

March 10, 2015

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



Re: Comment Letter: Salton Sea

Dear Chairwoman Marcus:

As a native Californian resident since 1960, I have seen the State lead the way in many areas. The issues at the Salton Sea pose a serious threat, but also an opportunity for the State to lead again, honor it's commitments and create a model for others to follow. Restoration of the Salton Sea through smart water management policies will encourage use of emerging cutting-edge technologies, promote economic development in the region, help the State meet it's renewable energy goals, force water conservation sooner rather than later, save endangered species that live in the area, help local growers who contribute to the economy, increase tourism to the region, improve public health and support future water transfers in other parts of the state thus leading to long term water reliability.

We are facing an environmental and ecological catastrophe affecting the environment, human health and wildlife if the Salton Sea Restoration is not implemented soon. The residents of Imperial County, who already face the highest asthma rates of anywhere in the country, along with the residents in the surrounding areas, will pay a high price for inaction at the Salton Sea. In September of 2012 a noxious odor originating from the Salton Sea spread throughout the region and was detected all the way to Simi Valley almost 200 miles away. Experts say this is a sign of things to come if nothing is done.

I support the Imperial Irrigation District's Petition requesting the Board to convene key stakeholders and prioritize Salton Sea restoration efforts.

Regarding the Status of the Salton Sea and Revised Work Order WRO 2002-0013, the State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB) should do the following:

1. To promote implementation of a reasonable and sustainable plan to address the air, wildlife, and water quality problems at the Salton Sea, the SWRCB should modify the salinity mitigation requirements of the above referenced work order based on implementation of a fully funded Salton Sea Restoration Plan. It was well known that approval of the transfer back in 2002 had the potential to have serious air quality impacts and cause the sea to become too salty to support a viable fishery. Absent restoration efforts, experts now agree that the negative impacts on the Salton Sea will be significant. I support the QSA agreement. However, the spirit of this agreement was very clear. Salinity mitigation water would stop flowing once a final restoration plan was approved, funded and in place.

The Honorable Felicia Marcus

March 10, 2015

Page 2

In May of 2007 a preferred plan was published. To date, very little money has been spent. The State should show good faith on its stated goal in 2003 to restore the Salton Sea and at the very minimum set aside recently approved water bond money of at least \$150 million to begin restoration projects at the Salton Sea. Next, the State should jump start the restoration project and make a 20% down payment based on the cost of the preferred alternative plan. This would amount to roughly \$1.8 billion dollars in next year's budget. Once these budgets are approved, the State will quickly see private money and investment flowing into the area and increased property values. The return on investment will be high. In a recent report by the Pacific Institute, the cost of inaction at the Salton Sea could be up to \$70 Billion. In the 1950's and 60's more people visited the Salton Sea than Yosemite. A restored smaller Salton Sea will still be a popular place for people from around the world to visit and a healthy place to live and work.

2. The issue the SWRCB should address is the presumption that the QSA is too big to fail. This does not justify the state neglecting its financial obligations, nor its obligation to protect human health, or to preserve the fish and wildlife resources of the sea. Upholding the conditions of the QSA by reserving the board's authority to consider changes to the water rights order (WRO) based on new information creates the incentive for implementation of the agreement in the spirit for which it was intended, that is to provide a plan for California to reduce its use of Colorado river water and also restore the Salton Sea. The state's assumption of liability for the QSA transfer and the related QSA legislation committing the state to undertake the restoration of the Salton Sea both fall within this new information.
3. The SWRCB should not make any changes to the Revised WRO 2002-0013. Rather the board should exercise its authority as the WRO is currently written and add, delete or modify the salinity mitigation requirements in light of the Resources Agency report on a feasible and preferred alternative that has yet to be funded 7 years later. It is unwise to take this provision of the WRO off the table. Based on the current language in the work order and the absence of a funded restoration plan, it would seem appropriate to modify and extend the 15 year requirement to mitigate the salinity impacts of the transfer.

The water and money needed to restore the Salton sea will come from Renewable Energy production, new revenue from development and increased property values, increased tourism, use of efficient water management technologies, changes in how we landscape, revised water rates, increased water storage capacity and more. A tremendous amount of water is currently wasted. We know we have to start using less water in the future so why not just start now?

The Honorable Felicia Marcus

March 10, 2015

Page 3

The mission statement for the State Water Resources Control Board reads as follows:

*“To preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of California’s water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health, and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use, for the benefit of present and future generations”*

Maintaining the QSA and restoring the Salton Sea is a perfect example for achieving this goal.

Let’s all work together and lead again like California has done so many times and show the nation and world how Science, Technology and Restoration can work together to create a sustainable place for people to live and work for the benefit of mankind and the environment.

In summary, the QSA agreement should stay in place, if it is kept to the agreements that everyone signed at the time. The agencies agreed to make the transfers, if the State acted on it’s restoration obligation. Everyone must live up to their part of the deal for it to be a valid document. It would appear this view has strong legal standing.

Sincerely,

**Mark Adams**

Murrieta, CA

[m1aaaca@msn.com](mailto:m1aaaca@msn.com)

714.865.0146