

Norma Saikfion
Public Administrator
Public Guardian
Public Conservator
Area Agency on Aging



(3/18/15) Public Workshop
Salton Sea
Deadline: 3/11/15 by 12:00 noon

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March 4, 2015

The Honorable Felicia Marcus, Chair
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814



Dear Chairwoman Marcus:

The office of the Imperial County Public Administrator/Guardian/Conservator-Area Agency on Aging (Department) is dedicated to treating every senior with dignity, compassion and respect. The hallmark of the Department's staff is its commitment to a service delivery system that is accessible, community-based and customer oriented. The Department is steadfast to advocate for appropriate funding and services on behalf of their seniors and programs. With this in mind, the lack of the State's commitment to address the QSA impacts to restore the Salton Sea is of grave concern to the Department and the senior population we serve.

As you are aware, the State has failed to meet its responsibilities under the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA), pursuant to Revised Order WRO 2002-0013, as well as to the people and wildlife resources of California, but more specifically to the frail, developmentally disabled, and/or mentally disabled seniors of the Imperial County living in and around the Salton Sea area. The State's failure to adequately address the associated impacts of the QSA are respectfully alarming.

With the growing 60+ senior population of 32,087 in the Imperial County, approximately 6,625 seniors are considered low income (U.S. Administration on Aging, Aging Integrated Database). An increased senior migration to the Salton Sea area has been seen by our Department because of the availability of affordable housing in the area and the lack of affordable housing in urban areas. The Department has witnessed environmental impacts to the senior population it serves in the following areas, but most importantly sees it as an environmental injustice to this frail population that needs the greatest assistance:

- Increased health care costs: If no action is taken, the health risks of the dust and fine particles that will be released, due to the exposed shoreline, exposes our senior population to adverse respiratory illnesses. A study by Yonsei University found that, "The mortality risk in elderly aged 65 or over caused by cardiovascular disease would be doubled if daily average concentration is increased." This effect on the health of the elderly will have an impact on the Department and services rendered in the northern part of the County as more seniors will require medical assistance thereby increasing money output for medical, travel and eating expenses due to the lack of medical services in the area.

- Decreased Real Property Values: The value of property will see a decline due to the real and perceived health threats and declining aesthetic value of the environment, thus affecting potential revenue and incomes for seniors. Reverse mortgages for seniors may be impacted as result of the reduced property equity. Additionally, the visual impact may affect estate sales for those residents within County perimeters. The lack of vegetation due to the high salinity levels, dead wildlife are not only a visual nuisance, but an air quality nuisance.
- Coupled with the health risks, the Department's Information and Assistance desk will see an increase in calls from an area that has very limited resources. A great majority of seniors in the Department's Representative Payee Program are living on fixed incomes and trying to survive on an income of \$800 to \$1,200 per month of SSI/SSA benefits. Unless more money will be contributed to senior services in the Imperial County, restoration of the Salton Sea must begin as soon as possible.

We urge you to do whatever is within your legal authority to take action to protect this underrepresented population and push the State to take on its responsibility to expeditiously take the appropriate actions to restore the Salton Sea and preserve the health and safety of the community. Help us be that voice for this frail population.

Respectfully,

IMPERIAL COUNTY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR/AREA AGENCY ON AGING



Norma Saikhon
Public Administrator/Guardian/Conservator
Area Agency on Aging

cc: Katherine Turner, Assistant County Counsel

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