



STAFF REPORT
6/8/2022

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Gabriel D. Martin, City Manager

SUBJECT: Resolution No. 2022-58 Supporting Ocean Water Importation to Refill the Salton Sea While Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution No. 2022-58 supporting ocean water importation to refill the Salton Sea while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The inflow of water to the Salton Sea has decreased and pursuant to the Quantification Settlement Agreement, mitigation water inflows ended on December 31, 2017, and without restoration or stabilization measures, the Salton Sea will rapidly decline.

In June 2018, the Counties of Imperial and Riverside entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to work together, along with local agencies, on agreed projects that would stabilize and restore the Salton Sea.

The Salton Sea Coalition has requested the City's adopt a resolution showing its continued support of ocean water import to refill the Salton Sea, and request the Ocean Water Importation Independent Review Panel assess potential carbon emissions when conducting the comprehensive analysis of ocean water import as long-range solutions.

BACKGROUND:

Recognizing that cooperation among stakeholders affected by the Salton Sea is paramount to solve its complex challenges, Riverside and Imperial Counties signed an MOU in June 2018, calling for joint planning to ensure smooth development of a multi-benefit project known as the Perimeter Lake.

Both counties plan to work together with local agencies on agreed projects and financing mechanisms such as an Enhanced Infrastructure Finance District (EIFD), which would support projects and stimulate economic development around the Salton Sea. This would include creating

recreational lakes, supporting geothermal resource development, mitigating air quality issues, and preserving vital habitat.

The Coachella City Council has adopted resolutions declaring its support as follows:

- Resolution No. 2020, adopted on January 22, 2020 – in support of the in Support of a Comprehensive Analysis of Ocean Water Import for the Restoration of the Salton Sea.
- Resolution No. 2020-48, adopted on August 7, 2020, in Support of the Addition of a Valley-Wide Representative to the Salton Sea Management Program ("SSMP") Engagement Committee, and Supporting the Immediate Comparative Engineering Review of the Ocean Water Import Proposals Accepted by the State of California in 2018.

The Ocean Water Import Independent Review Panel consists of scientists selected by UC Santa Cruz in August 2021 to conduct a comprehensive review of ocean water importation as part of the long-range solution for the Salton Sea that Coachella Valley cities called for in their resolutions in 2019 and 2020. The Long-Range Planning Committee of the Salton Sea Management Plan is comprised of state officials, agency officials, and a few representatives of the community. This committee is relying on Tetra Tech, a private engineering firm, to review plans from 15 years ago that were not implemented by the State due to the estimated \$9 billion dollar cost. These plans do not include the importation of water, nor do they include any evaluation of potential greenhouse gas emissions.

It is scientifically imperative to choose a long-term plan for the Salton Sea that takes greenhouse gas emissions into account. The planning committees have not explained the process or criteria for comparing the non-importation proposals with the ocean water importation proposals, nor have they stated that they would evaluate the potential greenhouse gas emissions of the various plans. Finally, there is no public hearing scheduled during the months between now and December to receive public comments.

The Salton Sea Coalition requested that public agencies impacted by the decline of the Salton Sea adopt resolutions supporting ocean water importation, including taking into account greenhouse gas emissions, as a long-term solution to restore the Salton Sea.

ALTERNATIVES:

Council may elect to not adopt this resolution.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.