

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
BOARD MEETING SESSION – DIVISION OF WATER RIGHTS
SEPTEMBER 20, 2018**

ITEM 6

SUBJECT

UPDATE REGARDING THE STATUS OF PHASE 1 OF THE SALTON SEA MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

DISCUSSION

[Order WR 2017-0134](#) requires that the Board hold a public meeting no later than March 31 of each year during phase 1 of the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) to receive oral and written comment on the status of Salton Sea Restoration. A previous update on the SSMP went before the Board at the March 20, 2018 Board meeting. The purpose of the September 20, 2018 Board item is to receive an update from the California Natural Resources Agency on progress made in implementation of the SSMP since the March 20, 2018 Board meeting, and receive comments from the public. In addition, the State Water Board staff will provide an update on recent activities since the March 20, 2018 Board meeting.

BACKGROUND

On October 28, 2002, the State Water Board issued [Order WR 2002-0013](#) which approved the long-term transfer of water from the Imperial Irrigation District to the San Diego County Water Authority, the Coachella Valley Water District, and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. On December 20, 2002, the State Water Board issued [Order WR 2002-0016](#), which revised Order WR 2002-0013. On November 18, 2014, the Imperial Irrigation District filed a Petition for Change seeking modification of [Revised Order WR 2002-0013](#). In May 2015, Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. established the Salton Sea Task Force to identify realistic short and medium term goals to respond to potential air quality and ecological impacts resulting from scheduled reduced flows of fresh water to the Salton Sea. As a part of the Salton Sea Task Force, the State Water Board regularly monitors and assesses progress on the implementation of the Salton Sea Task Force's SSMP, including workshops that were held on March 18, 2015, January 5, 2016, April 19, 2016, November 15, 2016, and September 7, 2017.

On November 7, 2017, the State Water Board adopted Order WR 2017-0134 amending revised Order WR 2002-0013 to incorporate additional conditions that set forth specific restoration milestones to address public health and environmental concerns within phase 1 of the SSMP (see table 1). The first milestone set by the order is that by December 31, 2018, construction of habitat and dust-suppression projects shall be completed on 500 acres of exposed playa. Order WR 2017-0134 requires that, no later than March 31 each year, the Board holds a public meeting to receive oral and written comments on the status of Salton Sea Restoration.

Per Order WR 2017-0134, a report from state agencies, due in the 1st quarter of 2019, will identify: (i) completed projects and milestones achieved in the prior year; (ii) amount of acreage of completed projects that provide dust suppression and habitat restoration, broken down by habitat type; (iii) upcoming projects to be completed and milestones to be achieved prior to the next annual progress report; (iv) the status of financial resources and permits that have not been secured for future projects; (v) any anticipated departures from the dates and acreages

identified in condition 24 of the order, and; (vi) progress toward development of the long-range plan described in condition 26 of the order.

In addition to the annual public meetings required by Order WR 2017-0134, the State Water Board, as part of its oversight role over the SSMP, requested a status update on the SSMP for the March 20, 2018 Board meeting. During this Board meeting, the California Natural Resources Agency noted that there were some unexpected challenges in securing the easement agreement necessary to move forward with one of their first large-scale habitat-construction projects, and that they were considering other projects to work towards achieving the annual milestones. Since the date to comply with the first milestone of Order WR 2017-0134 is December 31, 2018, the Board requested at the March 20, 2018 Board meeting a subsequent agenda item to receive an update on the status of Phase 1 of the SSMP later in 2018. The State Water Board also sent a letter on May 22, 2018 to the California Natural Resources Agency requesting additional information be included in future presentations before the Board. The May 22, 2018 letter is available at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/salton_sea/docs/05222018_cnra_ltr.pdf

The update on September 20, 2018 will focus on progress made since the March 20, 2018 agenda item.

Table 1: Specific restoration milestones to address public health and environmental concerns within phase 1 of the SSMP.

Year	Total number of acres of habitat and dust-suppression projects that shall be completed each year (annual milestones).	Report due to State Water Board on progress made toward meeting each annual milestone target.
2018	500	---
2019	1,300	First quarter of 2019
2020	1,700	First quarter of 2020
2021	3,500	First quarter of 2021
2022	1,750	First quarter of 2022
2023	2,750	First quarter of 2023
2024	2,700	First quarter of 2024
2025	3,400	First quarter of 2025
2026	4,000	First quarter of 2026
2027	4,000	First quarter of 2027
2028	4,200	First quarter of 2028
2029	---	First quarter of 2029
Total acres to be completed by the end of 2028: 29,800		

For more information about the background and history of the State Water Board's involvement with the Salton Sea, please visit the State Water Board's web page at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/salton_sea/

POLICY ISSUE

None. This is an informational item only and no decisions will be made.

FISCAL IMPACT

None. This is an informational item only and no decisions will be made.

REGIONAL BOARD IMPACT

None. This is an informational item only and no decisions will be made.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

None. This is an informational item only and no decisions will be made.

State Water Board action on this item will assist the Water Boards in reaching Goals 4 and 6 of the 2010 Update to the 2008-2012 Strategic Plan to comprehensively address water quality protection and restoration and the relationship between water supply and water quality and improve transparency and accountability by ensuring that Water Board goals and actions are clear and accessible.