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# California State Senate

SENATOR  
**JEFF STONE, PHARM.D.**  
TWENTY-EIGHTH SENATE DISTRICT



VICE CHAIR  
LABOR & INDUSTRIAL  
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VICE CHAIR  
NATURAL RESOURCES &  
WATER  
MEMBER  
BUDGET & FISCAL REVIEW  
PUBLIC SAFETY



March 11, 2015

Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board  
State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 I Street, 24<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Comment Letter – Salton Sea

Dear Ms. Townsend:

I am pleased to see that the State Water Resources Control Board (Board) has initiated a stakeholder process to foster discussions that I am hopeful will lead to consensus on a realistic Salton Sea restoration program in furtherance of the existing Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA). Further, I also would like to urge the Board to implement a stakeholder process that results in a specific timetable for implementation of any agreed upon restoration program.

It is my understanding that when negotiations over the water transfers (Quantification Settlement Agreement) took place and when the Board issued its Revised Order in 2002, potential negative impacts to the Salton Sea were a major issue of contention in the discussions that occurred. Due to the complexity of this matter and the unknown effects at the time, the Board required Imperial Irrigation District to fallow land and generate Salton Sea mitigation water for a period of fifteen years, or through 2017. As this deadline fast approaches, we are now beginning to foresee the impacts of an unsustainable Salton Sea.

The continued decline of water levels will accelerate exposure of thousands of acres of highly emissive lakebed, thus creating a public and environmental health hazard. The salinity levels are fast approaching levels where the remaining fish populations will no longer reproduce, thus impacting all wildlife. The economic impact of a dying Salton Sea also has the potential to affect tourism, real estate, and the overall quality of life for residents in the Coachella and Imperial Valleys.

Over the years, numerous studies have been conducted to analyze both short-term and long-term restoration options. In 2006, the Secretary of Natural Resources recommended a preferred alternative plan with a price tag of nearly \$9 billion. As can be expected with such a high cost estimate, the recommended plan has only served as a stumbling block for true progress at the Salton Sea.

Today's Salton Sea looks much different than it did decades ago but it continues to be our State's largest lake and one of its most significant natural and environmental resources. It supports a diverse wildlife habitat for over 400 species of birds and serves as a critical link on the 5,000 mile international Pacific Flyway. The Salton Sea is also home to the Sonny Bono National Wildlife Refuge and the Salton Sea State Recreation Area.

As referenced in the Board's Notice, the current condition of the Salton Sea and the accelerated decline expected post 2017 is an issue of "statewide importance" and it demands immediate intervention. I am hopeful that your board's involvement in this critical matter will encourage participation and commitment from all stakeholders involved while producing a path forward that everyone can agree upon.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Jeff Stone  
State Senator, 28<sup>th</sup> District

cc: Stephen W. Benson, Board President, Imperial Irrigation District  
John Powell, Jr., Board President, Coachella Valley Water District  
John Benoit, Member, Riverside County Board of Supervisors