Salton Sea Management Program

APRIL 24, 2019

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF SALTON SEA POLICY
CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY
Program Goals

- Stabilize and manage the Salton Sea to protect public health and critical Pacific Flyway habitat through:
  - Dust suppression projects that protect the health of local residents
  - Habitat and restoration projects that benefit fish and wildlife
Phase I of SSMP

- 2018 - 2028
  - Cover up to 30,000 acres of exposed playa
  - Establishes criteria for water delivery infrastructure and habitat
  - Utilizes design build and monitoring to be responsive to site conditions

Focus Areas:
- New, Alamo and Whitewater Rivers
- Air quality and dust suppression projects
Elevation & Exposed Playa

2,260 acres of new playa exposed in 2018

Predictions by SALSA2 model are consistent with 2018 observations

Sea elevations stabilize and exposed playa may peak in the mid 2040’s

The current salinity, measured as Total Dissolved Solids (TDS), is 63.7 ppt, which is consistent with modeling.

The inflow water from the New River has issues with pathogens and nutrients. The state and federal government are seeking solutions.
Status of Fish

Desert pupfish are doing relatively well in some drains, Salt Creek and Hot Mineral Spa Creek. Pupfish population has declined in San Felipe Creek.

The 2018 catch of Salton Sea tilapia was less than half of the 2017 catch: a historic low.

The 2018 catch saw many small-sized fish, which may lead to a greater number of fish in 2019.
Status of Fish-Eating Bird Populations

Fish-eating birds are utilizing resources similar to past usage, though at lower numbers.

In Spring 2016, numbers of fish-eating birds present at the Salton Sea began to fall to record lows.
Fish-eating Birds by Season and Year

Fall 2015 – Spring 2018

American White Pelicans: 10% of previously surveyed average

Brown Pelicans: 3% of previously surveyed average

Double-crested Cormorants: below 2% of previously surveyed average
Ongoing Monitoring

Data collected are used to provide information and determine or prioritize appropriate management actions.

In 2019, CDFW will conduct the following surveys using previously-adopted methods:

- **Desert Pupfish surveys at accessible drains and shoreline pools at the North and South end of the Sea**
- **Gill netting – Status and trends of Salton Sea fish populations**
- **Avian Resources – Current trends of birds utilizing the Salton Sea**
- **Aerial surveys to monitor piscivorous (fish-eating) birds**
- **Colonial Nesting Bird Monitoring**
- **Marsh Bird surveys**
- **Dead and Sick Bird Monitoring**
- **Shoreline Surveys**
Coordination & Outreach

Stakeholders

BOR agreement
- 3900 ac. dust-suppression

Public meetings
- Previous:
  - March 2018
  - October 2018
  - Feb 2019
- Upcoming: More interaction with communities
  - Summer 2019
Current and Future Projects

Current efforts: Mouth of the New, Alamo, Whitewater Rivers

- Primary playa exposure zones

Additional habitat constructed within the 10-year plan, as the sea recedes:

- New River - 7000 acres
- Whitewater River – 6000 acres
- Alamo River – 3500 acres

Anticipate implementing 14,900 acres of dust suppression projects by 2028
New River
Approx. 7000 ac

New River SCH
- Approx. 3770 ac
- Covering exposed playa in the New River area with wetted habitat
- Construction in mid 2020
- 1000 ac completed December 2021; 3770 ac completed December 2023

Additional SSMP projects
- Approx. 3250 ac
Whitewater River
Approx. 6000 acres

North Lake Concept
- Approx. 4000 acres
- Implement in 2023

Additional SSMP projects
- Approx. 2000 acres
Alamo River
Approx. 3500 ac

Alamo River SCH
- Approx. 2,900 acres
- Implement in 2024

Additional SSMP projects
- Approx. 600 acres
Environmental Planning and Permitting

- Anticipate reaching the 2024 target of habitat creation and dust-suppression
- Agreement with ACOE will be executed to support environmental planning and permitting – expected mid-2019
- Supplemental EIS and permits – expected completion 2020
- Easement negotiations – on-going
Assess potential long-range solutions:
- Water Import proposals
- Water quality projects
- Local or Regional water sources

The Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration PEIR preferred alternative contains these features: a perimeter lake, marine sea and saline habitat complex

- Current SSMP projects will be complementary to the creation of these features
SSMP 10 – Year Plan Updates

- Whitewater River / North Lake Concept
- Potential for supplemental water use
- Goals and Objectives refined
## Allocated State Financial Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Appropriated Agency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposition 50</td>
<td>$14 million</td>
<td>Wildlife Conservation Board</td>
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<td>Proposition 84</td>
<td>$26 million</td>
<td>California Department of Fish and Wildlife</td>
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<td>Proposition 1</td>
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<td>Proposition 68</td>
<td>$190 million</td>
<td>California Natural Resources Agency</td>
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For More Information

http://resources.ca.gov/salton-sea

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