

COACHELLA VALLEY ASSOCIATION of GOVERNMENTS

RESOLUTION NO. 02-002

RESOLUTION OF CONCERN REGARDING THE EFFECT OF WATER TRANSFERS ON THE SALTON SEA

WHEREAS, the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) has been an Ex Officio member of the Salton Sea Authority since its inception; and

WHEREAS, the Salton Sea is a valuable economic and recreational resource of the Coachella Valley receiving over 200,000 visitors per year at the State Parks alone; and

WHEREAS, the Salton Sea is among the most important bird resources in North America, with the greatest biodiversity of bird species in California and the second most in the Nation; and

WHEREAS, the Salton Sea will become more saline unless a plan for salinity control is implemented and its resources as we know them, will be lost; and

WHEREAS, CVAG understands the need and supports the implementation of the "California 4.4 Plan," which is designed to reduce California's use of Colorado River water in normal years to 4.4 MAF, without causing major economic and social impacts to the Coachella Valley, Palo Verde Valley, Coastal Southern California and California; and

WHEREAS, CVAG understands that the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA), which is the key element of the "California 4.4 Plan" provides the Coachella Valley with a firm water supply to resolve the overdraft of the groundwater basin and to allow for growth; and

WHEREAS, without the QSA and its water transfers to the Coachella Valley, development and water costs in the Coachella Valley will be impacted; and

WHEREAS, CVAG understands that the QSA is a time sensitive matter with an existing signature date of December 31, 2002 and that without agreement the Secretary of the Interior will limit California to 4.4 MAF which will reduce the supply to coastal Southern California or create water reallocations; and

WHEREAS, water transfers are a business arrangement between agencies to sell and buy water and are an essential component of the proposed "California 4.4 Plan" and the QSA; and

WHEREAS, in the recently released Imperial Irrigation District (IID) Water Conservation and Transfer Project Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement on the water transfer of up to 200,000 acre-feet per year of water to the SDCWA and the transfer of 100,000 acre-feet to the Coachella Valley indicates that the transfer could significantly reduce flows to the Sea; and

WHEREAS, a major reduction of inflows to the Sea will likely lead to a reduction in sea elevation of up to 22 feet, potentially exposing over 100 square miles of seabed and diminish the vitality of the Sea; and

WHEREAS, a major reduction of inflows greatly accelerates salinity increases in the Sea; and

WHEREAS, with or without transfers, significant changes to habitat threaten bird biodiversity and abundance at the Salton Sea; and

WHEREAS, the aforementioned physical changes in the Sea could lead to significant air quality, biological, and economic impacts; and

WHEREAS, the Coachella Valley may soon be redesignated as a non-attainment area for Particulate Matter smaller than 10 microns (PM-10); and

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WHEREAS, particulate matter contributions from exposed lake-bed might jeopardize the Coachella Valley's compliance efforts and lead to significant economic disruptions and health impacts; and

WHEREAS, major reductions of inflow will greatly increase the cost of restoring the Salton Sea and thereby risk making restoration financially and practically infeasible; and

WHEREAS, Congress and the California legislature have authorized studies of the Salton Sea and a plan approved by Congress and the California legislature does not exist for the restoration of the Salton Sea; and

WHEREAS, the IID Water Conservation and Transfer Project Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement contains several options to develop the water for the transfers including the option of fallowing land which would have less impact on the Salton Sea; and

WHEREAS, efforts are underway to relax environmental compliance laws to facilitate the water transfers; and

WHEREAS, CVAG acknowledges that the California "fully-protected species" laws may need to be updated to allow "take" provisions similar to the California Endangered Species Act; and

WHEREAS, for all of the above reasons it is prudent to proceed cautiously with those parts of the "California 4.4 Plan" which have serious economic and environmental impacts while continuing to proceed expeditiously with those parts of the Plan which are essential to meeting the California Colorado River Allotment; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Executive Committee of CVAG to oppose projects which significantly lower the level of the Salton Sea; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED to support efforts by Congresswoman Mary Bono to ensure that the impacts of water transfers on the Salton Sea and the Coachella Valley are complying with environmental laws; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED to urge the IID Board of Directors to pursue water transfer solutions which meet the terms of the QSA and do not create significant negative impacts on the Salton Sea; and

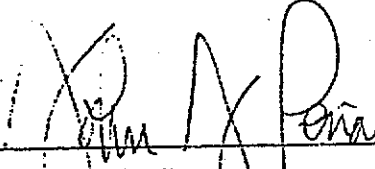
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED to request each CVAG member agency to pass similar resolutions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED to support stringent reviews of any State and/or Federal legislation that relax environmental laws at the detriment of economic or environmental values of the Salton Sea or Coachella Valley; and

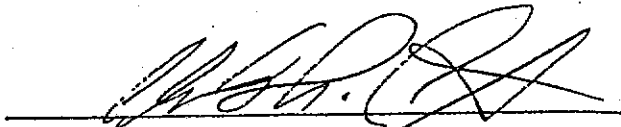
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be sent to Senator Dianne Feinstein, Senator Barbara Boxer, Congresswoman Mary Bono and the rest of the Congressional Salton Sea Task Force, other appropriate members of Congress, the Secretary of the Interior, State Senator Jim Battin, Assemblyman Dave Kelley, State Senator Sheila Kuehl, other appropriate members of the State legislature, the California Resources Secretary, the Secretary of the Environmental Protection Agency, other appropriate State and Federal agencies, and the Salton Sea Authority.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 25th day of February, 2002.

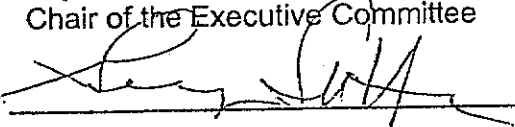
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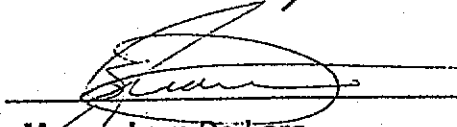
Mayor John Peña
City of La Quinta
Chair of the Executive Committee



Councilmember Chuck Grotke
City of Blythe



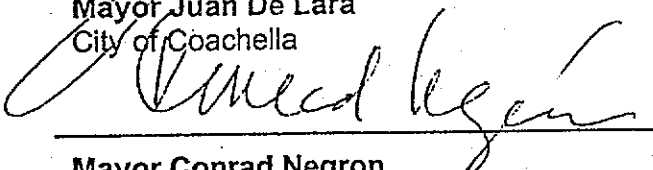
Mayor George Stettler
City of Cathedral City



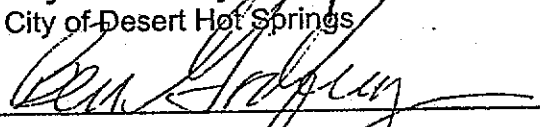
Mayor Juan De Lara
City of Coachella



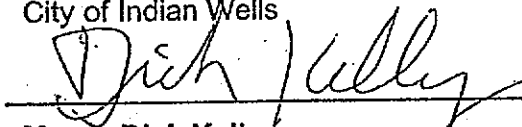
Mayor Matt Weyuker
City of Desert Hot Springs



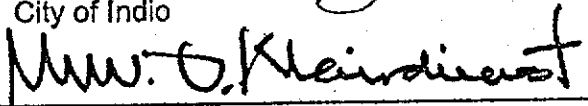
Mayor Conrad Negron
City of Indian Wells



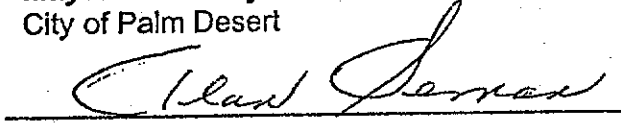
Mayor Ben Godfrey
City of Indio



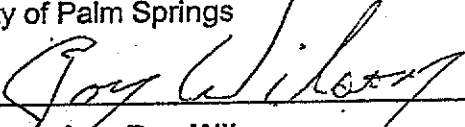
Mayor Dick Kelly
City of Palm Desert



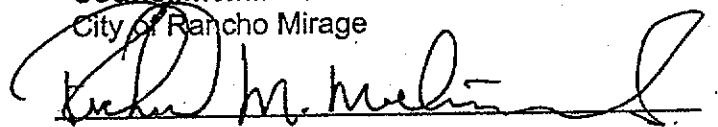
Mayor Will Kleindienst
City of Palm Springs



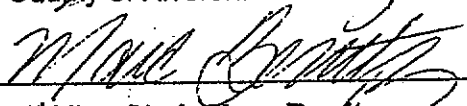
Councilmember Alan Seman
City of Rancho Mirage



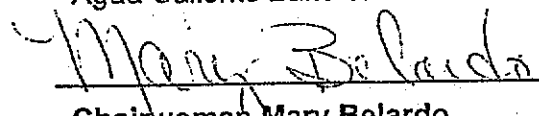
Supervisor Roy Wilson
County of Riverside



Chairman Richard Milanovich
Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians



2nd Vice Chair Marc Benitez
Cabazon Band of Cahuilla Indians



Chairwoman Mary Belardo
Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians

ATTEST: 