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State Agencies Herald Approval of Landmark Agreement on Salton Sea Management, Public Health Protection

SACRAMENTO – Senior Brown administration officials hailed today’s approval of a final agreement to restore and manage the Salton Sea over the next 10 years to protect public health and critical Pacific flyway habitat.

The agreement, approved today by the State Water Resources Control Board, commits the state to a suite of goals for Salton Sea management and outlines restoration milestones during the first phase of the state’s [Salton Sea Management Plan](#). It further commits to creation of a long-term plan by 2022 to guide work beyond the initial 10 years.

California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird said the agreement marks a key success in the Brown administration’s efforts to reach consensus on one of the state’s most difficult environmental challenges.

“This agreement locks in a shared vision for projects and activities over the next 10 years to protect air quality, habitat and water supply reliability in the Salton Sea region,” Laird said. “It provides assurance for all parties that state agencies will live to up to our commitments.”

The agreement was developed through discussions among the Imperial Irrigation District, Imperial County, San Diego County Water Authority, the California Natural Resources Agency, and a broad group of stakeholders including Audubon California, Defenders of Wildlife California, Sierra Club California and the Pacific Institute.

“Restoration of a smaller but sustainable Salton Sea is critical to protecting air quality for Imperial and Coachella valley residents and maintaining valuable wildlife habitat,” said California Secretary for Environmental Protection Matthew Rodriquez. “This consensus agreement shows the way forward, while the State Water Board’s oversight provides the transparency and accountability to ensure we meet its goals.”

The state’s partners in this effort include the Salton Sea Authority, the Torres Martinez Tribe, Imperial County, Riverside County, the Imperial Irrigation District, Coachella Valley Water District, San Diego County Water Authority, the Water Transfers Joint Powers Authority, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, Comite Civico del Valle, the Audubon Society, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

The habitat and air quality work will help fulfill the goals set forth in a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) reached in August 2016 between the U.S. Department of the Interior and the California Natural Resources Agency.

The state of California has committed more than \$80 million in voter-approved bond funds to restore habitat and suppress dust at the lake in the near term. A \$14 million grant from the state Wildlife Conservation Board helps to fund habitat conservation at the Salton Sea, and the Salton Sea Authority will administer a \$7.5 million U.S. Department of Agriculture grant for water conservation, wetland creation, and air quality mitigation.

In addition, under SB 5 (de León et al) signed into law this year, a bond measure that would provide \$200 million for Salton Sea projects will go before voters on the June statewide ballot in 2018.

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