

Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project Stakeholders Meeting Minutes UC Riverside, Palm Desert

November 15, 2011

The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Review the development and identification of State's preferred alternative, including:
 - Scope of SCH Project.
 - Key Implementation Principles of all Alternatives.
 - Reasons for Identifying Alternative 3 as State's Preferred Alternative.
- Provide updates on SCH Project, including
 - Draft EIS/EIR comments.
 - Project design.
 - Permitting.
 - Schedule.
 - Funding.
 - Upcoming Meetings/Coordination.
- Provide Stakeholders an opportunity to comment.

The PowerPoint presentation given at this meeting is posted on the DWR website at www.water.ca.gov/saltonsea.

Stakeholder questions and responses are summarized below.

Q: Please review and clarify funding information.

A: Funds from Proposition 84 are designated for construction, and funds from water contractors are designated for operations and maintenance.

Proposition 84 Funds

- Started with \$43 million after bond costs.
 - \$29.6 million have been appropriated.
 - \$11.5 million are encumbered (covers DWR and consultant costs); approximately \$1.8 million has been expended totally \$13.3 million encumbered and expended.
 - \$16.3 million have been appropriated, but not spent or encumbered.
 - \$13.3 million have not been appropriated.
- Approximately \$30 million available for SCH related activities.

Water Agency Contributions (Salton Sea Restoration Fund)

- Coachella Valley Water District has paid \$8.3 million.
- San Diego County Water Authority has paid \$11.8 million.
- IID has paid \$1.1 million to date.
 - Imperial Irrigation District's \$10 million will be paid over 45 years.
 - Expect \$46 million over 45 years.
- \$21.2 million contributed to date, but only \$11.1 million have been appropriated.
- Spent \$3.5 million.

Similar to Proposition 84, Salton Sea Restoration funds have to be voted on and appropriated. The State will be asking for the remainder of the funds for construction and operations and maintenance. They are discouraged from asking the Legislature for funds unless they can demonstrate that they can use the money. This is a rigorous process.

Q: What is the nature of the agreement with the landholder?

A: The SCH agencies are discussing options with IID.

Q: Power was presented in kilowatts in the Draft EIS/EIR. The total load was not disclosed or how long the pumps would be running. It is not clear that there is enough power.

A: This will be refined when design proceeds. Power consumption in the Draft EIS/EIR was based on different possible scenarios (residence times, salinity, etc.). Before finalizing the estimates will need to know where the SCH Project will be located and how big of a project will be built, and how much the Project will cost. Once this is known water delivery requirements will be refined, along with power demand. The analysis in the Draft EIS/EIR was intended to bookend the range of power consumption needed.

Q: If combustion is used instead of electrical power, this will need to be part of the environmental review.

A: The project is being designed to use electrical power, not combustion.

Q: What are the projected costs through 2014?

A: It is being assumed that approximately \$20 million will be available for building the SCH Project.

Q: Is the water quality for water coming into the project or disposed of in the project? Would water quality support fish?

A: The 401 permit and discharge permit would cover intake and output. The ponds are being designed to support fish and birds. Modeling done by UC Riverside (ecological and water quality) leads us to conclude that the Project can support fish.

Q: I am concerned that water quality can affect humans and make the Project open to lawsuits.

A: We are aware of water pollution and evaluated these impacts in the Draft EIS/EIR. Human health risks are small. Human contact is not precluded, but this is not human drinking water. UC Riverside did water quality work and also looked at pesticides.

Q: Is the adaptive management plan in the EIS/EIR?

A: No, the framework is in the Draft EIS/EIR EIR; a detailed plan will follow.

Q: The Draft EIS/EIR didn't include performance measures or goals. What is your measure of success? A certain level of birds or fish? Sediment reduction? Nutrient reduction? Goals/ performance measures may be needed for each one.

A: Thank you for your comment.

Q: What is the timeframe for responses to comments?

A: Responses to comments will be in the Final EIS/EIR, which will be released next spring. Responses will be provided to commenting agencies 10 days before the EIR is certified (under CEQA) and 30 days before the Record of Decision is issued (under NEPA).

Q: Will there be a consecutive comment period for the 404 permit?

A: Yes.

Q: Are species-specific designs incorporated? As part of the modular aspect, would you apply things learned to the next phase? Would you develop specific areas for rails or pupfish, for example? Could rail habitat be added as part of modular aspect?

A: Fish-eating birds are the primary focus of the SCH Project, although there are incidental benefits for other species, such as clapper rails. If broader authority is granted that addresses a broader scope, it could be incorporated into the Project. It depends on the Legislature and funding. Regarding the modular aspect, permits and the environmental analysis are designed to bound the largest project that could be built with current funding. Future phases are not specifically part of this project right now.

Q: Some fish and birds have a tendency to concentrate—a lot of the New River won't be diluted in Salton Sea and will be concentrated more than now. A lot of studying should be done on water quality.

A: Water quality impacts are addressed in the EIS/EIR.