



AGENDA:
DATE:
LOCATION:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Thursday, July 16, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.
Coachella Valley Water District
Steve Robbins Administration Bldg.
75515 Hovley Lane East
Palm Desert, CA 92260

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

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. CHANGES TO AGENDA

The Board will be asked to review and may change the order of Agenda, or approve as presented. The Board may also add Agenda items as provided under Government Code section 54954.2.

III. 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@saltonsea.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, 07/16/2026 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, July 15th**, publicly acknowledged during the Board meeting. (Written comments will be included in the public record but not be read aloud.)

IV. 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.

V. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION

A. CONSENT CALENDAR – Approve, Receive, and File

1. Minutes of Salton Sea Authority Board Meeting 6/18/2026
2. Salton Sea Authority Warrant Register Ratification for June 30, 2026
3. Salton Sea Authority Internal Financial Report for June 30, 2026
4. Extension and Modification of Federal Advocacy Contract
5. Appointment of Committee Assignments for 2026/2027

B. Aron King, SoCal Area Manager, Lower CO Region, USBR – intro and remarks

C. Imogen Lee, UCLA Water Quality Research and Grant Request.

D. Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians Post 2026 Colorado River Operations consultation request.

E. Strategic Plan Implementation

1. Review and consider adoption of Salton Sea Framework of Assurance
2. Authorize distribution of DOI/CNRA/Authority MOU Term Sheet (Discussion Draft) to inform existing and future joint efforts

F. Salton Sea Conservancy Executive Manager Recruitment - Secure Board direction with respect thereto and discuss possible Salton Sea Authority collaboration.

- G. Project Related Activity
 - 1. USACE Feasibility Study
 - a. Funding
 - b. WRDA 2026
 - c. RAPID Implementation
 - 2. North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project
 - a. Update on reallocation of Prop 68 proceeds
 - 3. Desert Shores
 - a. Update on Legal for Site Control (GAFCON)

VI. REPORTS

- A. Federal
 - 1. Federal Activities – Lisa Moore Lehman, Partner, Cultivating Conservation
 - 2. US Bureau of Reclamation – Aron King, SoCal Area Mgr., Lower CO Region
- 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
- C. Salton Sea State Recreation Area Update on Activities – Ray Lennox, Colorado District Superintendent. – No Report
- D. Local
 - 1. Salton Sea Action Committee – Alan Pace, SSAC President
- E. Executive Director’s Report and Comments - G. Patrick O’Dowd, Executive Director/GM, Salton Sea Authority

VII. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

NEXT MEETING TIME & LOCATION:

The Salton Sea Authority board is scheduled to meet on:

Thursday, September 17, 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.



**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
SALTON SEA AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
June 18, 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 10:13 a.m., June 18, 2026, at Imperial County BOS Chamber and via Zoom Webinar.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Led by Vice-President Singh

ROLL CALL

DIRECTORS PRESENT ON SITE

AGENCY

Cástulo R. Estrada, President
Gina Dockstader, Director
Joseph Mirelez, Secretary 10:18am
Rosemarie Morreo, Director 10:18am
Martha Singh, Vice-President
Ryan E. Kelley, Director 10:21am

Coachella Valley Water District
Imperial Irrigation District
Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
Imperial County
Imperial County

DIRECTORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM

AGENCY

DIRECTORS ABSENT

AGENCY

Yxstian Gutierrez, Director
Alex Cárdenas, Director
John Aguilar, Director
V. Manuel Perez, Director
Ex-Officio Joe Shea

Riverside County
Imperial Irrigation District
Coachella Valley Water District
Riverside County
California Natural Resources Agency

Chairman Estrada asked if there any changes to the agenda, there were none.

On motion by Dockstader, second by Estrada, the Board approved the Agenda.

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: 6

NOES: 0

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: Unanimous

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT

On Site: Tina Shields, IID, Christopher Thomas, DWR, Mario Llanos, CNRA, Jude Johnson, CV Strategies, Mario Llanos, CNRA, Christopher Thomas, DWR.

Via Zoom: Tom Sephton, Sephton Water Tech, JB Hamby, IID, Miguel Hernandez, CNRA, Michael Cohen, Pacific Institute, Mason Osgood, Neil Desai, National Parks Conservation Association, John Monsen, Sierra Club and 4 others.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mason Osgood, National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) discussed the Cadiz project.

Neal Desai of NPCA and John Monsen, Sierra Club shared similar remarks.

III. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

No Comments

IV. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION

A. CONSENT CALENDAR – Approve, Receive, and File

- a. Minutes of Salton Sea Authority Board Meeting 5/21/2026
- b. Salton Sea Authority Warrant Register Ratification for May 31, 2026
- c. Salton Sea Authority Internal Financial Report as and through of May 31, 2026
- d. CV Strategies final reconciliation, ratification of approvals and authorization of payment
- e. ACWA Vision for Our Water Future
 - i. Authorize Authority participate in initiative
 - ii. Approve Authority resolution of support

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

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: 8

NOES: 0

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: Unanimous

B. Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead – Draft Environmental Impact Statement process

- a. Torres Martinez Salton Sea/Colorado River request. Executive Director O'Dowd gave a brief update. Torres Martinez Tribe requested a nation-to-nation consultation, vs sending in an EIS comment letter. Chairman Mirelez

advised the tribe had not yet been contacted in regards thereto. Director Kelley asked if the board could also communicate with the government. O'Dowd stated that a Draft Resolution is prepared but held per the Chairman's request, but would be introduced in July if the government consultation is not scheduled.

- b. Secretary Estrada asked for clarification on the federal funding that was discussed at the last meeting. Lisa Moore stated that the Authority is actively pursuing several funding sources:

1. \$2.146MM that the Army Corps needs to complete the feasibility study
2. Additional IRA resources a separate effort to secure the funding in this effort in the amount of \$100MM.
3. There was a request for \$7MM to complete the study
 - a. \$4.1MM to complete the Feasibility Study
 - b. \$3MM to the Authority for outreach and engagement relating thereto
4. \$1MM separate CVWD commitments agreement through IRA

Ms. Moore advised that the \$2.146MM was included in both Senators Padilla and Schiff congressionally directed spending request at the Authority's request.

The Authority requested \$332MM from IRA funds based on the Trump Administration's estimate to address federal lands.

At the request of Director Dockstader Ms. Tina Shields from IID, Water Department Manager gave a brief update on the Colorado river negotiations, touching on the Law of the River.

- c. Salton Sea Funding
- i. Feasibility Study, Ms. Willhoff gave a brief update on the Salton Sea USACE/Authority/DWR feasibility study.
 - ii. Health Assurance Framework was also discussed.

C. Desert Shores

Executive Director O'Dowd gave a brief update. Last month the board approved securing legal services to draft an easement for project purposes. Gafcon's contract has been exhausted, and the grant has been modified to continue to support this effort. Recommending approval from the board.

On motion by Mirelez, second by Estrada, the Board approved the Gafcon Extension Agreement

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: 8

NOES: 0

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: Unanimous

D. Proposition 68 / North Lake Wetlands project and funding

Mr. Romo from Cruz Strategies gave a brief update on the Prop 68 monies, that has been approved and will be eligible pending the disbursement schedule from the state.

E. Consideration of Appointments for FY 2026-2027 Officers for the Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors (effective July 1, 2026)

a. Election of President of Board

On motion by Estrada to nominate Mirelez and second by Singh, the Board approved Mirelez as President.

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: 8

NOES: 0

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: Unanimous

b. Election of Vice-President of Board

On motion by Mirelez to nominate Estrada and second by Singh, the Board approved Estrada as Vice-President.

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: 8

NOES: 0

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: Unanimous

c. Election of Secretary of Board

On motion by Mirelez to nominate Singh and second by Estrada, the Board approved Singh as Secretary.

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: 8

NOES: 0

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: Unanimous

d. Election of Treasurer of Board

On motion by Mirelez to nominate Kelley and second by Dockstader, the Board approved Kelley as Treasurer.

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: 8

NOES: 0

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: *Unanimous*

F. Consider Approval of Resolutions updating Signatories on Authority's bank accounts

1. Resolution 26-01 Banc of California – Regular Checking
2. Resolution 26-02 Local Agency Investment Fund (LAIF)

On motion by Mirelez, second by Estrada, the Board approved Resolutions updating signatories for Banc of California and LAIF accounts.

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: 8

NOES: 0

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: *Unanimous*

V. <u>REPORTS</u>

A. Federal

1. Federal Activities – Lisa Moore Lehman, Partner, Cultivating Conservation, gave brief update.
2. US Bureau of Reclamation – Aron King. No Report

B. State

1. State Advocacy - Nick Romo, Cruz Strategies and Glen Farrel, GF Advocacy, gave a brief update. They are advocating additional funding for the Authority.
2. State of California – Mr. Miguel Hernandez, Public Affairs Officer, California Natural Resources Agency gave a brief update.
3. Salton Sea State Recreation Area Update on Activities – Ray Lennox, Colorado District Superintendent. No Report
4. Salton Sea Conservancy, Executive Director O'Dowd invited the Conservancy to join us with updates at the Authority's meetings.

C. Local

1. Salton Sea Action Committee – Alan Pace, SSAC President. No Report

D. Executive Director's Report and Comments - G. Patrick O'Dowd, Executive Director/GM, Salton Sea Authority stated that the Authority's July meeting will tentatively feature an update on the Arizona Sea Water Importation Project, pending scheduling confirmation from project officials.

VI. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

- Update/Presentation on the Sea Importation Project
- Chairman Mirelez to provide update on the Torres Martinez Salton Sea/Colorado River consultation request

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting Adjourned at 11:14 a.m.

NEXT MEETING TIME & LOCATION:

The Salton Sea Authority board is scheduled to meet on:

Thursday, July 16, at 10:00 a.m.

at

Coachella Valley Water District
Steve Robbins Administration Bldg.
75515 Hovley Lane, East
Palm Desert, CA 92260
(760) 398-2651

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Salton Sea Authority Warrant Register

June 1, 2026 through June 30, 2026

Date	Number			Amount
06/01/2026	ACH	Imperial Irrigation District	Utilities - 5/26	(98.01)
06/01/2026	ACH	County of Riverside - Executive Office	Final Retention Payment	(231,015.30)
06/02/2026	ACH	Lee and Associates Property Management	Rent - 6/26	(1,250.00)
06/05/2026	Deposit	Grant Reimbursement BOR	For Qtr Ended Mar 2026	630.50
06/05/2026	ACH	CV Strategies	Consulting services 3/26 - 5/26	(15,000.00)
06/11/2026	ACH	Banc of California	VISA billing cycle ended 5/26	(1,221.08)
06/15/2026	ACH	CV Strategies	Consulting services 6/26 - Final Settlement	(14,947.93)
06/22/2026	Check	Secretary of State	SSA Form SF-405 request 2026	(6.50)
06/22/2026	Check	Secretary of State	SSA Form SF-405 request 2026	(6.50)
06/22/2026	Check	Secretary of State	SSA Form SF-405 request 2026	(6.50)
06/26/2026	ACH	Best, Best & Krieger	Legal services 6/26	(4,910.60)
06/26/2026	ACH	SystemGo IT LLC	Internet service 6/26	(418.49)
06/26/2026	ACH	Cultivating Conservation	Consulting services 6/26	(7,350.00)
06/26/2026	ACH	Steve Cruz	Consulting services 6/26	(7,000.00)
06/26/2026	ACH	Western Growers	Membership Dues for 2027	(400.00)
06/26/2026	ACH	Janice Rosenquist	Accounting Services 5/26	(2,640.00)
06/26/2026	ACH	Gafcon, Inc	BOR Grant Expenditure Qtr Ended 3/26	(323.50)
06/26/2026	ACH	Bravata, Lisa	Expense report reimbursement	(141.38)
06/29/2026	ACH	Frontier Communications	Internet service 6/26	(104.99)
Monthly Activity				(286,210.28)
Beginning Cash Balance				\$ 431,183.82
Ending Cash Balance				\$ 144,973.54

Salton Sea Authority

Budget to Actual

General Fund (Unaudited)

For the Period July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026

		C		B / C		B - C	
		June 2026	YTD FY 2026	Budget FY 26	YTD Target 100%	\$ Variance	
1	REVENUE						
2	Local Government / Member Assessments		800,000	\$ 800,000	100%	\$	-
3	Other Federal / State / Local Contributions		-	525,000	0%		(525,000)
4	Sponsorships		10,000	10,000	100%		-
5	Other Grants		-	-	-		-
	Interest Income		-	-	-		-
6	Miscellaneous Revenue		1,750		-		1,750
7	Grant and Other Reimbursements to General Fund		6,748		-		6,748
8	Grant Reimbursements and Other Income	2,664	11,152	44,300	25%		(33,148)
9	TOTAL REVENUE	2,664	821,152	1,379,300	60%		(558,148)
10	EXPENSES		-		-		
11	Total Salaries	19,721	236,524	238,995	99%		(2,471)
12	Total Employee Benefits	9,734	122,348	126,574	97%		(4,226)
13	Total Salaries & Benefits	29,455	358,873	365,569	98%		(6,696)
14	Contract / Professional Services		-		-		-
15	DC Advocates	7,350	88,200	89,600	98%		(1,400)
16	Sacramento Advocates	7,000	84,000	84,000	100%		-
17	Attorney Fees	4,455	43,391	48,000	90%		(4,609)
18	Audit & Accounting	2,420	50,920	75,000	68%		(24,080)
19	Public Outreach & Engagement	29,948	75,633	60,000	126%		15,633
20	Total Contract / Professional Services	51,173	342,145	356,600	96%		(14,455)
21	Administration		-		-		-
22	Travel/Mileage	(2,859)	16,965	35,000	48%		(18,035)
23	Conferences/Seminars/Summits	52	5,827	15,000	39%		(9,173)
24	Office Rent	1,250	15,000	17,400	86%		(2,400)
25	OffSite Storage	125	1,500		-		
26	Utilities	98	1,498	4,000	37%		(2,502)
27	Repair and Service Maintenance		-	-	-		-
28	Office Rent, Utilities, and Repair/Maintenance	1,473	17,998	21,400	84%		(3,402)
29	Equipment / IT Maintenance	418	4,869	5,100	95%		(231)
30	Non-capitalized Office Equipment		1,742	5,000	35%		(3,258)
31	Insurance	1,147	13,763	14,000	98%		(237)
32	Bank Fees		-	-	-		-
33	Postage/Mail	73	733		-		733
34	Office Expense/Operating Supplies	30	5,024	5,400	93%		(376)
35	Office Expense/Online Services	524	1,034	5,400	19%		(4,366)
36	Dues, Subscriptions	1,516	13,622	10,000	136%		3,622
37	Operating Expenses/County Charges	25	3,026	6,000	50%		(2,974)
38	Board Room Usage and Recordings	105	3,207	3,600	89%		(393)
39	Interest Expense		-	1,231	0%		(1,231)
40	Total Administration	2,505	87,758	127,131	69%		(39,373)
41	TOTAL EXPENSES	83,133	788,776	849,300	93%		(60,524)
42	NET REVENUE / (EXPENSES)	\$ (80,469)	32,377	\$ 530,000	6%		(497,623)

Salton Sea Authority
Budget to Actual
DWR - Proposition 68 Grant (Unaudited)
For the Period July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026

		C		B / C	B - C	
		June 2026	YTD FY 2026	Budget	Budget FY 26	\$ Variance
1	REVENUE					
2	State of California Grant (Prop 68)	\$ -	\$ 826,455	\$ 1,976,000	42%	\$ 1,149,545
3	TOTAL REVENUE		826,455	1,976,000	42%	1,149,545
4	EXPENSES		-			-
5	SSA Salaries & Contract Accounting		4,852	15,000	32%	(10,148)
6	Riverside County Salaries		-	-		-
7	Contractors		821,603	1,961,000	42%	(1,139,397)
8	Department of Water Resources-North Lake Demo		-			-
9	TOTAL EXPENSES		826,455	1,976,000	42%	1,149,545
10	NET INCOME / (LOSS)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	-

Salton Sea Authority

Budget to Actual

BOR -DSR (Unaudited)

For the Period July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026

				B / C	B - C
	June 2026	YTD FY 2026	Budget	Budget FY 26	\$ Variance
1 REVENUE					
2 Bureau of Reclamation Grant	\$ 2,664	\$ 49,567	\$ 744,000	100%	\$ 694,433
3 TOTAL REVENUE	2,664	49,567	750,000	7%	700,433
4 EXPENSES					
5 Riverside County Salaries		-	-		-
6 SSA Salaries & Contract Accounting	2,664	5,222	15,000	35%	(9,778)
7 Contractors		44,345	735,000	6%	(690,655)
8 Legal Expenses		-	-		-
9 Bt `		-			-
10 TOTAL EXPENSES	2,664	49,567	750,000	7%	700,433
11 NET INCOME / (LOSS)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	\$ -

Salton Sea Authority
Balance Sheet
(Unaudited)
As of June 30, 2026 (Preliminary)

1	ASSETS		
2	Checking/Savings	\$	144,974
3	Rivco Payroll		54,996
4	Rivco Investment		2,328
5	Rivco Investment FMV Adjustment		(152)
6	Checking/Savings		202,146
7	Accounts Receivable		-
8	Rent Deposits		1,250
9	Prepaid Items		13,944
10	Due from BOR		2,664
11	Due from DWR		-
12	Due from Grant Funds		29,575
13	Right to Use Asset		-
14	TOTAL ASSETS	\$	249,579
15	LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCE		
16	LIABILITIES		
17	Accounts Payable	\$	21,225
18	Accrued Expenses		9,000
19	Credit Card Payable		1,224
20	Accrued Payroll		5,109
21	Accrued Vacation		95,609
22	Accrued Sick		8,160
23	Lease Liability		453
24	Due to Other Funds		26,935
25	Due to BOR		-
26	Due to Riverside County		-
28	TOTAL LIABILITIES		167,713
30	Fund Balance		
31	Fund Balance		49,489
32	Net Income		32,377
34	FUND BALANCE		81,865
36	TOTAL LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCE	\$	249,579

Memorandum

To: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors
From: G. Patrick O'Dowd, Executive Director /GM
Date: July 16, 2026
Re: **Approval of Revised Retainer Agreement with Cultivating Conservation**

Background

Cultivating Conservation has served as the Authority's federal legislative and policy consultant since 2014. The retainer began at \$4,100 per month (2019), rose to \$7,000 per month (2020 amendment), and was last set at \$7,350 per month by approved budget in June 2022, unchanged since. The proposed agreement takes effect June 1, 2026 for an initial one-year term, renewing annually absent 60 days' notice, with a 3 percent annual escalator thereafter.

Scope Increase

Most of the new scope language consolidates prior project-specific items (Farm Bill/USDA, Drought Contingency Plan, New River, North Lake, renewable energy) into general authority to advise on federal legislation, a change in form rather than substance. Two elements are genuinely new: authority to advise on federal administrative policy, extending beyond legislation into agency rulemaking, and to draft Authority public comments on federal agency actions. Agency engagement also broadens from a closed list (BOR, EPA, Corps) to an open-ended "other federal agencies."

Cost

The proposed rate of \$10,000 per month is a \$2,650 (representing approximately 8% compounded annually since last adjustment) increase over the \$7,350 rate in place since June 2022, the first change in four years. This increase was fully accounted for in the recently approved Salton Sea Authority 2026/2027 operating budget.

Recommendation: Approve Increase

Staff recommends the Board approve the revised retainer agreement with Cultivating Conservation, including the increase to \$10,000 per month effective June 1, 2026 and the 3 percent annual escalator

Proposed Retainer Agreement with Cultivating Conservation available upon request.

Memorandum

To: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors
From: G. Patrick O'Dowd, Executive Director /GM
Date: July 16, 2026
Re: **Consider Appointments to Ad Hoc Committees for FY 2026-2027**

The Salton Sea Authority's Joint Powers agreement states: "The Commission or the Chairman may establish such committees as from time to time are deemed necessary as good for the Authority." In recent practice, the Authority has had four functioning ad hoc committees: Executive, Finance, Personnel, and Projects. Appointments to the committees have been the discretion of the President with approval from the full board. Based on direction from President Mirelez, the committee assignments for the current board term are presented as follows for your consideration and approval:

❖ **Executive: Chair – President Joseph Mirelez, Vice-President Castulo Estrada**

- Review policies and procedure as requested by staff.
- Review legislative proposals (Federal/State platforms).
- Review new programs and projects initiated by staff.
- Confer with General Manager regarding general activities of the Authority, as required.

❖ **Finance: Chair – Treasurer Ryan Kelley, members Director John Aguilar and Director Rosemarie Morreo.**

- Review the budget (proposed and current mid-year and yearly).
- Periodic review of bank statements, accounts payable and receivable, etc., and insurance and contractual commitments.
- Review procedures and practices of accounting.
- Review of audits and reports.

❖ **Personnel: Chair – Vice-President Castulo Estrada, members Secretary Martha Cardenas Singh and Director Rosemarie Morreo.**

- Review updated employee manual and procedures.
- Review employee labor compliance and contractual commitments.
- Review and suggest alternative solutions to personnel issues – as requested by Board and General Manager.
- Review job descriptions, employee needs, and compensation with General Manager.

❖ **Projects: Chair – Director John Aguilar, members President Joseph Mirelez, Treasurer Ryan Kelley, and Ex-Officio member CNRA Assistant Secretary Joe Shea**

- Review current projects including their status, pending contracts or identified issues of concern.
- Coordinate interagency cooperative planning to assure project outcomes are beneficial to all concerned.
- As requested or appropriate, attend outside meetings.
- Review and advise staff of member agencies of the impacts Authority projects may have in relation to member agencies' programs and operations.



July 8, 2026

Meng-Chen "Imogen" Lee
Michael K. Stenstrom
Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering
University of California, Los Angeles

Re: UCLA WaterSMART Applied Science Grant Proposal

Dear Ms. Lee and Professor Stenstrom:

The Salton Sea Authority appreciates UCLA's interest in developing a machine learning-driven water quality management tool to support Salton Sea restoration planning, monitoring, and decision-making.

Based on our discussions and our current understanding of the proposal, the Authority supports UCLA's submittal of the WaterSMART Applied Science Grant application and is willing to participate as a non-financial partner. The Authority's participation may include providing input, feedback, coordination with regional partners, review of management needs and scenarios, and other non-financial support as appropriate, subject to available capacity and any required approval by the Board of Directors of the Salton Sea Authority.

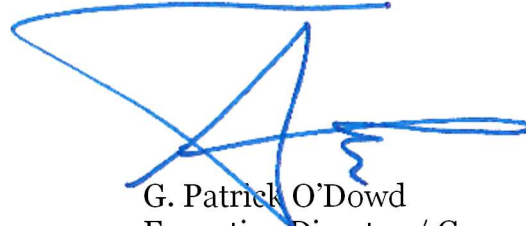
I also spoke with Vivien Maisonneuve of the California Department of Water Resources regarding this effort, and he confirmed that the proposed work could be value-added to Salton Sea restoration efforts. To achieve that potential, it will be important for the project to be framed in a manner that produces maximally beneficial results and to be properly resourced to ensure it can meet that objective.

The Authority is willing to work with UCLA in pursuit of that goal. This letter does not constitute a financial commitment, cost-share commitment, grant administration responsibility, or obligation to perform technical work by the Authority at this time. Any future commitment of Authority funds, staff resources, or formal project responsibilities would require separate review and approval by the Authority.

We appreciate UCLA's initiative and look forward to continued discussion regarding how this work can best support Salton Sea restoration partners.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Patrick O'Dowd', is written over the printed name. The signature is stylized with a large loop and a horizontal line extending to the right.

G. Patrick O'Dowd
Executive Director / General Manager



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL & ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING

Project Title:

**From Inflows to Insights: A Machine Learning–Driven Water Quality Management Tool
for SMART Salton Sea Restoration**

Research Engineer: Meng-Chen Lee, Ph.D.

P.I.: Michael K. Stenstrom, Ph.D.

Executive Summary

The Salton Sea’s restoration now turns on whether managers can anticipate and control water-quality and habitat conditions under declining inflows, rising salinity, and selenium pressure while protecting communities and wildlife. The State’s Long-Range Plan sets the programmatic frame for habitat creation and air-quality protection, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ (USACE) Imperial Streams & Salton Sea feasibility process is building the federal decision record to compare alternatives and refine operations. Within that joint context, the Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) ponds function as the near-term, adaptive “workbench” where operations, thresholds, and monitoring practices must be tested and improved in real time. Our proposal delivers a physics-guided machine-learning decision-support tool that ingests USACE hydrologic outputs (flows, stages, mixing) and SCH monitoring data to produce short-term forecasts, early-warning alerts, and scenario comparisons for dissolved oxygen, salinity, temperature, selenium, water-surface elevation, depth/inundation, and emergent-feature stability—directly supporting LRP objectives and feasibility-study evaluations.

This project combines machine learning with local constructed-wetland treatment insights, a comprehensive monitoring framework, and domain-expert knowledge to complement and extend existing hydrologic modeling and SCH habitat operations. Building on Imperial County constructed wetland pilots—which confirmed the ability of vegetated systems, sedimentation basins, and flow-through wetland hydraulics to attenuate nutrients, suspended solids, and transform selenium, while also revealing strong nonlinear sensitivity to retention time, loading rates, plant condition, microbial proxies, and seasonal variability—the tool is intentionally designed to address the predictive limits of traditional approaches. The framework integrates physics-guided ML/DL, ecological indicators, and inflow and mixing data from USACE hydrologic models to improve restoration scenario screening, anticipate water-quality drift, and provide explainable cause-effect relationships that reinforce scientific defensibility during feasibility comparisons and long-range planning.

The tool strengthens both operational reliability and planning confidence by converting multivariate, spatiotemporally dynamic monitoring datasets into quantitative and actionable decision insights. Managers can detect early dissolved oxygen decline, salinity drift, thermal stress, or selenium escalation with sufficient lead time to pre-screen and model operational levers before implementation, select responses that maintain water-quality stability under drought or climate extremes, and forecast recovery windows following intervention. By explicitly testing resilience trajectories and restoration scenarios, the tool helps answer a central feasibility question: which restoration alternatives are most likely to succeed under real inflow and climate stress, and what operational controls offer the most reliable path to maintaining long-term water-quality balance and habitat function? The system’s ability to explain threshold approach timing, rank feasible hydraulic or chemical levers, and estimate recovery stability ensures decisions shift from reactive interpretation to anticipatory, evidence-based adaptive management, strengthening

both SCH operations and the defensibility of FS/LRP restoration alternative scoring under future hydrologic and climate uncertainty.

By Year 2, we aim to deliver a validated forecasting stack, an operational dashboard with alerting and driver-diagnostics, and a scenario engine that quantifies trade-offs among pollutant reduction, habitat reliability, and water use under drought and storm regimes. In practical terms, this makes SCH a continuously learning platform that de-risks day-to-day operation, strengthens the LRP/USACE comparison of restoration alternatives, and creates a transferable template for treatment wetlands and managed habitats elsewhere in the basin's tributaries.

The model architecture also enables modular expansion. Habitat suitability features such as foraging access, inundation duration, and island stability can be layered in to simulate biological endpoints, advancing FS scoring and SCH sustainability. Critically, the tool allows transparent communication of ecological thresholds and performance diagnostics, supporting inclusive governance and more equitable government–community dialogue. As lithium extraction and geothermal energy development accelerate in the region, this tool offers a structured method for evaluating water–habitat trade-offs and safeguarding restoration integrity under shifting basin demands. It transforms fragmented data into actionable insights, improves communication across agencies and communities, and provides a replicable, science-informed framework for nature-based solution governance.

The severity of the Salton Sea crisis, coupled with its critical role in sustaining the Pacific Flyway and global bird biodiversity, demands a sophisticated, innovative, and robust ecosystem service forecasting platform—such as the one proposed in this project—to maximize the long-term success of this grant and the decades-long restoration effort. As machine learning (ML) rapidly emerges as a prominent tool in international natural resource management, this project offers a lasting capability for multi-objective restoration planning. It bridges predictive modeling with public accountability and equips USACE, SSMP, and regional stakeholders with the transparency, precision, and foresight needed to achieve a resilient, just, and ecologically credible restoration of the Salton Sea.

Memorandum

To: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors
From: G. Patrick O'Dowd, Executive Director /GM
Date: June 18, 2026
Re: **Resolution Supporting Government-to-Government Consultation by the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians Regarding Post-2026 Colorado River Operations**

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize adoption of Resolution No. ____ supporting the request of the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians (TMDCI) for meaningful government-to-government consultation with the Department of the Interior regarding the Post-2026 Colorado River Reservoir Operations Environmental Impact Statement and authorize distribution of the Resolution to appropriate federal, state, Tribal, and local officials.

DISCUSSION

On May 28, 2026, TMDCI formally requested government-to-government consultation with the Department of the Interior regarding potential effects of Post-2026 Colorado River operations on Tribal trust lands and resources within the Salton Sea basin. The Tribe's request asserts that consultation is required before issuance of a Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision and raises concerns regarding the relationship between Colorado River operations, drainage flows, Tribal trust lands, and conditions at the Salton Sea.

The attached Resolution supports the Tribe's request and urges the Department to complete meaningful consultation and consider Tribal input before issuing a Final Environmental Impact Statement or Record of Decision. The Resolution reflects institutional support for an independently asserted sovereign request by a fellow governing member of the Authority. As previously discussed by the Board, the Authority continues to expand its engagement with the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, and participants in the ongoing Post-2026 Colorado River negotiations to ensure that potential effects on the Salton Sea and surrounding communities are appropriately considered. These efforts include formal comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, direct correspondence with Department leadership, submission of supplemental historical materials to the administrative record, and outreach to local governments, agricultural interests, environmental justice organizations, and other affected parties. Additional resolutions, letters of support, and stakeholder engagement efforts may be pursued as these efforts continue.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution Supporting Meaningful Government-to-Government Consultation with the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians.
2. May 28, 2026 TMDCI Request for Government-to-Government Consultation.

RESOLUTION NO. ____

**A RESOLUTION OF THE SALTON SEA AUTHORITY SUPPORTING MEANINGFUL
GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION WITH THE TORRES
MARTINEZ DESERT CAHUILLA INDIANS AND REQUESTING SUPPLEMENTAL
ANALYSIS OF SALTON SEA IMPACTS IN THE POST-2026 COLORADO RIVER
RESERVOIR OPERATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

WHEREAS, the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians are a federally recognized sovereign Indian tribe whose trust lands are located within the Salton Sea basin and whose Chairman, Joseph Mirelez, and Vice Chairwoman, Rosemarie Morreo, serve as members of the Authority’s governing board; and

WHEREAS, the Tribe did not receive a meaningful opportunity to engage in government-to-government consultation before publication of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Post-2026 Colorado River Reservoir Operations (the “DEIS”), and on May 28, 2026, Chairman Mirelez formally requested such consultation from the Secretary of the Interior, documenting both the procedural deficiency and its consequences for the administrative record; and

WHEREAS, government-to-government consultation with affected Indian tribes is a separate and affirmative legal obligation of the United States under Executive Order 13175, 512 Departmental Manual 4, and the federal trust responsibility, and is not satisfied through the ordinary public comment process; and

WHEREAS, the Salton Sea Authority submitted its own comments on February 27, 2026, requesting supplemental analysis of Salton Sea impacts and has previously submitted supplemental historical materials to the administrative record, and reaffirms those submissions in support of complete and lawful federal decision-making;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Salton Sea Authority supports the request of the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians for meaningful government-to-government consultation with the Department of the Interior, and urges the Department to complete such consultation and incorporate Tribal input before issuing any Final Environmental Impact Statement or Record of Decision; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Salton Sea Authority urges the Department of the Interior to fully evaluate and disclose the potential effects of Post-2026 Colorado River Reservoir Operations on the Salton Sea, tribal trust lands, public health, air quality, and associated environmental conditions prior to issuing a Final Environmental Impact Statement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution shall be transmitted to the Secretary of the Interior, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, and such other federal and state officials as appropriate.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 2026, by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

Board President, Salton Sea Authority

Clerk, Salton Sea Authority



TORRES MARTINEZ DESERT CAHUILLA INDIANS

P.O. Box 1160
Thermal, CA 92274
(760) 397-0300 – FAX (760) 397-8146

May 28, 2026

Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: Request for Government-to-Government Consultation Regarding Salton Sea Impacts in the Post-2026 Colorado River Reservoir Operations DEIS, Salton Sea

Dear Secretary Burgum,

On behalf of the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians (the “Tribe”), we respectfully request for government-to-government consultation concerning the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Post-2026 Colorado River Reservoir Operations (the “DEIS”). This request is made pursuant to Executive Order 13175, 512 Departmental Manual 4, the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. § 4321 *et seq.*, the National Historic Preservation Act, 54 U.S.C. § 302706, and the United States’ trust responsibility to Indian tribes.

The Tribe did not receive a meaningful opportunity to engage in government-to-government consultation regarding the matters raised herein before publication of the DEIS. Because continued federal water deliveries foreseeably and directly affect Tribal trust lands within the Salton Sea basin, we believe that consultation was required before issuance of the DEIS. The absence of prior consultation constitutes a procedural deficiency under Executive Order 13175, 512 DM 4, and NEPA’s requirement for informed federal decision-making. This deficiency is not remedied through the ordinary public comment process. Consultation with federally recognized Indian tribes is a separate and affirmative obligation of the United States. Accordingly, the Department should promptly initiate formal consultation, fully consider the issues raised by the Tribe, and supplement the environmental analysis as necessary to reflect Tribal input before issuance of any Final EIS.

The DEIS characterizes the Salton Sea as a terminal lake outside federal authority. That characterization is inconsistent with the structure and operation of the Colorado River delivery system. Federal delivery of water into a closed basin necessarily creates drainage, return flows, and operational discharges requiring a receiving terminus. The United States has long recognized this operational reality by reserving lands within the basin for drainage purposes and by operating facilities that generate flows received within that basin. While the DEIS evaluates water deliveries, it does not

identify any legally authorized or physically existing alternative facility capable of receiving the resulting drainage if the Salton Sea is excluded from consideration. This omission renders the analysis incomplete.

The United States also maintains substantial property and trust interests within the Salton Sea basin, including federal lands subject to inundation or exposure, perpetual flowage easements, and Tribal trust lands directly affected by drainage conditions. Federal actions that generate and direct water into the basin foreseeably affect those interests. Yet the DEIS does not adequately analyze those impacts or the federal role in creating and perpetuating them.

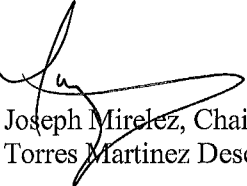
Federal courts have recognized that drainage obligations are inseparable from federal water deliveries. Continued delivery of project water necessarily carries responsibility for resulting drainage and its lawful disposition. The DEIS does not explain how those obligations are satisfied if the Salton Sea is excluded from analysis.

The Tribe further requests a complete written accounting of operational spills, return flows, drainage from federally delivered water, receiving locations, conveyance pathways, storage conditions, and governing legal authorities. If the Department intends to exclude the Salton Sea from analysis, it should identify where such flows are assumed to go and under what legal authority.

The Salton Sea functions as a receiving basin upon which federal water delivery operations rely, and federal actions affecting that basin directly affect Tribal trust lands and interests. The failure to consult with the Tribe and to analyze these impacts renders the current DEIS both procedurally and substantively deficient.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. The Department may contact me directly, or the Tribe's legal counsel, Patrick R. Bergin, at (916) 441-2700 or pbergin@ndnlaw.com to coordinate and schedule government-to-government consultation.

Sincerely,



Joseph Mirelez, Chairman
Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians

CC:

Dr. Andrea Travnicsek, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, U.S. Department of the Interior
William (Billy) Kirkland, Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior
Bryan Mercier, Director - Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior
Scott J. Cameron, Acting Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
David Palumbo, Deputy Commissioner - Operations, Bureau of Reclamation

Memorandum

To: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors
From: G. Patrick O'Dowd, Executive Director /GM
Date: July 16, 2026
Re: **Adoption of the Framework of Assurance and Direction to Staff**

Recommendation

Adopt the attached Framework of Assurance as the Authority's policy and governance framework for evaluating conditions, commitments, and proposed actions at the Salton Sea, including development of the Acceptable Condition Standard; direct staff to advance its seven core functions through appropriate intergovernmental, Tribal, scientific, public-health, and community partnerships; and direct staff to pursue agreements with state and federal partners that provide dedicated resources, assign aligned responsibilities, and establish reporting and escalation mechanisms.

Discussion

The Framework of Assurance responds to a well-documented gap: no public entity is presently responsible for integrating environmental science, monitoring cumulative conditions at the Sea, communicating emerging risks to affected communities, and coordinating a unified response among the agencies that each hold a piece of the problem. That gap has not arisen from the absence of a regional coordinating institution. Federal and state governments have repeatedly relied on the Authority to speak for the region, coordinate studies, lead environmental review, develop restoration alternatives, and sponsor federal work. What remains absent is a durable intergovernmental structure that converts that reliance into defined continuing responsibilities, assured resources, and measurable obligations. The Framework creates no new environmental mandates and replaces no existing authority. It establishes the structure needed to coordinate existing institutions around seven core functions: establishing and maintaining the process by which an acceptable environmental and public health condition is defined; integrating monitoring, scientific research, and community observation; supporting hydrologic and exposure modeling; guiding adaptive management; communicating timely information to affected communities; coordinating participating agencies while preserving institutional continuity; and fostering scientific partnership and community-based research.

Adoption today advances a commitment this Board already made. The 2026 Strategic Plan lists a Framework of Assurance among its Mission-Driven Objectives and directs, under Pillar 1, Strategy 8, that the Authority coordinate a regional framework for public assurance. That Strategy's fourth-quarter 2026 target is for the Framework to be outlined by participating agencies, including delegated responsibilities, required resources, and costs, not for

Authority adoption alone. Adoption is the Authority's initial policy step toward that target. The remaining distance is the multi-agency work described below.

Adoption also has immediate practical consequence. The Term Sheet before the Board would extend and expand the 2016 DOI/CNRA Memorandum of Understanding to include the Authority and organize near-term implementation around two priorities: the Imperial Streams Feasibility Study and the Framework of Assurance. Its recitals describe the Framework, once adopted, as the Authority's governance instrument for evaluating conditions, commitments, and proposed actions against consistent principles, including the Acceptable Condition Standard. Board adoption makes that recital accurate before transmittal to the Department of the Interior and the California Natural Resources Agency. The Term Sheet's present Framework provisions reach only acknowledgment, consideration of principles, coordinated outreach, and shared monitoring information; they do not yet assign the seven functions, commit resources, or establish escalation procedures. That is the intended division of labor: the Term Sheet identifies the governments that must be formally engaged together, and the Framework identifies what the resulting structure must deliver. Converting engagement into assigned, resourced, and measurable responsibility is the purpose of the agreement described below.

Direction to staff should include pursuit of one or more agreements, whether through the Term Sheet process, a dedicated implementation agreement, or both, that secure two things together rather than either alone: resources required for the Framework's assigned functions, including monitoring, modeling, communication, coordination, and related implementation activities, sized to the actions required to achieve and sustain an acceptable condition rather than to cost comparison alone; and aligned duties and responsibilities among state and federal partners, so that each of the seven core functions is assigned rather than assumed. Consistent with the Framework, the Authority's role is to coordinate the assignment and performance of these functions, not to assume each directly; staff should advance implementation through the intergovernmental, tribal, scientific, public-health, and community partnerships each function requires. Funding without assigned responsibility, or responsibility without resources, would reproduce the coordination gap the Framework exists to close.

Fiscal Impact

Adoption of the Framework has no immediate fiscal impact. Implementation will require dedicated external resources and partnerships. Any Authority expenditure, contractual obligation, agreement, or other commitment requiring Board authorization will return to the Board for separate consideration.

Attachment: Framework of Assurance, draft dated July 16, 2026.



Framework of Assurance

A Strategy for Environmental Health and Public Accountability

Salton Sea Authority

June 2026

Why the Framework Matters

The Salton Sea is changing.

As Colorado River operations continue to evolve, so too will environmental and public health conditions at the Sea. Some of those changes are understood. Others remain uncertain. Yet no public entity is responsible for integrating the science, monitoring cumulative conditions, communicating emerging risks, preserving the institutional record, and coordinating a unified response.

That is the problem the Framework of Assurance is designed to solve.

The Framework is not a restoration project or a regulatory program. It creates no new environmental mandates and does not replace the authority of existing agencies. It is the institutional framework needed to coordinate the institutions that already exist.

Its purpose is to ensure that changing conditions are understood, communities remain informed, agency commitments remain visible, and future decisions are grounded in a complete institutional record.

The Framework is built around seven core functions:

- Define an acceptable environmental and public health condition.
- Integrate monitoring, scientific research, and community observations.
- Support hydrologic and exposure modeling.
- Guide adaptive management.
- Communicate timely, understandable information to affected communities.
- Coordinate participating agencies while preserving institutional continuity.
- Foster scientific partnerships and community-based research.

The technical standards for these functions should be developed collaboratively by responsible agencies, Tribal governments, universities, public health professionals, and technical experts during implementation. The Framework establishes the institutional structure within which that work can occur.

The Salton Sea Authority is uniquely positioned to serve as the coordinating entity because its mission is to connect, not replace, the agencies already responsible for the Sea.

The Authority seeks federal partnership to advance the Corps feasibility study while developing the Framework into an enduring system of coordinated environmental stewardship and public health protection.

The question is not whether the Salton Sea will continue to change. The question is whether public institutions are prepared to understand those changes, communicate them, and respond in a coordinated, transparent, and accountable manner.

The Framework of Assurance exists to ensure that they are.

Introduction

The Salton Sea is entering a period of rapid and continuing transition.

The system is changing, communities will be affected, and no integrated federal, state, local, tribal, scientific, and public health framework presently exists to understand those consequences as a whole.

For more than a century, the Sea has functioned as the receiving environment for agricultural drainage generated by the Colorado River delivery system. For most of that period, public institutions understood and managed the consequences of that arrangement primarily as hydrologic and ecological conditions within the Sea. Water levels fluctuated. Salinity increased. Biological conditions evolved. The relationship between those conditions and human exposure outside the shoreline received far less institutional attention.

That approach is no longer adequate.

Conservation programs, water transfers, shortage operations, climate pressures, and changing Colorado River management are altering the Sea's hydrology and accelerating shoreline recession. As conditions change, new exposure pathways emerge connecting physical conditions at the Sea to the communities that live around it.

Some risks are understood. Others are not.

The challenge facing the Salton Sea is therefore not simply environmental. It is one of governance.

The issue is not the absence of effort. It is the absence of an integrated system capable of understanding, communicating, managing, and independently verifying cumulative consequences and the effectiveness of the actions taken to address them over time.

No single entity is presently responsible for understanding the cumulative public health implications of changing conditions at the Sea. No entity is charged with integrating air quality, shoreline recession, biological transition, vector dynamics, hydrology, community observations, and public health indicators into a unified understanding of risk.

The absence of that capacity is the problem the **Framework of Assurance** ("the Framework") is designed to solve.

The Framework establishes the institutional infrastructure required to operate that system on a sustained and transparent basis.

Defining an Acceptable Condition

No controlling instrument governing the Salton Sea has defined the integrated condition the Sea and surrounding communities must achieve and sustain to be considered acceptable.

The acceptable condition is not necessarily a single elevation, salinity level, acreage target, or project configuration. It is an integrated performance envelope composed of measurable thresholds and ranges for the conditions necessary to protect human health, air quality, habitat function, water quality, Tribal resources, infrastructure, and surrounding communities.

State Water Board Order WR 2017-0134 is the principal compliance instrument governing implementation of Phase 1 of the Salton Sea Management Program. Its enforceable milestones are stated primarily in acres of habitat and dust-suppression construction. The Order recognizes the need for a monitoring framework to assess success, but it does not establish the corresponding salinity range, air-quality threshold, habitat-function standard, public health outcome, or other integrated condition by which success is to be determined.

Acreage became the measure of performance because acreage can be counted. The acceptable condition those acres are intended to produce was not defined.

The result is a governance structure capable of reporting substantial compliance while leaving the essential question unanswered: Are the Sea and surrounding communities within an acceptable condition?

Nine thousand acres of constructed habitat may be contractually delivered and publicly reported while failing to produce acceptable water quality, air quality, habitat function, or public health protection. Acreage is a means. Acceptable condition is the end. The two have not been connected through a governing performance standard.

This absence extends beyond the State Water Board Order. Environmental reviews prepared for individual actions have reached findings of no significant impact without first identifying the boundary between an acceptable and unacceptable cumulative condition at the Salton Sea.

Where the existing condition reflects decades of unresolved degradation, comparison against that condition measures only the increment caused by the next action. It does not determine whether the resulting condition is acceptable. The existing condition may serve as an analytical baseline. It cannot serve as the standard of acceptable performance.

Preserving Institutional Continuity

An acceptable condition must be capable of being defined, achieved, maintained, and periodically revalidated, not merely achieved. As the Colorado River system, the Salton Sea, and surrounding communities continue to change, the institutional record supporting management decisions must remain as durable as the physical monitoring itself.

Governmental commitments are made against the conditions that exist at the moment they are made. When implementation is deferred, conditions continue to change. The environmental consequences of that delay become incorporated into the analytical baseline, and future decisions are anchored to that degraded baseline rather than to the condition earlier commitments were intended to achieve.

The original commitment does not disappear because it was fulfilled. It disappears because the gap it was intended to close has been quietly redefined. What was once an obligation becomes, over time, a description of existing conditions. The standard recedes with the shoreline.

The Framework therefore establishes not only a process for monitoring changing environmental conditions, but a process for preserving the institutional record against which future decisions must be measured. Monitoring data, management decisions, restoration commitments, implementation status, and performance measures should remain continuously available, comparable over time, and transparently linked to earlier decisions so that future evaluations are informed by the complete institutional record rather than only by existing physical conditions. The Framework does not determine whether previous commitments were fulfilled. It ensures that those commitments remain visible as future decisions are made.

Visibility does not determine accountability.

But accountability cannot exist without visibility.

This gap extends to what it means to sustain an acceptable condition, not merely to achieve one. No controlling instrument has defined durability, acceptable visual condition, community burden, or acceptable economic outcome for the communities surrounding the Sea. Measures may satisfy a single compliance objective while imposing recurring costs, degrading visual conditions, limiting future land use, or failing to restore economic and recreational value. No governing benchmark exists for those consequences. A program can fully meet its only defined target while every other dimension of what makes a condition acceptable remains undefined.

The Framework does not presume to establish the acceptable condition itself. That determination cannot responsibly be made by a single agency, water district, project sponsor, or advocacy organization. It must be developed through a timely and transparent process led by qualified technical professionals, subject to independent review, and conducted with the direct participation of affected communities and Tribal governments.

The first function of the Framework is therefore to establish and maintain that process.

What condition is acceptable?

Are we there?

If not, what combination of actions is required to get there and remain there?

Before integrated monitoring can have meaning, the system must know what it is monitoring against. Before adaptive management can operate, there must be a defined condition toward which management is directed. Before any federal, state, or local entity can responsibly select among restoration alternatives, including alternatives considered through the United States Army Corps of Engineers Feasibility Study, the condition those alternatives are intended to achieve and sustain must be established.

You cannot responsibly declare "no significant impact" when you have never established the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable.

Until that boundary exists, declarations of compliance, completion, mitigation, significance, or restoration success remain incomplete.

The Right to Know

The purpose of the Framework is not to prove that a particular risk exists.

Its purpose is to ensure that communities have access to the best available understanding of conditions that may affect them, and that uncertainty itself is systematically understood and communicated.

Residents of Mecca, North Shore, Niland, Bombay Beach, Salton City, Brawley, the Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indian lands and other Sea-affected communities should not be required to assemble information from multiple agencies, studies, jurisdictions, and academic disciplines in order to understand conditions in their own communities.

They have a right to know.

That right extends beyond understanding present conditions. Communities also have the right to understand how current conditions relate to prior

governmental findings, commitments, monitoring results, implementation decisions, and the evolving institutional record. Public understanding should not depend upon reconstructing decades of agency files or assembling fragmented information from multiple proceedings. Institutional continuity should itself become a public resource.

The Framework establishes the institutional capacity necessary to provide that understanding.

In doing so, it transforms dispersed information into actionable public knowledge.

The Federal Nexus

The Salton Sea receives drainage generated by federally authorized Colorado River deliveries. Federal operational decisions influence the quantity, timing, and reliability of those deliveries, and those decisions affect conditions at the Sea.

The federal government owns roughly 40 percent of the lands in and surrounding the Salton Sea and bears substantial responsibilities for the management of those lands, including responsibilities arising under applicable federal and state air quality requirements. The Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians' reservation occupies approximately 24,000 acres in and around the Sea, and the federal government also bears trust responsibilities relating to the protection and management of reservation lands affected by conditions at the Sea.

For that reason, federal participation is not incidental. It is structural to the operation of the system itself.

This is not a claim that every consequence is known. It is a recognition that federal actions influence basin conditions, and that those consequences require coordinated understanding and response.

The Coordination Gap

The Salton Sea is not underserved by agencies. It is underserved by coordination.

Numerous public agencies possess authority over portions of the problem. Air quality agencies monitor dust. Public health agencies track health outcomes. Water agencies manage water. Tribal governments manage tribal resources. Federal and state agencies collect scientific information. Universities conduct research.

Each performs an important function. None is responsible for understanding the whole.

The result is a fragmented system in which data, expertise, and responsibility are dispersed across institutions while communities experience the cumulative consequences.

Data exists. Expertise exists. Authority exists. But no entity is responsible for integrating them into a coherent understanding and communicating that understanding to the public.

The Framework does not replace those institutions. It connects them.

The Framework

The Framework of Assurance establishes a permanent, adaptive coordination system built around seven core functions: establishing and maintaining the acceptable condition standard described above, integrated monitoring, hydrologic and exposure modeling, adaptive management, public communication and community notification, interagency coordination, and scientific partnership and community-based research. The latter six functions operate in service of the standard established under the first.

Together, these functions create the institutional capacity necessary to understand changing conditions, identify emerging risks, communicate findings, and inform future management decisions.

Effective governance requires understanding not only changing environmental conditions, but also the institutional history that produced those conditions and the actions undertaken to improve them. Accordingly, the Framework preserves institutional continuity by documenting implementation of governmental commitments, maintaining the evolving administrative record, reporting measurable progress toward the acceptable condition, identifying unresolved obligations, and providing a transparent basis for future public decision-making.

Success is measured not by the elimination of uncertainty, but by the establishment of an acceptable condition standard and the system's demonstrated capacity to identify, understand, communicate, and close the gap between current and acceptable conditions.

The Framework's scientific partnership function encompasses both the generation and communication of knowledge. Neither is complete without the other, and neither is complete without the communities the Framework exists to serve.

Public agencies bear primary responsibility for monitoring, assessment, and mitigation at the Salton Sea. That responsibility is not transferable. Where those responsibilities are not fulfilled, the Framework's accountability function exists to make that failure visible. Community participation does not relieve public

agencies of their obligations. It helps ensure those obligations cannot quietly go unmet.

Communities surrounding the Salton Sea have a right to know what is changing, what those changes may mean for their health and safety, what public agencies are doing in response, and what residents can do in the interim to protect themselves while mitigation strategies are being developed and implemented. That right is not satisfied by data availability. Residents should not be required to assemble technical reports from multiple agencies in order to understand conditions affecting their own communities. The Framework establishes the institutional capacity necessary to translate scientific findings, monitoring results, agency commitments, and implementation progress into accessible public information on a continuing basis, and to notify affected communities promptly when conditions of concern develop.

Subject to the development of technically consistent standards, testing protocols, and quality assurance procedures, the Framework provides for the funding and integration of community-based monitoring programs and other locally directed scientific efforts into the broader monitoring and assessment system. Community-based programs, including those developed by environmental justice advocates and Tribal governments, generate observational data and local knowledge that centralized monitoring alone cannot replicate. Community observations may also identify emerging conditions, localized impacts, or operational concerns before they become evident through periodic agency monitoring. When conducted under protocols that ensure technical consistency and comparability, that data strengthens the overall assessment system and increases public confidence in its findings. The Framework supports the alignment of community-based science with agency-led monitoring efforts and targeted university research so that locally generated knowledge informs rather than duplicates the work of responsible public agencies.

Together these functions transform the Framework from a mechanism for coordinating institutions into an enduring system of public accountability.

The Salton Sea Authority

The Salton Sea Authority is uniquely positioned to serve as the coordinating entity for the Framework.

The Authority's purpose is not to replace existing agencies. Its role is to ensure that existing authorities function as a coordinated system, facilitating coordination, maintaining the institutional record, preserving institutional continuity, supporting scientific integration, and ensuring that communities remain informed as conditions evolve.

The Authority's value lies not in performing every function itself, but in ensuring that the many entities already engaged in Salton Sea issues operate as a coherent system over time.

Federal Resources

The Framework requires dedicated federal resources to be established and sustained at a scale commensurate with the public health obligation it addresses. The Owens Lake dust-control program, which costs more than \$75 million per year to operate at a site one third the size of the Salton Sea, provides a useful benchmark for the level of sustained investment that addressing exposed lakebed conditions requires.

That benchmark describes the scale of sustained investment comparable conditions have required. It does not by itself establish the acceptable condition the Salton Sea must achieve, or confirm that investment at a similar scale would close the gap between current and acceptable conditions at the Sea. Federal investment must be sized to the actions required to achieve and sustain the acceptable condition, not to cost comparison alone.

Federal resources may be secured through multiple channels, including government-to-government consultation, existing federal commitments, and congressional action.

Experience demonstrates that appropriations, environmental review, scientific investigation, planning efforts, and project implementation frequently proceed under different authorities and different time horizons. Effective stewardship therefore requires more than sustained funding. It requires a durable institutional mechanism capable of documenting commitments as they evolve, preserving implementation history, supporting independent evaluation, and providing transparent public reporting over time.

Without that continuity, successive planning efforts risk evaluating progress only from the condition they inherit rather than from the conditions previous commitments were intended to achieve and sustain.

Independent evaluation provides confidence not only that environmental conditions are being measured accurately, but that implementation progress is being measured with equal discipline.

The Salton Sea is not a static condition to be solved once and forgotten. It is a dynamic system whose hydrology, biology, chemistry, and relationship to surrounding communities will continue to evolve as Colorado River operations evolve. The purpose of the Framework is not to predict every future condition. It is to establish the enduring institutional capacity necessary to understand and respond to those conditions as they emerge.

Conclusion

The greatest challenge facing the Salton Sea is not simply what is unknown. It is that no acceptable condition has ever been defined against which what is known, what is uncertain, and what remains to be learned could be measured.

The Framework of Assurance acknowledges that uncertainty is itself a management challenge. Its purpose is not to eliminate uncertainty. Its purpose is to ensure that uncertainty is studied, understood, communicated, and managed through a coordinated, transparent, and accountable public process, directed toward a defined and achievable standard.

Communities living beside the Salton Sea have a right to know what is changing, what those changes may mean, and how public institutions intend to respond.

The Framework is intended to endure beyond any individual project, environmental review, funding cycle, or administration. Its purpose is to ensure that changing environmental conditions, governmental commitments, scientific understanding, and public accountability remain connected through a continuous institutional record capable of informing future decisions. Effective stewardship requires durable institutions.

The Framework establishes not only environmental understanding, but the institutional capacity necessary to act upon that understanding across generations.

The question is not whether conditions at the Salton Sea will continue to change. The question is whether public institutions are equipped to understand and respond to those changes, against a standard they have actually defined.

The Framework of Assurance exists to ensure that they are.

TERM SHEET
Extension and Expansion of the August 31, 2016
Memorandum of Understanding Regarding
the Coordination of Activities to Manage the Salton Sea

Discussion Draft for Intergovernmental Review. July 2026.

1. Purpose

To extend the August 31, 2016 Memorandum of Understanding between the United States Department of the Interior (DOI) and the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), as supplemented by the January 2017 Addendum, in advance of the expiration of its initial ten-year term on August 31, 2026, and to expand the instrument to include the Salton Sea Authority (the Authority) as a party. The extended and expanded MOU would carry forward the coordination architecture of the 2016 instrument, update it to reflect current realities, and organize its near-term implementation around two priorities: the Imperial Streams Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study and the Framework of Assurance.

2. Parties

- United States Department of the Interior.
- California Natural Resources Agency.
- Salton Sea Authority, a joint powers authority whose member agencies are the County of Imperial, the County of Riverside, the Coachella Valley Water District, and the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians.

3. Updated Recitals Reflecting Current Realities

- The 2016 MOU and 2017 Addendum remain the operative instruments for Federal and State coordination at the Salton Sea, and the Parties intend continuity of that coordination without interruption.
- The Authority and the California Department of Water Resources are the joint non-federal sponsors of the Imperial Streams Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study, authorized under the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 and being prepared by the United States Army Corps of Engineers in coordination with the sponsors.
- Reclamation's Post-2026 Colorado River Reservoir Operations Draft Environmental Impact Statement (January 2026, Section 3.2.7) identifies the SSMP long-range plan and the USACE feasibility process as the venues within which Salton Sea impacts are considered, making formal coordination among the Parties to those processes a stated premise of the Federal environmental review.

- The Authority has adopted the Framework of Assurance as its governance instrument for evaluating conditions, commitments, and proposed actions at the Salton Sea against consistent principles, including the Acceptable Condition Standard.
- The Parties reaffirm the recognition in the 2016 MOU of tribal jurisdiction and interests, the United States trust responsibility, and the duty of meaningful government to government consultation prior to any action related to the Sea that impacts a tribe. The Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians are concurrently a member agency of the Authority; such membership does not substitute for, limit, or diminish any separate government-to-government consultation obligations owed by the United States.

4. Feasibility Study Implementation

- DOI will coordinate with the USACE feasibility process, including timely provision of Reclamation, USGS, USFWS, BLM, and BIA information, data, and technical expertise relevant to study scope, alternatives, and design.
- The Parties will align SSMP project sequencing, the study's recommended plan, and Federal and State funding pursuit so that design and construction of resultant projects can begin on the schedule contemplated in the study process.
- The Parties will coordinate land ownership, rights-of-way, and withdrawal information necessary for project development, carrying forward the corresponding provisions of the 2014 DOI and Authority MOU.
- The Parties will designate a senior policy official from each Party to a working group, continuing the Salton Sea Working Group structure of the 2016 MOU with the Authority seated.

5. Authority Board Participation

- DOI, through the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science or a designee, may participate in meetings of the Authority Board of Directors on a regular basis as an ex officio, non-voting federal participant, in the same general capacity as the California Natural Resources Agency participates under the 2020 CNRA and Authority MOU. Such participation is intended to support coordination, information exchange, public accountability, and alignment of activities under this MOU. Such participation shall not confer voting rights, fiduciary obligations, or authority over matters within the jurisdiction of the Authority or any other Party.

6. Framework of Assurance; Outreach, Information, and Education

- The Parties acknowledge the Authority's adoption of the Framework of Assurance and will consider its principles in coordination activities under this MOU, including in the evaluation of project commitments, baselines, and reporting.
- Consistent with the Framework's Right to Know principle, the Authority will lead a coordinated outreach, information, and education program regarding conditions at

the Sea, the feasibility study, and implementation progress, in collaboration with CNRA and the Department of Water Resources, with Federal participation through the working group.

- The Parties will maintain and share monitoring information, building on the science and monitoring integration objectives of the 2016 MOU.

7. Provisions Carried Forward

- All provisions of the 2016 MOU and 2017 Addendum not modified hereby are carried forward in substantially their existing form.

8. Term and Execution

- Initial term to extend through the later of: (i) ten years from the effective date; or (ii) the expiration of any agreement, extension, or successor arrangement that extends Colorado River operational guidelines for Lake Powell and Lake Mead beyond September 30, 2026; renewable by agreement.
- Transmittal of this term sheet to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science and to the Office of the California Assistant Secretary for Salton Sea Policy for concurrent review.
- Confirmation of drafting assignments and a single review cycle in advance of the August 31, 2026 expiration date.

To: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors
From: G. Patrick O'Dowd, Executive Director /General Manager
Date: July 16, 2026
Re: **Institutional Coordination with the Salton Sea Conservancy: Statutory Roles and Administrative Alignment Options**

Requested Direction

Receive and discuss this report and provide direction to staff regarding: consultation with CNRA and Conservancy leadership to clarify the respective institutional roles of the Authority and the Conservancy, including the organizational assumptions informing recruitment of the Conservancy's founding Executive Officer, before that appointment is completed; evaluation of a shared administrative-services arrangement under Public Resources Code section 33821; and evaluation of extending that arrangement to shared executive leadership, using the model CVAG provides for CVCC as the preferred reference point, or such comparable collaborative arrangement as achieves the same objective, while the Conservancy retains its own independent governing board, statutory authority, funding, and fiduciary responsibility.

Discussion

The Authority's Coordinating Role

For more than three decades the Authority has served as the region's coordinating institution at the Salton Sea, a role federal and state law have consistently reinforced: P.L. 105-372 (1998), Chapter 612 (SB 317, 2003), AB 71 (2013), the 2020 CNRA-Authority MOU, the 2016 WIIN Act, and its current status, with DWR, as joint non-federal sponsor of the Imperial Streams Feasibility Study under WRDA 2020. This aligns with the Board's own 2026 Strategic Plan, which under Pillar 1, Strategy 4, directs an Authority-Conservancy coordination MOU by the fourth quarter of 2026. The pattern across three decades and both levels of government is consistent: Salton Sea coordination runs through the Authority.

Coordination and Consultation Under SB 583

SB 583 continues that pattern rather than departing from it. Section 33814(b) guarantees the sitting Authority president a permanent seat on the Conservancy's board. Section 33814(a) separately provides direct representation for the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, reinforcing the Legislature's design of complementary institutions with overlapping regional participation rather than isolated governance structures. Section 33826 authorizes the Conservancy to partner with local public agencies, naming the Authority specifically. Section 33827 requires the Conservancy, in implementing its enabling act, to coordinate its efforts with the Authority as necessary or appropriate, in cooperation with the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency. Section 33837 confirms that none of this displaces the Authority's existing responsibility or authority under other law.

The result is two complementary institutions, not two competing ones: one created by the region, one created by the State.

CNRA's own ex officio, non-voting participation on the Authority Board, through the Assistant Secretary for Salton Sea Policy under the 2020 MOU, gives the State a direct forum for this discussion before separate organizational structures become fixed.

That coordination duty is best directed, before January 1, 2027, at the organizational assumptions embedded in the founding Executive Officer appointment rather than at the appointment itself. As posted, the duty statement assigns broad functions in intergovernmental representation, Tribal engagement, and pursuit of federal and philanthropic funding that substantially overlap the Authority's existing relationships, responsibilities, and activities. Left unaddressed, that overlap risks significant duplication and institutional confusion from the Conservancy's first day of operation, the outcome the coordination duty exists to prevent. The Secretary must make the founding appointment before January 1, 2027. On that date, appointment authority passes to the Conservancy Board, on which the Authority holds a permanent seat. Consultation through the existing CNRA-Authority relationship is therefore the practical means by which the Authority's institutional perspective can inform the organizational assumptions underlying the founding appointment. Staff recommends requesting consultation with CNRA on institutional role definition and avoidance of duplicative functions before the appointment is completed, rather than a role in candidate selection itself.

The Framework of Assurance reinforces the relevant governance principle: institutional responsibilities should be expressly assigned and coordinated rather than duplicated, fragmented, or left unclear.

Administrative Alignment: Two Tracks

Shared administration and shared executive leadership rest on different statutory mechanisms and timing. Section 33821 appears to provide the statutory basis for a shared administrative-services platform now, subject to legal review and Conservancy Board approval. Shared executive leadership could be considered once the Conservancy's own board gains appointment authority under Section 33820 on January 1, 2027, subject to its own legal, fiscal, personnel, and governance review, including accountability, compensation, and conflicts a services contract does not raise. The Board's objective is a structure that avoids duplication and confusion between the two institutions; CVAG/CVCC, the model staff recommends evaluating first, is the logical reference point, not the only structure capable of achieving that objective, for the following reasons:

- Eliminates duplicate capacity, reduces institutional friction, and lowers administrative cost. The Conservancy's posted duties already overlap Authority functions; separate staffs would duplicate the same relationships and add overhead, consistent with the Strategic Plan's own concern about agencies competing for resources and duplicating effort.
- Preserves institutional memory at the project handoff: the Authority plans and advocates as Joint Local Sponsor, the Conservancy operates once projects are complete, and shared leadership could bridge that transition.
- Preserves and makes available three decades of standing relationships with the congressional delegation, DOI, Reclamation, the Army Corps, CNRA, and Tribal

governments, rather than requiring the Conservancy to rebuild them independently.

- Has a proven regional precedent: CVAG and CVCC show that two legally independent entities can preserve separate boards, funds, and fiduciary duties while sharing an integrated administrative and executive platform.
- Preserves independent governance. Each entity keeps its own board, statutory mission, funding, and fiduciary responsibility; this is administrative efficiency, not consolidation.

Subject to Board direction, staff would raise these items with CNRA and Conservancy leadership promptly, before the statutory transition in appointment authority on January 1, 2027.

Fiscal Impact

None associated with this discussion. Either arrangement, if pursued, would return to the Board with its own cost, staffing, and governance analysis.

ATTACHMENT A

SALTON SEA AUTHORITY

Governmental Recognition and Reliance on the Salton Sea Authority

Documented Institutional Roles, 1965–2026

Purpose

This attachment summarizes selected verified records showing how federal and state governments have recognized and relied upon the Salton Sea Authority as the regional coordinating institution at the Salton Sea. It supports the July 16, 2026 Board discussion concerning institutional coordination and administrative alignment with the Salton Sea Conservancy. It is not a comprehensive history or legal brief; each entry is limited to the role established by the identified source.

Summary Finding

The Authority was not merely recognized from time to time. It was repeatedly called upon to speak for the region, coordinate and conduct studies, lead environmental review, develop preferred alternatives, establish project priorities, analyze financing, communicate local priorities, and sponsor federal work. The recurring institutional issue has been the failure to consolidate those project-specific assignments into a durable structure with clearly aligned roles, resources, responsibilities, and accountability.

The creation of the Salton Sea Conservancy does not erase that history. SB 583 places the Authority directly within Conservancy governance, authorizes partnership with the Authority, requires coordination with it as necessary or appropriate, and preserves the Authority's existing responsibilities and authority. The present question is how two complementary institutions should be organized to avoid duplication and preserve institutional continuity.

I. Selected Documented Milestones

The following chronology identifies the strongest milestones bearing on the Authority's regional coordinating, planning, implementation, and intergovernmental roles.

1965 | Pomeroy Report

Documented role: A major engineering report recommended that a special agency be established to manage conservation of the Salton Sea.

Why it matters: The need for a dedicated regional management institution was identified twenty-eight years before the Authority was formed.

Source: Salton Sea Annotated Documentary Record (SSADR), 1965 Pomeroy entry.

1974 | Federal-State Feasibility Report

Documented role: The federal-state study found that no suitable local agency then existed to operate, maintain, and administer a salinity-control project and called for a broadly representative local entity.

Why it matters: Federal and state governments expressly identified the institutional gap the Authority later filled.

Source: SSADR, 1974 federal-state feasibility entry.

1993 | Joint Powers Agreement

Documented role: Imperial County, Riverside County, IID, and CVWD created the Authority to direct and coordinate actions concerning water quality, elevation stabilization, recreation, economic development, and other beneficial uses at the Sea.

Why it matters: The Authority was created as a regional coordinating public agency, not as an advisory committee.

Source: SSADR, 1993 formation entry; Salton Sea Authority Joint Powers Agreement.

1997 | Congressional Oversight Testimony

Documented role: Authority Chairman Tellis Codekas testified at the first congressional oversight hearing devoted specifically to Salton Sea stabilization and water quality.

Why it matters: The Authority was functioning as the region's congressional voice before Congress enacted the 1998 federal study law.

Source: SSADR, 1997 congressional testimony entry.

1998 | Salton Sea Reclamation Act, Public Law 105-372

Documented role: Congress defined the Authority by its 1993 JPA, required the federal feasibility study to proceed under an MOU among Interior, the Authority, and the Governor, and placed the Authority's Executive Director on the federal Research Management Committee.

Why it matters: Congress assigned the Authority structural roles in the federal study rather than treating it as an outside stakeholder.

Source: Public Law 105-372, sections 2(2), 101(b)(1)(C)(i), and 102(b)(2).

1998 | Reclamation-Authority Work Plan

Documented role: Reclamation and the Authority jointly prepared the study Work Plan and jointly stated the project objectives, including maintaining the Sea as a repository for agricultural drainage.

Why it matters: The Authority operated as a federal study partner.

Source: SSADR, 1998 Work Plan entry.

2000 | Draft EIS/EIR

Documented role: Reclamation served as NEPA lead, the Authority served as CEQA lead, and the abstract identified Reclamation and the Authority as project proponents.

Why it matters: The Authority acted as environmental lead and project co-proponent in a federal-state restoration process.

Source: SSADR, 2000 Draft EIS/EIR entry.

2002 and 2004 | Official QSA and Air-Quality Warnings

Documented role: Through Executive Director Tom Kirk, the Authority testified before Congress and the State Water Board that reduced inflows would increase restoration costs, expose playa, worsen air-quality risks, and leave unresolved who would bear responsibility for the difference.

Why it matters: The Authority served not only as coordinator, but as the region's official institutional voice on foreseeable consequences and accountability.

Source: SSADR, 2002 QSA testimony and 2004 congressional hearing entries.

2003 | Chapter 612, SB 317

Documented role: California made the Authority a mandatory consultation party in the state restoration study and preferred-alternative process.

Why it matters: The Authority's formal state consultation role predates AB 71 by a decade.

Source: Chapter 612, Statutes of 2003; Fish and Game Code section 2081.7(e).

2003–2004 | Torres Martinez Membership

Documented role: The Authority admitted the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians as a member agency while the Tribe retained its separate sovereign status.

Why it matters: The regional coordinating institution came to include direct Tribal governance participation.

Source: SSADR, Torres Martinez accession entry; JPA amendment record.

2004 | Public Law 108-361, Section 201

Documented role: Congress directed the Secretary of the Interior to complete the preferred-alternative feasibility study in coordination with California and the Authority.

Why it matters: Congress again placed the Authority alongside California in the formal federal study structure.

Source: Public Law 108-361, section 201, 118 Stat. 1681.

2006 | Authority Multi-Purpose Project

Documented role: The Authority adopted a comprehensive preferred conceptual plan integrating engineering, hydrology, habitat, air quality, land use, financing, and implementation structure, and committed to environmental review.

Why it matters: The Authority was functioning as the region's planning, technical, environmental, financing, and advocacy institution.

Source: Authority Resolution 06-02; Salton Sea Authority Plan for Multi-Purpose Project, July 2006.

2007 | WRDA Section 3032

Documented role: Congress required the Army to consult with the Authority on pilot projects and priorities and to consider both California's and the Authority's priorities.

Why it matters: The Authority remained an independent, congressionally recognized source of regional priorities.

Source: Public Law 110-114, section 3032, 121 Stat. 1110-1111.

2010 | SB 51

Documented role: The state-created Salton Sea Restoration Council was directed to request the Authority's assistance in organizing and operating the local-government forum.

Why it matters: Even when California created a separate restoration body, it relied on the Authority for regional governmental coordination.

Source: SSADR, 2010 SB 51 entry.

2013 | AB 71

Documented role: Fish and Game Code section 2942(a)(1) requires the Secretary, in consultation and coordination with the Authority, to lead the State's Salton Sea restoration efforts. Section 2942(b)(1) separately authorizes the Authority, in coordination and under

contract with the Secretary, to lead a feasibility study evaluating restoration funding sources, economic-development opportunities, state procurement and royalty-sharing opportunities, and recommended changes to existing long-term restoration plans. Section 2943 separately requires the Secretary to seek Authority input on design, public access, economic development, habitat, vector and predator management, and financial resources for restoration of the Salton Sea.

Why it matters: AB 71 renewed and expanded the Authority's existing coordinating role. In addition to requiring consultation and coordination with the Authority, the Legislature authorized the Authority to lead defined funding, feasibility, and long-term planning work in coordination with the Secretary, and separately required the Secretary to seek the Authority's input across a defined set of restoration components.

Source: AB 71 (2013); Fish and Game Code section 2942(a)(1), (b)(1), and 2943.

2014 | DOI-Authority MOU

Documented role: Interior and the Authority entered a ten-year, secretarial-level MOU involving Reclamation, USFWS, USGS, BLM, and BIA to exchange information and identify practical projects.

Why it matters: The federal executive branch treated the Authority as its regional counterpart across five Interior bureaus.

Source: SSADR, 2014 DOI-Authority MOU entry.

2014–2016 | Funding and Feasibility Action Plan

Documented role: CNRA funded work through a grant to the Authority; the Authority managed the program, evaluated prior plans, developed technical concepts, and produced the Perimeter Lake concept.

Why it matters: The Authority demonstrated program-management and technical capacity and generated concepts later carried into federal planning.

Source: SSADR, Funding and Feasibility Action Plan entry and benchmark reports.

2016 | Financing Analysis and WIIN Act

Documented role: The Authority sponsored detailed implementation-grade financing analysis. Congress separately expanded the Authority's eligibility to enter implementation and cost-sharing agreements with the Secretary.

Why it matters: The Authority was developing financing mechanisms while Congress expanded its role as a potential direct federal agreement and cost-sharing counterparty.

Source: Funding and Feasibility Action Plan, Benchmark 5; WIIN Act section 1181.

2016–2017 | DOI-CNRA MOU and Addendum

Documented role: DOI and CNRA created a two-party coordination agreement that left the Authority outside the governing instrument, while attached State actions anticipated Authority assistance with local involvement. The addendum linked air-quality emissions to QSA implementation and declining Sea elevation.

Why it matters: The arrangement illustrates the recurring mismatch between formal executive structure and the regional role assigned to and performed by the Authority.

Source: DOI-CNRA MOU, August 31, 2016; January 18, 2017 addendum.

2020 | CNRA-Authority MOU

Documented role: CNRA recognized the Authority as uniquely positioned to consolidate local priorities, designated it as the primary channel through which those priorities are communicated to CNRA, provided for regular ex officio State participation on the Authority Board, and contemplated coordinated implementation and federal funding efforts.

Why it matters: California formally described the Authority as the regional coordination channel, not merely one stakeholder among many.

Source: CNRA-Authority MOU, February 2020.

2020–2022 | WRDA Authorization and Federal Cost Share Agreement

Documented role: The Authority and DWR became joint non-federal sponsors of the Imperial Streams and Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study.

Why it matters: The Authority moved from concept developer to formal sponsor of a major federal civil works study.

Source: SSADR, WRDA 2020 and 2022 Federal Cost Share Agreement entries.

2024 | SB 583 and the Salton Sea Conservancy

Documented role: SB 583 created the Conservancy for specified project operation, maintenance, management, landholding, and grant-making purposes; gave the Authority President a permanent Conservancy Board seat; provided direct Torres Martinez representation; authorized partnership with the Authority; required coordination with it as necessary or appropriate; and preserved existing Authority responsibilities and powers.

Why it matters: The Legislature integrated the Authority into the Conservancy's governance and operations rather than replacing the Authority's regional role.

Source: SB 583 (2024), Public Resources Code sections 33812, 33814, 33821, 33826, 33827, and 33837.

2026 | Strategic Plan and Framework of Assurance

Documented role: The Authority's 2026 Strategic Plan directs formalization of the Authority-Conservancy relationship and carries forward the Authority's regional coordinating role. The Framework of Assurance states the corresponding governance principle: institutional responsibilities should be expressly assigned and coordinated rather than duplicated, fragmented, or left unclear.

Why it matters: The current Board discussion concerns how the Authority's documented coordinating role should operate alongside the newly created Conservancy, not whether that role exists.

Source: Salton Sea Authority 2026 Strategic Plan, Pillar 1, Strategy 4; Framework of Assurance presented July 16, 2026.

II. The Institutional Pattern

Across these records, the Authority repeatedly performs five connected functions: (1) regional representation; (2) intergovernmental coordination; (3) technical and environmental planning; (4) federal partnership and sponsorship; and (5) institutional continuity and accountability. These are not isolated historical references. They form a continuous pattern of governmental reliance extending from the Authority's formation through the present Corps feasibility study.

The recurring weakness has been structural. *The question for this Board to consider is not whether those institutional roles exist, they are well documented, but how they should be organized going forward.* Roles have been assigned through individual statutes, hearings, studies, grants, and memoranda, but not consistently integrated into one durable arrangement that aligns the Authority's regional function with the responsibilities, resources, and accountability of the other institutions operating at the Sea.

III. Relevance to Authority-Conservancy Alignment

- **The Conservancy adds implementation capacity; it does not displace the Authority's role.** SB 583 focuses the Conservancy on completed-project operations, maintenance and management, property interests, grants, and related implementation functions while expressly preserving the Authority's existing responsibilities and authority.
- **The Legislature provided overlapping representation and required coordination; it did not require duplicative administration.** The Authority President and Torres Martinez each hold direct Conservancy Board representation, the Conservancy may partner with the Authority, and the Conservancy must coordinate with it as necessary or appropriate.
- **The present Executive Officer design makes early clarification necessary.** The posted duty statement assigns broad external-facing functions involving intergovernmental representation, Tribal engagement, strategic planning, and pursuit of federal and philanthropic funding that substantially overlap the Authority's existing relationships, responsibilities, and activities. Without an agreed institutional structure, two parallel centers of regional coordination could develop from the Conservancy's first day of operation.
- **CVAG/CVCC is the logical initial reference model, not a predetermined result.** It demonstrates that separate public entities can preserve independent boards, funds, statutory duties, and fiduciary responsibility while sharing an integrated administrative and executive platform. Another collaborative arrangement may be appropriate if it achieves the same objective.
- **The governing objective is clear assignment and continuity.** The Authority and Conservancy should be organized so that regional coordination, project implementation, governmental relationships, public accountability, and institutional memory reinforce one another rather than compete or fragment.

IV. Conclusion

The Authority is not seeking a new institutional role. It is asking that a role repeatedly assigned and relied upon by Congress, California, federal agencies, and regional governments be reflected in the organizational relationship between the Authority and the Salton Sea Conservancy. The statutory design supports complementary institutions: the Authority as the established regional coordinating and federal-partnership institution, and the Conservancy as a State-created implementation, operations, maintenance, landholding, and grant-making institution. The immediate task is to align those functions before duplicative structures become fixed.



Cultivating Conservation

MEMO

TO: Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors and G. Patrick O'Dowd
FROM: Lisa Moore
RE: **Federal Report**
DATE: July 13, 2026

As noted in my last report, the Authority secured the support of our Senators to request \$2.146 million in FY27 Energy and Water appropriations to ensure that the Salton Sea Feasibility Study remains on track. While appropriations bills are typically advanced in the Senate Appropriations Committee in July, Committee action on all the FY27 appropriations legislation has been stalled due to disagreements between the Chair and Ranking Member over how to address the Administration's request for increased defense spending.

With the fiscal year ending September 30, it is likely that we will be looking at continuing resolution to fund the government until after the November elections. At that point, negotiators would work to complete the bills, where our request will be in play.

In addition, we are in the process of scheduling a meeting with Interior and Reclamation. That meeting will focus on the Authority's requests for Interior's financial and technical engagement to address Salton Sea impacts associated with Reclamation's Colorado River Post 2026 operational guidelines, expected to be released in August.



State Advocacy Update – June/July 2026

The Legislature began its month-long Summer recess on July 3, and will return for the final month of the 2026 legislative session on August 3. The following reflects the timeline for legislative activities through the remainder of the 2026 session. When the Legislature returns from its Summer recess, there will only be 21 working days remaining in the legislative session.

- **August 3:** Legislature returns from Summer recess
- **August 14:** Fiscal committee deadline
- **August 17-31:** Floor session only
- **August 31:** Last day of 2025-26 legislative session

On June 29, the Legislature approved a series of budget bills and budget trailer bills to implement the State Budget, and the Governor signed the budget package in advance of the July 1 start of the new fiscal year.

Notably, the signed budget package includes the reversion of \$16.8 million from Proposition 68 (Section 80111(a)) and then new appropriations of:

- \$16.2 million capital outlay to the Department of Water Resources for the North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project
- \$600,000 to the California Natural Resources Agency for an agreement with the Salton Sea Authority relative to implementation of the North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project

The final three-party budget agreement that was approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor did not address Proposition 4 allocations or Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund allocations, among other budget items. The Legislature has indicated a desire to continue work and discussions on those items through the Legislature's Summer recess with a plan to revisit those issues in follow-up budget-related legislation in August.

Now that the primary budget package has been approved and is being implemented for Fiscal Year 2026-27, the Authority will be actively engaging with

the CNRA to memorialize the agreement provided for in the State Budget and execute the appropriations mechanism for the approved funding.

As part of the broader state budget conversations, the Authority engaged with Assembly and Senate budget committees, legislative leadership, and the Salton Sea legislative delegation members regarding the Authority's support for the May Revise budget proposal relative to the North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project and agreement between CNRA and the Authority. Additionally, the Authority's budget engagement during June and continuing through the Summer recess and into August continued to socialize a request for a budget augmentation in the amount of \$5 million over three years to support a structured engagement and coordination program that empowers residents, Tribal governments, community-based organizations, and environmental justice advocates to meaningfully participate in shaping the federal feasibility study and responding to the environmental and public health consequences of the Colorado River agreement.

Discussions regarding remaining and outstanding budget matters are continuing in earnest through the Legislature's Summer recess and into August.

Soon, attention will turn to planning for the 2027 legislative session, including scoping and development of legislative concepts, socializing legislative concepts with broader stakeholder and potential partner organizations, and developing a comprehensive gameplan to advance legislative initiatives into the upcoming legislative session.