



Draft Environmental Study for Salton Sea Habitat Released

California Natural Resources Agency Announces Release of Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for the Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project

Sacramento- Secretary for Natural Resources, John Laird, announced today the release of the draft Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) Project Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR). The release of the study, which was prepared jointly with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, opens a 60-day public comment period on the SCH Project, including alternative methods of restoring habitat at the Salton Sea and their impacts.

“The release of this study is an important step in a phased approach to ecosystem restoration in the Salton Sea,” said Secretary for Natural Resources, John Laird. “This early start habitat will help maintain necessary habitat for the wildlife in the Salton Sea and will complement future restoration efforts.”

The Salton Sea is located along one of the most important flyways in North America, providing critical habitat for more than 400 species of resident and migrating birds. As water elevation in the Salton Sea continues to decline and salinity continues to increase, the result is a decline in the habitat the birds and fish depend on and an eventual collapse of the fishery. The SCH Project will provide a range of aquatic habitats that will support fish and wildlife species dependent on the Salton Sea.

During the 60-day comment period, public meetings will be held in the Salton Sea region to provide an overview of the proposed SCH Project and allow the public to submit official comments on the draft EIS/EIR.

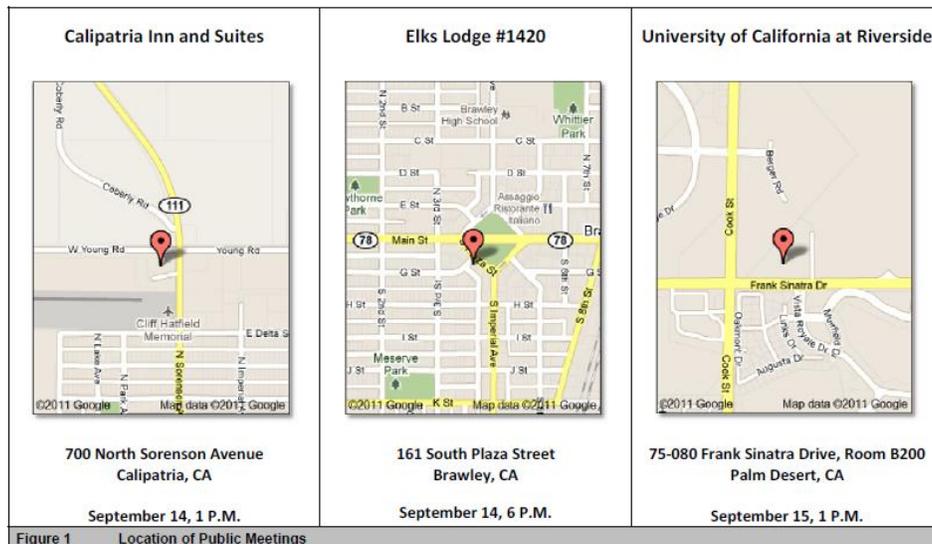


Figure 1 Location of Public Meetings

The process to restore the Salton Sea began in 2003 with the Quantification Settlement Agreement to reduce southern California's dependence on Colorado River water. Under the terms of the agreement, inflows to the Salton Sea will be reduced, hastening its ecological collapse. To mitigate these effects, the State prepared a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) based on two years of intensive scientific study and input from hundreds of stakeholders. In May 2007 the State released a Preferred Alternative for Ecosystem Restoration of the Salton Sea. The Preferred Alternative was submitted to the State Legislature for considerations and is still under review. The SCH Project is separate from, but completely compatible with, the recommendations for Early Start Habitat presented in the PEIR.

For more information on the Salton Sea SCH Project, refer to www.saltonsea.water.ca.gov. The website provides information on the draft EIS/EIR, methods to provide official comments, as well as information on the upcoming public meetings. For further questions, contact Kent Nelson, Program Manager, Salton Sea Restoration Program, Department of Water Resources at (916) 653-9190 or David Elms, Deputy Regional Manager, California Department of Fish and Game at (760) 200-9394.