



Community Engagement Committee Meeting

June 17, 2020 – via Zoom Webinar

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI)

Meeting in Brief

- In addition to providing a general update on the SSMP, the Committee discussed the State’s forthcoming Dust Suppression Action Plan, including public input received and upcoming Phase A/Phase B projects. The State has been developing the DSAP over the past several months. It will be available in the coming weeks on the State’s SSMP [website](#).
- The State received input from the Committee and members of the public regarding the format and approach for upcoming public meetings to engage communities on the first stage (the ‘Project Description’) of the NEPA permitting process for the entire 10-Year Plan.
- The Committee discussed the State’s revised SSMP Public Engagement Plan, including feedback received and input on next steps to update and implement the Plan. The State will integrate this input in its evolving SSMP Advisory Committee structure and process.

Click [here](#) for the meeting agenda and materials.

Action Items

Who	What	Timeline
All	Sign up on the SSMP listserv if you wish to receive SSMP updates from the State, such as meeting or project announcements, and have not yet signed up.	Ongoing
Members	Please help disseminate the Independent Feasibility RFP, once the State reissues and circulates it. Also help disseminate recruitment information for new SSMP positions that will be located at the Sea.	Late June
Members	The State Water Board’s annual Salton Sea hearing will take place virtually in the morning of 8/19. The Water Board is also planning an afternoon community session that day. If you have suggestions for the structure of the community session, please Justine Herrig at justine.herrig@waterboards.ca.gov .	End of July
State	The State will circulate a request for Engagement Committee volunteers for work group to help inform engagement for upcoming NEPA public meetings and refinement/ implementation of Engagement Plan.	Early July
State	The State will follow up with Committee Chairs regarding next steps for streamlining Committees.	Summer
State and Co-Chairs	The State will schedule the next quarterly Engagement Committee meeting.	September

State SSMP Update

Arturo Delgado, CNRA Assistant Secretary for Salton Sea Policy, reviewed the context for the SSMP and its scope and objectives. He clarified the following two aspects of the SSMP, which are outlined on the State's [SSMP website](#) with their key components and associated timeframes:

- 1) **10-Year Plan** for 30,000 acres of dust suppression and habitat projects. As discussed further below, this includes near-term implementation of the Dust Suppression Action Plan (DSAP), in addition to a draft SSMP Project Description to be released for input in the next month as part of the public input process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will serve as the NEPA lead agency. This will lead to development of an Environmental Assessment next year, which will provide program-wide permit compliance and enable the State to implement the full 30,000 acres of projects.
- 2) **Long-Term Plan.** The State completed an RFP process in March 2020 for an independent reviewer to conduct a feasibility analysis of water importation to the Salton Sea. It did not receive submissions and is re-releasing the RFP in late June. If water importation is deemed feasible, it will be part of the Long-Term plan. Preliminary planning for a long-term solution will begin this fall, with formal public engagement starting early 2021.

In addition, the Governor's revised budget includes authorization for ten new SSMP positions. If the budget is approved, that will nearly double the State's capacity for its Salton Sea work. Eight of the positions will be at or near the Sea. The State is working on temporary office space in Imperial County. The State will provide a full update at next Engagement Committee meeting in the fall.

Questions/Comments (and State responses)

- How will the RFP for an Independent Reviewer of water importation proposals go out, and can we help share that document? *It will be released in late June. The communication strategy will include outreach to local communities and interested parties. The State will also share it on its website and SSMP listserv.*
- Is the independent reviewer going to look at 2018 proposals as well as additional ideas or solutions for consideration as part of the feasibility study? *Yes.*
- Why not just convene experts and evaluate water import? *The State is attempting to be impartial and ensure credibility through an independent feasibility study to see if water import is a feasible alternative to include in the long-term plan.*
- Is the Long-Range Planning Committee being engaged in the RFP process? *Not at this time. The State team has been asked by the Secretary to look into streamlining the Committees, as the State's limited capacity has prevented it from engaging them fully. The State has begun discussions with the Committee Chairs and will provide an update at the next Engagement Committee meeting (as discussed further below).*
- Is import of water from the Gulf of California or other sources of water to restore the Salton Sea completely off the table? *No. The State is actively looking at this. It will be considered by the independent reviewer and subsequent feasibility analysis.*
- Do the projected SSMP water needs contemplate future transfers of Colorado River water in light of drought? *The State is not planning for additional water transfers. This is outside the scope of the SSMP and better addressed by the water districts.*
- Given that we know the three long-term alternatives – the Perimeter Lake, Sea-to-Sea Canal, and blended alternative (Canal + habitat), why isn't the State moving ahead to evaluate those now? *The State's intent is to have the independent reviewer consider these proposed water importation proposals in the feasibility analysis.*

- How can the State maintain the expertise of the Committees (e.g., Long-Term Committee) if it makes changes to its Committee structure going forward? We don't want to reinvent the wheel. *The State definitely agrees and will be considering this in the structure going forward.*
- How will the new advisory committee structure be shared? Will it be discussed with committees other than the Engagement Committee for review and input? *Yes, the State will discuss this with the Chairs, who will reach out to the members of each Committee.*
- Regarding the State's upcoming environmental review of the 10-Year Plan, will this involve both NEPA and CEQA, or is CEQA considered complete? *The State believes the majority of CEQA compliance is completed; we will confirm this on project-specific level.*
- Comité Cívico suggested the upcoming SSMP job descriptions should include experience related to working with EJ issues and disadvantaged communities. *The State agrees. There is some language included in recent announcements, but we'll enhance this going forward. The State will reach out to Luis about this.*
- Are you going to attempt to have more effective outreach to the public on projects going forward? *Yes the State is fully committed to this. See discussion below.*

Dust Suppression Action Plan (DSAP)

Overview of DSAP and Projects Included

Evon Willhoff from DWR explained the State plans to release the final DSAP in the coming weeks. The Plan will be shared on the SSMP listserv and State's SSMP [website](#). It will be considered a living document and open for public comment on an on-going basis with community meetings before end of the year and annually. Dust suppression projects will be constructed between this year and the end of 2022 in two phases. Phase A includes a planning area of 4,600 acres and will cover emissive areas with less complex designs, permitting and land access requirements. Phase B includes a planning area of 5,200 acres, will start this fall and go through 2022, and will include more complicated projects. The State anticipates some acres in the planning area will not have projects on them due to environmental or other constraints.

Public Input Received

The State worked with the Engagement Committee to design five public workshops between late 2019 and early 2020 and received public comments through late March. The input resulted in the State including: 1) additional project locations at the north end of the Sea, 2) more detailed timelines, schedules, project descriptions and methods, and 3) increased coordination with local organizations and regulatory agencies. When the State releases the final Plan, it will include a 'Response to Comments' package, explaining input received and how comments were addressed.

Questions/Comments (and State responses)

- Do DSAP 'Phase A' projects include parts of the SCH project? *Yes, this includes temporary dust control measures within SCH. The State is working with the County and IID to meet emissivity needs in each location. Phase A is just the first round of projects.*
- Have you agreed to not plant Tamarisk trees? This has been a long-standing request. *The State's plan is to only use native species for restoration.*
- Is it feasible to complete 4,600 acres of projects in 2020 (six months)? IID has constructed about 2,000 acres of dust suppression projects in three years. *Yes, the plan is ambitious because it needs to be. Finishing these projects in 2020 is contingent on environmental permitting and land access. The biggest challenge outside the SCH footprint will be land access; the State is working with the federal government and IID on this. If it's not possible by the end of 2020, projects will be finished in early 2021. The State anticipates not all acres within the*

planning areas will have dust suppression projects on them due to environmental or other constraints. This will be identified during project-specific planning and implementation.

- Bombay Beach appears to site a project atop a large emergent wetland. Would the DSAP clear habitat to build dust suppression projects? No. We want to incorporate and expand existing wetlands. As the Plan explains, projects will incorporate what's naturally occurring to extent possible.
- What characteristics make projects more suitable for Phase A versus Phase B? *It's a timing issue, in terms of the ease by which the State can quickly implement DSAP projects with less permitting, design, land access, and environmental challenges. For instance, some Phase A projects include surface roughening to create furrows or a ripple effect. Phase B projects will reinforce the ridges by planting in the rows. (Coordination with local agencies and on-going maintenance and monitoring will be critical.)*
- How is State going to share information regarding all of the good work that's being done, including on official State press releases? *We have received good suggestions for public outreach. We are going to use traditional and social media to share the information with partners and networks. We're also discussing informational videos and possibly blogs.*
- How is the State coordinating with the work being done on the North Shore (through the Salton Sea Authority and latest budget request)? *The State is working closely with the Salton Sea Authority (SSA) and will be entering into an Interagency Agreement with the Authority.*
- Has funding been secured for DSAP's Phase A and B? *Yes, the State has funding secured for the DSAP phases.*
- Regarding the DSAP 'Response to Comments' package, this is great to hear. Will there be Spanish translation? What's the process for engaging communities on integrating community benefits into upcoming projects – since it would be unfortunate to pass up that opportunity for near-term community buy-in? *The State is looking into Spanish translation. Near-term DSAP projects are working to address emissivity close to communities but will not be otherwise designed timewise to integrate community amenities. However, the State hopes to intentionally solicit and include community benefits in other habitat projects, including SCH and on the North end of the Sea, as well as in Phase B and long-term projects. The State plans to solicit these ideas in upcoming NEPA meetings regarding 10-Year Plan projects.*
- Were the Air Quality Committee members notified of an opportunity to comment on the DSAP? How have stakeholders in identified DSAP areas been specifically engaged? *In addition to the public workshops in 2019-20 and the March review period of the draft DSAP, the State has been communicating directly with various stakeholder groups. This includes the Air Quality districts as a key regulatory partner, to understand regulations related to projects at the Sea. Remember the DSAP is an ongoing planning tool for prioritization, not a decision document.*
- The State has shared publicly and numerous times in the past that Desert Shores would be restored soon. Is this happening? *The State is in active discussions with Imperial County to develop an MOU to advance this project.*
- Given the nexus between COVID-19 and the Sea in terms of respiratory issues, is the State attempting to capture federal COVID-related funds? *We are working closely with our federal partners to secure federal funding.*
- Comité Cívico emphasized the need for ongoing coordination with the State to get the word out regarding these projects.

NEPA Public Meetings

Gail Sevrens, CDFW Salton Sea Project Manager, explained the State's approach to the upcoming NEPA public engagement process. Using lessons learned from the DSAP process described above,

the State plans for two sets of public meetings and written comments. The first series to be held this July/August will be an opportunity to comment on the 10-year Plan Project Description and to develop a range of project alternatives to be considered in the Environmental Assessment. The second set will be an opportunity to comment on the draft Environmental Assessment in the fall/winter of 2021. The meeting format may need to be virtual, in light of COVID-19.

The State asked the meeting participants to respond to several questions, which were posed by Zoom instant polling. The feedback is captured below.

Committee input

- 1) Do you think that communities would be able to access a web-based teleconference (such as Zoom or GoToMeeting)?
 - a. Yes (31%)
 - b. No (33%)
 - c. Unsure (36%)
- 2) If no, would communities be able to access a teleconference meeting?
 - a. Yes (69%)
 - b. No (3%)
 - c. Unsure (28%)
- 3) What is the time you think would be the most convenient for the community to attend a virtual Salton Sea meeting?
 - a. Weekday Morning (8%)
 - b. Weekday Afternoon (13%)
 - c. Weeknights (79%)
- 4) How many virtual meetings do you think the State should hold for the NEPA scoping process?
 - a. 1 Meeting (8%)
 - b. 2 Meetings (42%)
 - c. 3 Meetings (50%)
- 5) Which medium do you think would be the most effective to promote the meeting(s) to the community?
 - a. Newspaper, Television, Radio PSA or Ads (39%)
 - b. Direct Mail (18%)
 - c. Social Media (15%)
 - d. Flyer Distribution (8%)
 - e. Contact by Partners, such as Engagement Committee Members (20%)
- 6) We are working to identify technological options. We anticipate having both Spanish and English audio available. Depending on our technical capabilities, if we are able to achieve them, which of the following would you prefer for written/visual materials during public online presentations:
 - a. Slides with both Spanish and English on the same slide (67%)
 - b. Different slides with Spanish and English (33%)

Questions/Comments (and State responses, as applicable)

- Most Committee members support using the full variety of engagement strategies listed in Question #5 above. This will depend on the timing, locations, and strategy for distribution.
- Outreach materials for virtual meetings should 1) include information about using Zoom and 2) emphasize that people can call in and request materials in advance if they are unable to access the on-line video.

- Could we better understand the anticipated content of the NEPA meetings in the Project Description phase, and whether they will meaningfully elicit community input about community benefits? *The State is the project proponent and will ensure we include a focus on community benefits. Also, we have a strong, aligned relationship with our local USACE partners, who are committed to public engagement.*
- Local engagement will need to be varied, including grassroots and low-tech strategies. There's no one-size-fits-all. Local communities have internet connectivity challenges and access to different types of media. KDI suggests one-on-one calls and smaller phone meetings – whatever elicits actual engagement from local folks. This will require strong coordination with local organizations. *The State wants more input on these strategies and will reach out to Committee members to set up a working group.*
- Recommended that the State include instructions on how to use virtual conference platform (such as Zoom) and that members of the public are able to access the meeting with a call-in number and request meeting materials in advance.

Draft Community Engagement Plan

Lisa Lien-Mager, Deputy Secretary of Communications for CNRA, provided an update on the Public Engagement Plan. The State circulated a revised Plan earlier this year and received important input, as outlined below. The State is also continuing to get input from discussions like the ones above regarding DSAP and NEPA engagement strategies.

The Plan needs more clarity around public engagement roles and responsibilities – of the State, the various entities, and the Engagement Committee. The State will structure a discussion about this at the next Engagement Committee meeting. Also, the State would like to convene a working group to discuss upcoming engagement needs and strategies, starting with the NEPA public workshops. The State would prefer to go through the Co-Chairs to solicit volunteers. However, the Co-Chairs suggested the State send an email directly to the Committee members to elicit interest in participating, along with suggested times to meet so members can better assess their availability.

Changes to Public Engagement Plan based on feedback received

- Engagement Purpose, Intended Outcomes, and Key Elements of Approach – acknowledged more need for tailored, localized approaches and strategies. Discussed idea of pilot projects with more community participation regarding community benefits.
- Engagement Tracks – added more detail to describe role of State team and community partners. Local leadership with SSMP Engagement Committee as the engagement planning hub, and to help solicit input from others. State support for more locally driven engagement, with strong leadership by local NGOs and community groups.

Questions (with State responses, as applicable)

- Is anyone asking the private sector to contribute to the Salton Sea effort in order to avoid loss of profits in the future from a degraded sea?
- When we look at Engagement Plan, there are different layers of engagement. How does this relate to the future structure of the Committee? *It is all related. The Plan will be further developed along with the Committee structure to support it.*
- Has there been any State progress on getting a special designated budget for engagement? *Two of the new proposed positions would be at the Sea and designated for public engagement.*
- If the Engagement Committee is meeting quarterly, members suggested an engagement work group should meet more regularly, e.g., monthly.

General Discussion/Public Comment

- The State Water Board is planning an informational Board hearing on the SSMP in August, possibly 8/19. This was initially planned for March. Adriana Renteria stated the Water Board would like input on the structure of the meeting from Committee members.
- Does the State have ideas to include potential community pilot projects or other ways to incorporate community benefits in upcoming DSAP projects? *DSAP projects are intended to address immediate emissivity issues. The NEPA process will have opportunity for input on the approach to the rest of the 10-Year Plan projects.*
- Can you explain the State’s approach in the DSAP to ensuring projects are put in place where residents live? *The Plan will explain the criteria the State used to select these projects. They included emissivity, proximity to communities, soil type, land access, and permitting challenges. The State did add another project as a result of community input.*
- The North Lake has been a success thus far. What enabled this? *\$19.25 million in Prop 68 bond funds were designated for the Salton Sea Authority (SSA), and those funds will be used for the planning and implementation of the North Lake Pilot Project. The State is in discussions with SSA to be able to transfer funds from DWR to the SSA for this project, and we are fleshing out a Scope of Work and roles/responsibilities. We will share details at the next Engagement Committee meeting. The project will be covered by the NEPA 10-Year document.*
- How can the public be engaged in the development of the financial agreement between DWR and SSA on the North Lake Pilot Project? I.e., how can the document ensure that community engagement will be done? *The State is working directly with the SSA to develop the details of this legal financial agreement. We acknowledge the importance of public engagement and intend to provide a clearly defined process for engaging the public as we move forward with developing the project.*
- Will members of other committees be able to join the next Engagement Committee meeting, so they can weigh in on the discussion around how the various Committees might be streamlined? *The State is figuring this out and will work with the Committee Chairs to identify a path forward.*

Updates regarding the State’s progress on the SSMP may be found on the [SSMP website](#) and will be distributed through the SSMP listserv. Visit the [SSMP website](#) to sign up for the SSMP listserv.

Meeting Attendees

The meeting was attended by roughly 75 participants, including the following Committee members and state staff liaisons.

State of California

Arturo Delgado, Assistant Secretary for Salton Sea Policy, CNRA
 Lisa Lien-Mager, Deputy Secretary for Communications, CNRA
 Evon Willhoff, Salton Sea Program Manager, DWR Liaison to Committee
 Gail Sevrens, Salton Sea Program Manager, CDFW
 Sam Haynes, Environmental Scientist, CDFW
 Vivien Maisonneuve, DWR

Committee Members Attending

Present			
	Javier	Aceves	Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
	Tom	Anderson	US Fish and Wildlife Services

	Patricia	Cooper	Riverside County
x	Maria	Davydova	RWQCB
	Debi	Elton	Sea and Desert Interpretive Center
x	Jenny	Binstock	Sierra Club California
x	Miguel	Hernandez	Comité Cívico del Valle (CCV)
x	Sahara	Huazano	Alianza Coachella Valley
	Genevieve	Johnson	Bureau of Reclamation Lower Colorado Region
X	Emmanuel	Martinez	Imperial Irrigation District
	Melanie	McLees Cox	SSAC
x	Patsy	Meister	Sea and Desert Interpretive Center
x	Kerry	Morrison	EcoMedia Compass
x	Luis	Olmedo	Comité Cívico del Valle (CCV)
x	Silvia	Paz	Alianza Coachella Valley (Co-Chair)
X	Esmeralda	Perez	Riverside County
	Marco	Perez	29 Palms Band of Morongo Indians
X	Alex	Rodriguez	DCG Public Affairs
x	Phil	Rosentrater	Salton Sea Authority
x	Frank	Ruiz	Audubon California
	Altrena	Santillanes	Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
x	Darren	Simon	SDCWA
	Dennis	Stephen	California State Parks
x	Rebecca	Terrazas-Baxter	County of Imperial (Co-Chair)
x	Christian	Rodriguez	Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI)
x	Lauren	Elachi	Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI)

State Consultant

Josh Zipperman, Senior Associate, Burke Rix Communications