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Salton Sea Financial Assistance Program
Department of Water Resources
1416 9th Street, Room 1148
Sacramento, CA 95814

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am writing to lend my strongest support to the research proposal entitled “Field Test of a Novel Wetland Treatment System to Provide Clean Water for the Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat,” which is being submitted to the Salton Sea FAP by Professor Norman Terry. Although I have known Professor Terry for more than 30 years as a University of California colleague, we do not collaborate in research and I am not involved with the research proposal under consideration. My commentary on his proposal in this letter stems solely from my longtime interest in research and teaching as related to water and soil quality, from my own recent research emphasis on water quality in near-coastal wetland systems.

Professor Terry has spent a number of years developing constructed wetlands as “design-with-Nature” water treatment systems to remove nutrients and harmful contaminants from wastewaters. This approach takes advantage of the unique soil and water chemistry in wetlands along with the physiology and biochemistry of the aquatic plants and algae in them to purify wastewaters that otherwise would become eutrophic or be hazardous to wildlife and humans. Of special concern with respect to ecotoxicity is the element selenium. Professor Terry has become internationally recognized for the development of methodologies for using aquatic plants and algae to remove this toxic element from wastewaters by transforming it into a gas that poses no environmental threat because it is diluted into the atmosphere and carried away. He has perfected this approach in a series of mesocosm studies and is poised to apply it to impaired water resources that in principle could be used to supply the Salton Sea. His project, which involves optimization of his approach for Salton Sea conditions, is surely destined to succeed in its goals.

Even my brief remarks here should make it evident why I am enthusiastic about the proposed project, both for its scientific content as a full-scale demonstration of proof-of-concept and for its high potential to benefit the Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat. I give my whole-hearted endorsement to it absolutely without reservation as an excellent, low-risk investment of public funds.

Sincerely yours,

Garrison Sposito
Betty & Isaac Barshad
Chair in Soil Science