

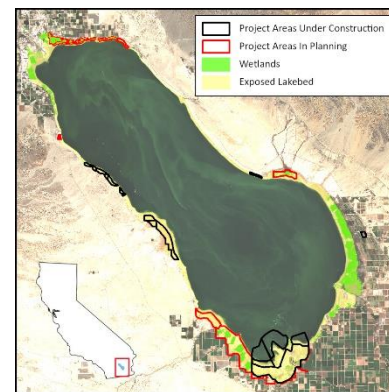
UNDERSTANDING STATE AGENCY ROLES AT THE SALTON SEA



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Salton Sea?

The Salton Basin is located in the Southern California desert, covering land in Imperial and Riverside counties that has been inhabited by Native American Tribes who are still there today. Despite being the largest lake in California in terms of surface area, the Sea has a shallow average depth of only 30 feet. Over the last several hundred thousand years, the Colorado River would periodically flood the Salton Basin to form an ancient lake. Today's Sea originated in 1905 when Colorado River floodwater breached an irrigation canal and flowed uncontrolled into the basin for 18 months. Local rivers and runoff from nearby farms continued to drain into the Sea, which maintained its hydrology for the next several decades. However, after more than a century of evaporation and less runoff from farms due to water conservation efforts, the Sea is shrinking and is now more than twice as salty as the Pacific Ocean. The Sea's high salinity levels are now inhospitable to many species that once flourished in the water and along the shore. Further, high winds in the area can pick up dust from the exposed lakebed, which contributes to poor air quality in communities near the Sea.



Salton Sea satellite image showing the recession of the shoreline from 2002-2024, with exposed lakebed, wetland and project areas both planned and under construction.

What is the Salton Sea Management Program?

Three California state agencies – the California Natural Resources Agency, Department of Water Resources, and Department of Fish and Wildlife – are implementing the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) to protect air quality and provide habitat for species that depend on the Salton Sea. The SSMP was established in 2018 and includes two main components:

Phase I – The 10-Year Plan (2018-2028) aims to address short-term goals and improve conditions by constructing nearly 30,000 acres of wildlife habitat and dust suppression projects to address public health and environmental concerns.

Long-Range Plan – Evaluates a series of possible restoration concepts to follow Phase I beyond 2028 for longer-term management and restoration (bit.ly/LRP-eng-2024). The Long-Range Plan will be continued with a Feasibility Study led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

What are the roles and responsibilities of the agencies that make up the Salton Sea Management Program?

Three agencies are primarily responsible for developing and implementing the Salton Sea Management Program:



California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA): The lead state agency facilitating the implementation of the Salton Sea Management Program to improve conditions at the Sea through wildlife habitat and dust suppression projects at the Sea under the Phase I 10-Year Plan.



California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW): Provides input on habitat project design, implements monitoring programs, issues regulatory permits.



California Department of Water Resources (DWR): Plans, implements, and determines feasibility of restoration projects. Assists with permitting and regulatory compliance, land access, engineering and design, contracting, construction, and operations and maintenance activities. Also instrumental in developing the Long-Range Plan for long-term restoration of the Sea.

Addressing environmental and public health concerns at the Sea goes well beyond the SSMP and involves California Native American Tribes and several other governmental, non-governmental and community-based organizations. For a comprehensive list of partners, see bit.ly/ss-orgs or Chapter 3 of the 2024 Salton Sea Annual Report (bit.ly/2024report-eng).



What documents and information are available regarding the Salton Sea Management Program?

Annual Reports: The Salton Sea Management Program team releases an annual report that includes updates on the status of Salton Sea projects and progress made towards meeting annual Phase 1 restoration milestones.

Monitoring Implementation Plan (MIP): A regional-scale monitoring plan for social and environmental conditions at the Sea and a framework for designing future monitoring plans. The MIP Annual Workplan serves as a reference for monitoring research and projects occurring at the Sea to foster collaboration. (bit.ly/MIP-eng, bit.ly/MIPWP-2024)

Interactive Project Tracker and Dashboard: Provides a map of Phase 1 projects and fact sheets, and identifies progress made towards restoration milestones and other activities to improve conditions at the Sea. (projects.saltonseaca.gov)

Community Needs Report: Identifies community needs related to the Salton Sea, describes the status of projects, and lists potential opportunities to address community needs while implementing restoration projects. (bit.ly/ss-community-needs)

What is the history of the State Water Board’s role in the Salton Sea Management Program?

The California State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) oversees the water rights order that set Phase 1 restoration milestones, the requirement for annual reports and a Long-Range Plan, and holds an annual public workshop on the status of projects and milestones. The State Water Board’s involvement at the Salton Sea spans several decades:



How can I get involved and provide input on the Salton Sea Management Program?

The State Water Board and the Salton Sea Management Program want to hear from you! There are many opportunities to engage with the program throughout the year, including the State Water Board’s annual Salton Sea workshop held each spring, which is focused on receiving an update from the Salton Sea Management Program on their annual report. Comments may be submitted in advance, or may be made in person or virtually during the workshop. The Salton Sea Management Program also has opportunities for public participation throughout the year.



Salton Sea Management Program
saltonseaca.gov



State Water Board
waterboards.ca.gov/saltonseaca

Use the QR codes to learn more about the Salton Sea and how to engage at the agency websites.

