Salton Sea Management Program

Air Quality Committee Meeting Summary

Held February 6, 2018 – Imperial, California

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

Meeting in Brief

The Air Quality Committee's primary focus was to learn about existing and potential measures for reducing dust associated with the Salton Sea playa to improve air quality in the region. Staff from the Imperial County and South Coast Air Pollution Control Districts identified concerns, regulations, and other resources to realize these goals. Imperial County will hold public workshops in May or June this year on its draft State Implementation Plan (known as SIP). Participants would like to continue advancing air quality improvements and joint data collection, public education, dust control measures, coordinated policies, and public education.

The California Air Resources Control Board is ready to assist both Districts and IID to draft protocols to assess the efficiency of dust control projects and to re-write parts of the BACM that will then fit with the needs and activities going on at the playa and with the Salton Sea. The South Coast and Imperial County Air Pollution Control Districts would like to develop common language and rules for the Salton Sea in cooperation with CARB. CARB could also help with measurement tools on the playa.

Follow up

- The Committee would like to identify air quality goals for the Salton Sea.
- The Committee could work with CARB and Air Districts to share rules and develop common language and coordinate on measurement tools and BACM development.
- IID will share its dust control work plan when ready.
- IID will share validated data quarterly with the Torres Martinez beginning this year and is working to post the validated data online.
- Public access can create emissive soils. Projects will have to consider concerns related to access and public safety.

Presentations are located at: http://resources.ca.gov/salton-sea/

Air Districts on Dust Control Rules for Open Spaces

Speakers: **Matt Desert** and **Reyes Romero**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District and **Kevin Durkee**, South Coast Air Pollution Control District

Imperial County APCD

Matt Desert and Reyes Romero from the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District spoke to the group. The District is focusing on the 10-Year Plan and Red Hill Bay beyond Salton City area from Imperial to Riverside. The exposed shoreline is a concern for the County District. Fragmentation of the soil crust and the follow-on wind creates air quality concerns.

Another significant source is off-roading in the Anza Borrego and elsewhere.

The District is developing a formal document, known as a State Implementation Plan or SIP, to address PM10. The SIP will go to the Board for approval in May or June 2018. The District will hold public workshops on SIP before taking it to the board. This is the third attempt to have the US EPA approve the SIP. The SIP is trying to demonstrate impacts of PM10 from all sources, including international sources such as transportation from Mexico.

The District sees the opportunity to apply innovative measures to the Salton Sea. The District amended the process in 2016 with a rule to allow different entities to apply innovative solutions; however, the EPA now has concerns with the rule. The EPA wants to have authority to adopt and review those control measures before they apply to the Salton Sea.

South Coast APCD
Kevin Durkee, the Quality Assurance Manager from South Coast, spoke to the group. The South Coast District has jurisdiction in the Riverside County portion of the Salton Sea, in addition to Los Angeles and Orange County.

The District actively monitors air quality and has a number of monitoring stations in the area, including one at an elementary school in Mecca and another in Indio.

Kevin showed different monitoring data by town. Palm Springs has lower PM10 levels than Indio. Mecca has higher levels than both Indio and Palm Springs, which might be an indicator of Salton Sea emissions. The District measures the number of days that exceed PM10 levels for more than 24 hours. From 1995-2007, the District didn't collect as much data. In 2008, real-time measurements began. In 2013 and forward, the District added a station at Mecca and expected to see more. The Mecca station has exceeded the standard between 7 and 10 days per year since 2013. On the north end of the Lake, the monitors demonstrate a high incidence of exceeding standards more often than the south end of the Lake.

Rule 403 for fugitive dust identifies best available control measures (BACM) for vacant land. The District thinks that Rule 403 and 403.1 may apply to the exposed playa from the shrinking Salton Sea. Rule 403.1 was intended to deal with sand blowing into the area from the Mojave Desert.

Questions and Discussion
The goals and measures of success are not clear in the 10-Year Plan. What are we looking for, basin-wide reduction in PM10?

When air quality is hazardous, one can usually smell it. Those are industrial levels; they are not naturally occurring.

From the Air District's perspective, there's no control measure other than water covering the full playa again that would guarantee eliminating emissions. No measures are 100%. From the regulatory perspective and Rule 404, any exposed playa that is considered emissive is required to meet certain requirements. The Districts manage the monitoring stations. The monitoring stations are averaging over long periods of time.

One key point is determining what allows the crust to form on the playa so everyone can use that information elsewhere. The South Coast and the County Air Districts' requirements mirror one another.

Recent legislation from Assemblyman Eduardo Garcia supports neighborhood monitoring in cooperation with environmental justice organizations. The County APCD is working with community

monitoring programs and public health departments on outreach in local communities. Asthma is predominant in the area because of the desert, the Salton Sea, agriculture, and off-roading.

The Imperial Irrigation District (IID) plan is required as mitigation for the QSA. The first goal was to characterize the playa through time and space, and understanding what's driving emission. The goal of the program is to prevent the playa from becoming a source. IID is developing the methodology within this context.

IID has been using wood chips on roads to reduce dust.

With the modeling, on-playa and off-playa, how do you know if you are getting close? IID has a network of weather research stations: checking inputs and measuring wind. IID is doing dispersion modeling. The IID Air Quality Plan from 2016 is a work plan. IID is using its own data for geomorphic surfaces. The station data were not inputs to the model. The station data are used for validation.

The Torres Martinez would like to get regular data from the 6-station monitoring network. CARB is working on a framework. IID offered to share the 5-year data set, which is a bit dated. IID has an agreement with the Torres Martinez to deliver data quarterly that will begin this year. IID is also working to get validated data onto the web soon.

Earl Whitcomb at the California Air Resources Board is working on anthropogenic determination. This is a question that everyone is interested in addressing. The definition of anthropogenic continues to evolve based on research and science.

The regulatory shoreline at Owens Lake is the result of settlement agreements. The Great Basin Air District there offered to define the shoreline as something that was close to the shoreline in 1907. LADWP later argued that shoreline. This has not yet happened at the Salton Sea. It could come about as the result of litigation.

Open Discussion

Community Information Sharing and Awareness
Immediate notifications are very important for the community. The Districts have talked about the need for "clean rooms" for people who have health problems to visit on days with poor air quality. Some have thought of providing dust masks and other alerts.

Luis Olmedo from Comite talked about the large education process in the Imperial Valley and plans to increase education in the Coachella Valley. These monitors provide immediate alerts. Comite also has staff going into the schools to expand education. It is a rainy-day approach, helping schools understand when not to go outside. The schools adopt policies regarding the air quality levels. Asthma linkage is another program.

The web site, SaltonSeaCOEE.org, is focused on informing the public and local communities about air quality conditions. Funded via Natural Resources, it helps get the word out about these programs. Education and real time data help people make decisions about their activities with the data and information.

The South Coast District representative observed that local community initiatives are so much more effective then the APCD advisories. The District put out 135 of those last year. So many that people stop paying attention.

AB617 funding is coming to a close, but it has provided a lot of benefit for educating the community.

One person suggested that AB617 funding could help to replicate the Imperial Valley's program in the Coachella Valley.

Future Role of CARB
CARB is ready to assist both Districts and IID to draft protocols to assess the efficiency of dust control projects and to re-write parts of the BACM that will then fit with the needs and activities going on at the playa and with the Salton Sea. Since Earl is in Sacramento, it is hard for him to be present. What expectations do the Districts have and how can the ARB best help the districts?

The Imperial County APCD reports that CARB has been very helpful developing the 3 SIPS and conducting the modeling and reviewing drafts related to PM10. Whenever the District has come out with a new rule, CARB has been helpful. The County Air District is very small, one of the smallest in the state. It manages rural and urban conditions.

The two Air Districts need to come together and **develop common language and rules**. CARB could help facilitate this coordination. The South Coast APCD may need to update its SIP soon. The County might want to adopt some of the South Coast APCD rules and vice versa.

CARB could help with **measurement tools** on the playa. Right now there are different measurement tools. They are not very scientifically accurate. IID is trying to use these tools. It would be helpful for CARB to weigh in and bring this into consistency across the districts.

Public Access and Activities
Disturbance on the playa is problematic. Signage and other corrective enforcement are important. Recreation occurs throughout the area. Dust control projects might want to have an access component.

Member of the public: IID managed marsh project is a great opportunity for the community to have public access.

Future Discussions
Bruce would like to rely on the Science Committee to review the IID Air Quality Work Plan to advise the state on how the state might move forward.

The Committee would like to discuss goals for air quality and potentially facilitate common language and rules across the air pollution control districts.

Formal Public Comment
No Formal Public Comment. The presenters answered questions throughout the meeting.