



March 9, 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)



**Re: Comment Letter – Salton Sea**

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Board:

On behalf of the Imperial Valley Economic Development Corporation (IVEDC), I am writing to express our support for the Imperial Irrigation District's (IID) petition regarding the restoration of the Salton Sea. IID's Board of Directors stated the need for restoration is urgent and has statewide significance and implications, as it was documented in its Notice of Public Workshop. It is also a particularly important issue for the businesses and economy of the region. Failure to address the Salton Sea's restoration needs, will adversely impact the economies of the Imperial and Coachella Valley – and ultimately over 500,000 residents.

IVEDC is a private corporation dedicated to aggressively marketing the region to grow and diversify the economy by attracting the following target industry clusters: Aerospace, Agribusiness, Contact & BPO Centers, Construction Materials and Renewable Energy and Biofuels, as they were identified in the Imperial County Strategic Development Plan.

Being able to attract and site new businesses into the region grows the economy. With new industry, local vendors, subcontractors and suppliers are able to grow their market share and improve their operations by hiring locally and purchasing from other local vendors, subcontractors and suppliers. Our businesses are closely tied to the overall health and well-being of the Imperial and Coachella valleys. When the broader community prospers, so does the local economy; when it suffers, so do our businesses and, ultimately, the people. That is why we are so concerned about the State's failure to restore the Sea.

Without restoration, declining water levels and increasing salinity at the Sea will have many serious consequences for the business community in the Imperial and Coachella valleys. 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 and Coachella valleys. 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 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 most of all the residents of the Imperial and Coachella valleys—areas that already suffer some of the State’s highest unemployment rates—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 the Salton Sea region. The Board should 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 IVEDC 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 blue ink that reads "Timothy E. Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Timothy E. Kelley  
President & CEO

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