

# **Salton Sea Community Needs and Recommended Actions 2023**



**Prepared by**  
**Better World Group Advisors**  
**for the California Natural Resources Agency**

# Acknowledgements

Better World Group Advisors (BWG) is deeply grateful to the California Native American tribes, residents, and advocates who have shared their expertise and tirelessly advocated for the Salton Sea by preparing comments and participating in public meetings over the past decade. These helped catalyze and shape the development of this Salton Sea Community Needs and Recommended Actions Report (“Report”).

BWG would like to specifically acknowledge the importance of the region’s California Native American tribes, who have stewarded the lands and waters of the Salton Sea and surrounding areas since time immemorial. BWG is grateful to representatives of tribal nations who shared their thoughts in three virtual inter-tribal government roundtable sessions.

This Report would not have come to be without a decade of advocacy on behalf of community-based organizations who tirelessly advocated for their communities to draw attention to community needs at the Salton Sea, and for restoration of the Sea that centered community.

We would like to thank the more than 70 government officials, non-profit representatives, and others who shared their expertise during the development of this document (see full list in Appendix D), as well as members of the Salton Sea Regional Community Benefits Working Group, tribal members, and residents who participated in multiple engagement opportunities. Specifically, Kounkuey Design Initiative and the Imperial Valley Equity and Justice Coalition worked directly with community to generate powerful ideas. This invaluable community input included over 500 individual survey responses; community tabling events in Brawley, Calipatria, Westmorland, Salton City, El Centro, Calexico and Thermal that engaged 255 interested parties; and five virtual and in-person focus groups with 55 residents.

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*Boat ramp access on the Salton Sea.*



# Introduction

Over the past decade, community members near the Salton Sea have asked for multi-benefit restoration projects that provide community amenities and benefits. These benefits are pivotal for a region with historic underinvestment in infrastructure and services and where residents experience some of the highest rates of public health and environmental justice issues in California.

However, the scope and purpose of the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) limits opportunities for incorporating recreational and other features within the design of SSMP restoration projects. The lack of broadband, stable electricity, or other vital infrastructure are endemic problems that are beyond the scope of the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) to solve on its own yet are intersectional with the day-to-day experience of Salton Sea communities.

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) recognized the need for better pathways to develop multi-benefit infrastructure and for addressing other community needs, while achieving the SSMP's own goals around air quality and habitat restoration. These issues are critical to the well-being of residents of a region which already experiences severe public health and environmental justice issues. CNRA secured resources for Better World Group (BWG) to develop strategies to identify recreation, infrastructure and other community amenities that could be incorporated into SSMP projects and to identify additional funding and opportunities for achieving community amenities.

In recognition that issues affecting shoreline communities are not simply “amenities” but are vital community needs intrinsic to their health and well-being, this Salton Sea Community Needs and Recommended Actions Report (“Report”) outlines vital community needs and proposes high-level recommendations for actions to address them. As surfaced by communities at and around the Sea, these vital community needs include the following: equitable outdoor access, public health, workforce and sustainable economic development, climate action, transportation, and broadband access.

The effort to develop this Report ultimately involved over 70 interviews with community residents, community-based organizations, federal, state and local government officials, philanthropy, education, and healthcare leaders; review of public comments and reports about the Salton Sea generated over the last decade; and working with the SSMP to support five working groups, tribal working groups, and community-based outreach led by Kounkuey Design Initiative and Imperial Valley Justice and Equity Coalition. It was additionally informed by working with the SSMP team throughout 2022 to generate an understanding of the program's capacity, gaps and limitations, as well as its strengths and opportunities to expand with existing staff capacity and resources.

The recommendations in the Report may not reflect the State’s perspective, nor are the recommended actions directed only at the State. Recommendations which involve the SSMP reflect a scenario where there is additional funding, particularly for staff capacity, which is currently a major barrier to addressing community needs, but do not involve changing the goals, scope or structure of the SSMP. Recommendations which fall outside of the purview of SSMP and even CNRA—such as investments in public health clinics or medical services—are included to reflect the severity of the need, the urgency of this intervention, and the opportunity presented by two time-sensitive and historic federal funding opportunities, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act, which may be able to address these needs at this time. Although the SSMP’s role is not to take on these needs wholly, there may be strategic actions the SSMP can take to support other partners to address these community needs.


While the Report is not authored by CNRA, it was commissioned and funded by CNRA. Actions to address community needs were recommended based on community input and consultation and review by government agencies. The Report generally does not identify specific governmental or other actors as causes for a need nor identifies them to implement specific recommendations. The Report identifies community needs and recommends actions that can be taken by federal, state and local government agencies, business organizations, philanthropy, community-based groups and nonprofit organizations.

The Report’s recommendations focus on the largely rural, unincorporated shoreline and near-shore communities that will be most impacted by the shrinking Sea—“shoreline communities.” While they are all unique, these areas share common infrastructure needs and characteristics as rural, under-resourced, close-knit communities.

The Sea’s **shoreline communities** have a deep connection to the desert and are committed to their home and improving the region. These communities include the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians Tribal lands, Thermal, Mecca, North Shore, and Oasis in the Eastern Coachella Valley; and Bombay Beach, Salton City, Desert Shores, Westmorland, Calipatria, and Niland in Imperial County.

“**Community needs**” refers to the vital infrastructure, programming, and other investments that lead to healthy, resilient, and just social, economic, and environmental outcomes.

Rich in abundant resources and strong cultural ties, these communities still face considerable community needs. These needs are rooted in past and continued lack of investment in shoreline communities. This is demonstrated by underfunded transportation, broadband, environment, and



public health infrastructure and services. Systemic racism and biases have and continue to limit investments in low-income areas, and communities of color, leading to inequities in access to basic infrastructure and services.

Underinvestment negatively impacts public health, community development, and economic well-being, which is especially noticeable in Salton Sea shoreline communities. Residents are burdened with air pollution exceeding levels seen in many other parts of the state. Children visit the emergency room with asthma-related issues at nearly double the state average. On top of this, these communities have high rates of poverty. Some communities only have weekly bus service connecting them to other places in the region. Most do not have sufficient access to high-speed internet. These challenges add up, making it particularly difficult for under-resourced communities to respond or recover. For example, the high rates of households with high housing burden and unemployment in Salton Sea communities increase their vulnerability to climate change.

The SSMP is addressing air quality by undertaking dust suppression and habitat restoration projects, and the program is seeking ways to integrate co-benefits into these efforts. However, many of the community needs shared over the years are outside the SSMP's regulatory purview. The State recognizes the critical importance of these needs and, the need to elevate them. The recommendations in this Report outline possible approaches for local, regional, and state entities, including SSMP, to address community needs based on both ideas surfaced from community leaders and additional research.

There are many opportunities to address the varied challenges at the Salton Sea and support shoreline communities. There are eight principal types of community needs identified in this document. Each section describes each need, followed by possible approaches that state, regional, and local governments and organizations could take to address them.

In addition to the recommendations outlined within each community need in this Report, there are barriers to addressing communities' needs which cross issue areas. Until these barriers are addressed, it is unlikely community needs can be met despite the SSMP and other governmental entities' best efforts. These barriers include capacity limitations, funding and regional coordination.



*Vegetation near the Salton Sea shoreline.*





# Salton Sea Community Needs and Recommended Actions

## Methods for Assessing Community Needs and Developing Recommended Actions

The needs and recommendations described in the following sections are rooted in comments provided by local communities and document review. Better World Group Advisors (BWG), on behalf of SSMP, reviewed years of written comment letters, public meeting recordings, and other available resources on the Salton Sea. These resources included reports, letters, papers, needs assessments, and surveys developed by state, federal and local governments, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, philanthropy, and higher education. A complete list of resources is included in the reference list (*Appendix F*) at the end of this document. BWG also interviewed over 70 regional experts and hosted five topical focus groups that convened advocates and others working in the region to further understand specific needs and possible solutions. The SSMP and BWG also held three inter-tribal focus group meetings to learn more about tribal perspectives and needs. *Appendix C* includes a list of California Native American tribes with ancestral ties to the Salton Sea.

These recommendations build on the long-term work of community-based organizations (CBOs) who advocate that restoration and management at the Salton Sea should include residents in decision-making and provide multiple benefits to address the region's needs. Many recommendations came from discussions and dialogue with community residents, governmental leaders or subject-matter experts. The recommendations in this document outline possible approaches for local, regional, state, and philanthropic entities, including SSMP. As a result, the recommended actions may not reflect the perspectives of the State, and in many cases extend beyond the authority of the SSMP and the Resources Agency.

The recommendations are also informed by community members' lived experience and expertise. With support from the Salton Sea Authority, Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) and Imperial Valley Environmental Justice Coalition engaged residents and gathered feedback through a community survey, tabling events, and focus groups. Their work helped ensure that community concerns and recommendations were integrated into this document.

The state and federal government made significant recent policy changes and investments that also influenced the recommendations. The State's Blue-Ribbon Commission on Lithium Extraction in California released a scoping report, and the Legislature created a new lithium excise tax. At the federal level, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act make historic infrastructure investments, with specific benefits for tribal, rural, and environmental justice communities, and in many cases, requirements that projects provides community benefits as a

funding condition. Given the Biden-Harris Administration's Justice40 goals, which made it a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities, and the probability of federal funding for SSMP and other projects, these pieces are critical to align. Where appropriate, the recommendations in this document dovetail with these opportunities. See *Appendix B* for more information about how this Report was developed.

## Need 1: Community engagement, capacity building, and coordination

Community residents and CBOs have consistently asked for more opportunities to participate in and lend their leadership to the restoration of the Sea and development of multi-benefit projects, and provided concrete examples and direction of what this would look like. While the SSMP has worked to increase and improve outreach and engagement in recent years in response to community input, more work is needed to achieve meaningful community engagement. Residents have advocated for meaningful inclusion at public meetings and in local decision-making processes. The Blue-Ribbon Commission on Lithium Extraction in California, a recent state process that looked at this region, also recommended increased resource support for community engagement in regional planning. Community expertise could be applied through collective decision-making processes, such as participatory budgeting, where possible.

Local tribal governments, community-based organizations, and other community partners experience serious constraints on staff time that prevent them from fully engaging in SSMP and related processes. The SSMP also has limited staff capacity to implement projects and needs additional staff for achieving meaningful community engagement and to address or support broader community needs at the Sea. Funding for SSMP projects may be inconsistent from year to year, and is mostly provided through bonds, which do not fund operations and maintenance.

Furthermore, the region as a whole has suffered from historical disinvestment and underinvestment. This is a serious challenge to creating and maintaining high-quality infrastructure, and fragmentation of local, regional, and state-led decision-making bodies prevents regional coordination and created gaps in the services needed to meet the needs of shoreline communities. Historic federal funding infrastructure opportunities are available, many of which require providing community benefits and alignment with Justice40 goals, particularly for environmental justice communities. But accessing this funding requires high levels of technical and planning capacity.

The following recommendations propose pathways for improving overall engagement, addressing capacity and funding, and improving regional coordination. Recommendations for addressing barriers related to key needs through increased coordination and engagement are listed in subsequent sections.



## Recommended Actions

### 1.1. Build internal SSMP program capacity to advance community needs.

- 1.1.1 Identify staff leads for expanded community engagement in shoreline communities, regional coordination and planning, equitable access and recreation, and environmental justice.

### 1.2. Continue to improve community engagement.

- 1.2.1 Explore new partnerships, grants, capacity building funds and other ways residents can be compensated for their expertise in Salton Sea and other infrastructure planning processes, including future recreation and access planning.
- 1.2.2 In collaboration with the Salton Sea Management Program's Community Engagement Committee, develop and implement an updated SSMP community engagement plan with community-specific methodologies and clear metrics that provides leadership development opportunities.
- 1.2.3 Continue to identify and participate in community events to provide SSMP and project information and hear from community residents.
- 1.2.4 Seek opportunities to support hiring local, multilingual community engagement leads such as community health workers (promotores), as trusted sources of information about opportunities to engage in Salton Sea planning processes and community infrastructure planning, public health, and community programs and resources.
- 1.2.5 Communicate progress in carrying out actions identified in the Salton Sea Management Program and Community Needs document as part of the SSMP Annual Report.
- 1.2.6 Consider updating the Salton Sea Management Program and Community Needs document at five-year periods through a public review process. Catalog public comments with new concerns directed to the SSMP about community needs, including those outside of the SSMP's area of authority.
- 1.2.7 Continue to provide Spanish interpretation and explore opportunities to offer Purépecha interpretation at SSMP meetings.

### 1.3. Increase SSMP engagement with regional entities to identify opportunities for SSMP restoration efforts to support recreation and other community needs.

- 1.3.1 Increase regular check points with key tribal, federal, state, and local planning agencies to increase coordination on regional infrastructure planning.
- 1.3.2 In alignment with Justice40 goals, collaborate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Salton Sea Authority to include the community priorities in the SSMP Long Range Plan Acceptability Criteria into the project 'Purpose and Need' for the Imperial Streams and Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study, and in design of project alternatives where possible.

#### **1.4. Support obtaining time-sensitive federal funding to address regional needs.**

- 1.4.1 Explore opportunities to connect California Native American tribes, CBOs, and local government, including community services districts and community councils, to technical assistance programs to apply for infrastructure funding.
- 1.4.2 Support local efforts to obtain federal infrastructure funding to advance Salton Sea community needs from sources such as the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) and Inflation Reduction Act, including writing state letters of support for infrastructure funding for community needs projects when possible.
- 1.4.3 Share notices of funding and other opportunities with tribal and local governments, utilities, nonprofits, and CBOs that could be used to support community needs, including SSMP newsletters.
- 1.4.4 Pursue technical assistance support for tribal nations, CBOs, Imperial and Eastern Coachella Valley local governments, and residents to invest in community infrastructure. Priorities include resource support to help community members engage in community meetings and planning efforts, such as compensation, food and childcare.

#### **1.5. Increase capacity for tribes, local governments and CBOs to engage in infrastructure development and planning processes.**

- 1.5.1 Build on California's Advance Pay Pilot and provide advanced payments to California Native American tribes, local agencies, and nongovernmental entities for infrastructure and planning projects.
- 1.5.2 Pursue funding set-asides for rural communities across state and regional grant programs, including transportation.

## **Need 2: Early, often, and meaningful tribal consultation**

The Salton Sea holds traditional and cultural significance for many California Native American tribes across the desert region. They have a deeply rooted history in what is today known as the Eastern Coachella Valley (ECV) and Imperial Valley, a presence spanning over 12,000 years.<sup>1</sup> The Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians' reservation is located along the northwest side of the Sea, and they are a primary landowner of parts of the shoreline and lakebed.<sup>2</sup> Given their ancestral ties to the Salton Sea and surrounding areas, regional decision-making will impact tribal lands, natural resources, cultural resources, cultures, economic prosperity and communities. Yet historical wrongs committed against them, and lack of timely consultation has led to a lack of resources and capacity to engage and has excluded tribes from participating in key decision-making.<sup>3</sup>

While California Native American tribes share many of the needs of other shoreline communities, they face unique challenges. Many do not have access to consistent funding and staffing to engage in government-to-government consultation on Salton Sea restoration and other projects, apply for and manage grants, or develop tribal infrastructure and services plans. Tribes report receiving many requests for consultation, with conflicting or unclear timelines or channels for engagement.



This makes it difficult for tribes to prioritize and participate in SSMP and other regional planning processes. State tribal liaisons reduce these barriers by serving as a point of contact for tribes and explaining how complex projects relate. The SSMP works closely with tribal liaisons at the Department of Water Resources and the California Natural Resources Agency, but the Program does not have their own tribal liaison, limiting capacity to consult with tribes. Tribal nations also lack the staff capacity to respond to the many consultation requests they receive or engage in planning processes or access grants or other opportunities. Tribal representatives asked that the state use a broader variety of outreach strategies that include site visits and meetings in central locations with tribal community members. They also want to see opportunities for tribal employees to receive training and hands-on experience working with state programs, like SSMP. Tribal representatives also noted that federal funding applications can be technical, complex, and time-consuming, and help from state agencies could facilitate tribes' access to these funds. Finally, tribes hold important ecological knowledge—the state should apply this to projects at the Sea and compensate tribes fairly for it.<sup>4</sup>

For California Native American tribes, lands and waters at or near the Sea hold sacred sites, ancestral travel routes, and important cultural resources, such as native plants. Their access to these places is key to maintaining cultural and spiritual practices, and health.<sup>5</sup> For these reasons, tribes have requested they may want exclusive access to certain areas. Recreation planning should include protections for tribal resources, cultural access, and sites, including those that have yet to be uncovered.

Government at all levels should pursue and implement tribal consultation policies, land return and co-management, and tribal resource assistance. By building their own capacity, tribes can have the resources they need to advance healthy, sovereign communities. The following recommendations provide initial pathways for the State and regional entities to offer support.

## Recommended Actions

### 2.1. Conduct early, often, and meaningful tribal consultation.

- 2.1.1 Build internal capacity for meaningful government-to-government consultations.
  - Pursue a full-time tribal affairs position to lead tribal consultation on the Salton Sea.
  - Seek opportunities for tribal consultation trainings for SSMP staff provided by other state or federal governments, tribal governments, or private sector training institutions on tribal cultural resources, sacred sites, and traditional cultural property.
- 2.1.2 In coordination with tribal governments, develop a SSMP Tribal Consultation Policy that meets the unique needs of tribes in the region. The policy should be developed and implemented in alignment with [Resources' Tribal Consultation Policy](#) and [California Truth & Healing Council's Principles for Respectful Meetings](#).
- 2.1.3 Support coordination and development of a tribal vision for regional planning, and a comprehensive plan for the Salton Sea region.
- 2.1.4 Host tribal site visits to Salton Sea restoration projects.

## **2.2. Support increased tribal capacity, improve government-to-government efficiencies, and minimize burdens on tribes.**

- 2.2.1 Increase coordination within state and federal entities working on the Salton Sea to reduce the number of overlapping consultations and other requests of tribes. This could include co-hosting planning meetings that address lithium and other regional planning and development efforts.
- 2.2.2 Schedule regular Salton Sea inter-tribal meetings to continue providing information and dialogue on SSMP projects and relevant state or federal funding opportunities.
- 2.2.3 Expand opportunities to fund new full-time staff positions for tribes to engage in state, regional, and local planning processes.
- 2.2.4 Explore opportunities for a tribally led funding source to finance tribal needs and priorities for sustainable economic development infrastructure in the Salton Sea region.
- 2.2.5 Streamline complex and overlapping regulations which can make it difficult for tribes to manage businesses and access private capital.
  - Increase and streamline investments to tribes by minimizing state grant application and reporting requirements to reduce barriers and burdens to tribes.

## **2.3. Respect, acknowledge, and support culturally appropriate use of tribal expertise, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), and intellectual property into Salton Sea efforts, as appropriate.**

- 2.3.1 Develop procedures to allow all affected California Native American tribes to define TEK, how that term should be used, and if there is another preferred term through government-to-government consultation.
- 2.3.2 Explore clear pathways and mechanisms to integrate tribal knowledge in Salton Sea management decisions.

## **2.4. Protect cultural resources and landscapes, sacred sites, and ceremonial locations at the Sea.**

- 2.4.1 Through tribal consultation, in alignment with [Assembly Bill 52](#) (Tribal Cultural Resources), support the long term and sustainable protection of culturally significant resources and landscapes.
- 2.4.2 Develop procedures to protect confidential cultural information.
- 2.4.3 Building upon the expertise and recommendations of the California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), create a SSMP Tribal Monitoring Program to enable tribes to provide direct input during project activities that may identify or impact sensitive tribal cultural, ceremonial, or beneficial resources. This includes seeking direction from tribes to identify sites to monitor for environmental contamination.
- 2.4.4 Compensate California Native American tribes for their expertise. Ensure budget and contracts have authority and funding to contract with local tribes for tribal cultural



monitors and services in advance of construction, including pre-site surveys, technical document review, and ongoing monitoring.

**2.5. Ensure equitable tribal cultural access, co-management, and ancestral land return to the Sea.**

- 2.5.1 In alignment with the Outdoors for All initiative, identify areas and establish access agreements for **exclusive** tribal access for gathering or ceremony through early, often, and meaningful tribal consultation.
- 2.5.2 Co-develop research, monitoring, restoration, and access projects with California Native American tribes using established agreements, such as and the California Department of Water Resources' Public Entity Agreement.
- 2.5.3 Work with tribes to develop SSMP projects that support tribal access to sacred sites and resources with tribal beneficial uses.
- 2.5.4 Through early, often and meaningful consultation, identify opportunities for tribal co-management at the Sea.
- 2.5.5 Through early, often and meaningful consultation and in alignment with Pathways to 30x30 and Outdoors for All, identify administrative and regulatory mechanisms for ancestral land return at the Sea, and, recognizing the SSMP is not a landowner, support these efforts with landowners and managers at the Sea.



*Photographing sunset at the Salton Sea.*

- 2.5.6 Include tribal representatives on the state's technical teams to ensure early and often information sharing, including TEK and indigenous science, into the development of restoration projects; discussion and resolution of potential issues; avoidance of harm; and identification of partnership opportunities for interested tribes.
- 2.5.7 Recommend SSMP contractors develop and implement a tribal communications plan to ensure early and often information sharing about restoration projects; discussion and resolution of potential issues; avoidance of harm; and identification of partnership opportunities for interested tribes. Plans should also include a primary point of contact.
- 2.5.8 Explore opportunities for federal, state, and local governments to return land to or co-manage with tribes with ancestral connections to the Salton Sea.

### Need 3: Equitable outdoor access and recreation

Many Salton Sea shoreline communities have no park access, where they can play, exercise, gather, rest or get refuge from the heat.<sup>6</sup> In Riverside County, 38 percent of residents are further than a half-mile from a park, and many are concentrated in the Coachella and Eastern Coachella Valleys, near the Sea.<sup>7</sup> In Imperial County, most recreation land lacks basic features, such as restrooms.<sup>8</sup> Over a quarter of residents in Brawley and El Centro, and 19 percent in the city of Imperial are further than a half-mile from a park.<sup>9</sup> At the Sea, there are few restrooms, shade structures or water fountains to allow residents to easily or safely visit, especially on hot days.

Access to the outdoors is needed for communities to thrive. Parks and outdoor spaces bring mental and physical health benefits, like reducing depression and disease risk.<sup>10</sup> Connection to and increased time spent in nature is associated with higher levels of happiness and sense of community.<sup>11</sup> Outdoor spaces can also protect communities from the impacts of climate change, like flooding or extreme heat.<sup>12</sup>

Residents and advocates have repeatedly called for more outdoor access and recreation investments. Shoreline communities have asked for more parks, walking trails and paths, sidewalks, bike paths and lanes, and improved lighting.<sup>13</sup> Walking trails and paths are a priority.<sup>14</sup> A recent Audubon Society community survey on recreation, funded by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, found that restrooms with running water, shade, picnic areas, and walking paths were critical to making the Sea usable.<sup>15</sup> In Bombay Beach, residents want cultural centers, like museums, which provide educational and tourism benefits.<sup>16</sup> Residents also want an active role in designing these spaces through participatory budgeting and community-led design.<sup>17</sup>

There are administrative, funding, and environmental barriers that limit state and regional efforts to create more recreation opportunities at the Salton Sea. The state is not a landowner at the Sea, so recreation and access projects are contingent on landowner approval and may require multiple land agreements and time-consuming negotiations.<sup>18</sup> Limited water supply and few public roads are barriers to building restrooms or public access points.<sup>19</sup> Inconsistent funding and limitations on how bond funds can be spent leaves few resources to maintain and operate these spaces. Finally, poor air quality could threaten safe outdoor recreation. This should be considered when siting



*Picnic table at the Salton Sea Recreational Area.*



recreation projects, including designating off-road vehicle use spaces to avoid more dust impacts.<sup>20</sup> The following recommendations provide strategies to increase regional coordination and equitable access investments at and beyond the Sea.

## **Recommended Actions**

### **3.1. Explore ways to address land access barriers for recreation and access.**

- 3.1.1 Explore opportunities for a standard easement or other land use agreement with landowners for access and recreation projects.
- 3.1.2 Explore developing access and recreation projects on state or federally managed land at the Sea where land access may be easier.

### **3.2. Conduct collaborative planning for equitable access and recreation.**

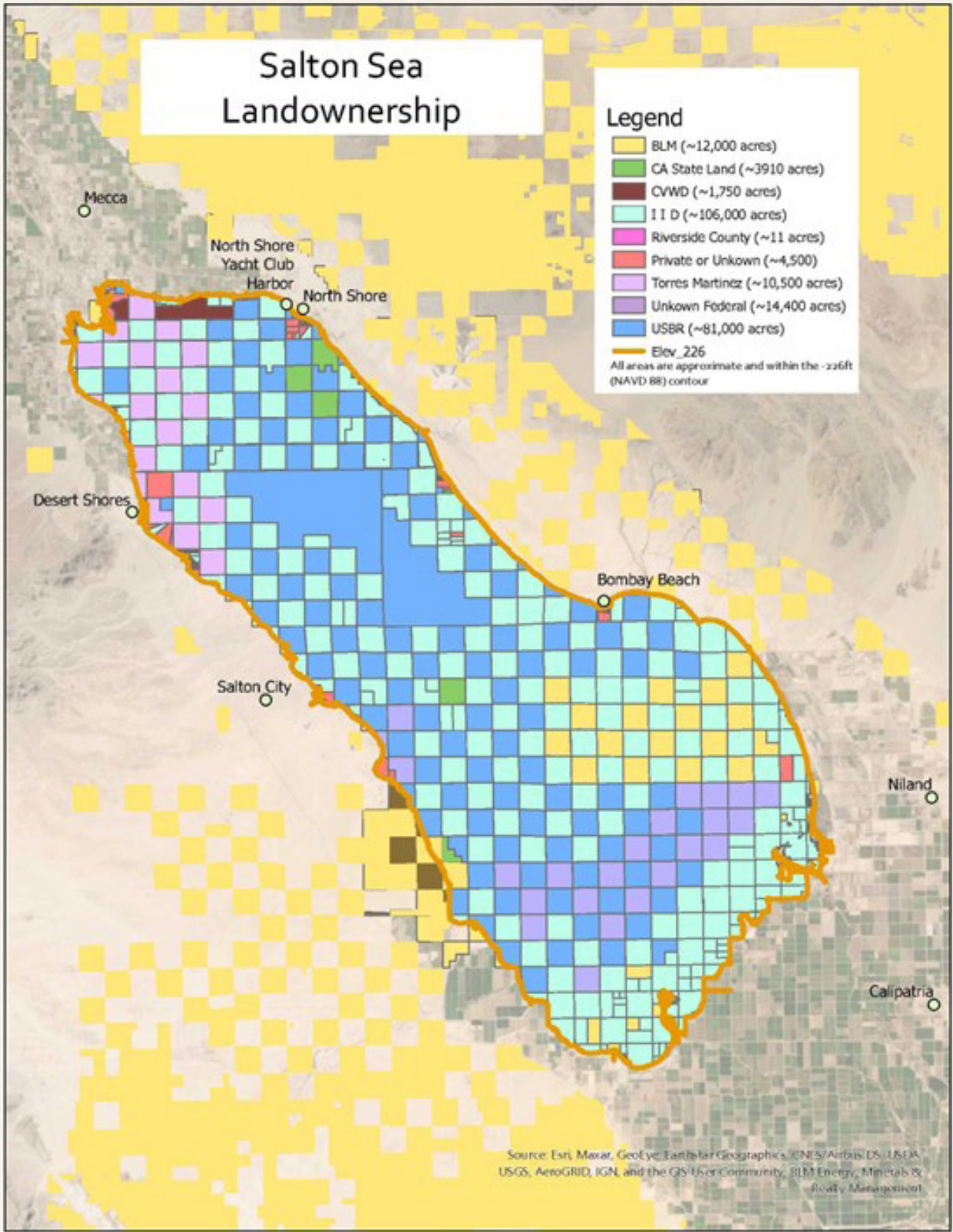
- 3.2.1 Initiate a public planning process with key landowners, land managers, and planning entities for a connected, non-motorized trail system at the Sea to support wildlife viewing. Meaningfully integrate tribes, CBOs, NGOs, and resident input.
- 3.2.2 Following trail planning, together with other public partners, support an equitable outdoor access and recreation planning process for the Sea to identify types and locations of recreation and access infrastructure.

- 3.2.3 Explore creative partnership agreements to support California Native American tribes, and CBO- and NGO-led community engagement to inform trail, access and recreation planning processes (including future planning). Investigate grant funding and other opportunities to support these partnerships.
- 3.2.4 Coordinate with regional transportation providers to secure safe and multi-modal transportation options that connect residents to parks, recreation centers, and outdoor spaces.
  - Coordinate with regional transportation providers to secure safe and multi-modal transportation options that connect residents to parks, recreation centers, and outdoor spaces.
  - Explore ways to connect regional parks, outdoor spaces, and Salton Sea wildlife viewing areas with existing and future multi-use paths and trail systems.

### **3.3. Where possible, include equitable access infrastructure in Salton Sea planning and projects.**

- 3.3.1 Include access infrastructure—outdoor gathering spaces, restrooms, lighting, shade structures and drinking fountains—covered as passive recreation access and public amenities in the 10-Year Plan Environmental Assessment, within 10-Year Plan projects.
  - Develop and implement a checklist for incorporating equitable access and recreational features (including features above) into 10-Year project design and development.
  - Coordinate early with Riverside and Imperial Counties and local water providers on restroom and drinking fountain infrastructure and identify opportunities for funding.
- 3.3.2 In partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ensure equitable access for wildlife viewing is considered in long-range planning efforts.
  - Include access for wildlife viewing in the project purpose and need. Develop project alternatives that include equitable access and recreational amenities that support wildlife viewing.
  - Ensure that the public has an opportunity to provide comments on location and type of features as early in the environmental review process as possible.
  - Identify ways to incorporate the “acceptability criteria” developed as part of the SSMP’s [Long-Range Plan](#) into the scoring and evaluation criteria of future Salton Sea projects.
- 3.3.3 To support creative community-led design, continue to implement Salton Sea restoration projects initiated by CBOs, NGOs, and local governments.
- 3.3.4 Ensure access and recreation projects support positive health outcomes by incorporating data on air quality and the receding Sea when siting recreation projects.





- 3.3.5 Develop parks and outdoor gathering spaces, restrooms, lighting, shade structures and trees, picnic areas, walking trails, bike paths, and drinking fountains in shoreline communities. Ensure facilities are accessible for people of all abilities and support different types of recreation.
- 3.3.6 Include cooling and climate co-benefits in the initial design of parks, outdoor spaces, pedestrian and multi-use paths or trails. This should include shade structures and increased native and drought-tolerant tree canopy and vegetation in design and construction of parks, rights-of-way and other outdoor spaces, to prioritize passive cooling.
- 3.3.7 Improve and create new camping facilities at Salton Sea State Recreation Area and at the north end of the Sea.
- 3.3.8 Explore expanding low-cost lodging opportunities for visitors, in addition to camping, while reducing displacement impacts for existing residents.
- 3.3.9 Explore opportunities to establish shared or joint-use agreements between school districts and local governments to increase overall community outdoor space by making schoolyards available to the community outside of school hours.

**3.4. Increase connections with the Salton Sea and provide for more meaningful outdoor and cultural experiences through enhanced signage and programming.**

- 3.4.1 Update and create new multilingual signage and interpretive materials at the Salton Sea, parks and other outdoor spaces to improve accessibility and meaningfully represent and celebrate the cultures and history of the region.
  - Consult with local California Native American tribes, the CA State Parks [Reexamining Our Past Initiative](#) and the [California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names](#) to incorporate best practices in developing materials that incorporate the region's tribal histories, cultures, and pre-contact names; celebrate the region's cultural heritage; and avoid offensive or derogatory language.
  - Consult residents and CBOs to identify additional language and access needs for signage.
- 3.4.2 Provide adequate signage on air and water quality risks at all Sea access points.
- 3.4.3 Explore opportunities, through philanthropy and state and federal agencies, to create museums, and new recreation and cultural centers, or visitor centers at each end of the Sea to serve as gathering places for visitors to learn about its rich wildlife, history, arts and culture. Potential locations identified by community members include Bombay Beach and the existing Salton Sea Recreation Area. These spaces could include educational and arts programming, and offerings, such as gear libraries, outdoor recreation programs, farmers' markets and other food access programming, movie nights, cultural history events, and more.

3.4.4 Support opportunities to partner with California Native American tribes, CBOs and others on internships, event and program offerings, according to community needs.

**3.5. Pursue funding for equitable access, recreation planning and implementation, including for operations and maintenance.**

3.5.1 Explore opportunities to apply to the Wildlife Conservation Board, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Coachella Valley Mountain Conservancy and other funding sources for grants to support a trail planning process that includes wildlife viewing.

3.5.2 Pursue partnerships with federal agencies and local governments to fund recreation and access planning.

3.5.3 Set aside a specific portion of funds annually for supporting access and recreation, similar to the State Water Project Davis-Dolwig Act. Explore using participatory budgeting to utilize funding set aides for access and recreation.

3.5.4 Identify operations and maintenance funding for access and recreation infrastructure, including utilizing the Lithium Severance Tax.

3.5.5 Provide technical assistance to support tribal nations and CBOs, and local governments in obtaining governmental and grant funding for equitable access and recreation projects at the Sea.

## Need 4: Public Health

Communities in the Eastern Coachella Valley and Imperial County have for decades faced severe public health and environmental hazards. Census tracts in shoreline communities are among the most vulnerable to impacts from pollution compared to the rest of California.<sup>21</sup> Imperial County and the Coachella Valley do not meet federal air quality standards due to high rates of fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) and ozone.<sup>22</sup> The exposed Salton Sea lakebed contains arsenic, selenium, and additional toxic elements, and may pose risks to public health.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, many communities in Imperial County and the Eastern Coachella Valley lack access to safe drinking water, rely on aging septic systems, and live close to hazardous waste sites.<sup>24</sup>

These communities also cope with major health issues, including high rates of cardiovascular disease.<sup>a</sup> <sup>25</sup> In Coachella Valley, 12 percent of all residents have been diagnosed with asthma.<sup>26</sup> In Imperial County, which ranks third highest in the state for child emergency room visits for asthma, that rate climbs to 20 percent.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the high need, the Sea's shoreline communities do not have reliable healthcare access. Hospitals are far away, up to an hour to reach by car and several hours by bus.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, there are only 52 primary care doctors available for the 130,000 residents living near the Sea, making the region a Medically Underserved Area.<sup>b</sup> <sup>29</sup>

<sup>a</sup> According to the [World Health Organization](#), cardiovascular disease refers to disorders affecting the heart and blood vessels. They are the top cause of death globally.

<sup>b</sup> A [Medically Underserved Area](#) is a geographic place that lacks access to primary care services, and help direct federal health investments.



Extreme heat fueled by climate change will create additional needs for cooling resources and medical care. Peak summer days in the region often exceed 115° Fahrenheit, and temperatures are expected to increase.<sup>30</sup> Extreme heat is a serious health threat, killing over 600 Americans annually.<sup>31</sup> Governments and institutions must respond with the resources to keep communities safe.

Tribal representatives said they are concerned about the region's air and environmental quality issues. They want to protect the safety of culturally significant materials, such as plants, that tribes rely on for environmental and spiritual health, and other beneficial uses.

Nearly half of residents surveyed identified healthcare centers and clinics, and clean and safe drinking water as the most important infrastructure improvements the community needs. Heat is also a major concern – climate resilient infrastructure, such as cooling centers, shade structures and trees, is a top priority for residents. They also called for faster response times from public safety departments to improve public health outcomes.<sup>32</sup>

The SSMP's dust suppression efforts will reduce air quality impacts from the shrinking Salton Sea, but these projects alone will not solve the region's health problems. Some of this work is happening through the Assembly Bill 617 Community Air Protection Program. As a result of local advocacy, the California Air Resources Board selected the communities of Calexico, El Centro, and Heber; the Eastern Coachella Valley; and Westmorland, Brawley, and Calipatria to represent three of the State's 19 target areas for the program. Each community is receiving targeted funding and engagement to develop and implement new strategies to measure local air pollution and reduce health impacts. These efforts provide a foundation for future collaboration. Governments at all levels, community-based organizations, academic institutions, and healthcare officials should continue to work together and with residents to better understand existing challenges, secure funding, and co-develop solutions. These recommended actions can help build the foundation for this collaboration.

## **Recommended Actions**

### **4.1. Track key public health conditions.**

- 4.1.1 Coordinate with tribal governments and federal, state, and local public health departments to track illnesses brought on by pollution (including dust emissions) and climate (i.e., extreme heat, wildfire, flooding).
- 4.1.2 Collaborate with residents to identify where to locate Salton Sea air quality monitors for measuring dust emissions and use data collected from community air monitors to inform Salton Sea planning processes.
- 4.1.3 Partner with California Native American tribes, academic institutions, and initiatives that involve residents in scientific research (community science) to monitor and research the Sea's water quality, toxic gases (i.e., sulfur containing gases) and microbial emissions, to identify impacts on air quality.
- 4.1.4 Support and expand existing community science initiatives related to climate change and public health at the Salton Sea by providing site visits and increasing coordination with and access for these projects.

## **4.2. Increase access to and integration of public health data.**

- 4.2.1 Share air quality data used to inform current and future restoration projects with the public and other agencies on the SSMP website and community platforms.
- 4.2.2 Explore opportunities for state and local agencies to support and expand existing air quality alert systems for shoreline communities.
- 4.2.3 Ensure timely and coordinated public access to community and regional air quality data collected by state, tribal, and regional governments, local academic institutions, and community-based organizations via local air districts.
- 4.2.4 Incorporate local data from community air monitors, water quality monitoring and health assessments into statewide and local air district health assessment tools to reflect local conditions and increase eligibility for funding opportunities. (See the CalEPA-funded [San Ysidro Community Air Study](#) for project reference)

## **4.3. Reduce exposure to harmful contaminants and related health risks.**

- 4.3.1 Fully implement the Eastern Coachella Valley and Calexico–El Centro–Heber AB 617 Community Emission Reduction Programs to reduce exposure to fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) and toxic air contaminants.
- 4.3.2 Identify opportunities for interventions, such as air filtration systems and weatherization projects for schools and residences, which have been identified for shoreline communities.
- 4.3.3 Explore a working group between SSMP, CNRA, California Environmental Protection Agency and California Air Resources Board on public health, air quality and environmental justice in Salton Sea shoreline communities to share data and develop a path to implement public health interventions that are identified by Salton Sea shoreline communities, but which may be outside the funding and regulatory limitations of SSMP.
- 4.3.4 Accelerate the transition away from high-risk pesticides toward adoption of safer, sustainable pest control practices, in alignment with the Department of Pesticide Regulation's [Sustainable Pest Management Roadmap for California](#).
- 4.3.5 Secure access to safe, affordable drinking water, wastewater, and flood control services in shoreline communities through partnerships with the Coachella Valley Water District's Disadvantaged Communities Infrastructure Task Force, the Imperial Irrigation District, County agencies, and others.

## **4.4. Improve access to critical healthcare services.**

- 4.4.1 Develop regional and community-specific health assessments to track public health outcomes and evaluate program impact. Include key indicators and metrics created with local healthcare organizations, educational institutions, health NGOs, community members and California Native American tribes.

- 4.4.2 Expand free mobile health and asthma clinics to provide accessible, culturally competent, and reliable preventive and urgent medical care services in alignment with community health assessment findings.
- 4.4.3 Establish permanent healthcare and emergency facilities in isolated communities, including North Shore and Calipatria, that serve the breadth of community needs (i.e., mental health services, controlled substance diversion programs, asthma and allergy management programs, senior services, and other specialized care facilities). Identify additional funding to support these services.
- 4.4.4 Support and expand existing social service programs to increase health insurance enrollment and awareness of public health resources.
- 4.4.5 In partnership with local educational and workforce institutions, develop a strong, local, and diverse healthcare workforce by providing occupational and experiential learning programs, and local Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training.

*Great egret at the edge of the Salton Sea.*





## Need 5: Inclusive and sustainable workforce development

Shoreline communities experience high rates of poverty and unemployment. In many Eastern Coachella Valley communities, over 65 percent of residents are living at twice the poverty line, more than the county average.<sup>33</sup> Sixteen percent of residents there are unemployed, compared to 4.1 percent statewide.<sup>34</sup> In November 2022, Imperial County recorded a 16.7 percent unemployment rate.<sup>35</sup> In Imperial County, 19.4 percent of all households live in poverty, compared to 12.3 percent statewide.<sup>36</sup> This may be caused by low-wage industries and few economic opportunities in the region.<sup>37</sup>

The shrinking Sea and climate change could make challenges worse. Odor or dust from the Sea could discourage tourism in the Greater Palm Springs area, which created more than 37,250 jobs and \$644 million in tax revenues in 2021 alone.<sup>38</sup> More dust could cause air regulators to limit agricultural production, while reduced water availability from the Colorado River will cause land use changes impacting the agricultural economy.<sup>39 40</sup> A restored Salton Sea could support local tourism and create the backbone of a new economy based on environmental stewardship and recreation.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile, lithium development at the Sea could dramatically change the region's economy and workforce. CBOs, developers, unions, and local institutions are working to maximize local benefits, including investing in education and training for a local workforce. There are opportunities to build on these efforts to also support a new restoration economy, and work to be done to ensure restoration and stewardship at the Salton Sea leads to high-quality, family-sustaining careers that provide upward mobility for local residents. There are examples that may provide a starting point for this new economy. Alianza Coachella Valley and UC Santa Cruz's [Our Salton Sea: Investing in People for a Thriving Region](#) presents an Inclusive Economy Indicator Framework for achieving an equitable and inclusive economy, and specific and important recommendations based on the region's unique needs.<sup>42</sup> The [Lithium Valley Commission](#) completed a detailed analysis on workforce and economic development related to lithium, with regional recommendations.<sup>43</sup> The Department of Conservation's [Multiple-benefit Land Repurposing Program](#) has established a precedent for mitigating impacts to farmworkers and small farmers from land conversion.<sup>44</sup>

Tribal governments and communities want to participate in these new economic opportunities. Tribes shared the need to integrate traditional ecological knowledge in projects at the Sea, including hiring tribal members as environmental and cultural monitors, and compensating tribes for their expertise. DWR's public entity agreements provide a model.<sup>45</sup> Further consultation with tribes can identify additional tribal workforce development and economic needs, including training and infrastructure ownership opportunities.

Communities want solutions for poverty and unemployment and lack of upward economic mobility.<sup>46</sup> Shoreline residents have identified "good jobs and a healthy economy" as one of the most important improvements for a healthy community. They shared that "green jobs," "assistance and resources

<sup>c</sup> Imperial County was previously designated as a serious nonattainment area for particulate matter 10 (PM10) in part due to windblown dust. It was designated as in attainment in 2020 by the Environmental Protection Agency based on commitments made in the Imperial County 2018 Redesignation Request and Maintenance Plan for Particulate Matter less than 10 Microns in Diameter. However, under this plan, if there are future violations, contingency measures to address fugitive dust could be put in place. These include rules for agriculture, which could severely impact this and other industries in Imperial.

for farm working individuals,” investment from government agencies, support for local businesses, and training for new industries are community priorities.<sup>47</sup> Bombay Beach residents also want to maximize economic opportunities related to arts and ecotourism at the Sea through museums and other infrastructure. These could also support local employment and economic development.

Restoration efforts already underway at the Salton Sea provide career opportunities through state positions, or private contracting and subcontractors. Management projects at the Sea are complex and require a significant amount of planning, engineering, and ongoing monitoring. Permanent positions needed for these projects include specialists in engineering, law enforcement, hydrology, wildlife and habitat conservation, plant propagation, and environmental science.<sup>48</sup> Future opportunities could provide dozens of permanent SSMP jobs locally, spanning engineering, hydrology, operations and maintenance, planning, communications and community engagement, real estate, and wildlife management and monitoring. Currently, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife hosts an office in Bermuda Dunes, but may expand into Imperial in the coming years, providing additional state employment opportunities. At the same time, the Salton Sea Management Program struggles to fill local positions, which may show that more is needed to connect people to these jobs.

Although Salton Sea restoration efforts can provide career opportunities, creating these career pathways takes intention and commitment from employers. Targeted hiring, workforce training, and additional support are needed so residents can access these high-quality, family-sustaining careers, and so the State can fill a range of critical local positions.<sup>49</sup> This is particularly necessary for tribal, under-resourced or low-income communities who face many barriers to entering these field.

More is needed to connect local communities to private contractors and the state. Private contractors and subcontractors provide most work on the active construction phases of restoration projects at the Sea. An Imperial County company was contracted to install irrigation, plant native vegetation, and install bales at the SSMP’s vegetation enhancement projects. At the Species Habitat Conservation (SCH) project, the 4,100-acre aquatic project under construction at the south end of the Sea, Kiewit Corporation is the lead contractor for SSMP. Of its 154 new positions hired for the SCH, 14 are from Imperial, while 73 are from Riverside, 20 from San Bernardino, 11 from San Diego, and 9 from Los Angeles. The remainder are from other parts of California, Arizona, Washington, Oregon, and Nevada. Kiewit Corporation has a project labor agreement for construction, but it does not include specific commitments to local hiring. This may point to the need for incentives to increase job access for tribal, under-resourced, and low-income communities in the Eastern Coachella and Imperial Valleys.

Partnerships between private industry, educational institutions, unions, and workforce training organizations and development boards – which are already underway for lithium development – can also help residents qualify for new and expanded industries.<sup>50</sup> Given the overlap with agriculture skill sets, restoration jobs could provide a pathway for agricultural workers into high-quality, alternate careers with the proper supports. This will require intentional collaboration and coordination between tribes, state and local government, labor unions, private employers, educational institutions, and workforce corps. These recommendations aim to guide this collaboration.

## Recommended Actions

### **5.1. Enhance training and access pathways to high-quality job opportunities in Salton Sea restoration projects for communities in the Eastern Coachella and Imperial Valleys, creating synergies with Lithium Valley efforts where possible.**

- 5.1.1 Pursue partnerships between SSMP and a university/college labor center, local unions, and CBOs to conduct a study on restoration career pathways. The study should identify opportunities to provide high-quality jobs and economic advancement, and how to prepare residents for careers in Salton Sea restoration.
- 5.1.2 Support a local Salton Sea restoration economy by partnering with California Native American tribes; local unions; state and local workforce development boards and governments; and local educational institutions, including Imperial Valley College, College of the Desert, San Diego State, Brawley, and University of California, Riverside. SSMP roles could be to:
  - Build off local workforce development efforts related to lithium by communicating future Salton Sea restoration workforce needs (i.e., demand side analysis of jobs, workforce utilization goals, certification requirements) to inform curriculum, regional training, and workforce development efforts.
  - Explore opportunities to create internships for local youth through partnerships with CBOs, local school districts, community colleges, and universities.
  - Establish a Salton Sea regional career center to be a hub for residents to access jobs related to Salton Sea restoration. This regional career center could assist with outreach and recruitment efforts to diverse communities about restoration jobs and connect to training opportunities, in coordination with Resources, regional workforce boards, and local unions.
  - Conduct broad, multilingual outreach for restoration career opportunities by providing hard-copy job postings and staffing at local career fairs, community events, and community-serving spaces. Share postings on the radio, and digital platforms with high engagement.
- 5.1.3 Partner with the state agencies, local governments and farmworker-centered CBOs to identify opportunities to include farmworkers in Salton Sea restoration careers.
- 5.1.4 Establish partnerships among state and local workforce development boards, local social service agencies, and CBOs to identify barriers for local tribal, under-resourced, and low-income communities to access high-road jobs, including positions with the State and in stewardship and restoration at the Sea.
- 5.1.5 Identify and implement practices to support participation by tribal, under-resourced and low-income residents in education and workforce training, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs through language access and improved access to childcare, transportation, and technology.



## **5.2. Increase job access for tribal, under-resourced, and low-income communities in the Eastern Coachella and Imperial Valleys.**

- 5.2.1 Explore mechanisms with the California Workforce Development Board to use state contracting power to expand access to Salton Sea careers for tribal, under-resourced, and low-income communities in the Eastern Coachella and Imperial Valleys.
- 5.2.2 Based on this input, create contracting incentives or other mechanisms to ensure SSMP contractors demonstrate the creation of high-quality jobs in tribal, under-resourced, and low-income communities, and job access for these communities, through targeted hire plans and other tools. Targeted hiring plans should include strong targeted hiring percentages and commitments to hours for apprentices.
  - Where possible, pursue wrap around benefits for workers, such as childcare, housing vouchers, transportation, technology access, and case management.
- 5.2.3 In alignment with [federal Project-Labor Agreement](#) (PLA) requirements, encourage SSMP contractors to enter into PLAs or Community Workforce Agreements that incorporate strong targeted and local hiring benchmarks, and include equity plans and strategic recruitment policies. Agreements should include the following:
  - Make additional training investments to enable tribal, under-resourced, and low-income communities in the Eastern Coachella and Imperial Valleys to pursue careers in Salton Sea restoration if initial targeted hiring goals are not met.
- 5.2.4 Update procurement policies to give preference to companies that demonstrate a partnership with an educational institution or training program for target hire communities.
- 5.2.4 Contract with local and tribal small businesses for concessions at the Salton Sea Recreation Area.

## **5.3. Increase economic opportunities for California Native American tribes.**

- 5.3.1 Leverage contracting opportunities with local California Native American tribes where possible to increase opportunities for Native American and tribally owned Economic Enterprises, in alignment with [Buy Indian Act](#) and other [U.S. Department of Interior Equity Plan](#) policies. This should include sourcing from local, tribally managed native plant nurseries, and streamlining the contracting processes for tribes, when possible.
- 5.3.2 Hire tribal monitors to enhance the protection of sensitive tribal cultural, ceremonial, or other beneficial resources.
- 5.3.3 Explore opportunities to support California Native American tribes, tribal economic enterprises, and tribal employment rights offices (or equivalent offices at non-federally recognized tribes) by providing pathways and opportunities for tribal workforce, business opportunities and tribal ownership of infrastructure assets (e.g., microgrids).

#### **5.4. Pursue further partnerships with local corps workforce programs as a career entry point for residents.**

- 5.4.1 Pursue contracts with California Conservation Corps (CCC), Tribal Conservation Corps, and the Inland Empire Conservation Corps for trail building and maintenance efforts at the Salton Sea.
- 5.4.2 In alignment with Outdoors for All, develop clear pathways for California Conservation Corps (CCC), Tribal Conservation Corps, and the Inland Empire Conservation Corps members to enter Salton Sea restoration and SSMP careers.
  - Pursue direct entry models in partnership with local unions to ensure that CCC workforce development provides the skills and training for graduates to enter a qualified apprenticeship program with a union involved in Salton Sea restoration efforts or to a state natural resources career.

#### **5.5. Support efforts to improve visitor experiences at the Salton Sea while increasing economic opportunities for residents and local businesses.**

- 5.5.1 Explore working with Visit California and the Greater Palm Springs and Coachella Valley Tourism Bureau to highlight and support local arts and eco-tourism efforts.
- 5.5.2 Work with local groups to identify and provide technical assistance to obtain public and grant funding opportunities for infrastructure and other improvements to improve the visitor experience, including roads, broadband, visitor's centers and museums.

## **Need 6: Expanded transportation access**

Shoreline communities do not have accessible or safe transportation systems to support day-to-day activities. Few residents have access to a personal vehicle, yet local bus routes run infrequently, and most bus stops offer no shade.<sup>51</sup> Some communities, such as Bombay Beach, only have bus service once a week.<sup>52</sup> In Thermal and Oasis, where 84 percent of residents rely on public transportation, the one existing bus line runs just once an hour.<sup>53</sup> Salton City has no public transportation.<sup>54</sup> For those who can drive, high-speed highways, unpaved or poorly maintained roads make travel dangerous.<sup>55</sup> These communities do not have complete sidewalks or bike lanes, and are missing crosswalks, benches, lighting and other features that make it safe to walk or bike.<sup>56</sup> This forces residents to walk on dirt or gravel roads.<sup>57</sup>

Transportation safety improvements are needed and would support health and safety for all residents.<sup>58</sup> In some cases, upgrades would be inexpensive, with Imperial County Transit estimating that adding another weekday service to the Bombay Beach route (51) would cost just \$17,740 a year.<sup>59</sup>

Tribes want to see road improvements on tribal lands and around shoreline communities. This could help improve cultural access and revive ancestral travel routes.<sup>60</sup> While some tribes have transportation plans in place, more information is needed to understand their needs and how transportation safety projects in shoreline communities can support them.

Shoreline communities envision transportation infrastructure that supports their daily lives, without needing a car. In Mecca and North Shore, residents want more bus connectivity to key destinations, like markets and the Yacht Club.<sup>61</sup> In Riverside County, communities identified the need for bus routes that better connect them within the region, through more North-South (Thermal, Oasis) and East-West connections (Oasis, Mecca, North Shore).<sup>62</sup> In Imperial communities, over 70 percent of residents want more walking and bike routes to parks, and 50 percent want bike paths separate from street traffic. They have also called for basic safety features, including more street lighting, complete sidewalks, and shade at bus stops.<sup>63</sup>

Providing safe and accessible transportation in shoreline communities requires overcoming the land ownership, coordination, and funding barriers that limit other community investments. In addition, transportation planning agencies usually prioritize investments based on population, which results in fewer funds going to rural and low-density communities. The following strategies build off existing planning and community engagement efforts to improve coordination and meet local needs.

## **Recommended Actions**

### **6.1. Align SSMP investments with local efforts to improve transportation access to and around the Sea.**

- 6.1.1 Using a “dig once” approach, design and build access roads to support other transportation infrastructure needs in shoreline communities. Identify opportunities for SSMP project access infrastructure to support creating walking and biking paths, and permanent roads with bike lanes and parking lots, paved and managed by local and regional transportation authorities.
- Identify locations and coordinate with local and regional transportation authorities to ensure public transportation, biking, and pedestrian infrastructure connects to Salton Sea access points (i.e., trailheads located near transit stops; complete sidewalks and lighting connecting to access points).

### **6.2. Advance inclusive and coordinated regional transportation planning with tribal consultation, community engagement, and collaboration between local planning authorities in the Eastern Coachella and Imperial Valleys.**

- 6.2.1 Pursue early, often, and meaningful consultation with California Native American tribes for all transportation design and planning processes.
- 6.2.2 Expand and enhance transportation planning across Eastern Coachella and Imperial Valleys through collaboration on transportation improvements across local and regional boundaries.
- 6.2.3 Build on existing community engagement efforts by integrating feedback from shoreline residents into all transportation design and planning processes and continue long-term engagement.



### **6.3. Improve multi-modal transportation across the region to increase safety and access for shoreline communities.**

- 6.3.1 Improve road and highway quality by increasing maintenance, expanding paved roads in rural areas, and adding traffic calming features.
- 6.3.2 Increase and improve public transportation in shoreline communities to connect residents around the region by converting demand-response services into fixed bus routes, increasing bus services and connecting routes across counties, adding north/south services, and improving technologies that provide real time rideshare and bus locations.
- 6.3.3 Explore opportunities to support alternative rideshare options that currently support shoreline communities, such as [Green Raiteros](#) based in the San Joaquin Valley.
- 6.3.4 Increase and improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, including by completing sidewalks, adding high-visibility crosswalks, and establishing bike lanes and routes.
- 6.3.5 Improve transportation safety and accessibility for all residents by increasing lighting, shade structures, and benches along pedestrian and bike routes and at bus stops. Entities should explore opportunities to deliver improvements through collaboration and cost-sharing.
- 6.3.6 Prioritize transportation projects in shoreline communities identified in existing transportation plans, including the Torres Martinez Cahuilla Indians Tribal Transportation Safety Assessment (2017); the Regional and Neighborhood Mobility Plans for Unincorporated Communities of the Eastern Coachella Valley; the Climate Resilience Action Plan for the Eastern Coachella Valley; and the Imperial County's Regional Active Transportation Plan, Pedestrian Master Plan, and Climate Action Plan.

### **6.4. Increase transportation investments in shoreline communities.**

- 6.4.1 Explore ways to adjust grant application criteria to increase funding opportunities for rural, shoreline communities.
- 6.4.2 Identify sustained funding for operations and maintenance of public and active transportation features to ensure long-term safety and accessibility.

## **Need 7: Climate action**

Climate change will have serious impacts on Salton Sea shoreline communities. Imperial County ranks among the top 10 most climate vulnerable counties in the United States because of extreme heat and the number of residents with health issues.<sup>64</sup> Climate change is also predicted to increase drought, wildfire smoke, and flash flood events, which create additional health and safety risks for residents, especially outdoor workers. Less water supply from the Colorado River will also have environmental, health, economic and political consequences for the region.<sup>65</sup> Shoreline communities will need stronger information and emergency networks, and infrastructure to achieve climate resilience.

Communities experience power outages triggered by wind and storms that can last for days.<sup>66</sup> This is unsafe for under-resourced households to lose access to refrigeration, air conditioning, and medical equipment, especially during extreme heat.<sup>67</sup> Hotter temperatures will further challenge the electricity grid and increase demand. Investments in more reliable and clean energy are needed to support the community's ability to respond to and cope with climate change.<sup>68</sup> The Imperial Irrigation District (IID), as the lead energy provider, has a unique opportunity to reduce climate impacts and increase grid reliability by investing in grid upgrades, renewable energy generation, conservation, and electrification programs.

In response to climate change, tribes in the region are interested in creating stormwater infrastructure based on tribal expertise and traditional ecological knowledge. They have also asked for state and regional support for their climate action and adaptation plans that also honor their natural differences in tribe specific plans.<sup>69</sup>

Shoreline residents and advocates highlight climate action as a priority for their communities. They have repeatedly called for “multi-benefit and climate resilient infrastructure projects” that provide community greening, gathering spaces, and shade.<sup>70</sup> They also want electric vehicle charging infrastructure, microgrids, stable electricity, and clean and stable water supply.<sup>71</sup>

New climate policies and funding at the state and national levels present exciting opportunities to invest in climate action and prioritize community needs. Government at all levels can intentionally direct these investments to shoreline communities to meet many of the region's climate challenges. To realize these benefits, leaders must balance the need to act quickly with the need for meaningful community engagement, decision-making, and design. Local governments and planners will also need to address hiring challenges and actively pursue funding opportunities to build climate infrastructure projects. The following recommendations elevate and add to existing efforts.

## **Recommended Actions**

### **7.1. Explore opportunities to support the region's transportation electrification.**

- 7.1.1 Where feasible, install public electric vehicle charging infrastructure that feeds excess power generated back to the grid at Salton Sea parking lots.
- 7.1.2 Explore opportunities to accelerate the electrification of vehicle fleets.
- 7.1.3 Support fleet electrification in the Imperial and Eastern Coachella Valleys in compliance with South Coast Air Quality Management District's Eastern Coachella Valley Community Emissions Reduction Plan (CERP), Imperial County Air Pollution Control District's Calexico-El Centro-Herber CERP, and CARB's Advanced Clean Trucks regulation.
- 7.1.4 Electrify bus fleets and shuttle services for lines serving Salton Sea communities.

- 7.1.5 Establish partnerships between Caltrans, Coachella Valley Association of Governments, Riverside County Transportation Commission, Southern California Association of Governments, and Imperial County Transportation Commission to install truck EV charging stations in key locations in Eastern Coachella and Imperial Valleys.
- 7.1.6 Provide technical assistance support for tribes, local businesses, and residents to make clean energy and electrification, and energy efficiency upgrades.
- 7.1.7 Identify partnerships and opportunities to establish electric vehicle rideshare stations in shoreline communities, and other high-need areas in the Eastern Coachella and Imperial Valleys.

## **7.2. Advance regional energy resilience.**

- 7.2.1 In addition to community resilience centers, incorporate renewable energy power, battery storage, and micro-grids at SSMP-managed buildings and sites where feasible.
- 7.2.2 Pursue state and federal funding including Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act funds for tribal and rural communities to upgrade, modernize, and decarbonize the regional electricity system and effectively manage demand.
  - Invest in projects that serve both the Eastern Coachella and Imperial Valleys through stable and resilient transmission and distribution. Design projects in alignment with Justice40 principles and federal infrastructure funding requirements around providing community and workforce benefits.
- 7.2.3 In alignment with local General Plan Housing Elements, explore opportunities to integrate self-generation, electrification and energy efficiency features into all existing and new affordable housing projects that serve Salton Sea communities. Support low-income homeowner and renter access electrification, energy efficiency and weatherization, and solar power upgrades to ensure access to air conditioning.

## **7.3. Invest in multi-benefit infrastructure that buffers shoreline communities from extreme heat, associated power outages, unhealthy air quality, and additional climate impacts.**

- 7.3.1 Establish community resilience centers at the Sea that can provide free shelter, internet, and heating or cooling during emergencies. Structures should be weatherized, energy-efficient, and incorporate renewable energy power, battery storage, and micro-grids, where possible.
  - Support local entities in pursuing funding through California Strategic Growth Council's [Community Resilience Centers Program](#), California's [Extreme Heat Action Plan](#), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's [Environmental and Climate Justice Block Grants](#), and [Tribal Climate Resilience](#) by sharing funding notices and writing letters of support.
- 7.3.2 Using Desert Recreation District programming as a model, provide public health-related programming and resource support at community and recreation centers, such as food pantries and health fairs.



- 7.3.3 Establish partnerships between local governments, CBOs, NGOs, and community services districts to engage in the planning and design of projects to align with community needs.

#### **7.4. Support tribal climate action and resilience.**

- 7.4.1 In coordination with the California Office of Planning and Research, support development of tribal climate action and adaptation plans to identify infrastructure and climate needs.
- 7.4.2 Explore opportunities to increase support for tribes to develop community resilience centers in tribal communities.

#### **7.5. Improve shoreline communities' ability to respond to climate-related emergencies.**

- 7.5.1 Invest in improved emergency notification systems across Riverside and Imperial counties to provide preparedness and emergency notifications in multiple languages, including Spanish and Purépecha.
- 7.5.2 Explore pathways to provide emergency services support and funding to increase the capacity of unincorporated communities to respond to emergencies. This includes fire houses and other emergency equipment storage.

#### **7.6. Invest in water programming and infrastructure improvements that promote sustainability, resilience, and efficiency.**

- 7.6.1 Advance agricultural water-use efficiency projects, crop changes, and other regional land use changes in ways that also promote environmental justice, ecosystem health, and landscape rewilding. This includes providing resource support to farmworkers, such as a displaced workers fund, and wildlife and habitat conservation efforts.
- 7.6.2 Identify opportunities to expand or use as a model the California Department of Conservation's Multi-benefit Land Repurposing Program to areas experiencing land use changes around water, inclusive of communities at the Sea.
- 7.6.3 Design public spaces to passively harvest rainwater and mitigate stormwater during heavy rainfall.

## Need 8: Broadband access for all communities

Salton Sea shoreline communities do not have sufficient access to broadband internet. In the Eastern Coachella Valley, nearly ten percent of places that could have high-speed broadband do not have access.<sup>d</sup> Over 20 percent of Imperial households do not have high-speed access. The need in these areas is well above the state average of 2.7 percent.<sup>e 72</sup> Unequal broadband access, known as the “digital divide,” can cause social disconnection, and mental and physical health impacts, especially for older adults and youth.<sup>73</sup> It prevents residents from accessing jobs, healthcare, educational and training opportunities, and other vital programs and benefits, and responding quickly during disasters.<sup>74</sup> Increased dependence on the internet since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic has only made this divide worse.<sup>75</sup>

Expanding broadband access requires better infrastructure and more funding. This includes installing the infrastructure to transfer data from global to local internet networks, and then to local buildings (last-mile and middle-mile infrastructure).<sup>76</sup> Because there are higher costs to build in rural areas, private companies often choose not to invest.<sup>77</sup> Shoreline communities have poor infrastructure, like unsafe roads, and landscape challenges like extreme heat and wind that make it harder and more expensive to install or maintain broadband.<sup>78</sup> The state’s designation of these counties as urban rather than rural reduces the per-household funding they receive.<sup>79</sup> For many low-income households, the cost of this technology is an added challenge.<sup>80</sup>

For tribes, lack of broadband access is a barrier to preserving their cultures and building internal structures for self-governance, economic opportunity, health, and education.<sup>81</sup> Regional tribes want to see more broadband service in their communities. They worry that current efforts are not enough to close the digital gap in the long-term.<sup>82</sup>

For over a decade, residents and CBOs near the Salton Sea have called for household and community broadband access. Communities have requested broadband access at the Sea itself, including at the Salton Sea State Recreation Area, community centers, and through proposals like Alianza’s concept for a community space at North Shore.<sup>83</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, Coachella Valley Unified School District supported wireless hotspots for students.<sup>84</sup> North Shore has deployed GeoLinks to provide high-speed wireless services in that area. This has sparked interest in using wireless services to provide short-term broadband access while more permanent infrastructure and affordability solutions are created.<sup>85</sup>

The state and federal government are making historic broadband access investments, which could be used to support shoreline communities. This includes a \$6 billion, multi-year investment in California’s Broadband for All programs, an additional \$550 million for middle-mile infrastructure construction, and \$2 billion of federal last-mile investments, along with millions of dollars for tribal and rural broadband.<sup>86</sup> Riverside and Imperial Counties are working to expand broadband infrastructure and affordability by connecting to these and other grant programs. However, more

<sup>d</sup> The Eastern Coachella Valley is defined here based on the [Coachella Valley Census County Division](#).

<sup>e</sup> Lack of access to broadband in these areas is based on the State’s definition of “unserved locations.” The [California Public Utilities Commission](#) defines “unserved locations” for the California Advanced Services Fund for broadband infrastructure as “an area for which no wireline broadband provider reliably offers broadband service at speeds of at least 25 Mbps downstream and 3 Mbps upstream to the entire community.”

community support, coordination through “Dig Smart” approaches, and investment incentives are needed to close the digital divide. Specific recommendations are outlined below.

## **Recommended Actions**

### **8.1. Expand high-performance and affordable broadband at the Salton Sea, and tribal and shoreline communities.**

- 8.1.1 In alignment to the [Broadband for All Action Plan](#)’s “Dig Smart” approach, coordinate regionally and implement a “Dig Once” policy for SSMP and other projects when possible. Dig Once refers to an infrastructure construction approach that reduces barriers and costs by stacking projects. It is used for expanding broadband (Dig Smart), in which future broadband utilities, such as fiber optic cable, are installed at the same time as road construction, lowering costs by reducing the need for multiple construction projects. This approach could be enhanced by including other key infrastructure, such as electricity grid upgrades.
- 8.1.2 Support State Parks’ efforts to expand broadband access at the Salton Sea Recreation Area and coordinate to ensure these investments support increased access for shoreline communities.
- 8.1.3 Include publicly available, free Wi-Fi in project plans for all community infrastructure projects in shoreline communities and at the Sea.
- 8.1.4 Leverage state contract pricing and require contractors to include Wi-Fi at restoration projects near underserved communities, lowering infrastructure costs.
- 8.1.5 Support Coachella Valley Unified School District and Imperial County Office of Education in efforts to provide broadband access to residences and schools.
- 8.1.6 Support internet access for all unserved locations in Salton Sea shoreline communities via temporary wireless hotspot providers until regional broadband access is achieved.

### **8.2. Accelerate coordinated regional planning efforts for broadband.**

- 8.2.1 Coordinate across county jurisdictions to continue expanding middle-mile infrastructure to the east and west of the Sea, to provide durable and lasting broadband access.
- 8.2.2 Coordinate across counties to increase participation in the federal Affordable Connectivity Program in shoreline communities.
- 8.2.3 Explore opportunities to host a California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) broadband internet caseworker in the Salton Sea region. Inform community residents and local planning entities of opportunities to engage in digital equity and broadband planning.
- 8.2.4 Partner with and provide resource support to CBOs and NGOs to provide digital literacy programming for devices needed to use the internet.
- 8.2.5 Provide technical assistance for local and tribal governments to engage in CPUC and Broadband for All Initiatives and for obtaining state and federal funding to expand broadband access for unserved and underserved areas.



# Appendices

# Appendix A

## Terminology

- **California Native American tribes:** California Native American tribes refers to both federally recognized and non-federally recognized California Native American tribes.<sup>87</sup>
- **California Natural Resources Agency (Resources):** The California Natural Resources Agency oversees and supports more than 26 distinct departments, conservancies, and commissions.
- **Climate resilience:** Climate resilience is the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate. Climate resilience is often associated with acute events – like heat waves, heavy downpours, hurricanes, or wildfires – that will become more frequent or intense as the climate changes.<sup>88</sup>
- **Community Needs:** This Report uses the term “community needs” in the context of vital infrastructure, investment, and program needs that lead to healthy, resilient, and just social, economic, and environmental outcomes. The community needs in this report originate from the long-term work of community-based organizations (CBOs) to build understanding at the Salton Sea to communicate that restoration and management should entail more than restoration projects.
- **Community science:** “Scientific research and monitoring, based on scientific modes of inquiry, which are (i) community-driven and community-controlled, (ii) characterized by place-based knowledge and social learning, collective action and empowerment, and (iii) with the normative aim to negotiate, improve and/or transform governance for stewardship and social-ecological sustainability.”<sup>89</sup>
- **“Dig Once” policies:** “Dig Once” refers to an infrastructure construction approach that reduces barriers and costs by stacking projects. It is used for expanding telecommunications, roads, and other infrastructure by coordinating construction for projects so that they happen at the same time. This lowers costs by reducing the need for multiple construction projects.<sup>90</sup>
- **Environmental justice:** The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, incomes, and national origins, with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.<sup>91</sup>
- **Equity:** This Report uses the term “equity” as defined in the context of social and racial equity, where “equity” refers to the fairness of achieving outcomes for all groups and no one factor, such as race, can be used to predict outcomes.<sup>92</sup>

- **Nonattainment area:** Nonattainment areas are areas of the state that do not meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards for certain air pollutants established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and as directed by the Clean Air Act.<sup>93 94</sup>
- **Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP or Program):** The California Natural Resources Agency, the California Department of Water Resources, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife all comprise and implement the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) to address air quality and ecological threats at the Salton Sea.<sup>95</sup>
- **Salton Sea shoreline communities:** The actions presented in this Report focus on predominantly rural, unincorporated shoreline and near-shore communities at the Salton Sea due to the disproportionate environmental and health impacts these communities may face because of the receding Sea. For the purposes of this report, shoreline communities are defined to include Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indian Reservation, Thermal, Mecca, North Shore, and Oasis, located in Riverside County's Eastern Coachella Valley, and Bombay Beach, Salton City, Desert Shores, Westmorland, Calipatria, and Niland, located in Imperial County.
- **Traditional (or Tribal) Ecological Knowledge (TEK):** California Native American tribes' traditional practices for land stewardship consider the need for sustainability and regeneration for future generations. As with many other first peoples, these traditional practices and knowledge have been maintained and passed down through generations and make up the basis of what is termed traditional (or tribal) ecological knowledge.<sup>96</sup>
- **Tribal Beneficial Uses:** California Native American tribes use California's surface waters in a manner unique to tribal culture, tradition, ceremonies, and lifeways. The California Department of Water Resources defines Tribal Beneficial Uses as a group of beneficial uses that can help protect activities specific to Native American cultures and their uses of California waters, including the consumption of non-commercial fish or shellfish. Tribal Beneficial Uses can also be referred to as cultural uses of water.<sup>97</sup>
- **Unserved and underserved broadband areas:** The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) defines an "unserved" area as one "for which no wireline broadband provider reliably offers broadband service at speeds of at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) downstream and 3 Mbps upstream to the entire community." The CPUC defines "underserved" areas as those that "have less than three service providers that do not provide wireline service at speeds of 100 Mbps."<sup>98</sup>



# Appendix B

## Methodology

Better World Group Advisors (BWG) reviewed the best available literature on the Salton Sea and regional communities. These resources included many years of oral and written comments from community residents and advocates, together with reports, letters, papers, needs assessments, and surveys developed by state, federal and local governments, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, philanthropy, and higher education. A complete list of resources is included in Appendix H, the reference list at the end of this document.

The Report is also informed by community members' lived experience and expertise, as provided through original community engagement and research. With support from the Salton Sea Authority, Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) and Imperial Valley Environmental Justice Coalition engaged residents and gathered feedback through a community survey, tabling events, and focus groups. Their work helped ensure that community concerns and recommendations were integrated into this document.

Findings from the following community outreach and engagement efforts and other sources are reflected in the document:

- **Tribal consultation:** The SSMP hosted three virtual inter-tribal focus group sessions to discuss regional needs specific to Tribal communities and incorporate Tribal feedback into the Report. Each session was approximately two hours, and convened representatives from seven regional tribes.
- **Review of existing materials:** Residents and community-based organizations have already provided considerable input on Salton Sea issues. BWG reviewed all available public comments received on the Salton Sea over the last decade.
- **One-on-One Interviews:** As part of an information-gathering process to provide updated information and context to available research, BWG conducted over 60 interviews with community residents; community-based organizations; representatives from federal, state and local governments; and representatives from philanthropy and education.
- **The Salton Sea Regional Community Benefits Working Group:** BWG supported the SSMP to convene a Salton Sea Regional Community Benefits Working Group from summer 2022 through spring 2023. The Working Group brought residents and advocates together with tribes, local, state, and federal government, including the SSMP, to develop a collective understanding of existing initiatives to address community needs, and gaps. Following a broader kick-off meeting, sessions focused on particular issue areas to highlight and learn

about existing programs, funding, and implementation opportunities, as well as key barriers or gaps. These five sessions covered transportation, recreation and equitable outdoor access, broadband, and public health.

- **Kounkuey Design Initiative and Imperial Valley Equity and Justice Coalition Direct Community Outreach:** In December 2022, the Salton Sea Authority issued a Request for Proposals for a community partner to lead outreach on community needs, to incorporate within the Report Non-profit Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) was selected to direct outreach with the communities in Eastern Coachella and worked in partnership with Imperial Valley Equity and Justice Coalition, in Imperial County, to further ground truth findings from the landscape analysis and working groups. This outreach included community feedback from 255 individuals through community tabling events in Brawley, Calipatria, Westmorland, Salton City, El Centro, Calexico, and Thermal, as well as five virtual and in-person focus groups that engaged 55 community participants from both Riverside and Imperial Counties, representing youth and older adults. KDI and IV Justice and Equity also collected more than 500 community surveys online and in-person. Residents were compensated for completing surveys and participating in focus groups. See *survey and mobile engagement results in Appendix F*.
- **Audubon/Bureau of Reclamation Community Surveys:** In summer 2022, the Audubon Society led a separate community engagement process, funded by the Bureau of Reclamation, to elevate local needs tied to recreation habits, desired amenities, and desired future activities at the Sea. In a community survey, Audubon collected feedback from 631 adult residents near the Salton Sea in English and Spanish over the phone and online. Additionally, 41 adult Purépecha residents were interviewed in the indigenous Purépecha language. Key findings from this study will be integrated into Audubon's Public Access Landscape Suitability Analysis, anticipated for release in summer 2023, and are integrated into this Report's equitable outdoor access recommendations.
- **Workshop on Outdoor Access Infrastructure for the Salton Sea Long-Range Plan:** In fall 2022, BWG and SSMP facilitated an interactive community workshop to identify where community members want outdoor access infrastructure, for consideration in future long-range planning at the Sea. Community members participated by moving outdoor access infrastructure icons onto a map of the Salton Sea, which represented: restrooms, shade structures, lighting, water fountains, parks, recreation and cooling centers, visitor access points, hiking trails, wildlife viewing areas, camping areas, picnic areas, boat access points, fishing areas, hunting areas, bike trails, public transportation stops, and parking. The findings of this workshop are incorporated in Chapter 6 of the [Salton Sea Long-Range Plan](#).
- **Presentations at SSMP meetings:** BWG and the SSMP presented on community needs at multiple SSMP or community meetings, including virtually and in-person in Bombay Beach and Calipatria, where participants provided comments and feedback on what they would like to see in this process.



Results of the Outdoor Access Infrastructure Workshop for the Salton Sea Long-Range Plan.



# Appendix C

## Salton Sea Region Tribes

California's Native American tribes have a deeply rooted history in both the Eastern Coachella Valley (ECV) and Imperial Valley, a presence spanning over 12,000 years. The Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians' reservation is located along the northwest side of the Sea, and much of their lands include the shoreline and the lakebed. The tribe considers the shoreline, their original lands that are within the lakebed and the surrounding landscape as their cultural and spiritual base. The region is traditional homelands of Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, Cupeño, Kumeyaay (Diegueño/Kamia/Ipai/Tipai), and Quechan currently represented by the following Tribal governments:<sup>99</sup>

- Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Augustine Band of Mission Cahuilla Indians
- Barona Band of Mission Indians
- Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
- Cahuilla Band of Indians
- Campo Band of Diegueño Mission Indians
- Colorado River Indian Tribes of the Colorado River Indian Reservation
- Chemehuevi Indian Tribe
- Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians
- Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel
- Inaja-Cosmit Band of Indians
- Jamul Indian Village
- Kwaaymii Laguna Band of Mission Indians
- La Posta Band of Diegueño Mission Indians
- Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeño Indians
- Manzanita Band of the Kumeyaay Nation
- Mesa Grande Band of Diegueño Mission Indians
- Morongo Band of Mission Indians
- Pala Band of Mission Indians
- Quechan Tribe of the Fort Yuma Reservation
- Ramona Band of Cahuilla
- San Pasqual Band of Diegueño Mission Indians
- San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians
- Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians
- Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation
- Torres -Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
- Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians
- Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians

# Appendix D

## Organizations Consulted or Interviewed

The organizations, agencies, and governments listed below were consulted or interviewed by Better World Group Advisors, and/or participated in a Salton Sea Regional Community Benefits Working Group as the Report was developed.

- Alianza Coachella Valley
- Audubon California
- Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Augustine Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Burke Rix Communications
- California Conservation Corps
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Department of Technology
- California Department of Water Resources
- California Energy Commission
- California Environmental Protection Agency
- California Natural Resources Agency
- California State Assembly
- California State Parks
- California Wildlife Conservation Board
- CactusToCloud Institute
- City of Calexico
- Coachella Valley Association of Governments
- Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy
- Coachella Valley Unified School District
- Comité Civico del Valle
- Council of Mexican Federations in North America
- Desert Healthcare Foundation
- Desert Recreation District
- Earth Advocacy
- EcoMedia Compass
- Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians
- Iipay Nation Of Santa Ysabel
- Imperial County
- Imperial County Department of Public Works
- Imperial County Workforce Development Board
- Imperial Irrigation District
- Imperial Valley Economic Development Corporation
- Imperial Valley Equity and Justice Coalition
- Imperial Valley Wellness Foundation
- Inland Congregations United for Change
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 569
- Kounkuey Design Initiative
- Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
- Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy
- North Shore Residents
- NorthEnd Alliance
- Pacific Institute
- Riverside County
- Salton Sea Authority
- San Diego State University
- Sierra Club
- Southern California Association of Governments
- State Water Resources Control Board
- Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation
- Tetra Tech
- Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians
- United States Department of Energy
- University of Oklahoma
- University of Southern California
- Urban Conservation Corps of the Inland Empire

# Appendix E

## Salton Sea Community Benefits Survey & Mobile Engagement Findings

### Salton Sea Community Benefits Survey: Survey Questions

The following questions were included in KDI's Salton Sea Community Benefits Survey.

1. Which age group are you in?
  - Under 18
  - 18 – 25
  - 26 – 45
  - 46 – 64
  - 65+
2. Which of the following best describes your gender?
  - Transgender
  - Non-Binary
  - Gender Nonconforming
  - Female
  - Male
  - Other gender, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which of the following races or ethnicities do you identify as?  
CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY:
  - American Indian / Mexico Native
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - Hispanic / Latino-a / Latinx
  - Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Other race or ethnicity not listed above, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
4. What community, city, or town do you currently live in? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your primary way of getting around? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

- Car
- Walking
- Biking
- Public transit
- Ride-share (Uber, Lyft, Raitero, etc.)
- Carpool (friends, relatives, known person)
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

6. If you have visited the Salton Sea State Park or the Salton Sea shoreline in the last five (5) years, what brought you there? how did you get there? \_\_\_\_\_

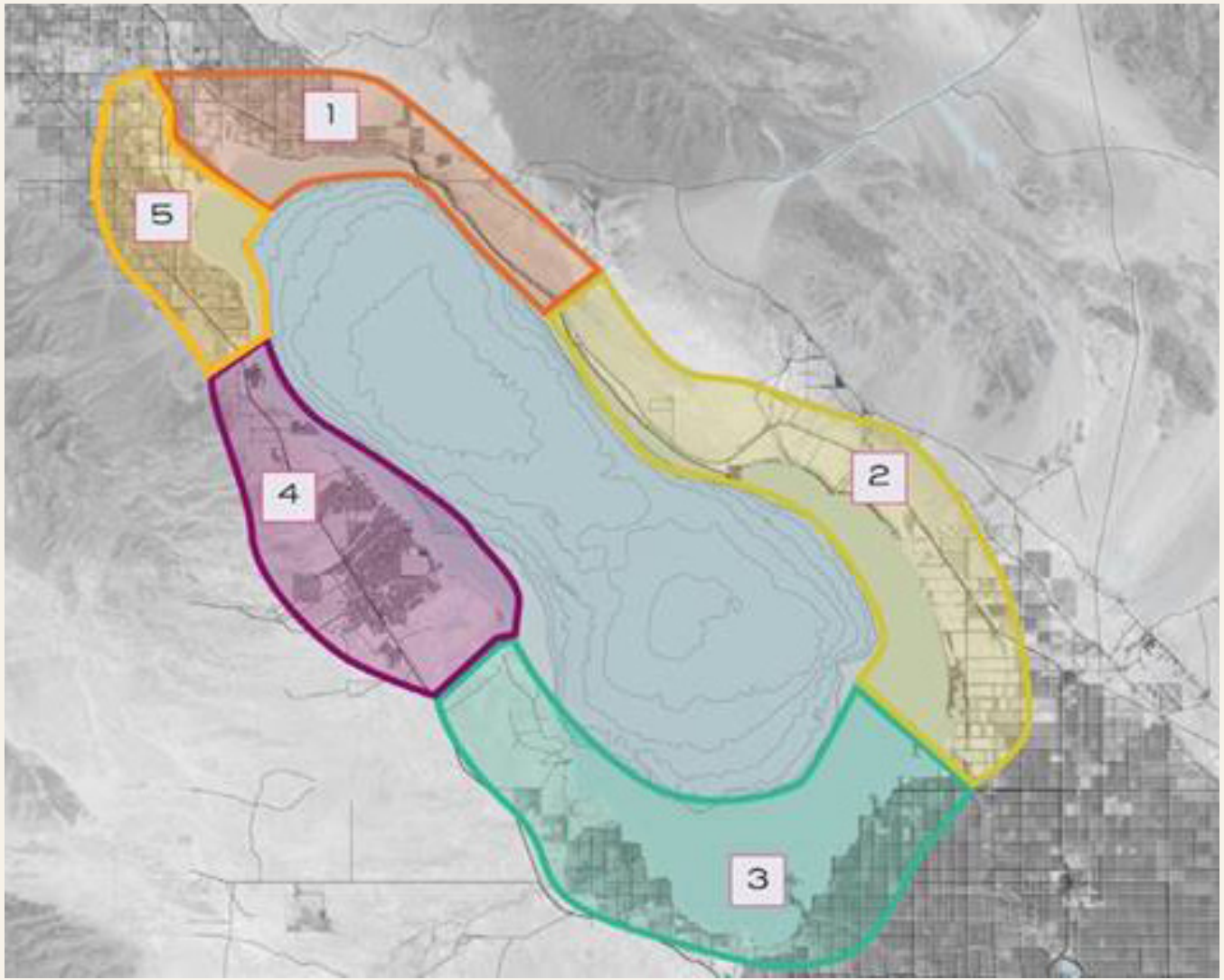
7. What are the two (2) main transportation improvements needed to get you easily to the Salton Sea?

- Improving vehicle access to the Salton Sea near my community
- Public transportation access from my home or community hub
- Active transportation access (non-motorized methods) like bicycle and pedestrian paths
- Safe roads (cross walks, traffic lights, speed bumps, etc.)
- Other (please specify transportation improvements) \_\_\_\_\_

8. The Salton Sea has the potential to become a vibrant recreational center for our local communities and for outside visitors. What are the top five (5) programs and improvements that are most important to you?

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| ◦ Walking paths                | ◦ Vending machines                       |
| ◦ Bike paths                   | ◦ Community spaces                       |
| ◦ Fishing piers                | ◦ Parks                                  |
| ◦ Boat ramps                   | ◦ Indigenous history and story telling   |
| ◦ Lighting                     | ◦ Science and outdoor education programs |
| ◦ Shade                        | ◦ Cooling centers and shade              |
| ◦ Restrooms                    |  |
| ◦ Water fountain               |  |
| ◦ Other (please specify) _____ |  |





9. Using the Salton Sea map above, which zones would you like to see the programs and improvements you selected in question 8? Choose your top three (3) zones.
- Zone 1
  - Zone 2
  - Zone 3
  - Zone 4
  - Zone 5

**10.** In the following list, what do you think are the three (3) most important infrastructure improvements for a healthy community? (the factors that you think can improve the quality of life in your community?)

- Parks and recreation
- Clean and reliable transportation (i.e.: electric buses, bikes, & scooters)
- Affordable housing
- Good jobs and healthy economy
- Climate resilient infrastructure (cooling centers, shade, etc.)
- Healthcare centers and health clinics
- Reliable energy source
- Clean and safe drinking water systems
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**11.** Finish the following sentence: I want the Salton Sea to be

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**12.** In order to claim your \$10 gift card, we need a way to get in touch with you. Please fill out the information below:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

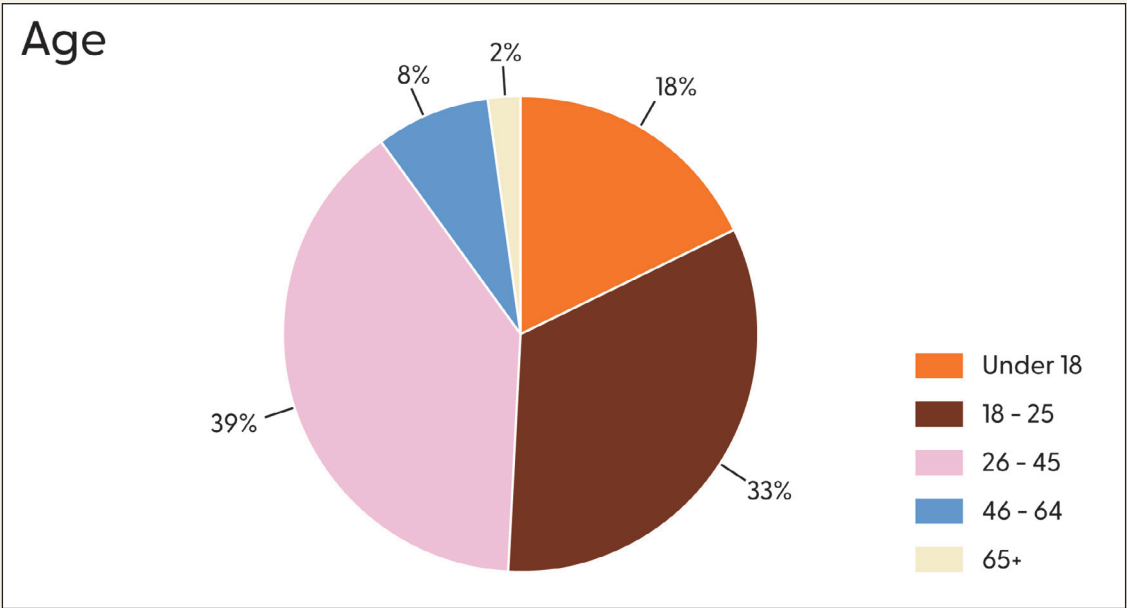
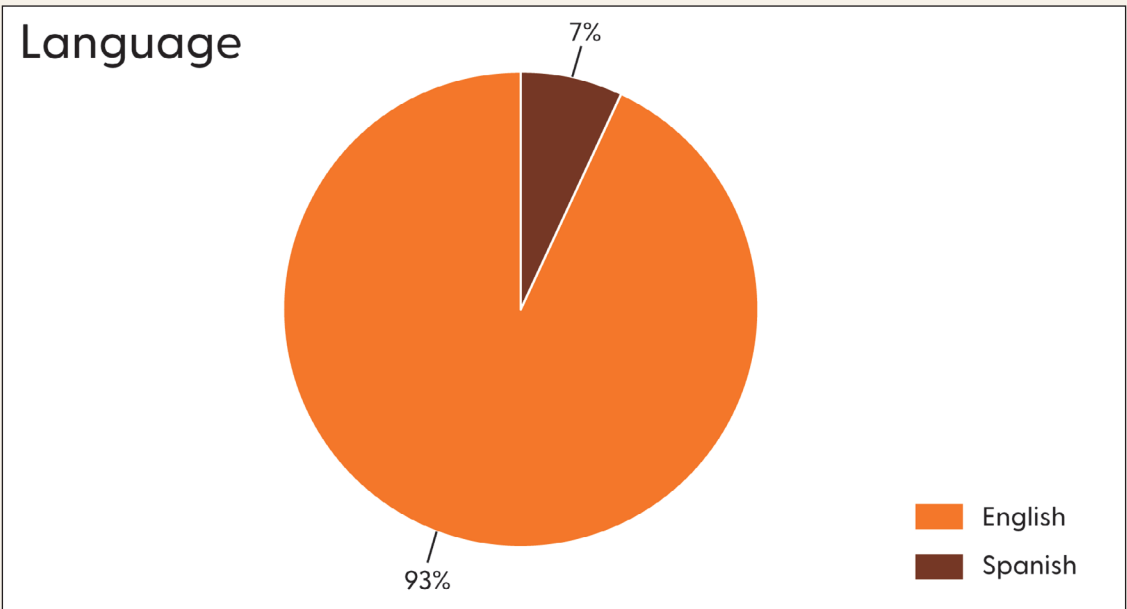
Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

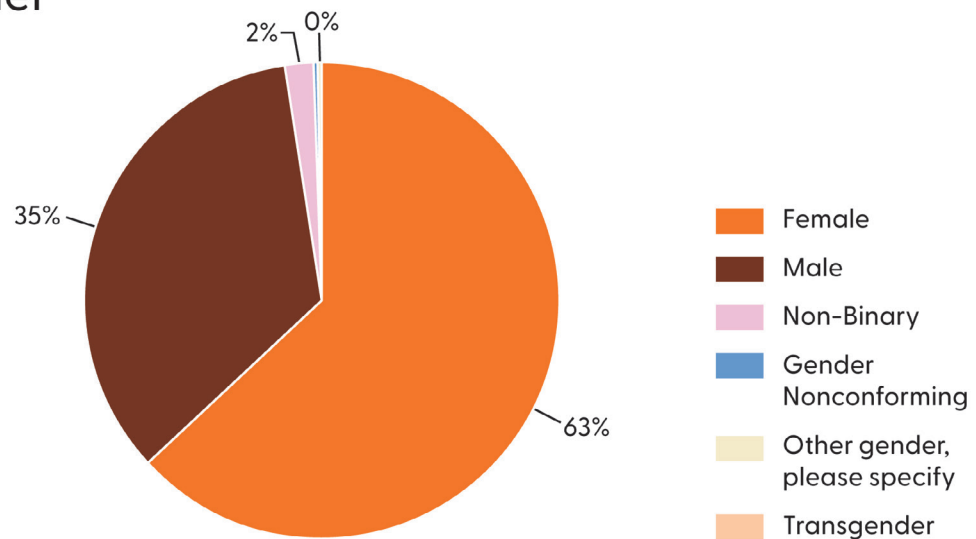
# Salton Sea Community Benefits Survey: Survey Findings

## A. Survey Participants

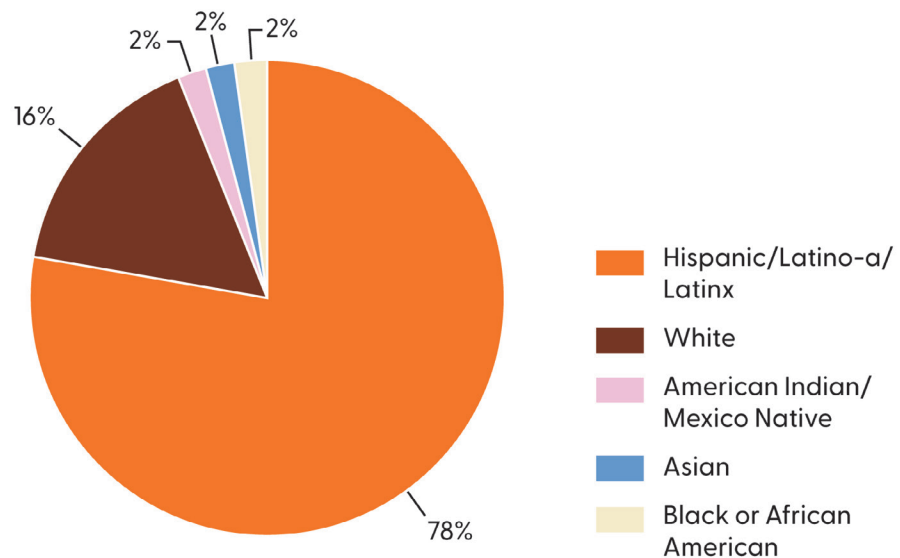
508 community members completed KDI's Salton Sea Community Benefits Survey between December 14, 2022, through January 23, 2023. 95% of surveys were completed in English. Residents most engaged are aged 25 to 45 years old, with 63% of respondents identifying as female and 75% of all respondents identifying as Hispanic and/or Latino-a/Latinx.



## Gender



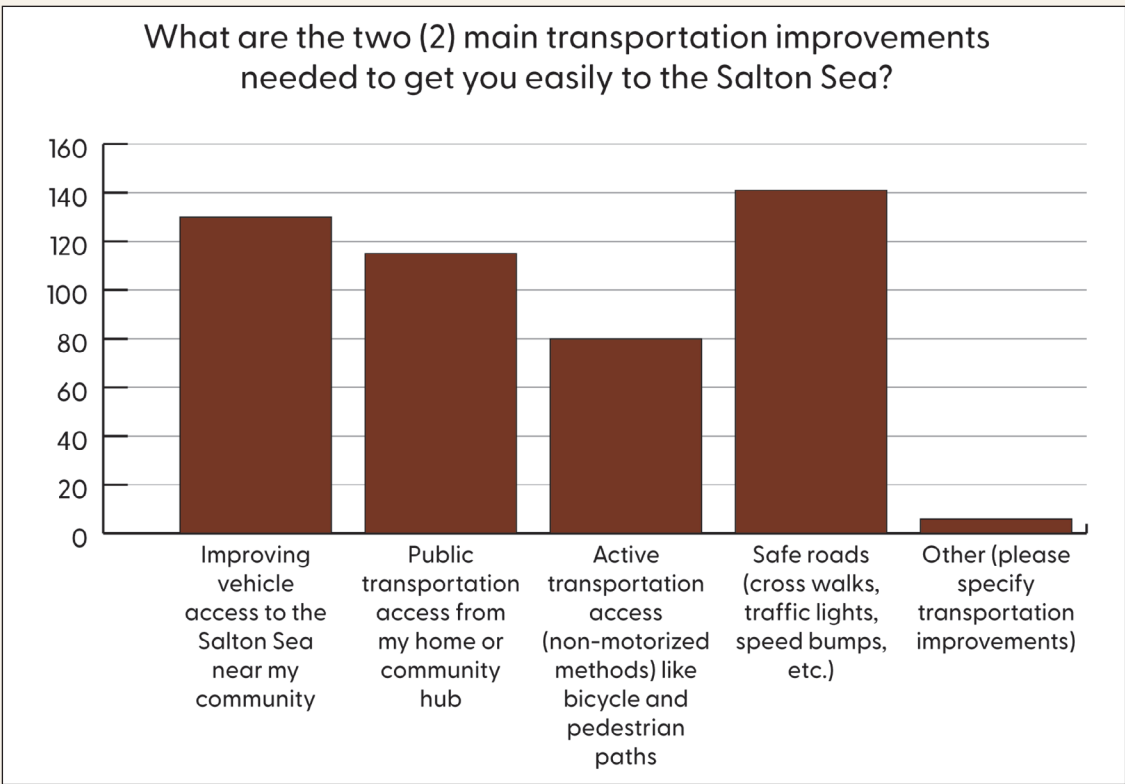
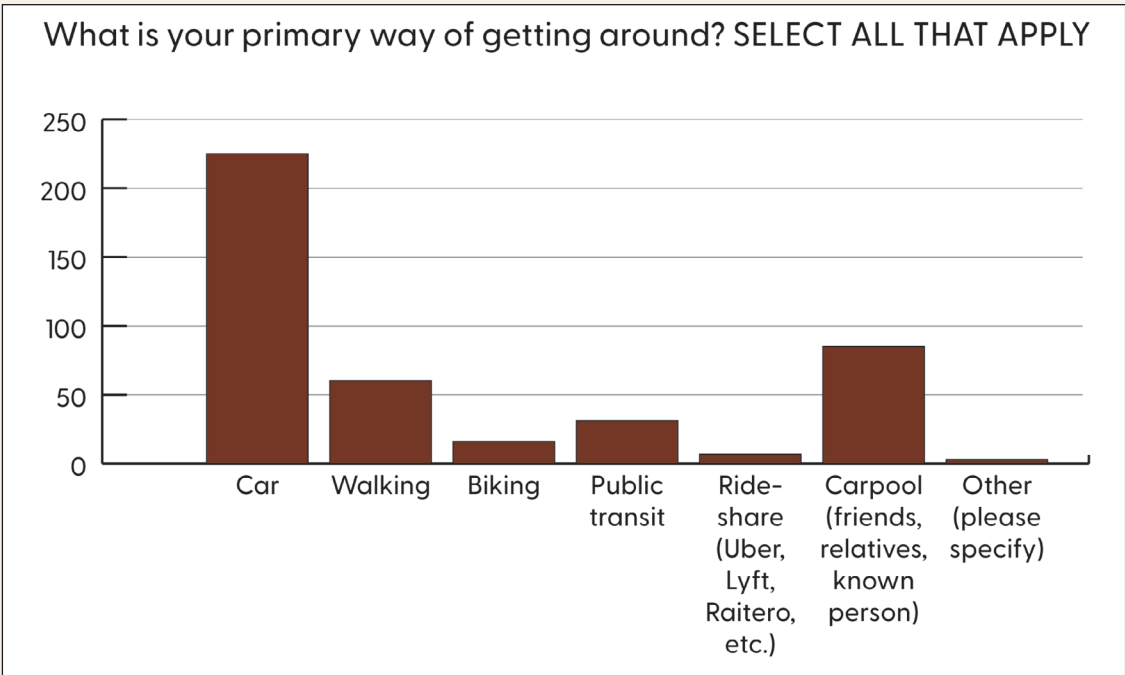
## Race





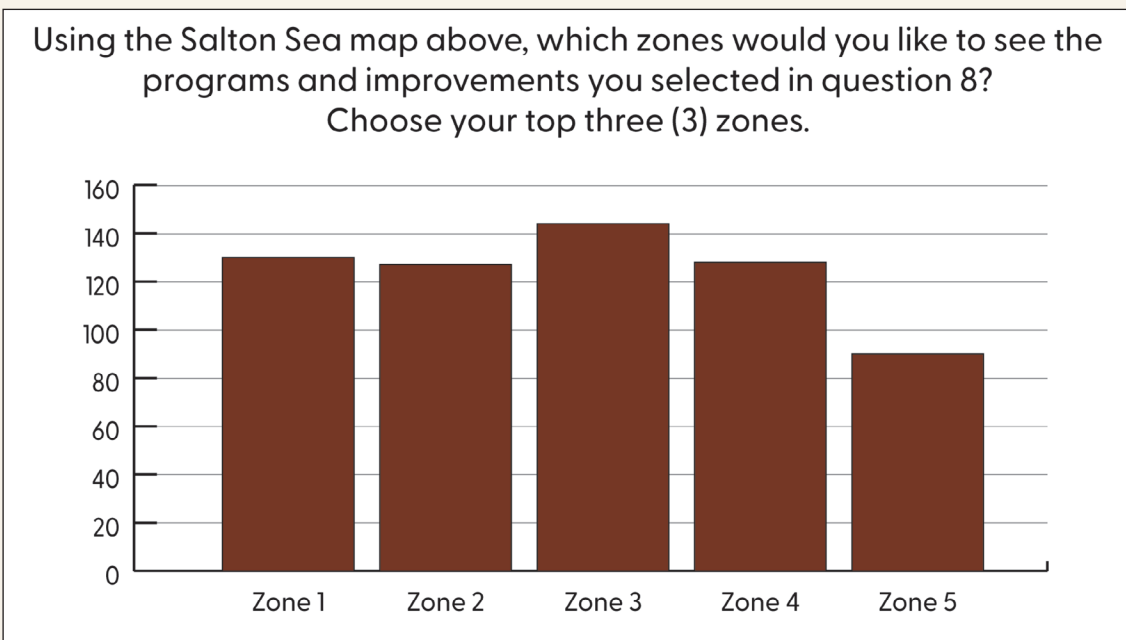
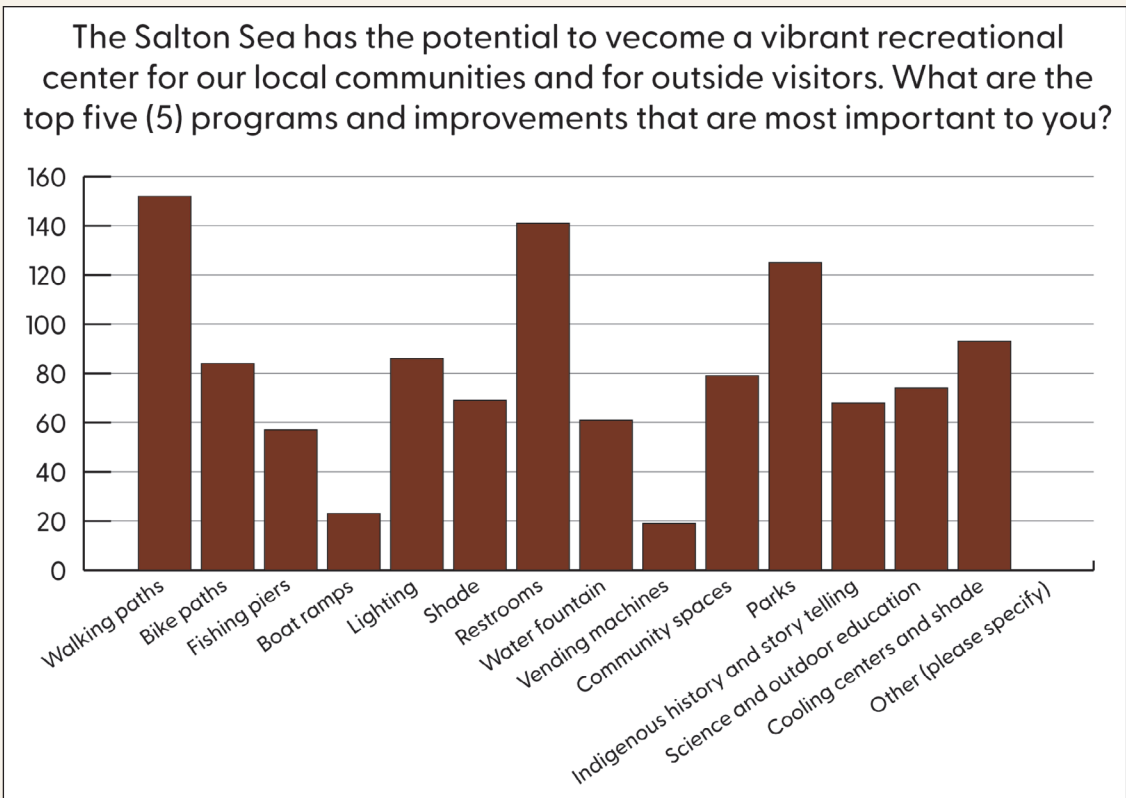
## B. Transportation

Over 300 survey respondents shared that a car is their primary mode of public transportation. This was followed by public transportation with over 100 results. More than 250 survey respondents said they would like to see improvement to public transportation access near their community as well as improvement to road safety and vehicle access to the Salton Sea.

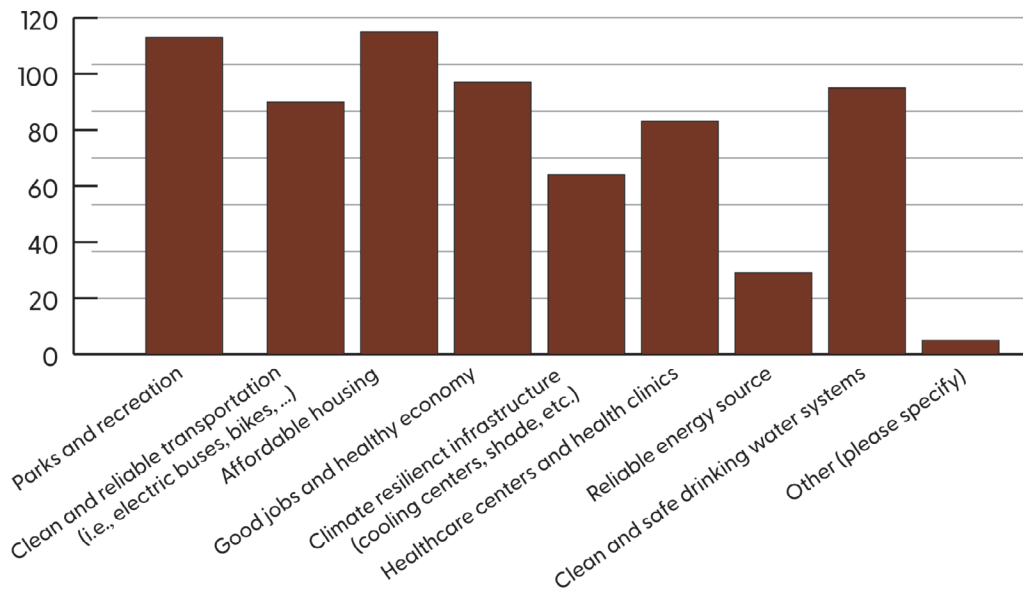


### C. Outdoor Recreation and Infrastructure

The highest ranked outdoor access amenities included parks and walking paths, while housing and clean/reliable transportation were noted as the highest ranked infrastructure needs. Survey respondents would like to see these investments made near Bombay Beach, Niland and the south shoreline of the Salton Sea.



In the following list, what do you think are the three (3) most important infrastructure improvements for a healthy community? (the factors that you think can improve the quality of life in your community?)



## Mobile Engagements

KDI also engaged approximately 225 residents through nine mobile engagements at communities in Eastern Coachella Valley and Imperial County to measure support for community needs previously identified by community members under the categories of: (1) Transportation; (2) Recreation; (3) Place making; and (4) Infrastructure. Participants were asked to identify their top five community needs from more than 30 options (noted below). Results were tallied for each category as follows:

### Transportation

- Street lighting: 70 votes
- Public transportation: 65 votes
- Bus shelters: 65 votes
- Paved roads: 55 votes
- Sidewalk: 28 votes

### Infrastructure

- Medical clinics: 76 votes
- Ecological restoration: 72 votes
- Wi-fi: 56 votes
- Cooling centers: 43 votes
- Green jobs: 37 votes
- Informal economy: 37 votes

### Recreation

- Parks: 85 votes
- Trails/bike paths: 67 votes
- Shoreline access: 57 votes
- Bird watching: 42 votes
- Camping: 38 votes
- Kayak: 16 votes

### Place making

- Shade tree: 68 votes
- Community gathering: 67 votes
- Community art: 48 votes
- Community narrative: 34 votes



# Appendix F

## References

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- <sup>10</sup> Desert Healthcare District & Foundation. (2020). *Community Health Needs Assessment of the Coachella Valley*. Retrieved April 4, 2023, from <https://www.dhcd.org/Community-health-needs-assessment-reveals-Coachella-Valley-s-health-priorities-and-inequities>.
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