



## Imperial-Mexicali Air Quality Task Force

March 05, 2015



Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board  
State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 I Street, 24th Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov

### **Subject: Salton Sea Comment Letter**

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Board:

On behalf of the Imperial-Mexicali Air Quality Task Force (AQTF), I am writing to express our support for the Imperial Irrigation District's petition regarding restoration of the Salton Sea. It is notable that the Board recognized in its Notice of Public Workshop that this issue is an urgent one of statewide importance. It is also a particularly important issue for the residents, businesses, and local government of the Imperial, Coachella and Mexicali valleys, which will bear the most direct and substantial costs of the failure by the State of California to restore the Salton Sea.

The Imperial - Mexicali AQTF mission is to improve air quality and health for all citizens of the Border Community and to the spirit embedded within the framework between the Agreement of the Mexico and the United States of America on the Cooperation for the Protection and improvement of the Environment in the Border Area. The AQTF continues to explore ideas to accelerate air quality progress for the region through additional programs and specific strategies. The AQTF is comprised of the leadership of the following entities, consistent with the Border 2020 Program: Mexico's Secretariat Environmental Protection Agency, the Air Pollution Control District (ICAPCD), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Academia, Industry, Environmentalists, and the general public. In general, AQTF strives to find solutions as means to improve air quality in the entire region.

As mentioned, one of the main goals of the AQTF is to protect the health and welfare of residents in this region. Without restoration, declining water levels and increasing salinity at the Sea will have many serious consequences for the residents in the Imperial, Coachella and Mexicali valleys. The declining water levels resulting from water transfers under the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) will expose thousands of acres of lakebed to the air.

A small, handwritten mark or signature in the bottom right corner of the page, consisting of a few slanted lines.

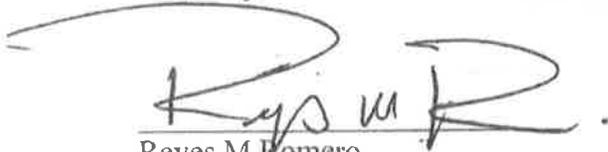
Emissions from this exposed playa will significantly worsen our region's already-poor air quality and cause many residents of this region to suffer from heart disease, asthma, lung cancer, and other health problems. Increasing salinity levels, which will accelerate sharply once the interim mitigation measures ordered by the Board end in 2017, threaten to destroy the Salton Sea ecosystem. And the economic impact of a dying Sea will be a long lasting burden placed on our residents, and most of all our children, in the Imperial, Coachella and Mexicali valleys. That is the harsh reality facing our region.

As IID explained in its petition, the QSA was supposed to prevent this from happening. It has long been recognized that water transfers out of the Imperial Valley would be a major threat to the Salton Sea and the Imperial, Coachella and Mexicali valleys. These concerns almost derailed the entire QSA, but the agreements were signed after the State of California promised to restore the Sea. This promise was a matter of basic fairness and the QSA would not have been signed without it. The water transfers benefit the entire State, so the Legislature agreed that the entire State would bear the cost of addressing the effects of the transfers on the Salton Sea. It is fundamentally wrong for the residents of this region to be forced to bear the consequences of California's effort to reduce its usage of Colorado River water.

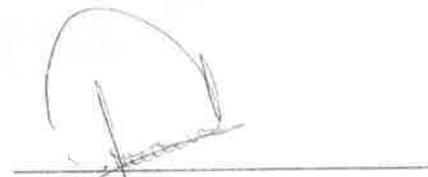
To date, more than a decade later, almost no progress has been made on restoration. It is time for action. Several studies in recent years have confirmed that restoration is both feasible and necessary to protect the health and well-being of the Salton Sea region. The Board should use its power to bring all necessary parties together to design, implement, and fund a restoration plan that will create a smaller, sustainable Sea and preserve a bright future for the Imperial, Coachella and Mexicali valleys.

On behalf of AQTF and residents of this region, we call upon the Board to approve IID's petition. The Board, the State, IID, and all other interested parties should cooperate to ensure that the Sea is restored before it is too late. We ask the Board to convene a collaborative process among these parties that will identify a specific restoration plan that can be implemented and funded in time to avert the looming crisis threatening our region and the entire State.

Sincerely,



Reyes M Romero  
Imperial County Co-Chair



Saul Guzman  
California Baja California  
Border 2020 Mexicali Co-Chair

cc: Stephen W. Benson, Board President, Imperial Irrigation District  
Ryan E. Kelley, Chairman of the Board, County of Imperial