RESTORATION UPDATE

A newsletter on the Salton Sea Restoration Project

Salton Sea Authority

November 2004

www.saltonsea.ca.gov

Support for Proposition 50 Funds to be Presented November 30th

The Salton Sea Authority is requesting the award of $9.5 million in Proposition 50 funding for certain local level pre-implementation tests related to the state's effort to identify and advance the Salton Sea Authority's preferred project by December, 2006.

The passage of Proposition 50 in 2002 authorized the State of California to sell $3.44 billion in bonds for water quality, water supply reliability, safe drinking water projects and for coastal land acquisition and protection. Otherwise known as the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act, Proposition 50 allocated funds have been under the authority of the Wildlife Conservation Board for utilization at the Colorado River and Salton Sea.

Wildlife habitat is a primary goal of the Salton Sea Authorities North Lake concept.

Following is a summary of proposed complementary and parallel activities to be performed by the Salton Sea Authority for advancing Salton Sea Restoration which will be presented to the Salton Sea Advisory Committee November 30, 2004.

1) Evaluate New River Wetlands

Citizens Congressional Task Force and Torres Martinez Whitewater River Wetlands projects to establish silt, phosphorous, nitrate, dissolved oxygen and selenium removal rates on Salton Sea inflows with a monitoring program to be developed by the USGS Science Office.

The purpose of this is to perfect design, obtain field performance data, determine scale-up factors and to create a scientific

monitoring program. Set to occur over 24 months, the monitoring program will remain in place and be expanded to cover constructed wetlands of the full restoration project. $2 million of Proposition 50 funds would be necessary with additional funding sought under other federal and state programs for the constructed wetlands.

2) Install and operate selenium removal pilot unit on "hot spot" streams and concentrate from reverse osmosis desalination trials.

This would verify the feasibility of beneficially using treatment technology as part of the overall selenium management plan. Expected to take 18 months, $750,000 is requested for this project.

3) Perform dynamic geophysical and seismology studies on constructability of in-sea barrier elements of project alternatives that include in-sea barriers; develop site and design-specific cost estimate.

This would verify the feasibility of using in-sea barriers which is the component with the greatest engineering needs and cost uncertainty. Expected to last one year, the estimated cost is $1 million.

4) Perform study of relative recreational and socioeconomic benefits and impacts of the project alternatives included in the Programmatic Economic Impact Report (PEIR).

This would comply with SB 1214, last for nine months and cost $750,000.

5) Perform project-level Economic Impact Study and Report with member agencies utilizing results from the aforementioned tasks.

This is expected to take 12 months and cost approximately $2 million.

6) Pursue interim algae control, odor abatement, habitat improvement and other ecological preservation and interim restoration actions.

This would ensure the health and survivability of the present species through and past future improved stabilization of the Sea. At a cost of approximately $300,000 per year, it would be performed over 10 years.

In an October 29, 2004 letter to Department of Water Resources Chief Deputy Director Joe Grindstaff, Senator Denise Ducheny stated, "I strongly believe successful restoration of the Salton Sea will best be achieved by full inclusion of the experience and knowledge provided by local stakeholders and community activists in decisions made about the Salton Sea." Ducheny went on to say, "Some of the proposed projects could be performed in conjunction with and parallel to the State's process. With this in mind, I encourage careful review and consideration of all the complementary projects proposed by SSA, with the goal that we move forward as quickly as possible on the ecosystem restoration plan.

"The Salton Sea Authority and your department, DWR, have recently agreed to begin negotiations on a consultation contract. This is a positive step towards including the SSA in development of the long term plan and I'm supportive of all the efforts that set in motion a partnership and collaborative venture."

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board has produced a resolution of support for the Salton Sea Authority's request for funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board. In addition, the IID Board of Directors also has voted to support the SSA's $9.5 million Prop 50 funding request.

Salton Sea Authority Submits Grant Proposals

The Salton Sea Authority has submitted three grant proposals to the State Water Resources Control Board's Agricultural Water Quality Grant Program. The proposals that were submitted are as follows.

#1 The Reduction of Total Suspended Solids and Silt from Agricultural Runoff Flowing into the Alamo and New Rivers:

The Eutrophicant reduction pilot project at Kent Sea Tech seeks to remove phosphorus from tail water that flows off fields and, ultimately, into the Salton Sea.

This grant proposal is a continuation of a project currently underway in the Imperial Valley. The current project participants include the Imperial Valley Farm Bureau, the Salton Sea Authority, Kent SeaTech Corp. and University of California, Riverside. The new proposal is to continue studying the beneficial uses of polyacrylamide (PAM) treatments to agricultural farm land at various locations throughout Imperial County. The desired outcome is that the PAM usage will reduce water consumption, improve soil structure and increase crop yields. Ultimately, it would help reduce the amount of silt going into the drains and into the sea. Amount requested: $639,159.

#2 Reductions of Phosphorous and Nitrogen in the Whitewater River and Salton Sea: The proposed project would be the second phase of the controlled eutrophic process (CEP) project that was undertaken by Kent SeaTech in 2002/2003 which studied nutrient removal from the Whitewater River. The proposed study is to further CEP research to determine whether this concept will be a cost effective method of reducing eutrophication. Amount requested: $574,068.

#3 Salton Sea Odor Abatement and Water Quality Improvement Pilot Project: The proposed project seeks to effect the immediate and dramatic improvement in conditions caused by excessive nutrients in selected semi-confined waters of the Salton Sea where stagnation causes odors, algal blooms and fish kills resulting from eutrophication. In these areas, an environment of low oxygen availability in the water column occurs adding to the fish die-offs. Installation of solar powered aeration devices in these areas would provide oxygen to the entire water column and anaerobic sediments. Anticipated benefits from increases oxygenation include:

- Reduction of odors by oxidizing hydrogen sulfide in the sediments
- Reduction of blue-green algae populations
- Improvement of fish habitat
- Improvement of the near-sea environment for aesthetics and recreation

A response regarding these grant proposals is expected in the spring.

Floating solar-powered circulators increase the oxygen content in water which, in turn, reduces algae blooms.

Salton Sea Authority Gets State Water Board Support

In addition to the California Regional Water Quality Board's support of the Salton Sea Authority's efforts, the Southern California Association of Government's Energy and Environment Committee has also adopted a resolution of support.

SCAG staff presented Resolution 04-455-1 in support of the Salton Sea Authority's efforts to identify and implement corrective measures to preserve the beneficial uses of the Salton Sea and urging early State and local cooperation on action plans and funding.

SSA's Preferred Project Alternative, which this Resolution supports, has the following objectives:

- Permitting the continued use of the Salton Sea as a reservoir for irrigation drainage
- Reducing and stabilizing the overall salinity of the Salton Sea
- Stabilizing the surface elevation of the Salton Sea and enhancing potential recreational uses and economic development of the Salton Sea

The Resolution was presented and approved for action on October 7.

Happy Holidays from all the White Pelicans and other feathered friends of the Salton Sea.

MEETINGS SCHEDULE

Technical Advisory Committee
December 8th, 1:30pm
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Desert Shores
Contact: Linda Quesnell (760) 564-4888

Board of Directors
December 9th, 2:00pm
Imperial Irrigation District, La Quinta
Contact: Linda Quesnell (760) 564-4888

Technical Advisory Committee
January 13th, 10:30am
Salton Community Services District, Salton City
Contact: Linda Quesnell (760) 564-4888

Board of Directors
January 27th, 10:00am
Torres Martinez Indian Reservation, Thermal
Contact: Linda Quesnell (760) 564-4888

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