

Little Hoover Commission  
925 L Street, Ste 805  
Sacramento, CA. 95814

Re: Salton Sea

Dear Sir/ Madam Commissioner.

I am a 15-year resident of southern California, 34 year resident of the Colorado Basin and a father of three girls who I raised in the shadow of the negative effects of the Salton Sea. I visited the Salton Sea in the early 80's and again in 2002 through 2015 and was amazed at what I saw there; the biological damage, the stripped denatured hills and encroaching desert sand reminded me of the failures and fall outs of inaction I have seen in Colorado, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, in North Africa, and Australia. I never expected to see such a waste of resources from the world's 5th largest economy and a state with the reputation of being tree huggers and lovers of nature to the extreme.

I spoke briefly at your last hearing raising the point that I did not think that the restoration of the sea was something that was achievable, not because of physical or financial reason but purely political. Since that time events have changed that give me hope that I am 100% wrong.

This spring IID petitioned the State's responsibility outlined in the QSA to restore the Salton Sea. Last week the IID released their draft SSERI plan at a cost of \$3.2 billion. The IID plan does include a method to pay back taxpayers. It also addresses required mitigation efforts for some habitat creation and dust control. Nevertheless, I cannot wholesale adopt the DRAFT plan because the long-term vision for payback and job creation is not realistic. The plan does not address the state's need for local decentralized power generation that does not have hundreds of miles of exposed and vulnerable power distribution cables. The 207 page draft plan does not effectively address changes that will affect sea levels including salinity that would kill wildlife, creation of enough habitat to sustain wildlife along the Pacific Flyway, the support of the regional ecology, and political changes. Reports and studies give warning and show increase of new quakes from geothermal injections; the sea's proximity to the San Andreas Fault should give everyone pause for concern. This renewable source does have its benefits, but it is not the only way to create clean power and water in the region. It needs to be a multiple-technology approach. Above all, we need to plan for the next 7 generations by securing water sources that won't run out.

**Long-Term plan for California.**

The Salton Sea and most of Southern California are water stressed because of three major reason that I have not seen addressed in "any" plan, this is the change to the ecologies of the Colorado Basin, the numerous dams and the "Law of the river" which manages the consumption of its waters. Without addressing these three items, every plan for the Salton Sea and Southern California water issues will remain in a critical state with more exposed land that will increase the pollution to all residents of the state, devalue the state land, reduce real-estate property taxes and contribute to local and global pollution.

I would encourage the commission to take a broader view of the problem and include all the real stakeholders in its final recommendation to the governor. The commission should consider that seven states and numerous tribal nations are a party to this drought, without which, any taxpayers money spent on restoration of the sea will be wasted on local band aid restorations that will fail.

The fountain of water for the south is the great Colorado Basin, the restoration of the lands that surround and feed rivers and wetlands within the basin will provide jobs and water for generations. The Salton sea and the entire southern Colorado Basin in any form depends on the ecology of the northern basin. What we have changed in the northern and upper quadrants of the southern basin through our well-intentioned actions needs correction, the seven states and tribal nations working together using well-studied and proven intervention methods must spend a collective effort to restore the ecology of the Colorado basin to ensure a steady water cycle from the north.

I would ask the commission to recommend a "water" caucus of the seven states, the tribal nations, and the federal government with the agenda of the restoration of the Colorado Basin. The caucus will come to agreements on the "shared" cost of restoring the basin, a cost that should not be the sole burden of any single state but shared across seven states and tribes with the major brunt placed on the business that created the change in the basin. The members must immediately negotiate interim water release from dams exceeding 100% capacity along the Green River so it can augment the Colorado River flow and enable California to take more than its 4.4 million acre feet per year to refill its local reservoirs. I would further ask the commission to recommend strategic deployments of low cost "water farms" in humid areas of the seven states that will generate "uncontested" water that will continue to enhance the flow of rivers and tributaries to the Colorado. The commission can recommend the deployment of smaller water towers for farmers and coastal communities that will lessen the burden on aquifers, and reservoirs within the state of California.

The caucus should be the launch of a multi state super fund that is focused on the restoration of the ecology of the Colorado Basin. This superfund of seven states and tribal nations must be used to augment existing funded programs such as the U.S. Army and Shell Oil Company who are currently working together on successful programs in and around the Rocky Mountain Arsenal with funds and pledges from corporations that already exceed \$80 million. In addition, the commission would recommend a caucus agenda that will cover the collective taxpayer investments in existing small-scale restoration projects to expand their successes. The caucus should consider the efforts of the Federal Lands Policy Management Act (FLPMA), the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) and the efforts of BLM who created a long-term plan with emphasis on water conservation. The CDCA plan that cost six million taxpayer dollars and 2 years which included 130 scientists who created a massive seven-volume document. The water caucus should consider the success of the Little Snake River Project that was started in 1999 and has spent \$38 million so far and restored over a million acres. It should include the American Rivers organization that has great success in restoring rivers and wetlands across the country.

The superfund should augment the Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative, Intermountain West Joint Venture, Colorado River Recovery Program, Bureau of Land Management's Colorado Plateau Rapid Eco-regional Assessment, Bureau of Reclamation's Colorado River Basin Study and the Southern Rockies, and Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperatives. These are just a few of the current programs and small-scale successes that have shown that intervention is required to achieve restoration. The superfund would also be available for local projects in the most impacted areas around the Salton Sea and advanced water treatment projects should be funded to expand their programs. The immediate expansion of the creation of desalination plants at the sea should be high on the agenda, as this will protect the current life in the sea that cannot wait. The externality of desalination is salt, which can be sold to defer expenses and excess can be distributed into the ocean by rail and ship. Creation of wetlands and replanting of the exposed land around the sea will provide local meaningful jobs for the local citizens. These are just a few samples and examples of the projects that can be funded now with the superfund, because they all directly influence the California water shortage and the life or death of the Salton Sea.

For a long term, multi-generational bilateral approach with our neighbors in Mexico, we also have the option of importing seawater and desalinating it benefiting both economies and opening many more new jobs. The commission should be aware and update the governor that many nations with similar climates use this technology, the Middle East has begun a Red Sea to Dead Sea project that will produce tremendous amounts of fresh water, while restoring the Dead Sea. If Israel, Palestine and Jordan can agree on sharing water, we can do something similar with Mexico.

To bring awareness to long-term sustainability, we have planned a highly publicized Sea-to-Sea Walk for October of 2016. Our large and growing social following is on track to make this a national sensation. A walk for water, from the Sea of Cortez to the Salton Sea will include residents of both countries. We also have the opportunity to set a global example of how to look past borderlines and secure sustainable resources for an entire region.

We have tremendous renewable options in our state, with proper utilization, can give us a forever-constant stream of fresh water that we have ignored. We simply cannot expect that pulling all of the freshwater resources out of the interior won't have serious ramifications to our state.

In summary while the State is obligated to restore the Salton Sea, I would hope that it would recognize that its obligation is not alone and the restoration is a collaborative effort not a singular responsibility. Grants are currently available for restoration projects across the Colorado Basin on [grants.gov](http://grants.gov). Supporting these and or enhancing them would be the best use of taxpayer's money for the restoration of the Salton Sea and its supporting lands.

The Salton Sea will not restore itself with just the addition of water, reduction of size or the generation of power. It will take projects at the Salton Sea that restore the surrounding ecology in concert with programs upriver that will need to be expanded beyond pilot and new projects to restore the ecosystems within the sea. To help the commission assess the value of this effort the commission should be reminded of the "non-use" value of sea that was reported in 2007. It was conservatively estimated at \$1-\$5 billion dollars per year loss and expenses if the sea and its areas were to be ignored, in reality we can expect this cost to be doubled by 2020. I urge you to look past the status-quo and act on what will benefit the people and environment, in the long term.

Little drops of water make a mighty ocean; collaborative efforts across seven states, tribal nations and the federal government will ensure success to the restoration program and a 7 generation long-term water solution to the southern state.

Sincerely,



Alexander Ramia

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