



Regional Governmental Affairs Committee  
Brawley Chamber of Commerce  
El Centro Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau



March 6, 2015

Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board  
State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 I Street, 24th Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
[commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov)



**Subject: Comment Letter: Salton Sea**

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Board:

On behalf of the Regional Governmental Affairs Committee of the Brawley and El Centro Chambers of Commerce, I am writing to express our support for the Imperial Irrigation District's petition regarding restoration of the Salton Sea. As the Board recognized in its Notice of Public Workshop, this issue is an urgent one of statewide importance. It is also a particularly important issue for the businesses and economy of the Imperial Valley, which in turn directly affects the residents of this area.

The Brawley and El Centro Chambers of Commerce represent hundreds of local businesses. A restored Salton Sea would be a major boon to the local economy, while the continuing deterioration of the Sea will place an increasing burden on the local residents. The Imperial Valley would benefit greatly from the attraction of a Sea where fishing, water sports and recreation thrive.

Without restoration, declining water levels and increasing salinity at the Sea will have many serious consequences for the business community. The declining water levels resulting from water transfers under the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) will expose thousands of acres of lakebed to the air. Emissions from this exposed playa will significantly worsen our region's already-poor air quality and cause many residents to suffer from heart disease, asthma, lung cancer, and other health problems. Increasing salinity levels, which will accelerate sharply once the interim mitigation measures ordered by the Board end in 2017, threaten to destroy the Salton Sea ecosystem. And the economic impact of a dying Sea will be a major burden on businesses, schools, public services, and the overall quality of life for residents in the Imperial Valley. That is the harsh reality facing our region.

The QSA was supposed to prevent this from happening. As IID explained in its petition, it has long been recognized that water transfers out of the Imperial Valley would be a major threat to the Salton Sea and the Imperial and Coachella valleys. These concerns almost derailed the entire QSA, but the agreements were signed after the State of California promised to restore the Sea. This promise was a matter of basic fairness and the QSA would not have been signed without it. The water transfers benefit the entire State, so the Legislature

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agreed that the entire State would bear the cost of addressing the effects of the transfers on the Salton Sea. It is fundamentally wrong for the businesses, the economy and the residents of Imperial County to be forced to bear the consequences of California's effort to reduce its usage of Colorado River water.

Now, more than a decade later, almost no progress has been made on restoration. It is time for action. Several studies in recent years have confirmed that restoration is both feasible and necessary to protect the health and well-being of residents and businesses in Imperial and Riverside Counties. The Board must use its power to bring all necessary parties together to design, implement, and fund a restoration plan that will create a smaller, sustainable Sea and preserve a bright future for the Imperial and Coachella valleys.

On behalf of the Regional Governmental Affairs Committee, we call upon the Board to approve IID's petition. The Board, the State, IID, and all other interested parties should cooperate to ensure that the Sea is restored before it is too late. We ask the Board to convene a collaborative process among these parties that will identify a specific restoration plan that can be implemented and funded in time to avert the looming crisis threatening our region and the entire State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne Irigoyen".

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Anne Irigoyen, President

cc: Stephen W. Benson, Board President, Imperial Irrigation District  
Ryan E. Kelley, Chairman of the Board, County of Imperial

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