



Salton Sea Management Program Briefing

Introduction

The Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) briefing will provide an overview of the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) restoration planning and implementation activities at the Salton Sea. The SSMP, a joint program of the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), DWR, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), is carrying out restoration projects at the Salton Sea to protect air quality and provide fish and wildlife habitat.

Samantha Arthur, Assistant Secretary for Salton Sea Policy at the CNRA, and Evon Willhoff, Acting Assistant Deputy Director for Salton Sea Restoration at DWR, will provide an overview of the SSMP's restoration actions, including recent implementation of large-scale aquatic habitat restoration and vegetation enhancement on exposed Salton Sea lakebed. They will highlight the Salton Sea's nexus to the Colorado River, the State's 10-Year Restoration Plan, and recent federal Inflation Reduction Act investments to accelerate State restoration implementation.

Background

In the Southeastern corner of the state, straddling Imperial and Riverside counties, the Salton Sea is California's largest inland lake. The Salton Sea is receding due in part to existing water conservation actions in the Imperial Valley that have reduced inflows to the Salton Sea. Drought and changes to Colorado River water availability exacerbate this trend. As the Salton Sea recedes, previously submerged lakebed is being exposed and has the potential to release dust, contributing to worsening air quality in a region already struggling with poor air quality and reducing important environmental habitat.

Under the direction of Governor Newsom, California State agencies are advancing projects at the Salton Sea to improve air quality and provide critical environmental habitat for birds along the Pacific Flyway. [The California Natural Resources Agency](#), the [California Department of Water Resources](#) and the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) are focused on implementing the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP). The SSMP's work is guided by State legislation, State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) orders, and formal agreements between federal, Tribal, and local entities. The Salton Sea Restoration Act of 2003 outlined the Legislature's intent for the State to restore the Salton Sea ecosystem and subsequent Water Board orders set a restoration milestone of 29,800 acres by 2028. The SSMP has developed a multi-pronged approach that includes projects around the Sea that increase wildlife habitat and reduce dust from exposed lakebed. The Program also led the development of a long-range restoration plan, beyond 2028, and is collaborating with local, state, federal, and Tribal partners on a feasibility study of ecosystem restoration options identified in the long-range plan.

Agenda Item: 12

Meeting Date: September 18, 2024

Page 2

This item implements Goal 1 of the Commission's 2020 Strategic Plan, which states that the Commission "will serve as a primary public forum for the discussion of improving water management policy to assist regions in achieving climate resiliency."

Meeting Overview

At the September meeting, DWR and CNRA staff will make presentations as described above. Commissioners will have an opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

This is an informational item.

Contact

Laura Jensen

Assistant Executive Officer

California Water Commission

(916) 820-5897