



SSMP Brawley Community Meeting Summary

February 28, 2019 – Brawley Union High School, Brawley, CA

Prepared by Burke Rix Communications

Background

Beginning in early 2018, the Engagement Committee has worked with the State to expand outreach efforts to increase engagement from local environmental justice communities and give them meaningful input in the early planning stages of the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP). As part of this effort, the Engagement Committee made a series of recommendations to the State that included refining the approach, format and outreach strategy for SSMP community workshops. The Engagement Committee also recommended that public amenities be incorporated into the SSMP projects so as to help the sea in continuing to provide recreational benefits and to give the community a sense of ownership in the program projects. It was determined by the State that these recommendations could be best incorporated into the project planning and community workshop for the Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) project. The State in coordination with the Engagement Committee developed an implementation strategy for the SCH workshop that aimed to increase public involvement and solicit input as to the kinds of recreational opportunities that would be most desired by the communities surrounding the sea. This meeting summary details how that strategy was implemented and the results of the SCH workshop held at Brawley Union High School on Thursday, February 28, 2019 from 5:30pm to 7:30pm.

Meeting Overview

The SCH community workshop was designed to encourage community stakeholders to attend and participate. This began with the decision to utilize the Brawley Union High School Cafeteria due to its central location and familiarity as a community meeting place within the City of Brawley. Complimentary tacos and refreshments as well as translation and childcare services were provided and promoted on workshop flyers to encourage participation for all demographic segments. Past SSMP community workshops had included light refreshments and beverages with translation services offered selectively. Childcare had not previously been provided.

The SCH workshop was extensively promoted by state consultants Burke Rix Communications and Comité Cívico del Valle with additional support by Engagement Committee Co-Chair Rebecca Terrazas-Baxter (County of Imperial) and Eric Reyes (FIELD). Outreach and promotion efforts included:

- **Flyer Distribution** – a bilingual flyer in English and Spanish was utilized to help explain the purpose of the workshop and the specific kind of feedback the State was looking to receive. The flyer was distributed electronically to various public and community based organizations. In addition, thousands of hard copies of the flyer were distributed at major places of business, community facilities, religious organizations, and to each of the surrounding local schools.
- **Outreach to Public Agencies & Elected Officials** – the outreach team contacted all local public agencies and elected officials to ask them to share the workshop flyer to their constituencies.

- Community Events – workshop flyers were also distributed at local community events leading up to the workshop.
- City of Brawley Notification System – the city utilized its text message notification system to inform residents of the workshop and encourage attendance.
- Social Media Promotion – Comité Cívico del Valle utilized its Salton Sea Community Outreach & Engagement Program (COEE) social media networks to promote the workshop. Burke Rix Communications also utilized its social media networks and other community groups to promote the workshop.
- SSMP Listserv email blast – the CNRA utilized its Salton Sea Management Program listserv to notify the public of the meeting.

Workshop Goals & Objectives

The primary goals and objectives of the SCH workshop were to:

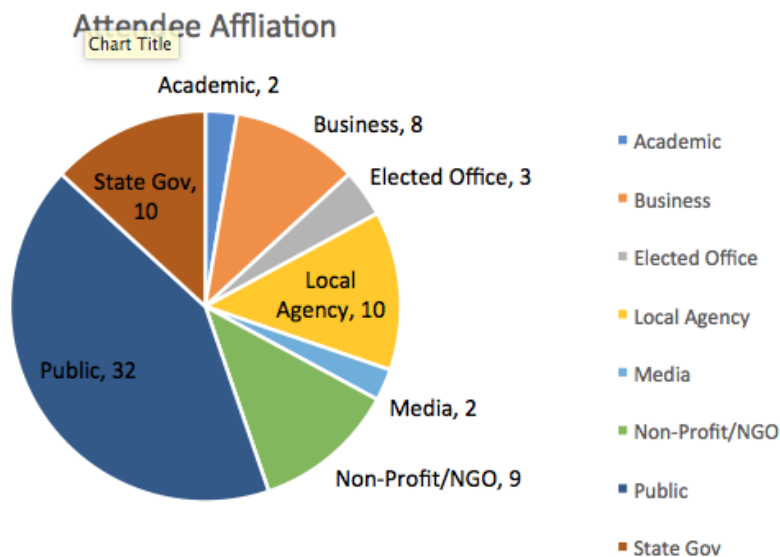
- Help provide the public with a broad understanding of the Salton Sea Management Program; including primary goals, projects, funding and current status.
- Present the SCH project, specifically detailing the goals, timeline and possibility for the State to incorporate recreational opportunities that help meet community priorities.
- Gather community feedback on the project and identify desired recreational amenities.

Workshop Approach

The workshop began with an informal open house period where poster exhibits were on display and manned by State staff to answer questions. After the open house, the State gave a presentation on the SCH project followed by questions from the audience. A short break was then provided to allow attendees to enjoy complimentary tacos and beverages. After the break, the attendees were formed into three small groups to specifically discuss what recreational amenities at the sea could best meet the needs of their community.

Meeting Attendees

The meeting was primarily comprised of members of the general public followed by business stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, and representatives from public agencies and elected office holders.



State representatives, committee members and state staff liaisons included:

State of California

Bruce Wilcox, CNRA
Vivien Maisonneuve, DWR
Esther Tracy, DWR
Allen Young, DWR
Arturo Delgado, CDFW
Nasseer Idrisi, CDFW
Samantha Haynes, CDFW

Engagement Committee

Rebecca Terrazas-Baxter, Co-Chair, County of Imperial
Miguel Hernandez, Committee Member, Comité Cívico del Valle
Darren Simon, Committee Member, San Diego County Water Authority

Facilitator

Josh Zipperman, Burke Rix Communications

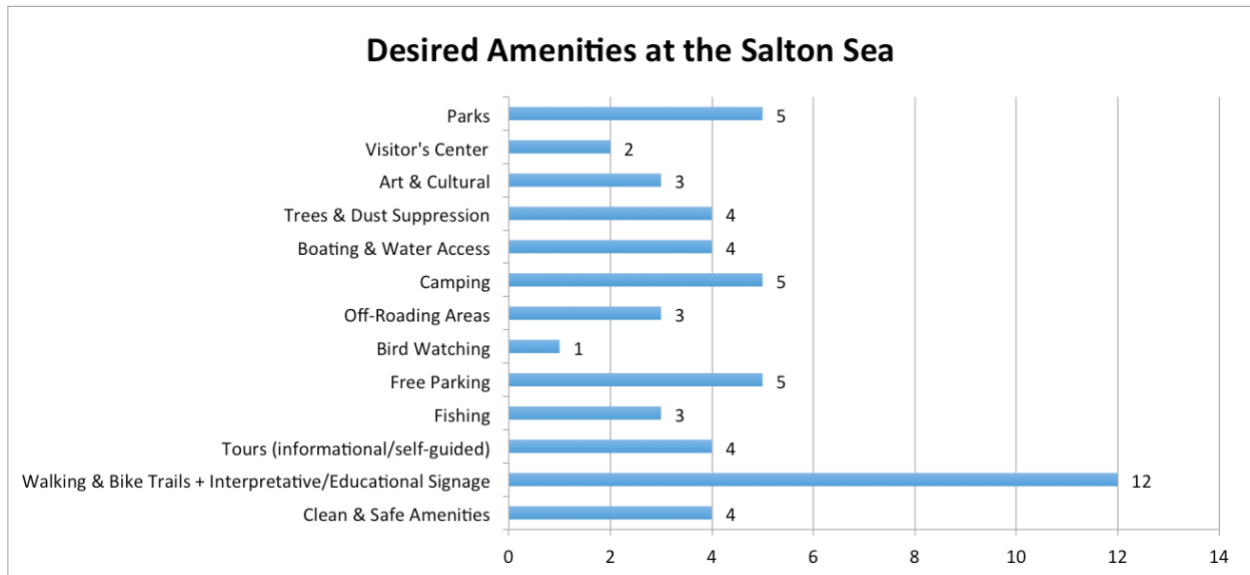


Community Feedback

The workshop provided four opportunities for public input; a question & answer period with accompanying comment cards and small group discussions on recreational amenities with a matching questionnaire. During the question & answer period, attendees asked clarifying questions about the SSMP program, the functionality of the lake for recreational use, and clarification on the long-range plan. The comment cards hit on a few common themes; 1) Need for Urgent Action, 2) Community Involvement/Volunteer Opportunities, 3) Water Importation, and 4) Need for a Health Impact Report. A matrix detailing all of the public comment responses has been provided with this summary.

The small group discussions consisted of three groups of 10-15 people that were each facilitated or assisted by State staff from DWR and CDFW. Attendees were asked what amenities they would like to see added to the Salton Sea that would make the destination a more desirable place to visit. The responses were documented on notepads and then each attendee was given stickers to indicate

their top three preferences. The below bar chart details the desired amenities from both the small group discussions and questionnaire.



Attendees also provided feedback on the desired community engagement and educational efforts that they felt could have a meaningful impact in addressing a wide variety of efforts at the sea. These included:

- Community Events such as a health fair, bird watching festival, and guided field trips focused on the environment and SSMP projects/construction sites.
- Resources for health groups, schools, and residents around the sea.
- Educational efforts regarding the environment and role of the sea, water quality, public health issues, and eco-tourism/recreational opportunities.
- Youth outreach & education.

Lessons Learned

The planning team overall felt that the SCH workshop was successful in providing a more hands on approach that allowed attendees to better understand the SSMP program and provide meaningful input. Below is a synopsis of what aspects of the SCH workshop the team felt went well versus what could be improved upon or done differently for future meetings.

SCH workshop successes:

- Positive feedback on the meeting overall and the information presented.
- Strong attendance with good cross section of general public and community stakeholders.
- Childcare resources were utilized and resulted in participation of families.
- Flyer distribution, specifically to the schools helped drive attendance.
- Complimentary food was appreciated and may have also helped with increased attendance.

SCH workshop areas for improvement:

- Pre-planning could be improved with specific timelines for tasks.
- Workshop flyer should have included more information on the history of the sea, significance of the projects and purpose of the discussion at the meeting.
- Presentation should be shorter, more concise and less technical. The SCH presentation included detailed updates on all the SSMP projects where a shorter overview of each project or sole focus on the SCH and North Lake projects would have been more effective.
- Meeting expectations and explanation as to how the State intends to follow-up on input received should have been incorporated into the presentation.
- Presentation should set realistic expectations for the SSMP that help explain what environmental restoration looks like detailing the incremental progress made to date, next steps are in the process, and what the project will look like when complete (i.e., the SSMP does not aim to restore the sea to it's heyday of the 1950s but rather works towards a smaller and sustainable sea with several phases of development to protect air quality and create wildlife habitat).
- The State also needs to better explain how habitat projects are also air quality projects and can provide recreational benefits as well (i.e., boating, fishing, and other options to TBD with community input).
- SSMP projects would benefit from renderings that better depict what they look like and how they could be used for recreation.
- Public comments need to be structured in a way to prevent people from grandstanding or behaving inappropriately (i.e., verbal abuse, profanity, etc.).
- Food should be served at the beginning of the workshop so as to avoid the break in-between the presentation and small group discussions where some attendees left.
- A food sponsor was recommended to help cover the cost for future meetings.

Next Steps

- Incorporate lessons learned from the SCH workshop into future planning and the development of an SSMP engagement strategy.
- Explore additional opportunities to survey the community on desired amenities.
- Establish a process for the State to collaborate with the community on the incorporation of community amenities into the design and implementation of the SCH project. This process would be transparent and sustainable with the State demonstrating how community input is being incorporated and what best practices can be utilized for the whole SSMP program.