

# SSMP Community Engagement Committee Charter

## Charge

The Community Engagement Committee (Committee), formerly known as ‘Outreach’ Committee, is an advisory committee to the State of California’s Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP). The Committee will advise and assist the State in engaging local communities and other interested stakeholders to **inform** and **solicit meaningful input** regarding health, air quality, environmental, and social aspects of SSMP projects, for the State to integrate into the Phase 1: 10-year Plan and long-range planning for the Salton Sea. The Committee shall advise and assist the State on tasks related to community engagement such as:

- Assist the State and serve as a conduit for all SSMP committees in the planning of timely and meaningful ways to engage and involve the public in important decisions by providing for early, open, continuous and effective public participation processes.
- Determine and develop methods to analyze and improve the effectiveness of engagement efforts.
- Utilize or leverage the collective networks of the Committee members to assist the State in engaging and disseminating information.

The Committee will also provide the State counsel and assistance in communicating clear messages for local communities and other stakeholders concerned with the Salton Sea and the SSMP, to ensure the messaging is consistent and aligned with messages from other local and regional Salton Sea-related efforts and the SSMP communications plan.

As the Committee is entirely advisory in nature, and has no governmental powers in and of itself, the proceedings of the Committee are not subject to state or federal open meeting laws. However, all Committee meetings will be open to any interested person to observe and time will be reserved for public comments.

## Committee Principles

While the focus of this Committee is to advise the State on its engagement regarding the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP), the Committee is mindful of past and current environmental injustices and their interconnectedness with the work of the SSMP. In its role advising the State, the Committee is determined to being inclusive of all by implementing accepted principles underlying equity and environmental justice.

Far too long, those excluded from where decisions are made have suffered from the many health risks environmental degradation poses, such as air pollution exposure, proximity to hazardous waste sites, ingestion of water contaminants, pesticides, dust,

and energy production; and lack of community amenities like parks, active transportation facilities, community centers, and so much more.

Frontline communities within the Salton Sea Region have fought long struggles in the courts, at the local government level and they have helped pass legislation at the state level to ensure accountability in order to protect the health of communities and the environment.

Environmental justice requires California leaders to respect and acknowledge that these frontline communities are experts in creating solutions for the Sea, despite their historical exclusion from decision-making and from public resources and services.

Environmental justice also asks for:

- Prioritizing and valuing prevention, public health, and improved quality of life
- Decisions must not do further harm to frontline communities
- Seeking out and facilitating the involvement of those potentially affected
- Prioritizing Tribal and frontline communities
- Meaningful community engagement
- Being proactive
- Taking an intersectional approach
- Being responsive
- Respecting and acknowledging community expertise

The Committee acknowledges the critical need to communicate consistently, clearly, and appropriately with environmental justice groups and frontline communities. It is important to make additional efforts to inform frontline communities of the Salton Sea Region about projects with environmental justice findings implications for their neighborhoods and families. The Committee will work to reach out early and often to these communities, in language that is understandable and accessible to local communities that face limited English proficiency, lack access to formal education, broadband connectivity, and experience other obstacles to engagement. They will also augment outreach with nontraditional communication methods, for example, the use of social media, flyers, community meetings, town halls, surveys, language translation and interpretation services, and focus groups targeted at populations who face barriers to participation. To ensure that specific outreach efforts are effective, Co-chairs and State liaisons will ask community groups, organizations, and members of the Committee for their suggestions and preferences for adjusting these techniques for any given matter.

The Committee shall also practice and be mindful of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion by not tolerating discrimination against an individual's age, ancestry, color, disability (mental and physical), gender, gender expression, gender identity, marital status, medical condition, education, income, geographic location, military or veteran

status, national origin, political affiliation, race, religious creed, sex (includes pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and related medical conditions), and sexual orientation or a combination of any of these factors.

Committee members or environmental justice groups that would like to further discuss the contents of these Committee Principles, may reach out to California Natural Resources Agency Assistant Secretary for Equity and Environmental Justice.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Members**

Committee members are selected to represent Tribal governments, local communities and key stakeholder groups, as well as for their expertise in reaching and meaningfully engaging those that would otherwise be difficult for the State to reach. This diverse membership will include many perspectives and resources that will make the State's efforts of engagement and outreach more effective, meaningful, and comprehensive. Members will:

- Represent and communicate with constituent groups, by sharing information about the SSMP and providing input into the engagement planning process.
- Provide guidance to the State on overall planning, strategies, and activities to meaningfully reach and engage local communities in SSMP updates and project planning.
- Support the efforts above by publicizing, helping to plan, and participating in these activities as possible and where relevant.

### **Committee Commitment**

Members of the Committee will hold themselves accountable to do the following:

- Strive to attend as many Committee meetings or Committee-related meetings as possible.
- Strive to attend as many SSMP public meetings as possible to participate in the Committee's role to evaluate and provide feedback on the quality and effectiveness of the meeting, while also providing recommendations for improvement if applicable.
- Assist the State with the dissemination of meeting information and materials.
- Be respectful of other Committee member concerns, perspectives and opinions, even when they conflict with their own.

- Respond in a timely manner to communications by the Chair(s) and other members, including when requested to provide input or edits into SSMP messaging by email.

## **Annual Review**

### **Membership and Committee Composition**

On an annual basis, the Annual Review Working Group, a sub-group of the Committee, will conduct a review of existing membership to:

- Identify if there are any gaps in representation within the existing membership including their respective networks. If gaps are identified, the Committee will work with the State to fill vacancies while being mindful that the number of members should be within a threshold to allow for constructive and productive meetings. Committee members can nominate a candidate for CNRA consideration and approval. Nominations shall consist of a short description as to who they represent and the reasons they would be a valuable addition to the Committee
- Allow existing members to choose whether or not they can or would like to continue serving on the Committee. If a member chooses to step down, and there is no organizational or formal alternate assigned, the Committee will work with the State to fill vacancies.
- Identify Committee members that are not active on the Committee either by low meeting attendance or by the lack of assistance to the State in the dissemination of meeting information, engagement with their respective networks, assistance with making engagement more meaningful, etc. The Committee or Annual Review Working Group will reach out to those identified to understand why participation was low and determine if there is still interest in Committee membership. If there is still interest, determine if there is something that could be changed, on either end, to improve participation. Depending on the modification identified, it may be discussed at a CEC meeting with members or elevated to CNRA for consideration.

### **Charter Review**

On an as needed basis, the Annual Review Working Group, will conduct a review of the Community Engagement Charter to identify and recommend updates to the State.

### **Committee Chair(s)**

The Co-Chairs of the Engagement Committee, with support from the State's Liaisons, will:

- Schedule quarterly Committee meetings and ad-hoc meetings at the State's request, with members providing input on the Committee's meeting schedule and overall topics for discussion.
- Work with the State Liaisons to develop meeting agendas, ensuring meeting topics are effectively integrated with State planning needs, and email proposed meeting agendas for review and input by members.
- To ensure meetings are productive and well documented, work with State Liaisons to circulate meeting materials a week before meetings; send draft meeting summaries for members' review and input; and provide final summaries to the State for posting on the CNRA Salton Sea website and sharing with other SSMP Advisory Committees.
- Provide facilitation of meetings to promote participation and inclusivity, either by Chair/Co-Chairs or a State Liaison.
- Participate in meetings with other Committee Chair(s) to ensure SSMP planning and messaging is well coordinated and integrated.
- Share updates and request input from members by email as necessary.

### **Chairs Composition & Selection**

The Co-Chairs of the Committee shall be comprised of representatives from the Salton Sea Region: one representative from Riverside county and one representative from Imperial county, so as to equally represent the surrounding communities of the North and South sides of the Salton Sea. Each Co-Chair position will consist of a four-year term that are staggered by two years to provide consistency in leadership to the Committee. The Co-Chairs may be extended by mutual agreement of the Co-Chair and the State. Co-Chairs may take a leave of absence for a period up of no more than two-years and may nominate an alternate from their organization to serve in their place. Failure to return from an absence of two-years and resume the responsibilities of Co-Chair will enable the State to name a replacement or allow the Committee to begin the nomination process for a new Co-Chair.

The Nomination process for selecting a new Co-Chair will be as follows:

- Committee members will be allowed to nominate one existing committee member (including themselves) by email to the State during the nomination period.
- After the nomination period as closed, the State shall evaluate all nominations and recommendations to then determine the next Co-Chair.

### **State Liaisons**

State Liaisons will include representatives from the California Natural Resources Agency and its departments—including Water Resources and/or Fish and Wildlife—and consultants. State Liaisons will work with the Committee to meet the objectives described in the Committee Charge.

## **State Commitment**

Specifically, State Liaisons will commit to:

- Working with Committee Chair or Co-Chairs to distribute meeting information to Committee members at least a week in advance of the quarterly meeting.
- Reporting back information to the Committee as it pertains to outreach and engagement, such as methods used to perform outreach and facilitate accessible and equitable meetings, meeting attendance, and comment or questions received.
- Sharing relevant engagement and project schedules at quarterly meetings.
- Responding to Committee member nominations and recommendations in a timely manner.
- Be respectful of Committee member concerns, perspectives, and opinions, even when they conflict with their own.

**Committee Members & State Liaisons - See Attachment**

**ATTACHMENT**  
**Committee Members - (updated October 2024)**

Patricia	Cooper	Riverside County Office of Supervisor Perez
Juan	De Lara	SSAC
Shelby	Dill	Imperial County Vegetable Growers Association
Lauren	Elachi	Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI)
Adonis	Galarza	FIELD
Maximiliano	Ochoa	Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy
Genevieve	Johnson	Bureau of Reclamation Lower Colorado Region
Sara	Lockett	California State Parks
Mariela	Loera	Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
Krystal	Otworth	Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
Patricia	Meister	Sea and Desert Interpretive Association
Jose	Mora	Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
Kerry	Morrison	EcoMedia Compass
Karen	Nelson	Sea and Desert Interpretive Association
Luis	Olmedo	Comité Cívico del Valle
Isamay	Pasillas	Comité Cívico del Valle
Antonio	Ortega	Imperial Irrigation District
Aydee	Palomino	Alianza Coachella Valley
Chuck	Parker	Salton Sea Coalition
Silvia	Paz	Alianza Coachella Valley (Co-Chair)
Esmeralda	Perez	Riverside County
Marco	Perez	29 Palms Band of Morongo Indians
Belen	Leon	ICAPCD
Thomas	Brinkerhoff	ICAPCD
Christian	Rodriguez	Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI)
Aaron	Rojas	Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
G. Patrick	O'Dowd	Salton Sea Authority
Camila	Bautista	Audubon California
Altrena	Santillanes	Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
Tom	Sephton	EcoMedia Compass
Darren	Simon	SDCWA
Lisa	Santos Tabarez	FIELD
Thomas	Tortez	Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
Rebecca	Terrazas-Baxter	County of Imperial (Co-Chair)
David	Villarino	FIELD
Eric	Reyes	Los Amigos de la Comunidad
Kim	Floy	Sierra Club
Ryan	Atencio	CARB
Leah	Mathews	CARB

**State Liaisons to the Committee include:**

Miguel	Hernandez	CNRA, Public Affairs Officer
Mario	Llanos	CNRA, Deputy Secretary for Salton Sea Policy
Noaki	Schwartz	CNRA, Assistant Secretary for Equity and Environmental Justice
Evon	Willhoff	DWR
Josh	Zipperman	Burke Rix Communications