



Salton Sea Management Program Draft Community Engagement Plan

Last revised September 25, 2020

This document outlines a conceptual approach and a roadmap for engaging local communities in the planning and implementation of the Salton Sea Management Program. It describes the current context, high-level components of the engagement approach, proposed tracks and tactics, and near-term next steps.

Current Context

- The Newsom Administration is committed to addressing air quality and ecological threats at the Salton Sea. The Sea's ongoing decline and exposure of lakebed affect thousands of residents, many of whom suffer from serious respiratory issues and are from disadvantaged communities.
- The California Natural Resources Agency is working with the Department of Water Resources and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to plan and implement projects as part of the Salton Sea Management Program's Phase 1: 10-Year Plan, prioritizing construction of dust suppression and habitat projects on emissive exposed lakebed and areas expected to be exposed by 2028.
- Communities around the Sea have expressed interest in timely progress toward project delivery. Community members have also expressed interest in being consulted on Salton Sea projects and providing input, such as requesting that projects include community amenities such as recreation, multi-benefit infrastructure and access to the Sea. Residents have further expressed an interest in and commitment to being part of the decision-making process for determining community design parameters for Salton Sea projects.
- The state team completed the first project under the SSMP in January 2020, the 112-acre Bruchard Road Dust Suppression Project.
- In addition, the state team released a Dust Suppression Action Plan in July 2020 that prioritizes a planning area of 9,800 acres of dust suppression and restoration projects on emissive lakebed at locations around the Sea, including up to 2,000 acres identified for completion in 2020. The projects, to be constructed in phases in strategic locations along the perimeter of the Sea, will target the most emissive sites to help control dust from exposed lakebed areas and limit Salton Sea-related impacts on air quality for communities such as Salton City, Bombay Beach and North Shore.
- The state team has begun planning and public involvement for the federally required NEPA environmental planning process for the SSMP. The process will complete permitting for the full 30,000 acres of projects identified in the SSMP's Phase 1: 10-Year Plan. The first phase of this included release of a draft project description in August 2020 and three public scoping meetings in September 2020.
- Work is slated to begin in fall 2020 on the first major habitat project of the SSMP – the 3,770-acre Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) project at the southern end of the Sea in the New River area. This project will suppress dust while creating a series of ponds with islands and areas of

varying water depths to serve as fish and bird habitat. It is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2023.

- The state team also expects to begin developing a long-term plan for the Sea in the first quarter of 2021.

Engagement Purpose and Intended Outcome

The state team seeks to work with local leaders, non-profit organizations and community members to build a long-term, respectful approach to engage with Salton Sea community members, listen to their ideas and concerns and incorporate local input into the state's process and decisions where possible through a transparent engagement process.

The overarching intended outcome is to:

- Keep community members informed and actively engaged
- Establish clear expectations about the state's process to plan and implement projects at the Sea as well as clear and accessible pathways for communities to provide input
- Build consistency in the community engagement process, involving residents in project development and implementation to design projects that prioritize community benefits and help meet community needs while suppressing dust and creating habitat
- Create long-term community buy-in and stewardship for work at the Salton Sea

Key Elements of Proposed Approach

- Commit to meaningful and sustained community engagement effort
- Acknowledge deficiencies in state's past community involvement and demonstrate long-term commitment to work together on issues important to the community
- Provide a roadmap for community engagement with clear feedback loops so community members can understand how their input is addressed
- Identify the purpose of community engagement meetings from the start
- Establish parameters of engagement (i.e. what portion of a plan can be realistically modified as a result of feedback; what kind of information is lacking that experts in the audience can provide, etc.)
- Design agendas that purposefully engage the public and provide ample time for residents to debrief and provide feedback. Allow time for public comment and Q&A with the larger group at all community meetings
- Ensure adequate Spanish translation is provided for the duration of meetings
- Set a clear process for how the intake of community's recommendations will be integrated into the plans and projects such as the SSMP and DSAP. Provide a clear articulation of how community input will ultimately be codified within the design of each project
- Make publicly available an appendix with the comments collected during community meetings
- Present information in clear and culturally appropriate formats, such as general FAQ brochures, Spanish language translations and graphics-rich materials, to ensure that residents have the context and tools they need to provide input
- Establish a consistent state presence at the Sea and provide office / staff facilities that can meet both state and community needs
- Dedicate one or more state team members for outreach and engagement

- Utilize local venues or events for the community to engage with the state team at regularly scheduled intervals as capacity allows to demonstrate commitment to the engagement process. During restrictions due to COVID-19 ensure that virtual meetings are as accessible as possible. Meetings will be a times that are most accessible to community members
- Employ different and localized strategies tailored to the needs of different communities around the Salton Sea
- Prioritize opportunities to use local work force in project implementation as consistent with contracting laws and policies
- Develop one or more pilot projects in partnership with community members that provide amenities to residents in the short term while larger projects are designed and potentially use participatory budgeting techniques
- Enlist the support of local non-governmental organizations to build community leadership by identifying and utilizing youth ambassadors to support community outreach and help advance community engagement opportunities
- Enlist the support of community groups to bring engagement opportunities to community members where they are (i.e., pop-up events, kiosks, etc.)
- Identify opportunities for community-identified projects to be incorporated into the SSMP
- Create specific community advisory committees and engagement strategies for each major project during the concept stage
- Identify annual or per-project budget for community engagement
- Continue community engagement throughout design and construction of the SCH
- Define the function, the roles of the State, co-chairs, consultants, and members, and objectives of the committee
- Engagement Committee meeting dates/times/locations as well as agendas will be provided with ample notice
- Provide an annual schedule of SSMP projects and their respective timelines indicating the opportunities for community engagement

Elements for Consideration as Capacity Increases

As the state team capacity increases with dedicated staff, consider incorporating the following elements:

- Provide post-meeting surveys for attendees to fill out that include feedback questions on meeting structure, logistics, and substance
- Incorporate facilitators trained in engagement methods and in cross-cultural literacy and/or provide such training to staff
- Solicit and incorporate input from community and engagement committee members into community presentations
- Develop annual projected schedule outlining Engagement Committee meetings, public community meeting dates, and outreach period
- Form workgroups for committee members to work closely with the State in the planning and execution of engagement activities
- Increase frequency of Engagement Committee meetings

Community Engagement Tracks

The community engagement process is envisioned along three interrelated tracks, each with a main objective and specific tactics.

Moving forward, the state team will continue to develop the Engagement Plan to a finer level of detail, with further delineation of purpose, milestones, timeline, capacity, process, roles and expectations for the Engagement Committee.

Engagement Venues

Venue	Objective	Structure / Tactics	Role
Engagement Committee (Facilitated by state team with participation and support from local community groups and NGOs)	Enlist leaders of local community groups and NGOs to help steer SSMP engagement efforts, reach community members through their communications channels, and increase community engagement in SSMP planning activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSMP Engagement Committee serves as hub and primary venue to plan engagement activities • Convene quarterly meetings in different communities around the Sea to provide forum for updates, collaborative planning and identification of project(s) in the different communities around the Salton Sea • Engage leaders on topics / issues of concern • Identify needs for materials, collaterals, graphics, etc., and ensure they are disseminated with ample notice • Develop and maintain annual schedule for community engagement meetings • Use newsletters, listservs and other channels maintained by groups to extend reach • Identify pilot project(s) • Enlist support of leaders to develop and implement youth ambassadors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure coordination and inclusion • Identify priority topics • Provide knowledge and insight into community needs • Help advise / shape broader community engagement effort • Develop strategies to address short-term and longer-term needs

<p>Ongoing Community Engagement</p> <p>(Supported by state team as capacity allows and augmented by community groups and local NGOs through MOUs or other agreements)</p>	<p>Familiarize community with SSMP and specific projects, and gather input on priorities, concerns and ideas to help shape specific projects to incorporate into the SSMP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes place in a variety of locations and formats • Work with community groups • Create Community Advisory Groups for each major project • Establish feedback loop so residents can see how their input is being used • Develop mechanisms to provide regular updates to community members • Establish state presence / point of contact for community members • Consider and incorporate input from Engagement Committee and Local Experts Group when possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement on SSMP and specific projects to inform project design and implementation
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Near-Term Next Steps in the Process (to be updated)

- 1) Discuss revised draft SSMP Community Engagement Plan at Engagement Committee meeting on September 30 and gather additional input.
- 2) Recruit for and fill new SSMP staff position that will spearhead day-to-day engagement functions
- 3) Develop updated charter for Engagement Committee identifying roles and responsibilities
- 4) Continue to build out schedule for community engagement meetings
- 5) Develop strategy and MOUs or other agreements with community groups and NGOs to augment state team’s capacity to carry out community engagement
- 6) Identify pilot project(s) that can provide amenities to residents in the short term while larger projects are designed and potentially use participatory budgeting