

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



FROM: Supervisors Benoit and Ashley

SUBMITTAL DATE: January 9, 2014

SUBJECT: Resolution to Support in Concept the Salton Sea Restoration and Renewable Energy Initiative

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Adopt Resolution No. 2014-035, support in concept the Salton Sea Restoration and Renewable Energy Initiative.
- 2) Direct the Clerk of the Board to transmit copies of this resolution to Governor Brown, Riverside County's state legislative delegation, Imperial Irrigation District and the Imperial County Board of Supervisors.


BACKGROUND: The Salton Sea Restoration & Renewable Energy Initiative, launched by the Imperial Irrigation District in partnership with Imperial County, seeks a collaborative Salton Sea restoration solution designed to minimize the looming environmental and air quality impacts from the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) water transfers projected to occur after 2017.

The Salton Sea Restoration and Renewable Energy Initiative would use revenue generated by new renewable energy projects to fund environmental mitigation and restoration efforts at the Salton Sea. The Salton Sea Authority voted to support the Salton Sea Restoration and Renewable Energy Initiative at their December 19, 2013 meeting.

The Salton Sea is California's largest inland lake, and it is receding rapidly. Riverside County supports efforts to protect the Salton Sea's surrounding communities and minimize impacts to human health, air quality, and the wildlife dependent on that ecosystem.



Supervisor John J. Benoit
Fourth District



Supervisor Marion Ashley
Fifth District

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3 **RESOLUTION NO. 2014-035**

4 **RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT IN CONCEPT FOR THE SALTON SEA RESTORATION AND**
5 **RENEWABLE ENERGY INITIATIVE**
6

7 **WHEREAS**, the Salton Sea is a critically important environmental resource providing vital habitat sustaining
8 over 400 avian species on the Pacific Flyway while also offering the most diverse and plentiful renewable
9 energy resources to be found anywhere on earth; and
10

11 **WHEREAS**, in 1993, the California legislature authorized the Salton Sea Authority (SSA) as a joint powers
12 authority comprised of Riverside County and other local governments whose goal is to revitalize the
13 Salton Sea; and
14

15 **WHEREAS**, in 2002, the state committed through the Salton Sea Restoration Fund Act to assume
16 responsibility for funding and implementing a Salton Sea restoration plan to facilitate local government
17 agencies' authorization of the 2003 Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA), a series of agreements which
18 enabled California to live within its 4.4 million acre foot (maf) annual Colorado River entitlement; and
19

20 **WHEREAS**, , in 2007, the state completed an environmental process identifying Salton Sea restoration
21 alternatives ranging from a \$1 billion plus cost for a "No action" alternative to a \$8.9 billion alternative
22 preferred by the California Natural Resources Agency but never acted upon by the Legislature; and
23

24 **WHEREAS**, the 2003 QSA, which authorized the nation's largest agricultural-to-urban water transfer, is
25 influenced by certain commitments the State of California assumed for itself beyond the environmental
26 mitigation funding responsibilities of the participating water agencies; and
27

1 **WHEREAS**, while the QSA will have provided mitigation water from 2003 to 2018, the state continues to hold
2 legislative obligation to provide for mitigation and restoration actions, as it is generally recognized that dramatic
3 declines will occur absent implementation of the restoration plan for the Sea; and
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5 **WHEREAS**, early and aggressive implementation of Salton Sea restoration would offset the need for many
6 expensive QSA air quality and habitat mitigation requirements; and
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8 **WHEREAS**, the SSA, with support from its member agencies including Riverside County, has been authorized
9 by the state legislature in AB 71 (Perez) to lead development of a financial feasibility action plan to harness
10 economic resources necessary to implement a long term restoration strategy for the Sea; and
11

12 **WHEREAS**, Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and Imperial County entered into a memorandum of
13 understanding (MOU) on October 24, 2013 that seeks a collaborative Salton Sea restoration solution designed
14 to minimize the looming environmental and air quality impacts from the QSA water transfers projected to occur
15 after 2017;
16

17 **WHEREAS**, the MOU is foundational to the Salton Sea Restoration and Renewable Energy Initiative currently
18 in development, which is focused on a smaller but financially and environmentally sustainable Salton Sea.
19 Designed around reduced inflows, and optimizing access to the playa in the Known Geothermal Resource Area
20 at the Salton Sea that will be exposed as the shoreline recedes, the initiative proposes the development of
21 renewable energy projects and subsurface mining extraction opportunities to provide a funding mechanism to
22 jump-start restoration; and
23

24 **WHEREAS**, America's Renewable Energy Powerhouse at the Salton Sea offers renewable energy sources
25 estimated to eventually provide up to 1,700 megawatts of geothermal baseload energy plus other renewable
26 generation opportunities such as solar, wind, solar gradient, biofuels, mineral extraction and other developing
27

1 green technologies to assist load-serving utilities in meeting California's renewable portfolio standard
2 requirements; and

3
4 **WHEREAS**, stakeholders including the state of California sense that inaction at the Sea poses imminent threats
5 to California's environment, human health, large scale agricultural food supply, renewable energy production
6 and economic vitality, which is building momentum for the Salton Sea Authority to vigorously pursue a more
7 productive working relationship with the state and federal resource and regulatory agencies;

8
9 **NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Riverside County Board of Supervisors supports the
10 concept of a Salton Sea Renewable Energy Initiative and calls on the State to work closely and cooperatively
11 with the Salton Sea Authority and its member agencies including Riverside County to fulfill its Salton Sea
12 mitigation and restoration responsibilities.

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14 **APPROVED AND ADOPTED** THE 14th day of January, 2014. I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution
15 XXXX was adopted by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors.

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KEVIN JEFFRIES, Supervisor
First District

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JOHN TAVAGLIONE, Supervisor
Second District

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JEFF STONE, Chairman
Third District

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JOHN J. BENOIT, Supervisor
Fourth District

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22 _____
MARION ASHLEY, Vice Chairman
Fifth District