

## 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

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## 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**

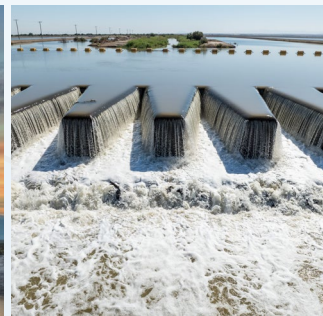
The Strategic Plan provides a clear and collaborative roadmap for the Salton Sea Authority's work moving forward. By focusing on governance, stakeholder collaboration, funding, and public health, the plan establishes a framework to strengthen the Authority's role in advancing solutions for the Salton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

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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.



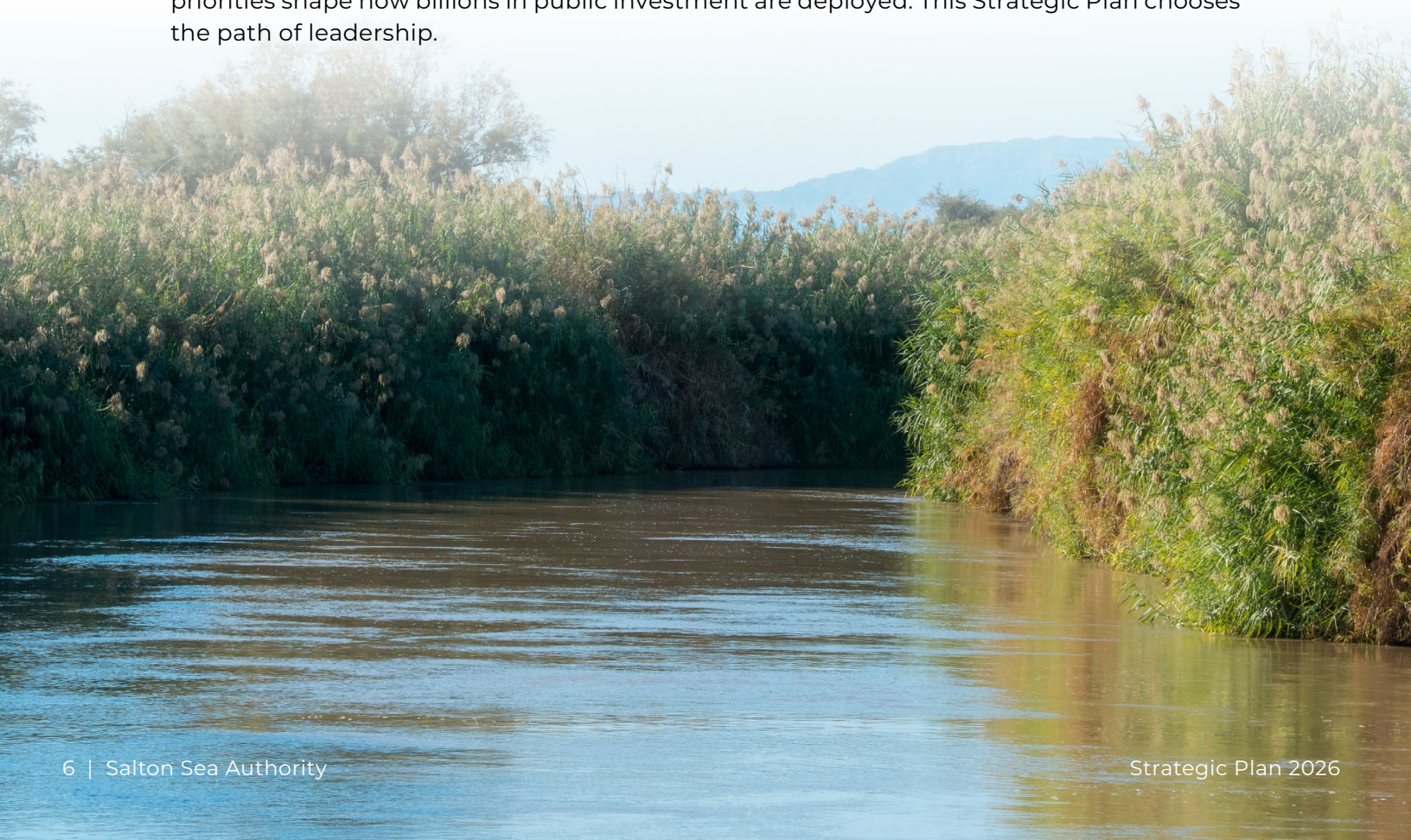
# Executive Summary

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 Conservancy<sup>1</sup> ;
- 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.

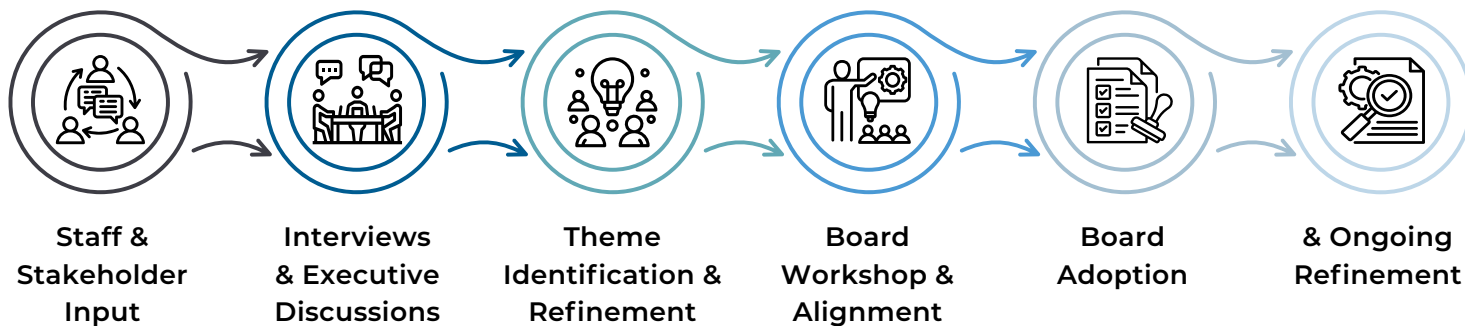
The development of this Strategic Plan was a collaborative process informed by direct engagement with the Board of Directors, Authority leadership and staff, member agencies, and regional stakeholders. Through interviews, planning discussions and ongoing dialogue, the planning process surfaced both the 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.



<sup>1</sup>The 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.

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

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# 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.

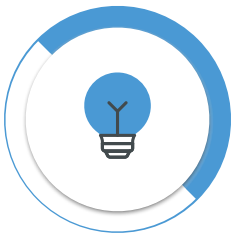
# Core Elements



## Our **Mission**

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

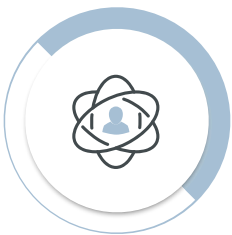
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## Our **Vision**

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.

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## 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

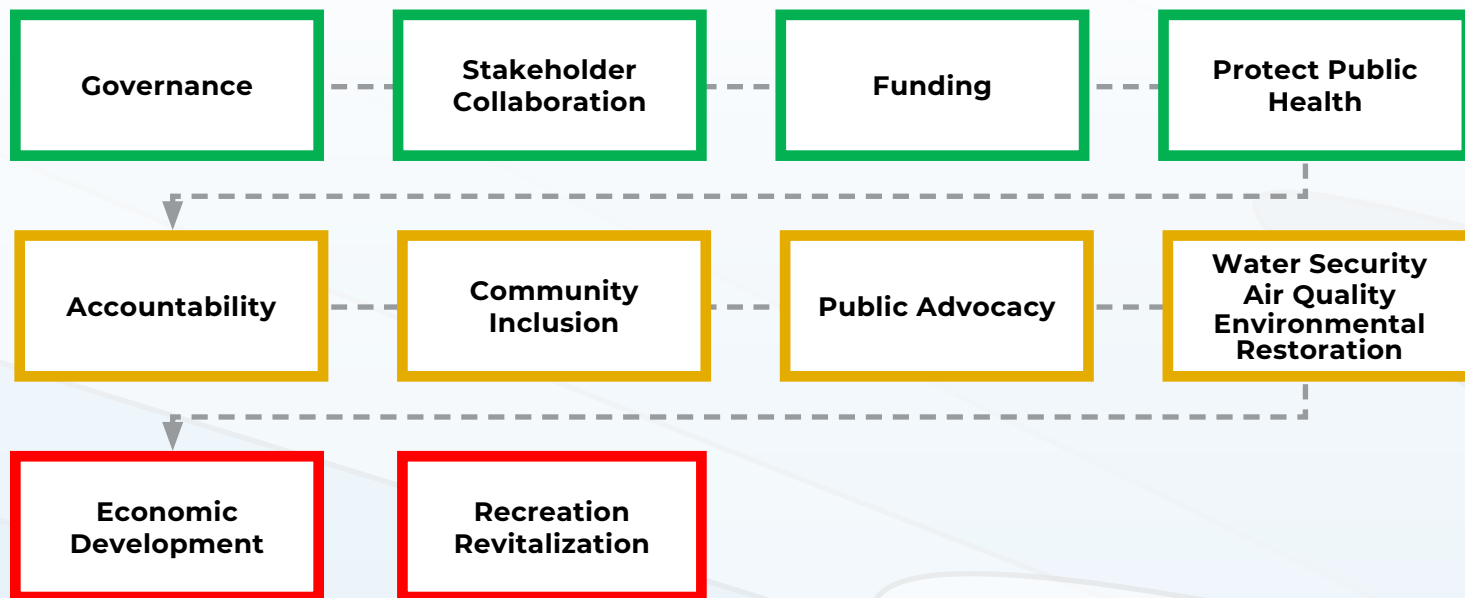
Promote agency alignment around a shared Framework of Assurance that places public health, environmental restoration, and accountability at the forefront of all actions.



## 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.

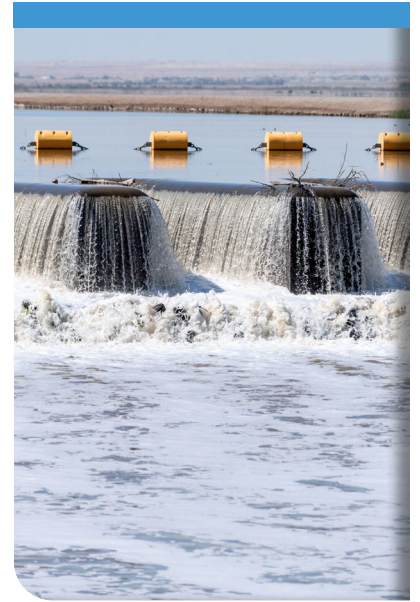
**Governance is the infrastructure that makes everything else possible. Without clear authority, binding commitments, and enforceable accountability:**

- 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.

<sup>2</sup>For comparison, LADWP spends \$100 million on O&M at Owens Lake – which is 1/3rd the size and ONLY addresses PM<sup>10</sup>

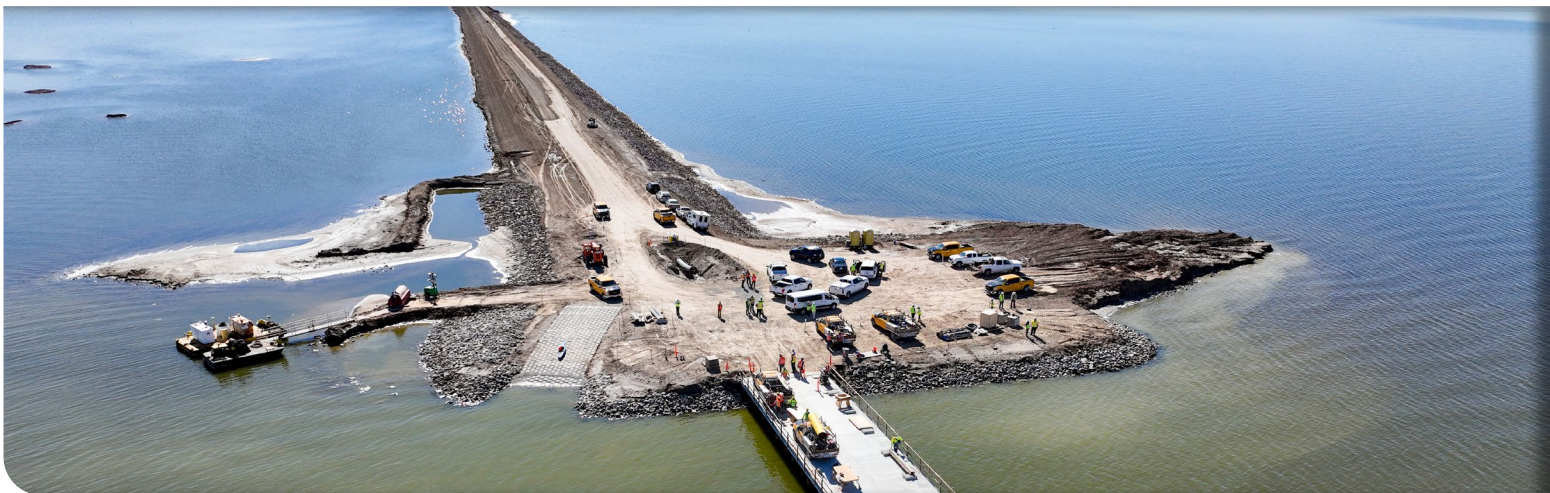
# 1 Strategy 1: Align Governance Structure to Match Regional Impact

## 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 projects<sup>3</sup> 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)

<sup>3</sup>This 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 communications<sup>4</sup>
- 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

<sup>4</sup>This 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:

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- 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



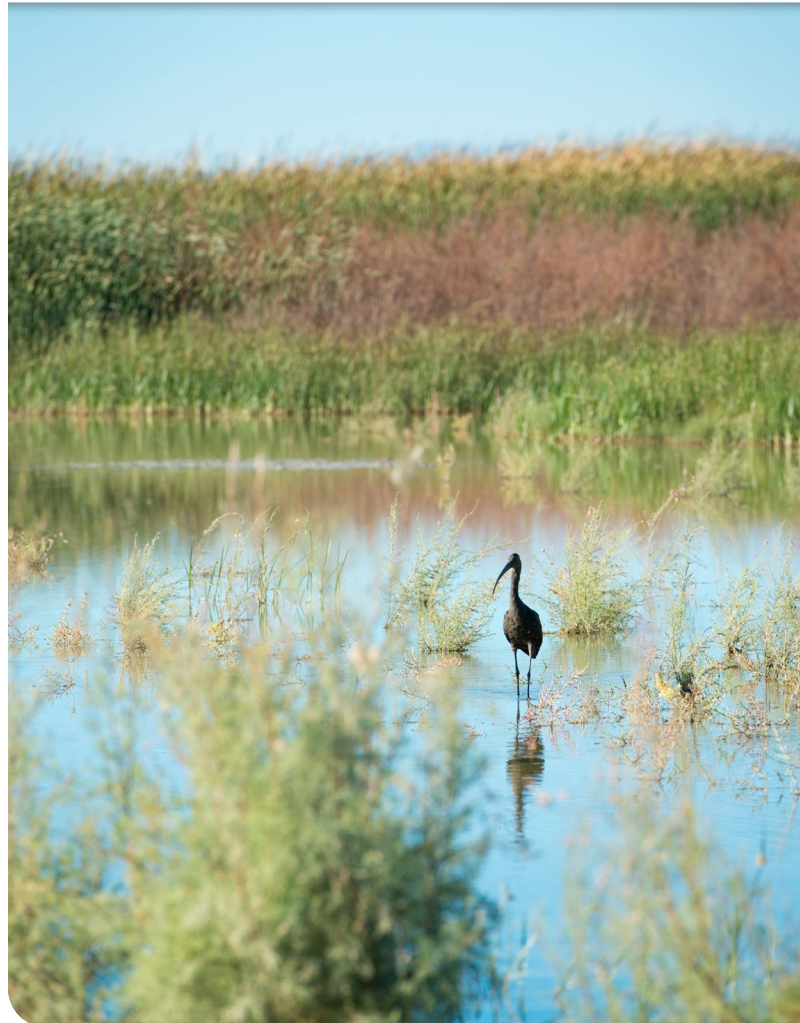
# 3 Strategy 3: Align with Federal Restoration Leadership

## 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.

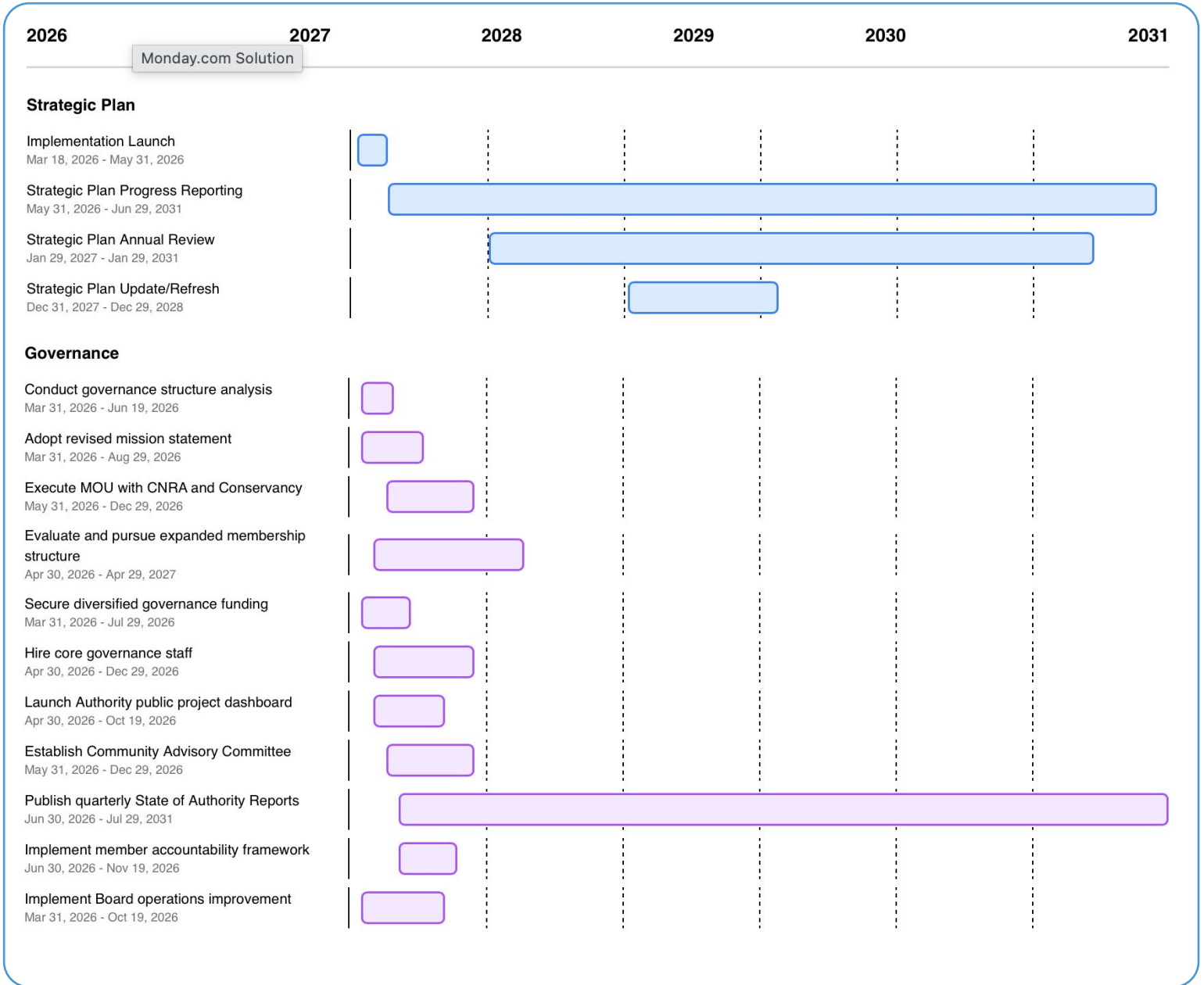


## Implementation Phasing and Schedule

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

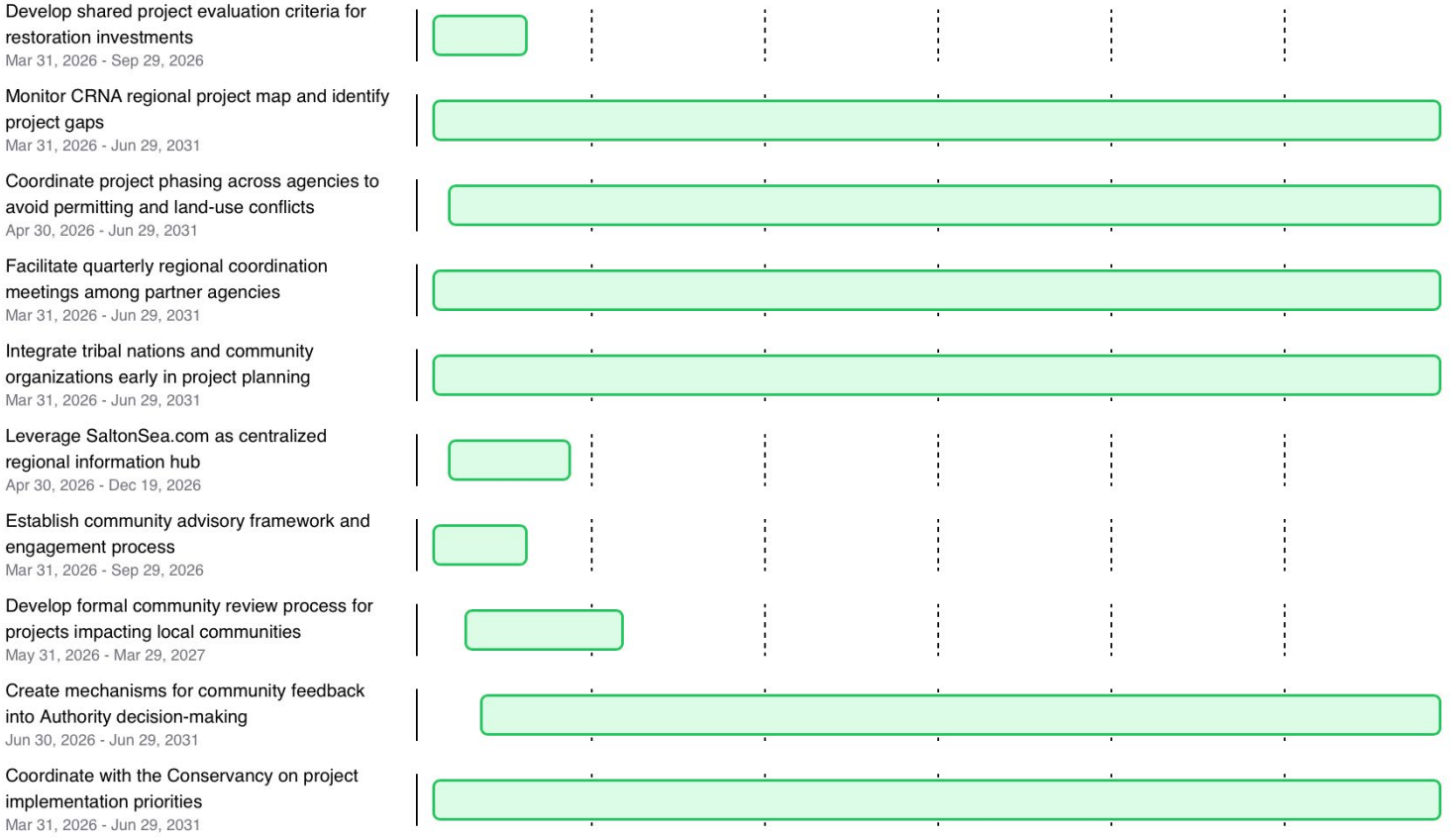


# Strategic Plan Implementation Timeline

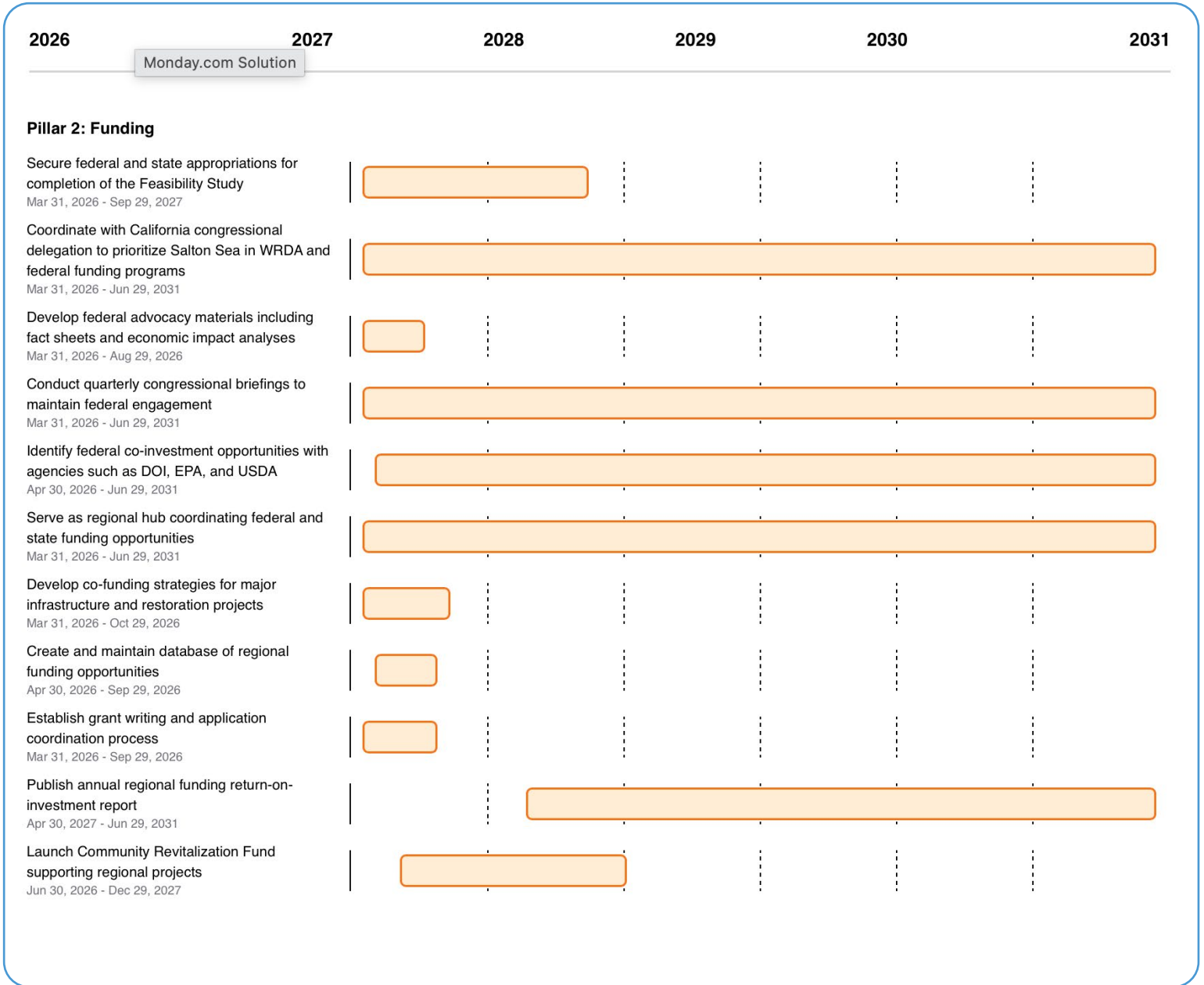
2026 2027 2028 2029 2030 2031

Monday.com Solution

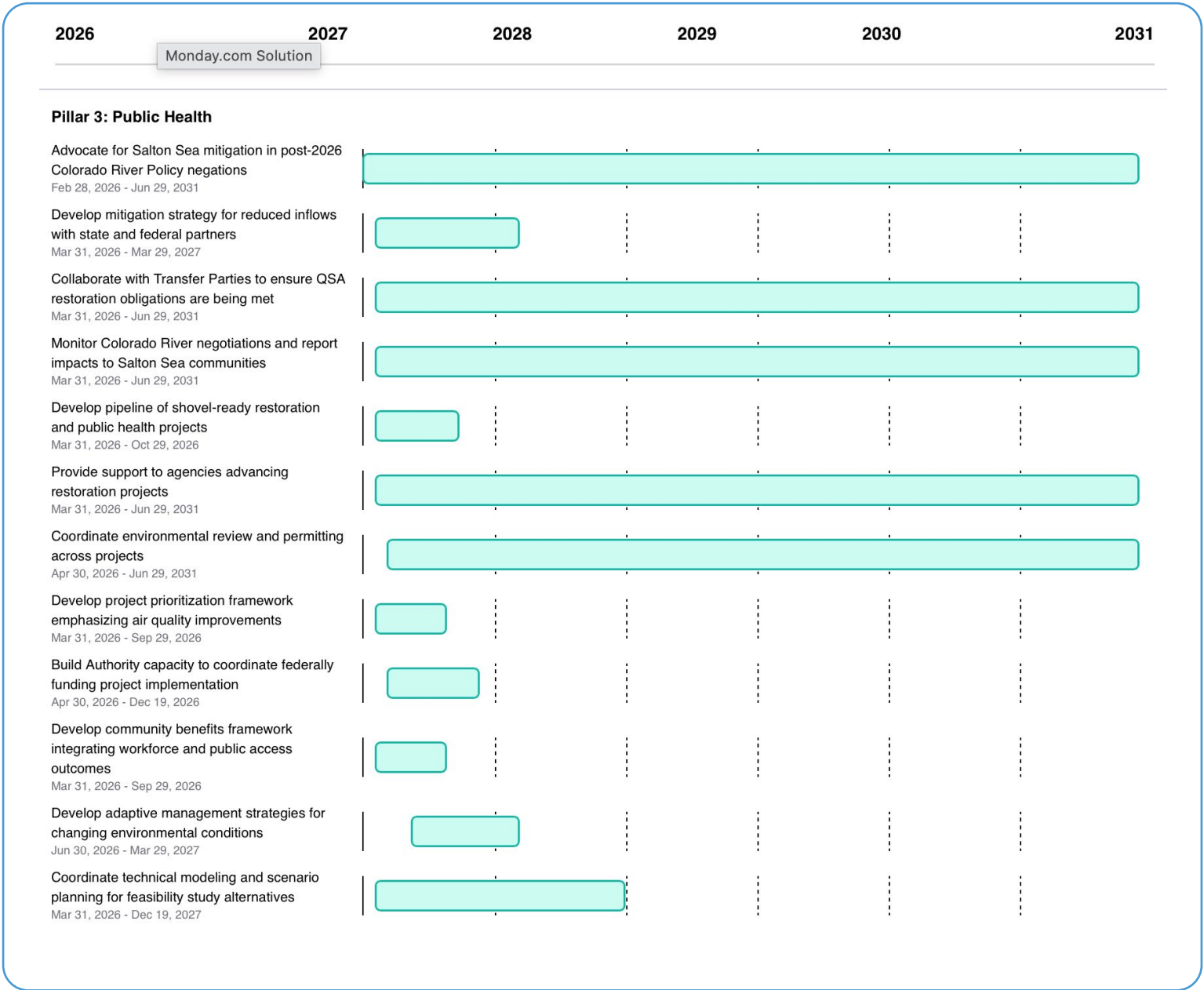
## Pillar 1: Stakeholder Collaboration & Outreach



# 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

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