

SALTON SEA AUTHORITY

WATER BOND: VISION, GUIDING PRINCIPLES & PRIORITIES

I VISION: The Salton Sea Authority supports policy principles for public funding of water infrastructure that optimize return on investment of scarce state bond funds. Highest funding priority should be accorded to projects that fulfill existing state statutory obligations and establish state water stability through regional self-reliance by addressing complex problems in those regions facing the most challenging conditions and offering the greatest returns through integrated, holistic solutions.

II GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

A. ENSURE BOND EXPENDITURES ADDRESS STATE STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS FOR MITIGATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION

- a. Expenditure of bonds funds should remain consistent with existing state law and agreements pertaining to longstanding state obligations and legal settlements intended to deliver water system reliability
- b. Expenditure of bond funds to fulfill state obligations should be structured to sustain long term viability of restoration efforts
- c. Bond funds should be expedited to reduce long term state liabilities associated with restoration and/or mitigation obligations as defined in existing law and agreements. To optimize multiple benefits of these expenditures over long term, the funds should reinforce beneficial outcomes of a realistic and comprehensive funding plan as a part of the restoration plan.
 1. Such a comprehensive financing plan should include both a schedule of future costs and a specific allocation among funding sources to meet those future costs.
 2. In developing the plan, the following criteria should be applied
 - a. The plan must make a realistic assessment of available funding;
 - b. “beneficiary pays” principle will be applied to the extent possible;
 - c. the plan should respect any current statutory or contractual conditions that limit the contributions from specified local water districts, tribes and land use agencies.

B. INTEGRATE FUNDING RESOURCES TO DELIVER MULTIPLE BENEFITS

- a. In an era of limited public funding and enormous competing needs, it is the responsibility of leaders at the state and local levels to cooperate on projects that yield multiple benefits and ultimately achieve a greater common good;
- b. Public funding from bonds should be spent in areas where the need is greatest and where the comparative investment will deliver the greatest good;

- c. Public funding from general obligation bonds should be invested in areas where threats to human health and the well-being of the economy and environment is most acute;
- d. Acknowledging the long term repayment of debt from public bond financing, those projects that continue to deliver public benefits through the period of bond repayment should be given higher priority than those that do not;
- e. Highest priority should be given to fund projects that simultaneously deliver significant benefit to improve all of the following conditions documented to exist within a hydrologic region affected by the water project:
 - i. restoration of long-term stable aquatic habitat for ecosystems in eminent danger of extinction or permanent inability to support a diversity of fish and wildlife in regions known to support up to 2/3 of species of migratory birds in the North American Continent
 - ii. sequestration of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses
 - iii. mitigation of particulate pollution sources for areas where residents face historically high hospitalization rates at least twice the state and national average for bronchial problems due to chronic and acute particulate pollution;
 - iv. protection of water quality in riparian zones impacted by agricultural drain runoff and urban storm runoff;
 - v. protection of tribal heritage and cultural values;
 - vi. enhancement of economic development opportunities for regions that exceed twice the state average unemployment rate during the previous fiscal year from the time of enactment of the bond act by California voters
 - vii. provision of sustainable financial revenue streams that will support long term improvements in all of the categories above
 - viii. development of Energy Independence through clean energy sources including biofuel, solar and geothermal power and mineral extraction;
- f. Support cooperative ventures between public and private sectors to expedite cost-effective development of public infrastructure and programs
- g. Strengthen regional self-reliance by ensuring projects that help generate revenues within the local region remain in that region, whenever those revenues are derived from local resources on public lands overseen by publicly agencies.

C. PRESERVE LOCAL CONTROL; ASSERT LEADERSHIP ROLE

- a. Preserve and protect the charter powers, duties and prerogatives of local and regional governments and agencies to harness the joint powers of member- in a manner that asserts local leadership of efforts to revitalize the economy, restore the environment and stabilize safe, reliable and affordable water supplies and that are the most likely to generate local revenue streams to assist in attaining project objectives.
- b. Oppose provisions that preempt local and regional authority or that shift responsibilities and liabilities to the locals and regional entities from state or federal governments.

- c. Local agencies should preserve and enhance authority and accountability for revenues raised and restoration projects that are facilitated.

D. SUPPORT PROJECTS THAT PROMOTE FISCAL STABILITY

- a. Support provisions that establish financially credible action plans for restoration, promote fiscal stability, predictability, financial independence, and preserve the regional revenue base and protect local control over local government budgeting for bond projects.
- b. Oppose measures that shift proceeds from P-3 revenue streams from regional entities to the State or Federal Government.
- c. Oppose measures that increase regional dependence upon State or Federal Governments for financial stability, or that increase burdens of liability or mandated costs with no guarantee of local reimbursement or offsetting benefits.

III PRIORITIES:

A. Develop holistic action plan for America's most complex watershed:

- (1) Establish multiple benefit strategy incorporating solutions to all of the complex problems above, with special emphasis on self-reliance and financial sustainability through public-private partnerships in Renewable Energy
- (2) re-evaluate feasibility of previously studied restoration alternatives in light of current circumstances and needs of private sector development.

B. Maintain momentum in establishing shallow water habitat and other incremental habitat and air quality mitigation efforts.

C. Design and Implement Pilot projects delivering multiple benefits as noted above