

October 22, 2018

Riverside County
Board of Supervisors
4080 Lemon Street, 5th Floor
Riverside, CA 92501

via email: KHarper-Ihem@rivco.org

Subject: Board of Supervisors Meeting 10/23/18-Policy Calendar Item 33-Resolutions No. 2018-203 & 204-Intention to Establish the Salton Sea Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD)-Oppose

Dear Board of Supervisors:

I am a member of the Salton Sea Coalition which is comprised of a team of grassroots individuals that live and work near the Salton Sea (Sea) and are directly impacted by its current dire condition. We are water resource professionals, teachers, farm workers, environmentalists, health professionals & more.

The Salton Sea (Sea) is California's largest lake. The Sea's current water supply is primarily contaminated agricultural drainage and partially treated municipal wastewater. There is no outflow and salts, nutrients, pesticides and other contaminants have concentrated in the Sea.

There is only one species of fish (tilapia) remaining in the Sea and they are not reproducing. The 400+ species of fish-eating birds that have depended on them have also significantly declined as their regional migration stopover is dying. Blue-Green Algae and cyanotoxins have been detected 5 times in the last 6 months. On a hot humid day, the Coachella and Imperial Valleys are stifled with hydrogen sulfide stench. Recreation is near non-existent.

The situation is exacerbated by the reduction in water input to the Sea as the result of the water transfers related to the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA). The Sea is shrinking and exposing the receding shoreline (playa) to the elements. The Sea has dropped 18" since mitigation water ended about one year ago.

Children in the region have abnormally high cases of asthma and nose bleeds. There is a cancer cluster among border patrol agents. The Sea is littered with unexploded military ordinance---some of which is radioactive.

The Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) has stalled and Phase I projects are at a standstill. The one complete project has a serious design flaw. Government agencies and water agencies are creating roadblocks to success.

Although we commend the County for taking some action, the North Lake proposal and the EIFD is not the answer for two main reasons:

- The Ocean-to-Sea project provides a comprehensive Salton Sea solution for the entire region and needs to be fully vetted before a North Lake project can be realistically considered. The County needs to amend the MOU with Imperial County to include the Ocean-to-Sea project. (See our attached requests). Your constituents want an Ocean-to-Sea Project. Listen to the people!
- The EIFD is driven by development goals—not improvement of health and well-being of the region’s residents, which should be your number one goal. Plus, the EIFD will take future tax increment funds away from an area that is classified by Environmental Justice as a Disadvantaged Community.

Conclusion

Please do not adopt Resolutions No. 2018-203 & 204-Intention to Establish the Salton Sea Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD).

Our government (local, state & federal) and the Southern California water agencies have failed us. The Salton Sea issues are well known, many solutions have been identified but nothing gets done. We are frustrated by years of inaction. The North Lake Project and related EIFD are not the answer.

In the alternative, we are beseeching the County to support the following; (1) new SSMP leadership & organization, (2) long-term solution that includes a comprehensive evaluation of the Ocean-to-Sea project and (3) comprehensive environmental health study in the Coachella & Imperial Counties (see our attached request to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to assist with item 3 and conduct a comprehensive community health assessment).

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Mark L. Johnson