The Salton Sea
A Guide for the Advancement of Public Health, Climate Resilience, and Community Engagement

PREPARED BY
Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
Objectives for Salton Sea Rehabilitation and Climate Resilience in the Eastern Coachella Valley:

- Ensure meaningful community engagement in Salton Sea management, mitigation, and planning and implementation of programs and projects.

- Ensure effective and fair implementation of the Salton Sea Management Plan (SSMP), including strong dust mitigation projects and vegetation/habitat projects that provide dust suppression and further public health.

- Implement and invest in programs and projects that fall beyond the SSMP but respond to the needs, opportunities, and priorities of Eastern Coachella Valley (ECV) communities.

- Build on air quality and other climate resilient efforts to drive investments to the Eastern Coachella Valley (Coachella, Thermal, Oasis, Mecca, and North Shore) that will provide public health benefits and further climate resilience.

- Ensure that all Salton Sea investments (local and regional, including tax increment financing and bonds) further fairness and equitable access to investments and community benefits.

- Increase collaboration with local, regional, and statewide partners working on Salton Sea rehabilitation. Elevate community engagement work and help guide better inter-agency and cross-sector engagement at the community level.

Priorities and Objectives:

OBJECTIVE 1: Establish an enhanced community engagement process.

- Sustain meaningful community engagement in Salton Sea management planning and implementation efforts. Not only must residents living in the Eastern Coachella Valley be updated regularly (on SSMP modifications, SSMP implementation, investment opportunities, and other Salton Sea mitigation and management decisions and activities), but community leaders and community-based organizations must also inform and help drive Salton Sea planning and implementation efforts and priorities.

OBJECTIVE 2: Implement effective dust mitigation and public health enhancing projects through Salton Sea management activities including and beyond effective SSMP implementation.

- Ensure SSMP implementation includes significant investments in projects and programs designed to provide a direct, meaningful, and assured benefit to existing communities. Currently, the projects identified in the SSMP are primarily focused on providing sustainable habitat to endangered fish and bird species that rely on the Salton Sea to survive. While many vegetation and habitat projects will provide dust mitigation, such benefits are largely secondary. Public health goals should be a primary focus of SSMP implementation. ECV residents deserve a plan that prioritizes their health and well-being.
• Develop and implement a suite of projects and programs that address community public health priorities and fall beyond the scope of the SSMP. Projects and programs should include projects on the northern end of the Sea.
  
  o Implement an expansive regulatory air monitoring system across the Coachella Valley and around the Salton Sea. Work with a diverse group of stakeholders working on air monitoring to create a broad network that can monitor pollutants emitting from the Sea and Playa. AB 617 implementation can support this work.
  
  o Work with community organizations, agencies, and academic institutions to advance research initiatives on asthma and other respiratory illnesses in the ECV.
  
  o Implement TCC projects that can provide urban greening and vegetation near the Sea, and other mitigation projects in the communities most impacted by Salton Sea emissions.
  
  o Prioritize implementation projects that have been identified by community residents in the Regional and Neighborhood Mobility Plan for the Eastern Coachella Valley and the Climate Resilience Action Plan for the Eastern Coachella Valley.

**OBJECTIVE 3: Integrate Salton Sea programs and projects that further public health climate resilience, air quality, and environmental justice programs and investment projects in the Eastern Coachella Valley.**

• Funds allocated for Salton Sea restoration and mitigation should be flexible and available to deliver climate resilient projects that community members have identified and recommended.

• State, regional and local agencies should implement programs and projects identified in mobility plans, TCC, AB 617, and other efforts designed to further climate resilience and public health that also address Salton Sea mitigation and restoration. This includes projects and programs that can help improve air quality, public health, and provide urban greening around the Sea. Projects at the Sea should provide climate resilient infrastructure, recreational opportunities intended for local residents, and other amenities that residents need.

• Opportunity areas and programs include:
  
  o AB 617 Implementation:
    
    • **Status:** SCAQMD recommended ECV for year 2 selection for both an air monitoring system and an emission reduction plan. Final selections will be made by CARB in December 2019.
    
    • This program will help increase our data supply for air pollution in the ECV. A CERP will help plan for and identify emission reduction projects at the local level.
Transformative Climate Communities:

- **Status:** The Climate Resilience Action Plan was finalized in September 2019. This Plan provides a blueprint and will guide investments in the ECV designed to further climate resilience. Priority projects include affordable housing, renewable energy, and urban greening.

- SB 351 was signed by Governor Newsom in October 2019 which expands eligibility to unincorporated communities for TCC implementation grants.

*Objective 4: Salton Sea investments (local and regional, including tax increment and bonds) must further fairness and equitable access to investments for community benefits.*

- **North Lake Project:**
  - Identify project goals, public health benefits, funding mechanism, and timeline for implementation. This information should be shared with community residents. Ensure that these processes include community input, prioritization, and a transparent community engagement strategy.
  - North Lake Project implementation and investments should secure meaningful benefits for existing communities

- **Bonds:**
  - **Proposition 64:**
    - $5.3 million in marijuana tax revenues are available for a new Youth Community Access Grant Program. Program can support youth access to natural or cultural resources, with a focus on low-income and disadvantaged communities for positive programming and discourage substance use. This includes but is not limited to community education and recreational amenities.
  - **Proposition 68:**
    - Proposition 68 authorized $4 billion in general obligation funds for state and local parks, environmental protection and restoration projects, water infrastructure projects, and flood protection projects.
    - Proposition 68 funding that’s specifically allocated for the Salton Sea should be made flexible and available for projects that can help advance community benefits and mitigation measures from Salton Sea pollution.
  - **Current Bond Negotiations**
    - Current negotiations are underway for a climate resilience bond. Bond language should include Salton Sea investments that support community engaged planning and projects and programs that further public health and align with community-identified priorities.
• Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District

  o Agencies responsible for developing and implementing the EIFD should establish a clear direction and timeline that allows for community engagement and ensures full transparency.

  o Revenue procured should be directed to projects and programs that advance public health and climate resilience for existing communities in the ECV and impacted by the Salton Sea.

  o The Public Financing Authority should include at least two board positions for residents of the ECV.

  o EIFD hearings and workshops should be held during accessible times for the community and noticed appropriately and extensively to the community.

**Objective 5: Increase collaboration with local, regional, and statewide partners and agencies.**

• We should all work to increase our collaboration with stakeholder agencies and organizations to maintain the momentum of the SSMP implementation and complementary projects in the surrounding communities.

• Local partnerships should include non-profit and community-based organizations, including those working outside environmental justice issues that can contribute; technical experts and academic institutions that can help translate scientific discovery into action; and community residents as an integral partner in all of these coalition conversations.

• Regional partnerships should include Riverside County, Imperial Irrigation District, South Coast AQMD, Public Health, CVWD, Torres Martinez, and other entities that have a stake in the Sea and, collectively, power to help propel informed initiatives and priorities.

• Local stakeholders should continue to build and strengthen partnerships with state representatives and state agencies committed to creating a health Salton Sea and resilient region, including CNRA, DWR, SWRCB, CARB, and EPA.

• Collaborative efforts should be centered around community benefits, health, and development and must include partners with a more localized approach on environmental impacts, restoration, and conservation. Our collective approach shall be holistic and intersectional aimed at achieving the community’s vision of a healthy and vibrant Salton Sea region.