

## Memorandum

**To:** Salton Sea Authority Board of Directors  
**From:** Phil Rosentrater, General Manager  
**Date:** September 24, 2015  
**Re:** Discussion of a new Salton Sea Preferred Plan: SSRREI with SSWIFT  
**CM No.** \*\*\* Proposed Revision \*\*\* V.A – 09/24/2015

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### GENERAL:

The Salton Sea Authority (SSA) publicly acknowledges the impracticality and financial infeasibility of the state preferred restoration plan with its \$9 Billion+ price tag.

Likewise, other plans, including the SSA Preferred Plan, with a massive mid-sea barrier and concomitant time constraints for construction, is deemed unworkable.

A new Salton Sea Preferred Plan that can be incrementally built out, starting immediately and continuing in incremental phases as time, money and water supply allow, is the top priority for this organization.

That discussion on how to best accomplish this strategy reaches a new stage on this agenda item with the presentation and subsequent Board discussion of conceptual plans referred to as Salton Sea Restoration and Renewable Energy Initiative (SSRREI) and the Salton Sea Water Incremental Funding in Time (SSWIFT).

A smaller, sustainable Salton Sea having been the expressed goal of the SSA Board of Directors for the past several years, cooperative planning efforts within the SSA partnership and in tandem with the state Natural Resources Agency were formally launched with passage of legislation funding (\$2M) the Financial Feasibility Action Plan (FFAP) as a SSA / State Resources Agency joint effort.

In advance of securing state funding for the FFAP, the SSA adopted a set of Guiding Principles in December of 2012 calling for the SSA to “Assert Local leadership” in directing the revitalization of the Sea in concert with state and federal entities that are legally and contractually bound to cooperate with the SSA in this effort. In recognition of the complex, interconnected challenges of Sea restoration facing limits of time and resources available to accomplish restoration at the Sea, the SSA Guiding Principles also call for investment of public funds in a manner that will maximize return on investment by delivering multiple benefits.

Consistent with the aforementioned authorizations and principles, SSA member agencies, led by Imperial Irrigation District and Imperial County, set in motion a planning concept that would integrate the pressing need to preserve habitat and cover emissive areas of playa as they become exposed due to changing water levels in the sea. This approach, focused primarily on the most vulnerable areas of playa in the southern portion of the Sea, is designed to accommodate and enhance development of renewable energy with as much symbiotic benefit as possible. The SSA Board has previously endorsed “in concept” this approach at its earlier stages of development as the Salton Sea Restoration and Renewable Energy Initiative (SSRREI). Updates to the SSA Board on SSRREI have occurred at previous meetings in tandem with progress reports on the FFAP. While both are still works in progress, the SSRREI has been formally released in late June of 2015 and is ready for a more formal introduction to the SSA Board as a first and necessary phase of development toward a more comprehensive revitalization plan for the entire Sea.

Likewise, the draft SSWIFT strategy has been steadily developing as a work product required under the state FFAP. The SSA ad hoc Project Committee meetings through the summer served as the working arena for discussion and development of draft concepts that could complement and reinforce SSRREI in a manner that will be realistic, fair, and most beneficial to all concerned. The SSWIFT approach intends to embrace the elements of SSRREI by delivering additional benefits of stable shoreline, habitat, recreation, dust control and property value improvement for the remainder of Sea areas not covered by SSRREI, and to accomplish all of this within conservative but reasonable parameters of time and available resources.

From SSA staff perspective, there is far more common ground that unites these two concepts than separates them, and far more advantages in strategically coordinating them as a unified effort than developing them as full plans operating separately and independently.

**RECOMMENDATION: \*\*\* (Proposed revision) \*\*\***

**The Salton Sea Authority Staff recommends that the Salton Sea Authority Board:**

- 1) SSRREI - Board will direct staff regarding appropriate follow-up.**
- 2) SSWIFT - Board will direct staff regarding appropriate follow-up.**
- 3) Direct staff to continue to develop a larger comprehensive restoration and revitalization effort to be known as the new Salton Sea Preferred Plan.**

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Rosentrater  
General Manager