



Re: Comments on IID Petition to the Water Board.  
By: Coulter H Stewart, Founder and former Publisher of  
Government West Magazine; former Senior Consultant to  
the California State Assembly Sub-committee on Energy.  
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For the past ten years I have heard from the "experts" that it is too expensive to bring water from the Sea of Cortez to save the Salton Sea. These well meaning men, attorneys, scientists, engineers, politicians and the media have bought this idea because of a report issued over 12 years ago by the Federal Bureau of Reclamation which detailed a huge project to import 2.9 million acre feet of salt water each year from the Sea of Cortez and export 2.3 million acre feet of water back to the Sea of Cortez from the Salton Sea each year.

This project called for 240 miles of pipeline to move this vast amount of salty water both directions sort of like a kidney dialysis machine. Needless to say moving 5.2 million acre feet of water through pipelines is expensive. The pipelines required are very large. The pumping costs are large. The current total cost figure being cited by these well meaning experts is \$60 billion to bring water from the Sea of Cortez in this fashion. Therefore ipso facto this is a non starter. While such a project would maintain the salinity and water level of the Salton Sea at acceptable levels the cost is indeed prohibitive. End of discussion.

There is an alternative which I have discussed, written and lectured about.

Desalinate a much smaller quantity of water, 400,000 acre feet per year, at or near the Sea of Cortez and bring it to the Salton Sea through a canal-river-pipeline system.

After meeting and talking with the Chief Engineer of Tetra Tech, a Director of the Pacific Institute and the University of Redlands Author of the Salton Sea Atlas as well as members of the Salton Sea Authority Board, I learned that this much reduced size project had never been considered by the Fed-

eral Bureau of Reclamation, or anyone at the State level. It is also not included in the current \$2 million "Salton Sea Funding and Feasibility Review" being conducted for the Salton Sea Authority with funding from the State Department of Water Resources. These three very respectable men also helped me understand that in addition to importing this amount of desalinated water we would still need to export 100,000 acre feet of salty water each year.

And guess what? Geothermal power plant operations require at least 20% make up water to re-inject into the geothermal formations to prevent subsidence and resource depletion. Problem solved. Move 500,000 acre feet verses 5.2 million acre feet. Total cost for this project \$7 billion, including desalination verses \$60 billion for the kidney dialysis method. What a difference!

Unfortunately none of this is being studied in the above mentioned study to end all studies. They are just reviewing the same old plans to shrink the Sea thus exposing some 150 square miles of toxic dust for our breathing comfort.

Here is a specific plan for your review:

1. Decide to solve the Salton Sea problems of water level, salinity and nutrient load permanently.
2. Direct the Imperial Irrigation District and the Coachella Valley Water District to form a new Joint Powers Authority to work with Mexico to operate and import desalinated water from the Sea of Cortez. The quantities shall be sufficient to offset inflow declines due to transfers and drought.
3. Compel the IID to require that local geothermal operators use Salton Sea bottom water for re-injection make up water rather than fresh Colorado River water.
4. Work with the Bureau of Reclamation to create a State/Federal revolving fund of \$300 million per year to finance the initial debt service.
5. Continue the current Mitigation Water Purchase Program administered by California Fish & Wildlife until new supplies of fresh water are available.
6. Expand and diversify this effort as needed to remedy the general lack of water for Southern California due to cutbacks from the SWP, Los Angeles Aqueduct and Colorado River Aqueduct.
7. Petition to have the Federal designation of the Salton Sea as an "agricultural wastewater sump", broadened to include ecological, public health and economic benefit.

Before you say this is too expensive, consider the legal battles you will be defending yourselves against from public health, environmental and property advocates if you continue to maintain the status quo, which is to let the Salton Sea shrink and die.

I'm sure you have read the Pacific Institute Report on the Cost of Doing Nothing at the Salton Sea, issued in September 2014, as well as the Phase 7A study from LADWP/Barnard Co. Perhaps you should re-read them, before your decision on a permanent solution for the Salton Sea.

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