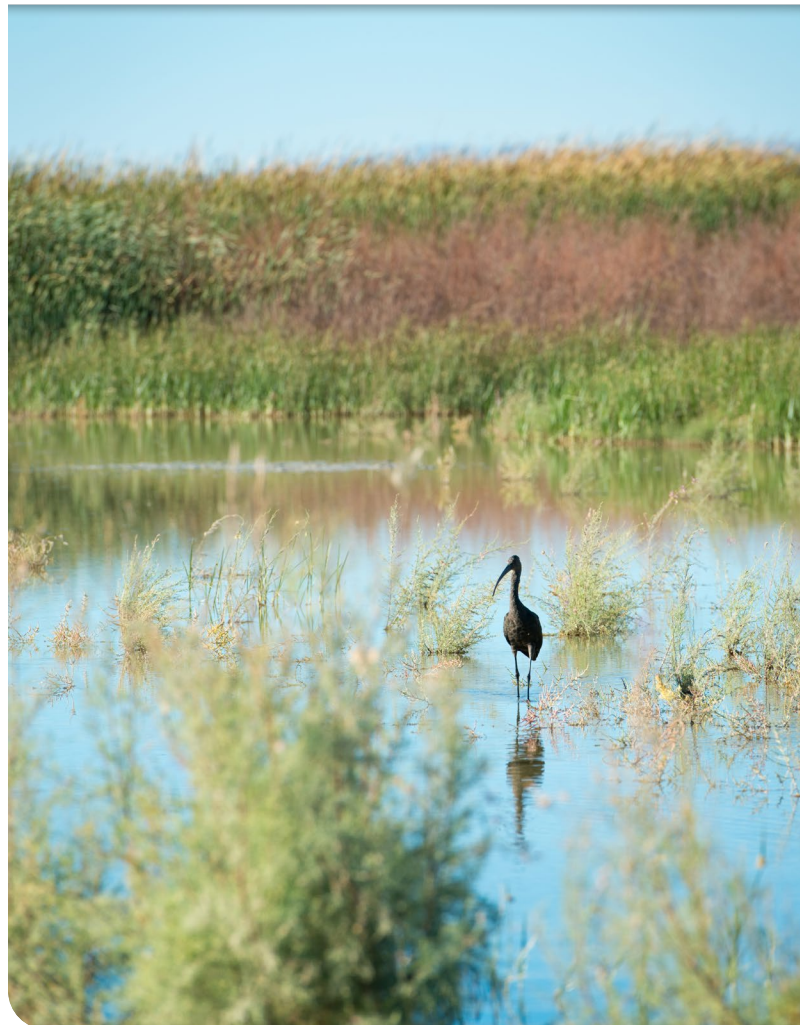
3 Strategy 3: Align with Federal Restoration Leadership

Initiatives:

- Work with state to integrate North Lake Wetlands into the overall feasibility study framework, including possible federal funding
- Engage tribal governments, community-based organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and local stakeholders in evaluation of all Feasibility Study restoration alternatives
- Ensure equity and environmental justice principles are integrated into all federal restoration planning and project evaluation as required by law
- Build Authority capacity to coordinate, facilitate, and fund federally supported projects in preparation for post-study implementation phase
- Communicate alignment between local sponsor priorities and U.S. Army Corps Feasibility Study goals
- Maintain active coordination with the Conservancy to ensure feasibility study alignment with onboarding completed projects

Metrics:

- Attendance at 100% of Army Corps Feasibility Study coordination meetings through completion of the effort.
- Tribal/community stakeholder engagement sessions held per Feasibility Study phase per outreach plan
- Authority staff capacity assessment for federal project delivery completed by Q2 2026
- Formal alignment document between joint local sponsors and Corps priorities adopted by Q 2026



4 Strategy 4: Advance the Authority as a Regional Partner in Support of the Conservancy

Initiatives:

- Formalize the strategic relationship with the Conservancy through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) memorializing respective roles and outlining coordination, information sharing, and resource alignment
- Serve as designated local coordinating entity for all agency projects under SSMP, Feasibility Study, and other Salton Sea initiatives
- Coordinate Authority Board activities, planning calendars, and communication protocols with other public agencies, including the Conservancy's meeting calendars and reporting cycles
- Establish regular coordination meetings with the Conservancy leadership
- Create formal feedback mechanism for Authority to provide local input on the Conservancy's operational efforts and priorities

Metrics:

- MOU with Conservancy executed by Q4 2026
- Periodic coordination meetings with Conservancy leadership: 100% attendance by Q1 2027
- Number of joint Authority-Conservancy initiatives launched annually: minimum 3 by 2027



5 Strategy 5: Build Public Understanding of the Sea's Importance and Complexity

Initiatives:

- Develop and distribute 'Salton Sea 101' education kits and training materials for schools, agencies, civic organizations, and legislators
- Launch multimedia public awareness campaign featuring local voices, interactive maps, and real-time project updates
- Produce and promote short films and community tours to foster regional, state, and national awareness of Salton Sea importance
- Partner with environmental justice organizations, tribal nations, and youth groups to create multilingual and culturally appropriate educational content
- Establish Authority website as primary information hub with accessible content for diverse audiences
- Create speaker's bureau providing Authority representatives for community events, school presentations, and civic organization meetings

Metrics:

- 'Salton Sea 101' education kits distributed to 50+ organizations by Q4 2026
- SaltonSea.com traffic: 25% increase year-over-year starting 2027
- Number of multimedia pieces produced (videos, infographics, interactive tools): minimum 10 annually
- Community tours conducted: minimum 4 annually for different audiences (legislators, media, educators, public)
- Educational partnerships established with schools and youth organizations: 4 by Q4 2027
- Social media engagement metrics: 50% increase in followers and engagement by Q4 2027



6 Strategy 6: Engage Policy and Civic Leaders Through Targeted Communications

Initiatives:

- Host regular legislative briefings and roundtables in coordination with Federal and State delegations, SSMP and other partners
- Deliver annual 'State of the Salton Sea' reports with audience-specific versions for regulators, funders, and regional leaders
- Establish regular communication cadence with key policymakers including one-on-one meetings, updates, and policy briefings
- Coordinate messaging and advocacy strategy across all partner agencies and organizations through regular alignment meetings
- Create rapid-response capability to provide policymakers with timely information on emerging Salton Sea issues and opportunities

Metrics:

- Legislative briefings: minimum 4 annually starting 2026
- Salton Sea Impact Dashboard operational by Q2 2027
- Annual 'State of the Salton Sea' report published by Q1 each year starting 2027
- Number of policymaker engagements (meetings, briefings, tours): 40+ annually by 2027
- Partner agency coordination meetings held monthly starting Q2 2026
- Policymaker satisfaction with Authority communications: 85%+ by Q4 2027



7 Strategy 7: Drive Local Support and Coordination for Restoration Planning

Initiatives:

- Ensure the Authority fulfills its Joint Local Sponsor Role for the Army Corps Feasibility Study through active Board and staff engagement.
- Convene regular inter-agency coordination sessions aligning Feasibility Study with SSMP and other regional planning efforts
- Engage communities and regional leaders through public forums and legislative roundtables to gather input to build support for restoration planning
- Develop public communication strategy keeping communities informed of Feasibility Study progress and opportunities for input

Metrics:

- Authority resolution adopted affirming Board and staff commitment to the Army Corps Feasibility Study and the Authority's Joint Local Sponsor role by Q3 2026
- 100% attendance at Feasibility Study coordination meetings through planning period
- Inter-agency coordination meetings held monthly starting Q3 2026
- Community forums conducted: 2+ annually by 2027
- Legislative roundtables hosted: 2+ annually by 2027
- Public communication updates distributed: monthly starting Q3 2026





8 Strategy 8: Coordinate a Regional Framework for Public Assurance

Initiatives:

- Work with Imperial County Air Pollution Control Board, South Coast Air Quality Management District, California Air Resources Board, Regional Water Board, Vector Control and others to develop and implement a consolidating framework that provides local assurance that the changes taking place at the Sea are not increasing risks to public health and safety.
- Align Framework with Post 2026 Colorado River Operating Guidelines
- Clarify agency responsibilities and define escalation pathways when risks are identified
- Publish annual report outlining progress, delays, and next steps
- Create transparent reporting mechanism holding all partners accountable to commitments and timelines
- Build Framework credibility through consistent reporting, honest assessment of challenges, and celebration of successes

Metrics:

- Framework of Assurance outlined by participating agencies Q4 2026, including delegation of responsibilities, required resources, and costs
- Agency commitment performance rate published quarterly: 80%+ on-time delivery target
- Comprehensive agency participation in Framework: by Q4 2027
- Escalation protocols established and documented by Q2 2027
- Public satisfaction with accountability transparency: 75%+ by Q4 2028





**Strategic Action:
Funding**



Pillar 2: Funding

Purpose

Restoring the Salton Sea at scale requires sustained, coordinated investment over decades. Following the establishment of clear governance and aligned stakeholder priorities, this pillar focuses on securing and coordinating funding to support implementation. For the Salton Sea Authority, the funding pillar is about ensuring that resources are secured to advance shared regional goals.



This pillar follows Stakeholder Collaboration to ensure that investments are informed by coordinate priorities and inclusive planning. Federal, state, and philanthropic funding is most effective when aligned across programs, sequenced to reduce duplication, and leveraged to support multi-benefit outcomes. By strengthening funding coordination, the Authority increases resilience to funding variability while enabling implementation to proceed with the pace necessary to deliver measurable results.

Strategies:

- 1** Advocate for Federal Funding and Policy Alignment
- 2** Leverage Federal and State Investment More Strategically
- 3** Secure Long-Term Funding and Multi-Decade Commitments



1 Strategy 1: Advocate for Federal Funding and Policy Alignment

Initiatives:

- Secure federal and state appropriations to fully fund Feasibility Study cost through Army Corps work plans and congressional authorizations
- Collaborate with California Congressional delegation to prioritize Salton Sea in WRDA and other federal funding programs
- Work with federal agency partners (DOI, EPA, USDA) to identify programmatic synergies and co-investment opportunities
- Participate in national coalitions and working groups to raise Salton Sea's visibility as priority ecosystem restoration site
- Advance regional-federal-state coordination to avoid duplication and accelerate implementation following Feasibility Study completion
- Conduct quarterly briefings with congressional delegation and staff to maintain momentum and awareness
- Develop compelling advocacy materials (fact sheets, economic impact analyses, success stories) tailored to federal policymakers

Metrics:

- Federal appropriations secured for Feasibility Study full completion by FY 2027
- Minimum 12 congressional briefings conducted annually
- Salton Sea included in WRDA 2026 authorization language
- Federal grant conversion rate: 40%+ (applications submitted vs. awarded)
- Number of federal agency co-investment opportunities identified: 5+ annually by 2027



2 Strategy 2: Leverage Federal and State Investment More Strategically

Initiatives:

- Serve as coordinating hub for federal and state funding opportunities, helping local partners access and align resources
- Develop co-funding strategies for major infrastructure and restoration projects (habitat restoration, recreation, transportation, renewable energy, broadband) delivering both environmental and economic returns
- Work with joint local sponsors and Army Corps to identify where Feasibility Study projects can unlock matching funds for SSMP or other implementation programs
- Advocate for programmatic flexibility in federal and state grants to allow integrated, multi-benefit projects
- Track funding performance across region and report annually on return-on-investment from coordinated initiatives
- Maintain database of available funding opportunities and match them to regional project pipeline
- Provide technical assistance to member agencies and local partners in grant writing and application processes

Metrics:

- Timely funding opportunity alerts distributed to 20+ partner organizations
- Coordinated funding secured annually: \$25M+ by 2027
- Number of bundled/co-funded projects facilitated: 3+ annually by 2027
- Return-on-investment report published annually by Q2 starting 2027
- Grant application success rate for Authority-assisted applications: 50%+ by 2028
- Number of partners provided with technical assistance: 10+ annually by 2027



3 Strategy 3: Secure Long-Term Funding and Multi-Decade Commitments

Initiatives:

- Advance state and federal support for multi-decade implementation plans building upon SSMP and Feasibility Study
- Work with federal and state leadership to establish long-term funding mechanisms through WRDA, infrastructure bills, and budget set-asides
- Build regional investment fund supporting complementary economic development, public health, and workforce strategies
- Ensure QSA-mandated mitigation and restoration timelines are met; advocate for updated state commitments beyond 2026
- Partner with philanthropy and private sector to expand funding diversity and reduce public burden
- Implement a Community Revitalization Fund as a mechanism to pool resources from state, federal, philanthropic and private sources to support integrated projects
- Develop sustainable funding model including Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District(s), potential lithium extraction tax revenue, bond funding, and long-term state and federal commitments

Metrics:

- Long-term state and/or federal funding commitment (10+ years) established by Q4 2028
- Lithium extraction tax revenue mechanism tracked quarterly starting Q1 2026
- Philanthropic partnerships established: 3+ major donors (\$5M+) by Q4 2028
- Community Revitalization Fund capitalized with initial \$10M by Q4 2027
- Total multi-decade funding commitments secured: \$200M+ by Q4 2030





**Strategic Action:
Public Health**



Pillar 3: Public Health

Purpose

Public health outcomes represent the most direct measure of progress at the Salton Sea. As governance structures are strengthened, stakeholders aligned and funding coordinated, this pillar focuses on translating planning and investment into the measurable health protections for surrounding communities. For the Salton Sea Authority, this pillar ensures restoration and mitigation efforts are evaluated through their impact on community well-being.



This pillar is intentionally positioned after Governance, Stakeholder Collaboration, and Funding to ensure public health actions are informed by coordinated decision-making and supported by sustained investment. By integrating public health considerations into planning, prioritization, and oversight, the Authority helps address both current and emerging risks while supporting long-term community resilience. This approach enables public health outcomes to be advanced in a sustainable manner.

Strategies:

- 1** Advance Salton Sea Interests in Future Colorado River Water Policy
- 2** Deliver Project Readiness and Implementation Support
- 3** Deliver Tangible Community Benefits
- 4** Strengthen Regional Resilience to Environmental and Climate Impacts
- 5** Drive a Visionary and Practical Restoration Plan that Protects Public Health



1 Strategy 1: Advance Salton Sea Interests in Future Colorado River Water Policy

Initiatives:

- Advocate in post-2026 Colorado River policy negotiations as advocate for Salton Sea health, community protection, and water equity
- Work with member agencies, Army Corps, California Natural Resources Agency, and federal partners to develop mitigation strategy for reduced inflows with modeling, cost estimates, and funding mechanisms
- Collaborate with Transfer Parties (IID, CVWD, SDCWA) and State to ensure QSA restoration obligations are fully enforced and timely met
- Elevate Authority's role as technical and policy advisor on intersection of water security, public health, and restoration needs
- Monitor and report on Colorado River negotiations' potential impacts to Salton Sea communities
- Advocate for inclusion of Salton Sea mitigation provisions in any new Colorado River operating agreements
- Coordinate with state water agencies to ensure Authority perspective is included in California's negotiating position

Metrics:

- Attendance at 100% of Colorado River negotiation meetings where Authority participation is requested
- Monitoring and Mitigation strategy proposal (as developed by the Framework of Assurance) developed and submitted by Q2 2027
- \$100M+ state/federal mitigation funding commitment secured by Q4 2027
- Annual impact assessment of Colorado River policy on Salton Sea published starting in 2026
- Number of technical briefings provided to negotiators: 4+ annually
- QSA compliance tracking report published quarterly starting Q1 2026



2 Strategy 2: Deliver Project Readiness and Implementation Support

Initiatives:

- Ensure state maintains an active pipeline of shovel-ready projects focused on public health, habitat restoration, and community benefits prepared to receive state or federal funding
- Provide technical assistance to member agencies and local entities to advance project development from concept through construction
- Coordinate environmental review, permitting, and regulatory compliance across multiple projects to reduce timelines
- Support state agencies in pursuing SSMP 10-year plan milestones in an effort to mitigate their failure at meeting the Water Board Order acreage requirements
- Develop project prioritization framework emphasizing near-term air quality improvements in disadvantaged communities
- Build Authority capacity to serve as Project Implementation Coordinator for federally funded initiatives
- Track and report quarterly on regional project pipeline status, funding gaps, and implementation barriers

Metrics:

- Number of implementation coordination meetings held monthly starting Q1 2027



3 Strategy 3: Deliver Tangible Community Benefits

Initiatives:

- Develop and implement Community Benefits Framework embedding health, employment, and public access outcomes into all restoration and infrastructure projects
- Promote workforce development and local hire provisions across all projects in collaboration with local schools, unions, and job centers
- Facilitate the identification and development of sites for public access, recreation, and education to reconnect residents to Salton Sea and expand regional pride
- Center investments in disadvantaged and tribal communities ensuring those most affected by past harm benefit most from future progress
- Track and publicly report on job creation, training opportunities, and local economic benefits from restoration projects
- Partner with educational institutions to create career pathways in environmental restoration and related fields
- Ensure all major projects include accessible public benefits (parks, trails, educational facilities, community gathering spaces)

Metrics:

- Community Benefits Framework adopted and implemented by Q4 2026
- 200+ jobs created through Authority-coordinated projects by Q4 2028
- 500+ workforce training opportunities provided by Q4 2028
- 3+ public access sites developed and opened by Q4 2028
- 70%+ of project benefits delivered to disadvantaged communities by Q4 2028
- Local hiring rate for restoration projects: 60%+ by Q4 2027
- Number of educational partnerships for career pathways: 3+ by Q4 2027



4 Strategy 4: Strengthen Regional Resilience to Environmental and Climate Impacts

Initiatives:

- Lead regional engagement in post-2026 Colorado River operating guidelines ensuring Salton Sea impacts are assessed and mitigated
- Collaborate with State and partners to monitor inflows, playa exposure, and model future scenarios
- Advocate for fully funded mitigation strategy linked to agricultural water conservation impacts threatening air quality and water reliability
- Ensure Imperial Streams Salton Sea Feasibility Study prioritizes resilient, scalable project alternatives aligning with long-term goals
- Advance climate-resilient infrastructure including stormwater capture, green infrastructure, and renewable energy as part of ecosystem restoration
- Build regional capacity to respond to climate-driven changes affecting water availability, air quality, and community health
- Develop adaptive management strategies allowing project adjustments based on changing environmental conditions

Metrics:

- Mitigation funding secured linked to water conservation impacts: \$50M+ by Q4 2028
- Climate-resilient infrastructure projects initiated: 3+ by Q2 2030
- Adaptive management framework adopted by Q4 2027
- Regional resilience assessment completed and updated annually starting 2027



5 Strategy 5: Drive a Visionary and Practical Restoration Plan that Protects Public Health

Initiatives:

- Advocate for Feasibility Study project alternatives prioritizing air quality improvement, habitat restoration, water resource resilience, and community benefits
- Work with technical experts to provide data, modeling, and scenario planning supporting robust plan development
- Identify clear land acquisition, water rights, and funding pathways for project implementation within Study recommendations
- Use Feasibility Study as catalyst to re-engage local communities and redefine future vision of Salton Sea
- Ensure final recommended plan delivers real, fundable, shovel-ready projects offering measurable on-the-ground benefits
- Advocate for plan alternatives integrating with existing SSMP investments and other regional restoration initiatives

Metrics:

- Authority input incorporated into 100% of Study alternative development phases
- Technical data contributions provided to Corps: quarterly throughout Study
- Land and water rights pathway analysis completed by Q4 2027
- Community engagement sessions on Study alternatives: 4+ by Q4 2028
- Tentatively Selected Plan includes projects achieving tangible, sustainable solutions to air quality challenges by Q4 2027
- Funding commitments secured for preferred plan implementation: \$100M+ by Q4 2030



Measuring Success



Commitment to Results

This Strategic Plan establishes a clear framework for advancing the mission of the Salton Sea Authority. The strategies outlined in this document reflect input from board members, staff, and key stakeholders and are intended to guide coordinated action across the region.

Success will be measured by the Authority's ability to advance meaningful progress on the priorities identified in this plan while continuing to strengthen partnerships, build momentum, and respond to evolving conditions at the Salton Sea.

Tracking Progress and Accountability

Implementation of this Strategic Plan will be supported through regular progress updates to the Board of Directors. These updates will allow leadership to evaluate progress, identify opportunities for adjustment, and ensure transparency and accountability throughout the implementation process.

Tracking progress will also provide an opportunity to highlight milestones, strengthen collaboration among partners, and maintain alignment with regional, state, and federal initiatives that support restoration and public health goals.

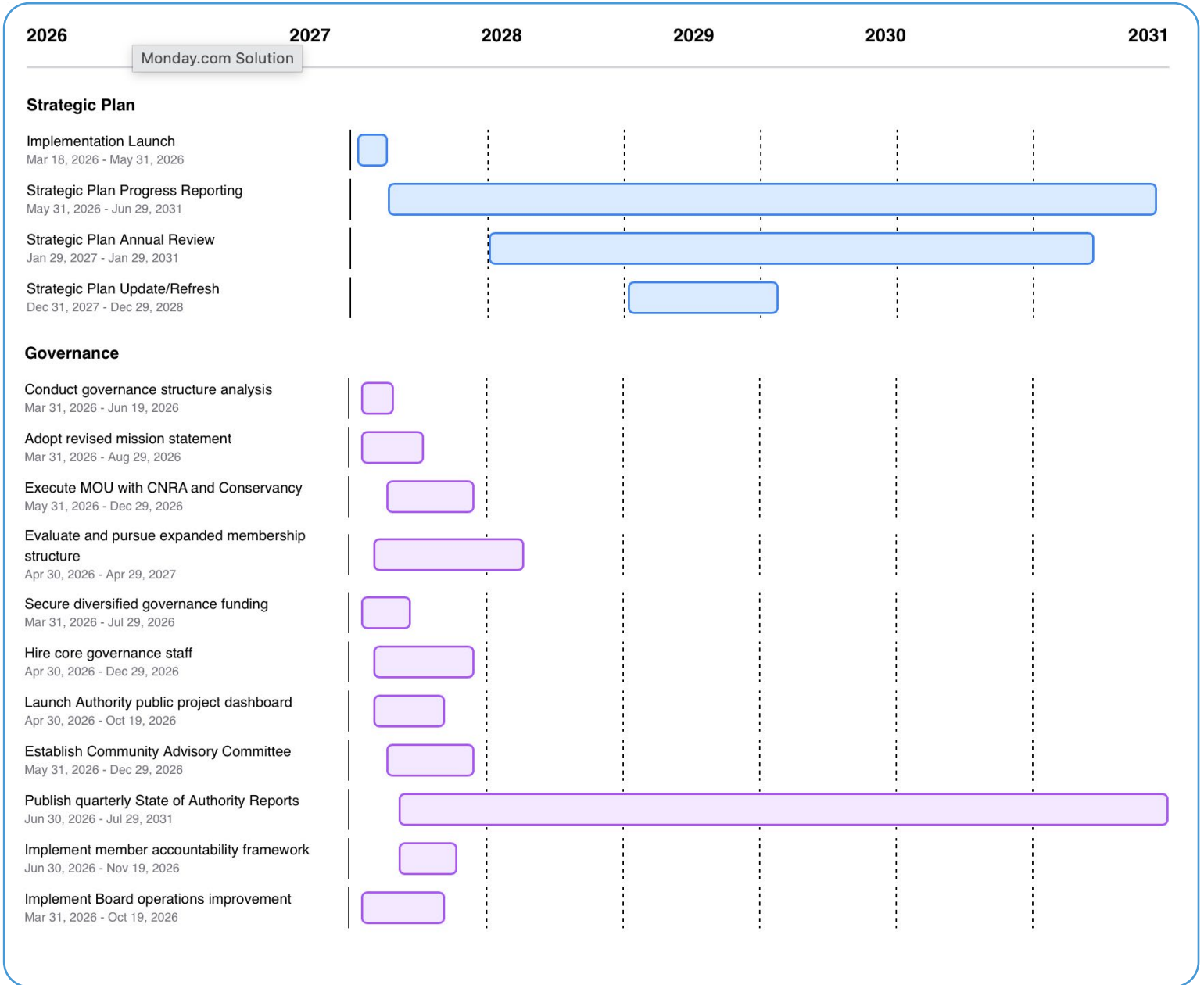


Implementation Phasing and Schedule

Recognizing the scale and complexity of challenges facing the Salton Sea, the strategies in this plan are intended to be implemented in phases. Some initiatives can begin immediately, particularly those focused on strengthening governance and coordination, while others will evolve over time as partnerships develop, technical studies are completed, and funding opportunities emerge.

The implementation timeline included in this section provides a high-level overview of how strategies may unfold over the next several years.

Strategic Plan Implementation Timeline

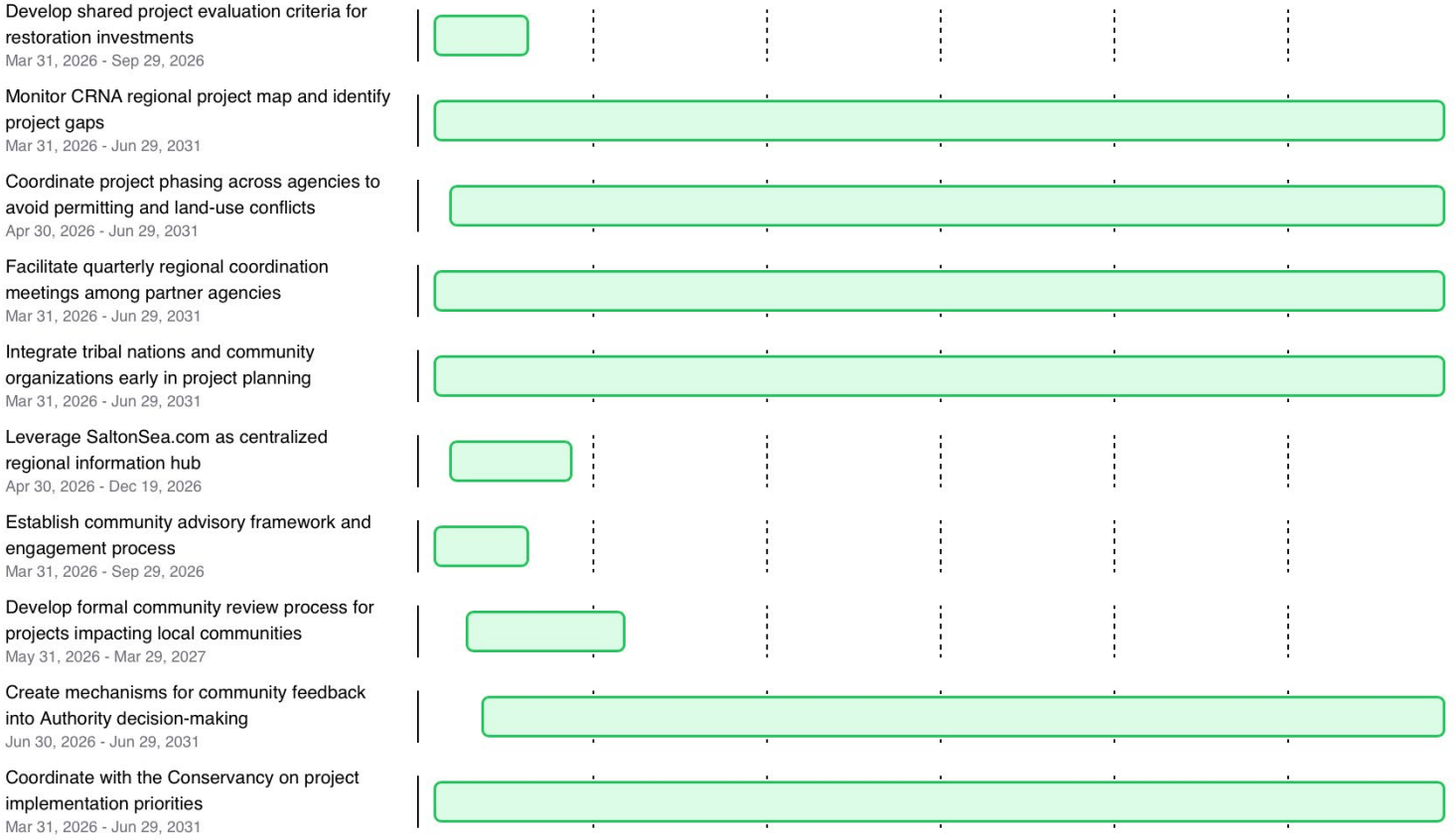


Strategic Plan Implementation Timeline

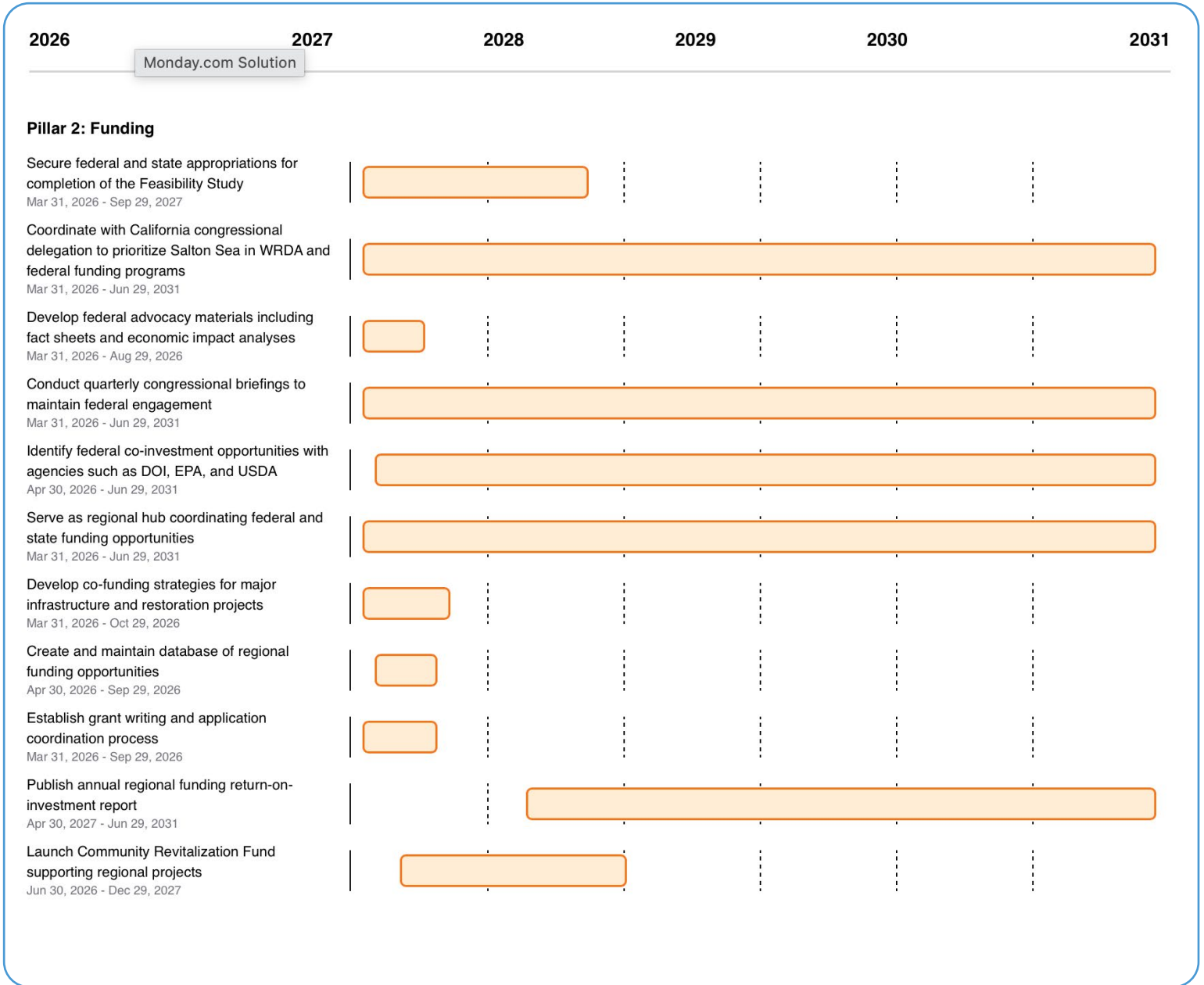
2026 2027 2028 2029 2030 2031

Monday.com Solution

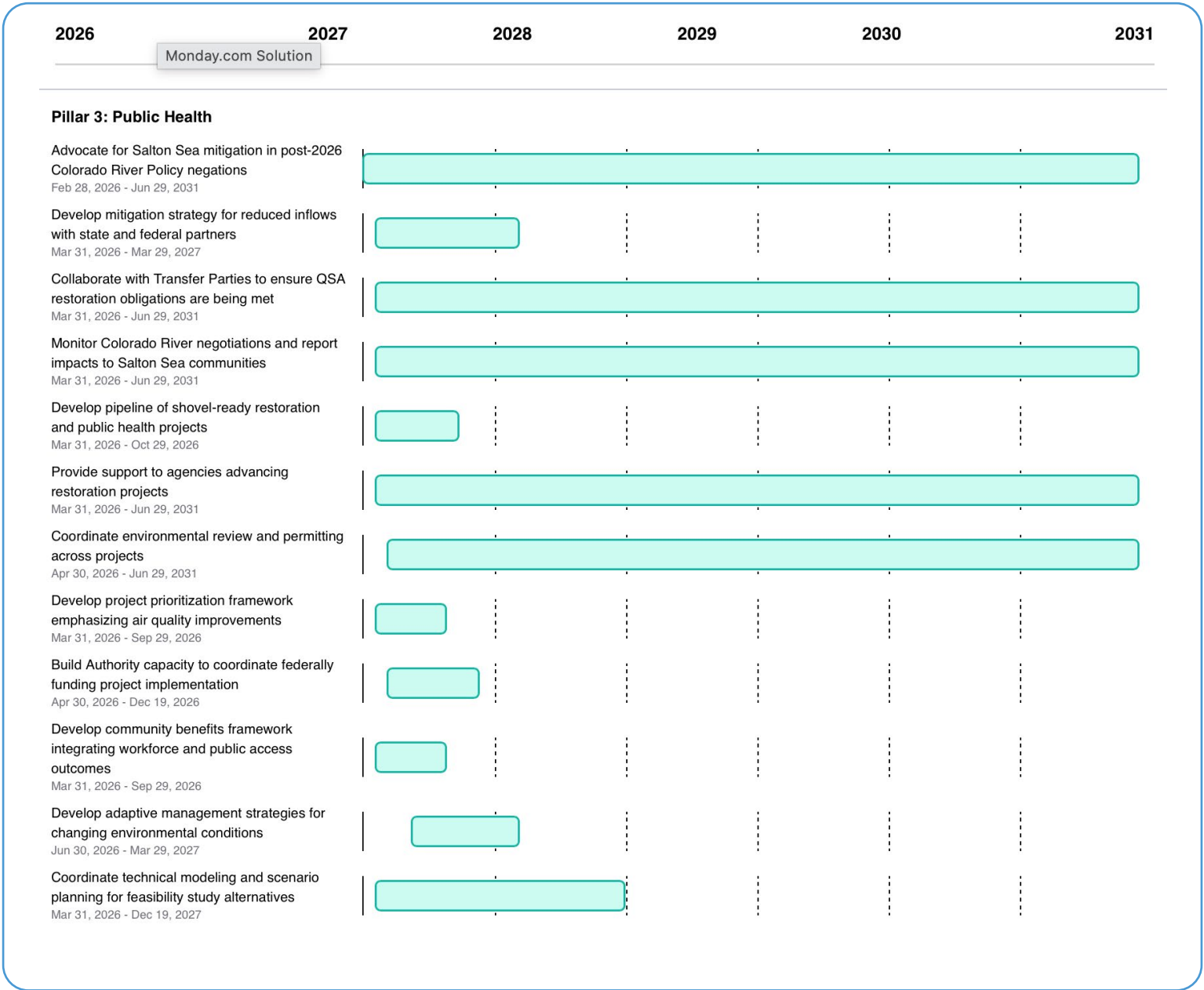
Pillar 1: Stakeholder Collaboration & Outreach



Strategic Plan Implementation Timeline



Strategic Plan Implementation Timeline



A Living Document

This Strategic Plan is intended to serve as a living document. As conditions change and new opportunities emerge, the Authority may periodically review and refine the plan to ensure it continues to reflect the needs of the region and the priorities of its partners.

Through continued collaboration, strategic coordination, and a commitment to measurable progress, the Salton Sea Authority will be well positioned to advance solutions that support the long-term health of the Sea and the surrounding communities.





2026 Strategic Plan

Select images courtesy of the California Department of Water Resources.

saltonseas.com

County of Riverside

RIVERSIDE OFFICE:
4080 Lemon Street, 5th Floor
Riverside, CA 92502-1647
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Fax (951) 955-2194



DISTRICT OFFICE/MAILING ADDRESS
78015 Main Street, Ste. 205
La Quinta, CA 92253-3420
(760) 863-8211
Fax (760) 863-8905

SUPERVISOR V. MANUEL PEREZ FOURTH DISTRICT

March 6, 2026

The Honorable Alex Padilla
U.S. Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Schiff
U.S. Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ken Calvert
U.S. House of Representatives
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Ruiz, M.D.
U.S. House of Representatives
2342 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Padilla, Senator Schiff, Representative Calvert & Representative Ruiz:

As Supervisor for Riverside County's Fourth District, representing the eastern two-thirds of Riverside County, and also as a Director of the Salton Sea Authority, I am writing to convey my strong support for the Salton Sea Authority's FY 2027 Energy and Water Appropriations request for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funding to advance the Salton Sea Imperial Streams Feasibility Study (Corps Feasibility Study).

Senator Padilla, Senator Schiff, Representative Calvert & Representative Ruiz
March 6, 2026
Page 2

The Salton Sea spans 370 square miles in Imperial and Riverside Counties and is California's largest lake. The Sea has been sustained by agricultural return flows, which have declined nearly 15 feet since 2003, and will expose roughly 30,000 acres of dry lakebed. It has been estimated that the Sea's playa will become exposed at a rate of 5,500 acres per year and that by 2045 there will be total increase of between 75,000 and 92,300 acres relative to 2003. The Sea is also now twice as salty as the ocean, causing major declines in fish and bird populations along a major stopover in the Pacific Flyway.

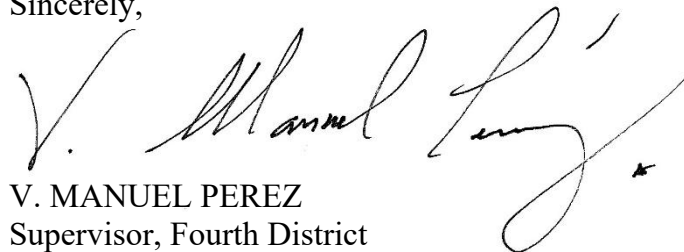
Air pollution linked to playa exposure contributes to high rates of asthma and respiratory illness, particularly in children. This is particularly the case for the disadvantaged communities surrounding the Salton Sea which suffer from the highest rates of these illnesses in the state.

The negative impacts caused by declining Sea inflows are likely to accelerate and expand because of anticipated federal water supply cutbacks likely to be adopted as part of the Bureau of Reclamation's Colorado River guidelines revisions. Now in draft form, Reclamation contemplates Sea impacts from cutbacks will be addressed through the Corps Feasibility Study.

The completion of the Corps Feasibility Study is a required prerequisite to securing 65 percent federal funding to address these critical concerns. Given the likelihood that these problems will be compounded by Reclamation's anticipated action, I ask that you ensure the Corps Feasibility Study is fully funded and accelerated to protect the communities I represent.

If you have any questions about my support for this funding request, please don't hesitate to contact me at (760) 863-8211. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "V. Manuel Perez", with a small asterisk at the end of the signature.

V. MANUEL PEREZ
Supervisor, Fourth District

VMP:das

RYAN E. KELLEY
SUPERVISOR – DISTRICT 4
940 MAIN STREET, SUITE 209
EL CENTRO, CA 92243

Board of Supervisors
County of Imperial

BUS: (760) 482-4613
CELL: (760) 336-9533
FAX: (760) 482-4215
E-MAIL: ryan Kelley@co.imperial.ca.us

March 1, 2026

The Honorable Alex Padilla
United States Senator
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Schiff
United States Senator
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ken Calvert
United States Congressman
2205 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Ruiz
United States Congressman
2342 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Padilla, Senator Schiff, Congressman Ruiz and Congressman Calvert:

As supervisor for Imperial County's Fourth District, and also as a Director of the Salton Sea Authority, I am writing to convey my strong support for the Salton Sea Authority's FY2027 Energy and Water Appropriations request for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funding to advance the Salton Sea Imperial Streams Feasibility Study (Corps Feasibility Study).

The Salton Sea spans 370 square miles in Imperial and Riverside counties and is California's largest lake. The Sea has been sustained by agricultural return flows, which have declined nearly 15 feet since 2003, and will expose roughly 30,000 acres of dry lakebed. It has been estimated that the Sea's playa will become exposed at a rate of 5,500 acres per year and that by 2045 there will be total increase of between 75,000 and 92,300 acres relative to 2003. The Sea is also now twice as salty as the ocean, causing major declines in fish and bird populations along a major stopover in the Pacific Flyway.

Air pollution linked to Salton Sea playa exposure contributes to high rates of asthma and respiratory illness, particularly in children. For example, a recent study evaluating the impact of particulate matter pollution on Imperial Valley school children found that 24% had an asthma diagnosis, much higher than California and national averages. Disadvantaged communities surrounding the Salton Sea also suffer from the highest rates of these illnesses in the state.

The negative impacts caused by declining Sea inflows are likely to accelerate and expand because of anticipated federal water supply cutbacks likely to be adopted as part of the Bureau of Reclamation's Colorado River guidelines revisions. Now in draft form, Reclamation contemplates Sea impacts from cutbacks will be addressed through the Corps Feasibility Study.

The completion of the Corps Feasibility Study is a required prerequisite to securing 65% federal funding to address these critical concerns. Given the likelihood that these problems will be compounded by Reclamation's anticipated action, I ask that you ensure the Corps Feasibility Study is fully funded and accelerated to protect the communities I represent.

Sincerely,



Ryan E. Kelley
Supervisor, District 4
Imperial County Board of Supervisors



GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
WADE CROWFOOT, Secretary for Natural Resources

March 6, 2026

The Honorable Alex Padilla
United States Senator
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Schiff
United States Senator
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The Honorable Ken Calvert
United States Congressman
2205 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Ruiz
United States Congressman
2342 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Padilla, Senator Schiff, Congressman Ruiz and Congressman Calvert:

On behalf of the California Natural Resources Agency, I thank you for your continued leadership on behalf of the State of California and your support for the Salton Sea. I write to convey my strong support for the Salton Sea Authority's FY2027 Energy and Water Appropriations request for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funding to advance the Salton Sea Imperial Streams Feasibility Study (USACE Feasibility Study).

The Salton Sea is California's largest lake. Advancing projects at the Salton Sea to protect air quality and provide critical environmental habitat for fish and birds along the Pacific Flyway has been a key priority for Governor Newsom since the early days of this Administration. Declining flows into the Salton Sea have resulted in a shrinking, increasingly saline lake that exposes submerged lakebed and can create dust that has the potential to harm public health and is of concern to local communities. The Sea is also now more than twice as salty as the ocean, causing major declines in fish and bird populations along a critical stopover in the Pacific Flyway.

CNRA, the California Department of Water Resources, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife are focused on taking near-term actions to improve conditions at the Sea through California's Salton Sea Program, which includes a 10-year Salton Sea Management Plan that focuses on constructing nearly 30,000 acres of habitat and dust suppression projects around the Sea. To develop long-term restoration actions, our Salton Sea Program is partnering with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the USACE Feasibility Study. Our agencies have already secured our State match for the upcoming fiscal year, and need the federal government to continue its investment in the study in order to advance this critical work for the Salton Sea. I ask that you ensure the USACE Feasibility Study is fully funded and accelerated to protect our shared work and progress for the Salton Sea.

Sincerely,

Wade Crowfoot
Secretary for California Natural Resources Agency

715 P Street, 20th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814 Ph. 916.653.5656 www.resources.ca.gov





Cultivating Conservation

MEMO

TO: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors and G. Patrick O'Dowd
FROM: Lisa Moore
RE: Federal Report
DATE: March 16, 2026

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Salton Sea Feasibility Study is funded 50% federally and 50% by local sponsors. Earlier this month, the Authority submitted appropriations requests and support letters to our Congressional delegation (Sens. Padilla and Schiff; Reps. Ruiz and Calvert) to support the Corps work for FY27 in the amount of \$2.146 million. This process requires submission of various budget materials to each office, which have their own particular requirements, along with letters of support. All requests were submitted in advance of the deadlines.

Background: The Authority and CA DWR are joint local sponsors of the Feasibility Study. In order to ensure the Corps has the resources to undertake and complete the Feasibility Study, the Authority has led the advocacy to direct federal funding to the Corps. The Authority's work in this space has secured **\$7.2 million** for this work through Congressional appropriations and directed work plan funding. The total federal cost for the Feasibility Study is \$11,389,500. Completing the Feasibility Study and securing a Chief's Report is a prerequisite to securing federal funds for project implementation at 65% federal share.

The Corps projected budget need for FY27 work is \$2.146 million. During the month and a half preceding the FY27 appropriations deadlines, we (Authority and DWR) conducted a number of meetings with the Corps to determine how new Corps policies could affect the previously identified FY27 budget number. In particular, the Corps is instituting a 35% design requirement and a new RAPID policy intended to accelerate projects. Giving the evolving nature of those policy changes and no new FY27 budget from the Corps, the Authority and DWR submitted the existing approved FY27 budget request for the federal appropriations process.



State Advocacy Update - March 2026

State legislators introduced approximately 1,800 new measures ahead of the February 20 bill-introduction deadline. As is typical early in the session, many of these measures were introduced as intent or spot bills and will be amended into substantive proposals throughout the Spring.

At this point, the Legislature is actively engaged in the second year of its 2025-26 two-year legislative session. The following reflects the timeline for legislative activities into the second quarter of 2026:

- **February 20:** Bill introduction deadline
- **March 26-April 6:** Spring recess
- **April 24:** Policy committee deadline
- **May 15:** Fiscal committee deadline
- **May 29:** House of origin deadline

Budget committees in both the Senate and Assembly have begun reviewing the Governor's January budget proposal, which outlines approximately \$350 billion in state expenditures. Since releasing the initial plan, the Administration has provided additional detail on a new zero-emission vehicle purchase rebate, a sustainable aviation fuel tax credit, and proposed adjustments to the cap-and-invest program. The ongoing Budget Committee review process will also be informed by the release of the Governor's May Revise to the proposed State Budget, which will be available early in May 2026. The Legislature's budget committees and subcommittees will eventually conclude the review of the Governor's proposed State Budget and will construct budget proposals within the Assembly and Senate, ultimately leading to the Legislature's constitutionally-required adoption of a State Budget by June 15.

As part of the broader State Budget engagement over the coming months, the Legislature and Administration will also be engaging in discussions relative to a second round of allocations from Proposition 4. The following reflects the Governor's proposed allocation of Proposition 4 funds as part of the 2026 budget cycle:

Chapter 2. Safe Drinking Water, Drought, Flood & Water Resilience

(\$ in Millions)

Department	Program	2025-26 Appropriations	2026-27 Proposed Appropriations
State Water Resources Control Board	Water Quality & Safe Drinking Water	\$183	\$160
	Tribal Water Infrastructure	\$11	\$13
	Multibenefit Urban Stormwater Management Projects	\$1	\$39
	Water Reuse & Recycling	\$153	\$78
	Cross-Border Rivers & Coastal Waters (Tijuana & New River)	\$47	\$0.7
Dept. of Water Resources & State Water Resources Control Board	Water Data Management & Stream Gages	\$8	\$1
Dept. of Water Resources	Groundwater Storage/Banking/Recharge & Instream Flow	\$30	\$20
	Brackish Desalination & Salinity Management Projects	\$0.2	\$0.6
	Water Conservation in Agricultural & Urban Areas	\$0.3	\$1
	Various Flood Management Projects	\$187	\$232
	Dam Safety & Climate Resilience	\$232	\$2
	Integrated Regional Water Management	\$0.5	\$2
	Riverine Stewardship Projects	\$1	\$5
	Urban Streams Restoration Program	\$1	\$11
Natural Resources Agency	Regional Conveyance Projects & Repairs to Existing Conveyances	\$3	\$0
		\$0	\$69
Dept. of Conservation	Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program	\$32	\$65
California Water Commission	Water Storage Investment Program	\$74	\$0
Los Angeles Rivers & Mountains Conservancy	Climate Resiliency & Protection of the Los Angeles River Watershed	\$0.6	\$11
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy		\$20	\$6
State Coastal Conservancy	Santa Ana River Conservancy	\$10	\$0.2
	Coyote Valley Conservation Program	\$3	\$14
	West Coyote Hills Program	\$0	\$23
Natural Resources Agency	Wildlife Refuges & Wetland Habitat Areas	\$0.2	\$0.2
	Clear Lake Watershed	\$2	\$17
	Nature, Climate Education & Research Facilities Grants	\$15	\$4
Natural Resources Agency, Dept. of Water Resources & Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	Salton Sea Management Program	\$148	\$3
Salton Sea Conservancy	Salton Sea Conservancy	\$2	\$3
Wildlife Conservation Board	Lower American River Conservancy	\$5	\$0
	Stream Flow Enhancement Program	\$21	\$11
	Habitat Enhancement & Restoration Program	\$11	\$0.5
Total		\$1,199	\$792

The January budget also includes a new \$30 million proposal to expand planning and implementation of priority habitat-restoration projects at the Salton Sea and to create new public-access opportunities for surrounding communities. The Authority’s legislative team will continue to monitor this proposal and identify opportunities for the Authority to engage.

The Legislature has taken early action to expedite funding from the recently approved statewide climate bond (Proposition 4; 2024). The Authority's legislative team continues to monitor the budget process for opportunities related to climate, infrastructure, and transportation priorities.

The Authority engaged directly with Senator Padilla's office regarding the Authority's comment letter on the ongoing Colorado River negotiations. Discussions focused on anticipated environmental and economic impacts associated with the post-2026 operating framework, including increased exposed playa and related air-quality concerns.

The Authority also advanced a request for \$1 million in state funding to support a coordinated community-engagement program that will inform the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' feasibility study and ensure local perspectives are incorporated into federal decision-making. Engagement with Senator Padilla will continue throughout the year, as his partnership remains essential to elevating regional priorities and ensuring state leadership remains aligned with community needs at the Salton Sea. The Authority state advocacy team will also continue engaging Assemblymember Jeff Gonzalez as a key partner in the Assembly.

The Authority's legislative team continues to review newly introduced measures for potential impacts to airport operations ahead of the March 25 amendment deadline. At this time, no new state legislation warrants a recommended Board position.