

January 6, 2020

The Honorable Ryan E. Kelley
Imperial County Board of Supervisors
940 West Main Street, Suite 209
El Centro, CA 92243

Subject: Response to Letter of November 4, 2019 to Governor Gavin Newsom

Dear Chairman Kelley:

We are writing in response to the County of Imperial's November 4, 2019 letter to Governor Gavin Newsom identifying specific resource and equipment needs related to the county's Proclamation of Local Emergency for Air Pollution at the Salton Sea.

Our agencies agree that the receding Salton Sea poses an urgent public health challenge for communities surrounding the Sea that already suffer from poor air quality. We are actively discussing with the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (State OES) the possibility of securing hazard mitigation funding for the county's resource and equipment needs and encourage you to continue your dialogue with the State OES.

We are pleased to inform you that Governor Newsom's proposed 2020-21 budget to be released later this week will add to the State's commitment to improving conditions at the Sea by proposing an additional \$220 million for the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP). This proposed funding would bring the State's total financial commitment to \$891 million for important work at the Salton Sea in the near future.

Since taking office, Governor Newsom has directed us to break through bureaucratic barriers that have hampered progress stabilizing conditions at the Sea. State agencies are advancing several projects outlined in the 10-Year SSMP, which will improve conditions by constructing 30,000 acres of dust suppression and habitat projects around the sea. The State has already started the federally-required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental planning process for the SSMP that will facilitate permitting for the full 30,000 acres of SSMP projects. This work will start to show results in coming months as important projects break ground.

State agencies have worked with the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) to move beyond years of stalled progress on complete site access and water supply agreements that allow for the 3,770-acre Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) project at the southern end of the Sea to move forward. These agreements will serve as a template for future projects at the Sea. A design-build contractor for the SCH project will be selected this coming summer, and the project will break ground shortly thereafter.

Concurrent with this large project, state agencies are working intensely to accelerate dust suppression projects that limit the exposed lakebed from worsening existing dust

and contaminants in the air around the Sea. In coming weeks, a dust mitigation project will be completed at the southern end of the Sea that involves tilling to create furrows on the surface of exposed playa on 150 to 200 acres along Bruchard Road to physically trap dust and soil particles that enter the area from upwind sources. We are also accelerating planning and approvals that enable another 9,000 acres of dust suppression projects to be built in areas of the receding sea that are most emissive. These dust suppression projects will begin breaking ground this year. Looking forward, our agencies are developing a Dust Suppression Action Plan to prioritize and implement dust suppression projects over a three-year period in coordination with local, state, and federal partners and stakeholders.

Additional near-term priorities for Salton Sea improvements include:

- Working with local partners to further refine and incorporate the North Lake project concept into the SSMP. The concept envisions construction of a 3,680-acre horseshoe-shaped lake at the north end of the Sea to control dust and create habitat for fish and birds.
- Providing funding support for the Red Hill Bay project, which is constructing 530 acres of shallow wetland habitat to reduce dust on exposed playa and benefit various bird species on the southern end of the Sea.
- Establishing a unified website for information on state actions at the Salton Sea and distributing a regular electronic newsletter with updates.
- Continuing to add capacity to the state team focused on Salton Sea projects, building from the Governor's recent appointment of Arturo Delgado as Assistant Secretary for Salton Sea Policy at the California Natural Resources Agency.

The State is also committed to addressing a range of other factors that are primarily responsible for current air quality challenges including soot from sources in Mexico, unmitigated dirt roads and open lots, agricultural burning, and particulate matter from diesel trucks. Accordingly, we are committed to working with the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District and the South Coast Air Quality Management District, which have primary authority to reduce dust sources near the Sea. The California Environmental Protection Agency is coordinating with our counterparts in the federal government and Mexico to reduce the impacts of pollution coming across the border. In addition, the California Air Resources Board, in coordination with transportation agencies and others, is moving aggressively to reduce pollution from trucks that move freight through the region.

In addition, air quality monitoring data in 2017 and 2018 indicates that dunes to the west of the Salton Sea currently generate many times more wind-driven emissions of particulate matter than exposed playa at the Sea. We are committed to working with others to address these conditions in any feasible way in parallel with actions to mitigate dust from exposed playa.

In addition to air quality mitigation projects underway by parties as part of the Quantification Settlement Agreement, state agencies have undertaken the following actions:

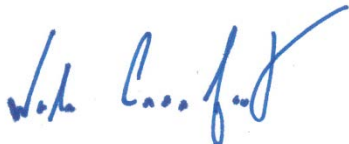
- Designed the Salton Sea shoreline air monitoring network consisting of six sites operated by IID that provides publicly available hourly particulate matter air quality data.
- Provided \$270,000 in grant funding to Imperial County Air Pollution Control District and IID to measure desert soil emissivity and quantify the levels of toxic metals in windblown playa dust.
- Identified emissions and controls for exposed playa for the Ecosystem Restoration Program.
- Designed a Compliance Monitoring Plan for use by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) in constructing and maintaining playa dust control projects.
- Provided \$185,000 in grant funding and technical support for IVAN air monitoring network operated by Comité Cívico del Valle's IVAN network in Imperial Valley and Coachella Valley.

Finally, your November 4 letter requested the State undertake an epidemiological health study. We are glad to report that a study funded by the National Institute of Health is currently underway to determine the health effects of childhood exposure to particulate matter and inform public health action in the Imperial Valley. "The Salton Sea and Children's Health: Assessing Imperial Valley Respiratory Health and the Environment" study is being completed by researchers from the University of Southern California and the University of Washington in coordination with the California Department of Public Health. More information about the study is available at <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/translational/peph/prog/rta/cfg/usc/index.cfm>.

As outlined above, significant work is underway to address the concerns outlined in your letter, and more will be done in the future. The State intends to remain an active and committed partner with Imperial County and other local and federal agencies in addressing Salton Sea-related air quality challenges.

We look forward to continued collaboration and communication with Imperial County, the Salton Sea Authority and other local partners in the future. Please work directly with Assistant Secretary for Salton Sea Policy Arturo Delgado as the State agencies' key local leader on this work. He can be reached at Arturo.delgado@resources.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Wade Crowfoot
Secretary for Natural Resources



Jared Blumenfeld
Secretary for Environmental Protection