

Salton Sea Management Program Long Range Plan FAQ

What are the Salton Sea Long-Range Plan Concepts?

The state is currently evaluating *concepts for a long-range solution* at the Salton Sea. Right now, these concepts are focused on solutions with water sources within the Basin, because plans to bring water to fill the Salton Sea are being studied by an Independent Review Panel. A report that evaluates all in-basin concepts and feasible water importation concepts will be submitted for a 'long-range plan' due to the State Water Resources Control board in December 2022.

What is the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) Long-Range Plan?

The SSMP Long-Range Plan establishes a strategy for the management and long-term restoration of the Sea after 2028.

Why 2028?

Currently, the Salton Sea Management Program and partners are working on different projects and efforts to cover up areas of the Salton Sea playa (shore) by 2028 known as the "10-Year Plan". Collectively, these efforts will cover about 30,000 acres of playa with water, plants or other methods. Collectively, these efforts are part of the "Phase 1: 10-Year Plan" to reduce dust in the air and create wetlands for fish and birds.

How does the Long-Range Plan relate to the Phase 1: 10-year Plan?

The Long-Range Plan is what comes next. The Long-Range Plan aims to complement the 10-Year Plan projects and identify the path towards the long-term restoration of the sea. The 10-Year Plan is considered the "Baseline" Plan for the other restoration concepts.

What types of projects are being considered in the Long-Range Plan?

The Long-Range Plan will consider both concepts that use current water inflows (in-Sea concepts) and concepts that involve bringing additional water to the Sea. The SSMP team and Long-Range Plan Committee are currently reviewing in-sea concepts. This summer, after the Independent Review Panel has completed its study, water importation concepts will also be considered.

What is the Independent Review Panel and how does it tie into the Long-Range Plan?

The SSMP contracted with the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC), in June 2021, to facilitate the establishment of an expert Independent Review Panel to conduct a feasibility study of water importation strategies to help inform long-range planning beyond the Phase I: 10-year Plan. The outcome of the Panel's feasibility study will determine the technical, environmental, and economic feasibility of water importation for a potential whole-Sea solution.

What is the makeup of the Independent Review Panel?

The Independent Review Panel is chaired by Dr. Rominder Suri, Professor and Chair of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Temple University and founding director of Temple University's National Science Foundation-funded Water, Environment, and Technology (WET) Center. The panel website provides additional details on the schedule and biographies of panel members. UCSC has contracted with Kennedy Jenks Consulting and other specialty subcontractors to serve as a support team to an Independent Review Panel to provide research and analysis.

When will the findings of the Independent Review Panel be shared?

The Independent Review Panel's screening report came out in April 2022. A feasibility and summary report were released in September 2022. The findings of the feasibility study for water importation strategies will be evaluated along with the in-sea concepts and all together be considered as part of the proposed recommendations in the Long-Range Plan.

What is a concept?

A concept is a set of ideas or approaches to address the habitat, air quality and other issues at the Salton Sea. *A concept can also be thought of as a very high-level blueprint describing the basic outline of a proposed project.*

What is a strategy?

A strategy is a specific action (such as setting aside an area for geothermal/lithium development) that could be used in any concept. A strategy is not expected to address the multi-faceted problems at the Sea but could improve any concept. A concept could be coupled with multiple strategies.

Where is the State in developing the long-range plan? Is it too late for new ideas?

Not at all. This is a very long process. The State Water Resource Control Board approval of the Long-Range Plan is just the beginning, and what will be submitted will be a starting point, after which project design and formal environmental review will happen. We are collecting and considering public feedback on new or improved ideas right now.

What is the timeline for developing the Long-Range Plan and when will it be complete?

The State Water Board Order WR-0134 requires that a Long-Range Plan be submitted by the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to the Water Board by the end of 2022.

What opportunities are there for community members to engage in the development of the Long-Range Plan?

There are multiple opportunities for input throughout the development of the Long-Range Plan. The Long-Range Plan Committee holds public meetings every other month and will hold community workshops at key points in the process for the public to help influence the plan. The Independent Review Panel is also holding public workshops and meetings to share updates and solicit input.

What opportunities are there for community members to influence the Long-Range Plan?

Key opportunities to influence the Long-Range Plan include developing criteria for LRP concept selection (particularly the 'acceptability' metric) and providing information on how to refine or improve concepts, and on particular strategies.

How will the State report back as to how community feedback was considered and whether it is incorporated into the SSMP Long-Range Plan?

The Long-Range Plan Committee maintains a comment log from each meeting with responses from the State team, which will be publicly shared on the Salton Sea website. Community input at public workshops will similarly be documented. If comments are not directly applicable to the Long-Range Plan, they will be considered in other aspects of the SSMP.

Will there be an environmental review of the Long-Range Plan?

Yes. After the report is submitted to the State Water Board, a formal environmental review process will begin.

What is the “Baseline”?

The baseline is the reasonably foreseeable future which long-range plan concepts will be compared against. In this instance, the baseline is the habitat and dust suppression projects described in the [Salton Sea Management Program Phase 1: 10-Year Plan Draft Environmental Assessment](#) ('10-Year Plan projects'). The 10-Year projects will collectively cover 28,9003 acres of playa in Imperial and Riverside Counties. These projects include the Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) Project (4,110-acres of pond habitat for fish-eating birds), the North Lake Demonstration Project (a 160-acre lake located near the North Shore Yacht Club), the North Lake Project (4,022 acres project designed with interconnecting ponds from Desert Shores to the Salton Sea State Recreation Area), Alamo River Project (7,257 acres of habitat ponds at the Alamo River), New River Expansion Project (6,850 acres of habitat ponds near the outlet of the New River surrounding the SCH Project), Desert Shores Channel Restoration Project (30 acres created by refilling five boat channels in the Desert Shores Marina), and Audubon California's Bombay Beach Wetland Project (stabilizing, preserving and enhancing 650 acres of emergent wetland and brine pool habitat near Bombay Beach). Each concept assumes the projects in the 10-Year Plan are built, but Long-Range Plan concepts do not have to be compatible with the baseline to move forward. Many of these projects are already in development.

Where did the non-water importation (in-basin) restoration concepts come from?

The State team created four concepts, each based on past federal state or local proposals, updated with new information on Salton Sea projects and water availability. Three additional concepts were proposed by members of the Long-Range Planning Committee.

What are community amenities?

Over the last decade, community members have advocated for the Salton Sea Management Program to provide *community amenities*. Regulatory, technological, cost and landownership barriers have posed challenges to integrating community amenities within project design. Other needs, such as for broadband, stable electricity or other vital infrastructure, which are intersectional with the experience of Salton Sea communities, who have and continue to experience underinvestment in infrastructure and services, are beyond the scope of the SSMP. In response, California Natural Resources Agency secured resources for Better World Group Advisors (BWG) to develop a Community Amenities Strategy. The intent is to identify community needs to incorporate into SSMP projects (near-term and long-term) and related efforts when possible. This community amenities strategy will be completed in December 2022. To date, amenities surfaced through a review of previous public comments include physical infrastructure at the Salton Sea, programmatic co-benefits (workforce, public health) and regional benefits (broadband, stable electricity).

How will community amenities be considered in the Long-Range Plan?

The Long-Range Plan delivered to the State Water Board may include high-level locations for concept features, such as physical amenities at the Sea and/or strategies for how the Long-Range Plan can support programmatic or regional benefits.

Once the Long-Range Plan is finalized, how will it be funded?

It's hard to know for certain until the plan is finalized but funding could be obtained from State, Federal and other sources.

Where can I go for updates on the development of Long-Range Plan?

The SSMP website (www.SaltonSea.ca.gov) is the best place for updates and to sign-up to the listserv for our regular newsletter.

Definitions:

Drainages	The catchment basins around the Sea that drain into the Salton Sea.
Emissive	Creating dust.
Exposed Lakebed Area	Since 2003, there has been a steady decline in the surface water elevation of the Salton Sea. IID used satellite imagery to estimate 23,917 acres of exposed lakebed at the end of 2019, with a baseline of zero in 2002 (IID, 2021, Attachment 1). After 2019, exposed lakebed area estimates have not been reported using satellite imagery. Lakebed exposure may be estimated using measured water elevations and elevation-area relationships. Given the reported elevation changes in the prior section, an additional lakebed exposure of 2,400 and 2,200 is estimated for the years 2020 and 2021, respectively. Therefore, 28,500 acres of lakebed may be estimated to have been cumulatively exposed between 2003 and 2021. The emissivity of the exposed lakebed is not uniform and depends on local sediment conditions. Approximately 4,700 acres of the exposed lakebed has developed a vegetation cover, making it less likely to be emissive.
In-Sea	Concepts that use existing inflows to the Sea, and don't involve importing water (also referred to as "non-water importation")
Inflows	The sources of water that sustain the Salton Sea, including the rivers, drains., local watersheds, direct precipitation and groundwater inflow
Playa	Areas of exposed lakebed.
Residual Sea	The central body of water that would remain after restoration around the perimeter.
Saline	The total dissolved solid (TDS) standard for drinking water is 500 mg/L or 500 parts per million (PPM), or 0.5 parts per thousand (PPT). TDS is generally referred to as salt content. Water with more dissolved salts, but lower than ocean water is called brackish, typically in the range of 2 to 15 PPM. Ocean water salinity is about 35 PPT. We are using the term "marine" to describe water bodies with salinity of 35 PPT like ocean water.
Sea	Salton Sea