



**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS  
SALTON SEA AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING  
May 21, 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 Estrada, at 10:05 a.m., May 21, 2026 at Coachella Valley Water District and via Zoom Webinar.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Led by President Estrada

**ROLL CALL**

**DIRECTORS PRESENT ON SITE**      **AGENCY**

Gina Dockstader, Director	Imperial Irrigation District
John Aguilar, Director	Coachella Valley Water District
V. Manuel Perez, Director	Riverside County
Cástulo R. Estrada, President	Coachella Valley Water District
Joseph Mirelez, Secretary	Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
Rosemarie Morreo	Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
Ex-Officio Joe Shea	California Natural Resources Agency

**DIRECTORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM** **AGENCY**

Marth Singh, Vice-President	Imperial County
Ryan E. Kelley, Director	Imperial County

**DIRECTORS ABSENT**      **AGENCY**

Yxstian Gutierrez, Director	Riverside County
Alex Cárdenas, Director	Imperial Irrigation District

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT**

On Site: Per Christian, Beatrice Eslamboly, and Jude Johnson, CV Strategies, Felipe Vega, Imperial County, PHD, Michael Placencia, Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board, Alan Pace, Petra Geosciences, SSAC.

Via Zoom: Pat Cooper, Deputy Chief of Staff, Supervisor Perez, Riverside County, Ray Lennox, CA State Parks, Tom Sephton, Sephton Water Tech, Tina Shields, JB Hamby, IID, Mario Llanos, Miguel Hernandez, CNRA, Michael Cohen, Pacific Institute, Roger Shintaku, Erin LaCombe, CV Strategies, Tim Maurier and 9 others.

## **II. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Per Christian Steels Kaels, Advisor for Aquastream, Inc, Co-Founder. Introduced himself and spoke about Water Bio Remedy.

## **III. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Director Perez asked for comments from other board members on the 1<sup>st</sup> Conservancy Meeting, that he was not able to attend.

President Estrada stated that it was a long meeting with good participation both in person and zoom. Questions were raised about roles between the Conservancy and the Authority, and call broad calls for collaboration between all parties. The meeting was introductory to the conservancy.

Ex-Officio Joe Shea advised that budget and staff openings were discussed.

Director Dockstader and Secretary Mirelez commented.

Director Perez highlighted segregation of duties between CARB and AQMD as an example of segregating roles between the Authority and the Conservancy to avoid public confusion.

Secretary Mirelez, stressed that while fish and the birds are important more attention needs to focus on the affected people.

President Estrada agrees that we need to prioritize projects around the communities and thinks we can echo that in the conservancy, ensuring that projects planned by the state and others are near existing communities, and acknowledged the Authority's longstanding focus in that regard.

Director Aguilar agreed the meeting was very positive, but emphasized that funding reflects priorities, and that needs to be translated into funding from the state for the Authority (and not just the Conservancy), both administratively and for project development.

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

### **A. CONSENT CALENDAR – Approve, Receive, and File**

#### **1. Minutes of Salton Sea Authority Board Meeting 3/19/2026**

2. Salton Sea Authority Warrant Register Ratification for March and April 2026
3. Salton Sea Authority Internal Financial Report for April 2026

President Estrada noted that item IV.C. was indicated “Pulled from the Agenda” and questioned the need to memorialize that change. He then advanced the consent calendar for consideration.

*On motion by Mirelez, second by Aguilar, the Board approved the Consent Calendar to be received and filed.*

*Approved by the following vote:*

*AYES: 10*

*NOES: 0*

*ABSTAINED: 0*

*MOTION PASSED: Unanimous*

Referring to President Estrada’s earlier comment, Director Dockstader requested that the agenda be formally considered and approved by the Board. Executive Director O’Dowd advised that practice had recently been added to Board customs and practices. Its exclusion from this agenda was a staff oversight.

*On motion by Mirelez, second by Aguilar, the Board to approve the agenda, noting that the item IV.C. was pulled from the agenda and will be addressed by the Executive Committee in consultation with CV Strategies. Director Dockstader will participate in that consultation based on her extensive past dealings with CV Strategies – particularly on the Strategic Plan.*

*Approved by the following vote:*

*AYES: 10*

*NOES: 0*

*ABSTAINED: 0*

*MOTION PASSED: Unanimous*

**B. Salton Sea Authority 2026/2027 Operating Budget – Review and Approve**

Executive Director O’Dowd provided a detailed presentation of the 2026/2027 Operating Budget for the Salton Sea Authority. He noted that while IID’s

departure will create a revenue gap, that gap is largely budgeted to be addressed from current and future agreements including the USBR Grant for the Desert Shores project (recently amended to provide a 6% indirect allocation to the Authority), Prop 68 funding from the reconstituted North Lake project, (providing \$200,000 annually for the next three years to support the Authority's collaborative effort with the state to integrate this project into the North Lake Wetlands project), and other opportunities staff is pursuing to secure necessary funding, all as outlined on the Budget Schedule.

Specific to the Prop 68 modification, support language proposed by staff and Sacramento advocacy team was flagged by Ex Officio Shea to ensure that it clearly segregated Prop 68 requests from other general funding requests of the Authority.

*On motion by Perez, second by Aguilar, the Board approved the 2026-27 Operating Budget and direct staff to distribute member contribution invoices. It was also understood and agreed that the Authority's letter requesting state funding, including support for Proposition 68 modifications, would be drafted to the mutual satisfaction of CNRA and the Executive Committee.*

*Approved by the following vote:*

*AYES: 10*

*NOES: 0*

*ABSTAINED: 0*

*MOTION PASSED: Unanimous*

**C. CV Strategies, Final Accounting – PULLED FROM THE AGENDA**

President Estrada requested direction from counsel regarding a request to speak on item IV.C. Counsel advised at the discretion of the board it would be acceptable receive comments but the Board cannot take any action on that item.

*On motion by Dockstader, second by Aguilar, for the Board to allow public comment on item IV.C*

***Approved by the following vote:***

***AYES: 10***

***NOES: 0***

***ABSTAINED: 0***

***MOTION PASSED: Unanimous***

President Estrada opened public comment.

Beatrice Eslamboly of CV Strategies provided remarks regarding outstanding invoices.

**D. Renew Office Lease**

Executive Director O'Dowd gave a brief overview of the draft lease; it reflects a 2-year term at \$1,325.00/month for year one and \$1,400 for year two and is requesting board approval to execute the lease.

***On motion by Mirelez, second by Estrada, for the renewal of the Office Lease.***

***Approved by the following vote:***

***AYES: 8***

***NOES: 2***

***ABSTAINED: 0***

***MOTION PASSED: Riverside County - No***

**E. Project Related Activity**

1. USACE Feasibility Study

a. Outreach

Ex-Officio Shea gave a brief update on the feasibility Study public meetings that were held in April.

Director Perez expressed appreciation for Ex-Officio Shea's personal interest in the work of the Authority and the community. President Estrada agreed.

Executive Director O’Dowd stated that the federal partners were very pleased with the workshops. He also acknowledged the SSAC sponsorship of the workshops.

b. Funding

Ms. Moore outlined the specifics of a funding request relating to IRA funds available. Executive Director O’Dowd explained the diligent effort pursued by Ms. Moore in attempting to secure these funds.

***On motion by Mirelez, second by Estrada, to send the Army Corps IRA funding request letter.***

***Approved by the following vote:***

***AYES: 10***

***NOES: 0***

***ABSTAINED: 0***

***MOTION PASSED: Unanimous***

2. North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project
  - a. Dispensation of Remaining Funds

Executive Director discussed during item IV.B Operating Budget

3. Desert Shores
  - a. Grant Modification

Executive Director O’Dowd gave a brief update on the amended grant and pointed out that the revised grant budget includes resources for legal support and to secure site control of the project so that we can actually build something.

b. Engagement of Council

Executive Director O’Dowd advised that two law firms who have special expertise in site control – particularly title issues surrounding large, disparate parcels and eminent domain – have been identified and actively engaged in discussion. Staff requested authorization to proceed with the selection and engagement of a law firm for site control/easements consistent with and limited to grant funding.

***On motion by Dockstader, second by Mirelez, to proceed with selection and engagement of law firm as provided for in the grant.***

*Approved by the following vote:*

*AYES: 8*

*NOES: 0*

*ABSTAINED: 0*

*MOTION PASSED: Unanimous*

**F.** Arizona Seawater Importation – Tabled for the June 18 meeting.

Tom Sephton commented on his concerns that we would be spending what is left on the Desert Shores grant on legal services.

Ron Spears commented and appreciated the work done on the Desert Shores Project, he also commented on the Army Corps North side of the Sea.

## **V. REPORTS**

### **A. Federal**

1. Federal Activities – Lisa Moore Lehman, Partner, Cultivating Conservation gave a brief update on the feasibility study and the federal appropriations needed for this work.

Ex-Officio Shea responded directly to Ron Spears comments. He stated that the Corps is presenting an array of potential concepts.

- Divided Sea with a marine South and one with more saline hypersaline, more saline to the North Sea
- Perimeter Lake
- Water optimization concept
- A Corps concept that is a combination concept that would take a different concept and divide the Sea in some places but then do optimization in other places. But it also always depends on Mother Nature!

2. US Bureau of Reclamation – Aron King, SoCal Area Mgr., Lower CO Region – No Report

### **B. State**

1. State Advocacy - Nick Romo, Cruz Strategies and Glen Farrel, GF Advocacy gave a brief update.

2. State of California – Mr. Miguel Hernandez, Public Affairs Officer, California Natural Resources Agency – No Report
- C. Salton Sea State Recreation Area Update on Activities – Ray Lennox gave a brief update. He will be filling in as the Interim District Superintendent until that position is filled. He discussed the Salton Sea General Plan Process. There will be a Draft Plan in the next year or so. He also mentioned that unfortunately there has been a tremendous amount of vandalism at Mecca Beach and is currently closed to the public.
- D. Local
  1. Salton Sea Action Committee – Alan Pace, SSAC President – No Report
- E. Executive Director’s Report and Comments - G. Patrick O’Dowd, Executive Director/GM, Salton Sea Authority gave a brief update. He attended the Salton Sea Management Program Workshop on May 20. One of the big topics that came up was the health and safety and how to deal with that.

## **VI. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**

Arizona Seawater Importation

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

### **NEXT MEETING TIME & LOCATION:**

**The Salton Sea Authority board is scheduled to meet on:**

**Thursday, June 18, at 10:00 a.m.**

**at**

**Imperial County BOS Chamber**

**940 W Main Street**

**El Centro, CA 92243**

**(442)265-1020**

*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.*