CHAPTER 8
PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

8.1 INTRODUCTION
Since the initial stages of the Salton Sea Restoration Project, stakeholder outreach and education and agency participation have been a primary focus of efforts in the shaping of the project and in the development of alternatives for the EIS/EIR. Although salinity and surface water elevation problems at the Sea have been studied for many years, the initial planning process for the current set of alternatives began in 1996. The process has included numerous public and agency meetings. Meetings have been held to help identify potential alternatives, develop screening criteria, conduct screening analysis (with public and agency input) to eliminate some alternatives and focus on feasible alternatives, and give the public updates about which alternatives would be retained for analysis in the EIS/EIR.

8.2 LEAD AND COOPERATING AGENCIES
The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the Salton Sea Authority (Authority) have entered into an agreement to coordinate and perform studies and investigations necessary to implement Public Law (PL) 105-372 and PL 105-575. Under this agreement, Reclamation and the Authority are jointly responsible for addressing environmental impacts and are the lead agencies for preparing the EIS/EIR. Reclamation is responsible for ensuring that the document comply with requirements established by National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Authority is responsible for ensuring that the report comply with requirements established by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

As lead agencies, the Authority and Reclamation are responsible for establishing a liaison with the public and all federal, state, local, and tribal agencies that have jurisdiction by law or that have special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposed action and for requesting their participation, as appropriate. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has identified areas of jurisdiction, by law or special expertise, for all federal agencies. An agency may ask the lead agencies to designate it as a cooperating agency. The lead agencies meet periodically
8. Public and Agency Involvement

8.3 Public Involvement

8.3.1 Opportunities for Public and Agency Involvement

Reclamation and the Authority have implemented a public involvement program that was designed to ensure that information from the public is included and public concerns are fully addressed during the restoration effort. The overall goal of the program is to achieve consent among affected interests on a feasible solution to the problems facing the Salton Sea. The objectives of the public involvement effort include the following:

- Meet and document legal requirements for public involvement outlined in NEPA and CEQA;
- Develop public awareness and understanding about the Salton Sea Restoration Project to encourage public participation in the decision-making process;
- Provide adequate notice to interested parties about the development of a Salton Sea Restoration Project and about their opportunities to participate;
- Ensure affected local, regional, state, and federal elected and appointed officials are informed about the purpose and need for the Salton Sea Restoration Project and its progress;
- Achieve balanced decision-making that takes into account the issues important to affected interests;
- Reduce project costs by avoiding wasted effort on solutions that will not be acceptable to affected interests;
- Minimize litigation and disputes through informal negotiations; and
- Build general public understanding about the purpose and need for the project.

To date, participants representing the interests of agriculture, water districts, recreation, sport fishing, environmental organizations, businesses, and the general public have been asked to help define problems and to evaluate alternatives for solving the challenges confronting the Salton Sea area.

This public involvement has been solicited and engaged through multiple public outreach methods and activities including the following:

- Public workshops;
- Public meetings;
- Community presentations;
- Educational materials/direct mail;
- Media contacts;
8. Public and Agency Involvement

- Legislative briefings;
- Project public information line/ project website; and
- EIS/ EIR scoping meetings.

Table 8.3-1 provides information relative to the public workshops and meetings that have been held to date on the Salton Sea Restoration Project. The public is encouraged to continue to provide input to the process by attending and participating in public workshops and by providing written comments on the draft EIS/EIR. Public involvement will continue throughout the course of completing the environmental document and implementing the project itself.

**Table 8.3-1**
Summary of Public Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meeting Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 12</td>
<td>Salton Sea Symposium II, Rancho Mirage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 15-17</td>
<td>Public Scoping Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 5-8</td>
<td>Public Alternative Screening Meetings (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2</td>
<td>Environmental Community Meeting, Tiburon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>May 8</td>
<td>Congressional Task Force Hearing, Brawley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10</td>
<td>Environmental Community Meeting, Palm Desert</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 11</td>
<td>Alternatives Workshop, La Quinta</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 12</td>
<td>Alternatives Workshop, Salton City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 12</td>
<td>Alternatives Workshop, Brawley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Alternatives Workshop, San Diego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Environmental Community, San Diego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 3</td>
<td>Alternatives Workshop, Rancho Mirage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 4</td>
<td>Alternatives Workshop, Salton City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 4</td>
<td>Alternatives Workshop, El Centro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 5</td>
<td>Environmental Community, Calipatria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 8</td>
<td>Environmental Community, San Francisco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 13-14</td>
<td>Salton Sea Symposium III, Desert Hot Springs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.3.2 Major Public and Agency Issues and Concerns Identified During Scoping

The public scoping process has identified numerous public and agency questions and concerns. These are discussed in the Salton Sea Restoration EIS/ EIR Scoping Report, published in January 1999, and posted on the Reclamation website. This document is incorporated by reference. The report includes a complete list of all comments received during the scoping period, both oral and written.
Agency comments and concerns were tracked separately and included concerns similar to those of the public. Additional concerns included the following:

- Defining the scope of the project;
- Defining the No Action Alternative; and
- Listing international boundary issues and cultural and Native American issues.

All of these issues were incorporated into the scope of the EIS/EIR analysis and, where appropriate, are addressed within the individual resource sections of this document (see Section 1.7.1 for a list of the concerns identified during public scoping).

8.3.3 Distribution of EIS/EIR

Following completion of the draft EIS/EIR, Reclamation and the Authority will distribute the document to a comprehensive list of elected officials, federal, state, regional, and local agencies, local Indian tribes, and interested organizations and individuals. In addition, the lead agencies will conduct public hearings at various locations in the project area to solicit public and agency input on the document. The availability of the document will be publicized in various media, including local and regional newspapers, the Federal Register, and the Reclamation website. All public comments on the draft EIS/EIR will be addressed in the final EIS/EIR.

8.4 Agency Coordination

In addition to activities and programs to solicit public and stakeholder involvement, a number of subcommittees and teams have been formed to ensure the involvement of all interested and participating federal and state agencies in the process. Interagency teams are important in bringing the technical expertise of the agencies into the planning process and ensuring that the appropriate agency staff are reviewing and providing recommendations at each step of the process. In many ways, the agency involvement programs have interacted with and complemented public outreach efforts.

Public agencies participating in the process to date include the following:

- California Department of Water Resources;
- International Boundary Water Commission
  - US Section
  - Mexican Section;
- US Environmental Protection Agency;
- California EPA;
- US Army Corps of Engineers;
- US Geological Survey;
- US Fish and Wildlife Service;
- Torres Martinez Band of Cahuilla Indians;
- US Bureau of Land Management;
- US Bureau of Indian Affairs;
- California Regional Water Quality Control Board;
- Coachella Valley Water District;
8. Public and Agency Involvement

- Imperial Irrigation District;
- Riverside County;
- Imperial County; and
- California Department of Fish and Game.

Throughout alternative development and analysis, meetings with these cooperating agencies were conducted to allow regular consideration of their issues and suggestions. In addition, the Fish and Wildlife Service was regularly consulted directly on issues and alternative features within their expertise. EPA and the Corps of Engineers were also consulted directly relative to Section 404 and water quality issues. The Torres Martinez Band of Cahuilla Indians were individually consulted throughout the process on use of lands within and near their reservation as well as on potential effect to cultural resources related to their historic uses of the area. Table 3.16-4 includes a list of tribal organizations contacted through the Native American consultation process. The BLM was specifically consulted in relation to the use of Federal lands for project purposes. Finally, a separate meeting with State regulatory agencies was held to assure their understanding of the process and proposed alternatives.

All these agencies, and others, were consulted throughout the process informally as specific information needs and questions were identified.

8.5 Research Management Committee

The Secretary of the Interior, with authorization through PL 105-372, established the Research Management Committee (RMC). The RMC consists of representatives of the following entities involved in the Salton Sea recovery effort: the Department of Interior, the state of California, the Salton Sea Authority, the Torres Martinez Band of Cahuilla Indians, and the California Water Resources Center. The RMC facilitates the pooling of financial resources for research activities and coordination of research on a time-sensitive basis. The RMC acts on recommendations made by the Salton Sea Science Subcommittee relative to funding science needs and supports the awarding of science projects evaluated by the subcommittee. RMC recommendations are forwarded to the Authority for funding.

8.6 Science Subcommittee

The Salton Sea Science Subcommittee (SSC) was established to serve as an independent and objective advisory body to provide scientific evaluations and recommendations to the RMC. The SSC is administratively responsible to the RMC. The charter for the RMC and SSC is provided on Reclamation’s website at www.lc.usbr.gov. The compositions for the RMC and SSC are shown in tables 8.6-1 and 8.6-2.

The primary purpose for this science component is to provide a sound scientific foundation on which to base management judgments on various alternatives to achieve project goals. To arrive at this point, the following tasks were accomplished:

- Gathering, synthesizing, and evaluating existing scientific information relative to the Salton Sea ecosystem;
8. Public and Agency Involvement

- Identifying priority data gaps and facilitating investigations for obtaining that data;
- Completing focused scientific evaluations of potential environmental impacts from proposed project alternatives and management actions; and
- Developing a strategic science plan to guide the long-term integration of science within the project.

8.6.1 Data Gathering, Synthesis, and Evaluation

There is a general perception that the Salton Sea has been “studied to death.” Therefore, past and ongoing studies initially were evaluated to determine the extent and quality of information that would be useful for project evaluations. The University of Redlands is an important cooperator and collaborator in this effort. The university established an independent Salton Sea Database Program that interfaces with the science and management components of the project. The database program provides a centralized system for storing data and for processing, sharing, and distributing scientific information. The database program also has geographic information system (GIS) capabilities for mapping and evaluations. Synthesis documents were prepared for existing information by various subject matter experts, SSC subgroups, and others to address project information needs (Table 8.6-3). A wide array of documents were deposited within the University of Redlands Salton Sea Database Program for access by project managers and scientists. The database is a comprehensive collection of literature and GIS data specific to the Sea and available through the university’s website, http://cem.uor.edu/.

8.6.2 Identification of Priority Data Gaps

Evaluation of existing information disclosed that much of the information was dated and of limited use because of changes taking place within the Salton Sea.

| Table 8.6-1 |
| Composition of the Salton Sea Research Management Committee |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Level of Appointee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salton Sea Authority</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of California</td>
<td>Office of the Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Department of the Interior</td>
<td>Office of the Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indian Tribe</td>
<td>Tribal Chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of California University Community</td>
<td>Director, University of California Center for Water and Wildlife Resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Table 8.6-2 |
| Composition of the Salton Sea Science Subcommittee¹ |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Type</th>
<th>Representatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Federal Agencies

US Geological Survey
US Army Corps of Engineers
Los Alamos National Laboratory
US Environmental Protection Agency
Bureau of Reclamation
Bureau of Land Management
US Department of Agriculture
US Fish and Wildlife Service

Independent Nations
Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indian Tribe

California State Agencies
Department of Fish and Game
Environmental Protection Agency
Department of Water Resources

Regional Agency
Salton Sea Authority

California Local Government
Riverside County
Imperial County

California Water Districts
Imperial Irrigation District
Coachella Valley Water District

California University Community
San Diego State University
University of Redlands
University of California
Imperial Valley College

Environmental Groups
California Audubon Society

Mexico/United States
International Boundary and Water Commission

1Chair by an Executive Director who does not represent any organization but the Science Subcommittee; all organizations are limited to one representative, except for the International Boundary and Water Commission, which has a representative from Mexico and from the United States.

Table 8.6-3
Issue-specific Reconnaissance Investigations and Synthesis Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis Documents Followed by Reconnaissance Investigations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Avifauna of the Salton Sea: A Synthesis</td>
<td>Point Reyes Bird Observatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish and Fisheries of the Salton Sea</td>
<td>Institute of Marine Science, University of Southern Mississippi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical and Physical Analyses of the Salton Sea</td>
<td>Bureau of Reclamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Synthesis of Our Knowledge of the Biological Limnology of the Salton Sea</td>
<td>Center for Inland Waters and Department of Biology, San Diego State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Survey of Algal Toxins in the Salton Sea</td>
<td>Scripps Institute of Oceanography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconnaissance of Microbial (Bacterial and Viral) Pathogens in the Salton Sea</td>
<td>US Geological Survey, National Wildlife Health Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis Document of Current Information on the Sediment, Physical Characteristics, and Contaminants at the Salton Sea, Riverside and Imperial Counties, California</td>
<td>Levine-Fricke Recon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ecosystem. Also, there have been no studies of the Sea as a whole, and the fragmented investigations that have been done do not provide sufficient data to meet some information needs. It was concluded from these evaluations that the immediate science priority was to describe the current state of the sea through a series of integrated reconnaissance studies to provide “real time” information for use in the NEPA/CEQA evaluations (Table 8.6-3). The next levels of need were determined to be an evaluation of the ecological factors resulting in major bird die-offs (Table 8.6-4), followed by evaluations of important system processes within the Sea. This information can be reviewed on the University of Redlands website (http://cem.uor.edu/). The SSC evaluated the data gaps in such a way that would satisfy the schedule requirements of NEPA/CEQA, while establishing the foundation for scientific input to long-term decisions and actions for restoring the Sea.

**Table 8.6-4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Investigation</th>
<th>Awarded To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tilapia Food Habits</td>
<td>The University of Southern Mississippi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of Natural Toxins at the Salton Sea</td>
<td>University of California at San Diego Scripps Institute of Oceanography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigations of the Cause of Eared-Grebe Mortality at the Salton Sea - Algal Blooms and Biotoxins</td>
<td>Wright State University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Science investigations are competitively awarded by the Salton Sea Authority. Requests for proposals to address specific needs are developed by the SSC, are broadly advertised, and are available on Reclamation’s website (www.lc.usbr.gov). Proposals received are evaluated initially by the SSC for relevance and general scientific merit. Proposals deemed to be of value are then submitted for external peer review by subject matter experts. Peer review is the dominant factor regarding which proposals are selected for funding. Successful proposals have originated from the private sector, university community, and government agencies.
Findings from these studies provide important information of direct relevance for evaluations of proposed management actions. Findings often differ from popular perceptions and conventional wisdom about the Sea based on earlier investigations and more fragmented scientific efforts.

### 8.6.3 Focused Scientific Evaluations for Potential Environmental Impacts

The SSC independently evaluates proposed management actions, including the No-Action Alternative. These evaluations are restricted to the potential biological impacts, both positive and negative, likely to occur as a result of the actions being considered. Subject matter experts are invited to SSC meetings to assist with evaluations. Evaluations are restricted to actions being considered by management, as it is not an SSC role to propose actions. Findings are nonjudgmental regarding acceptance or rejection of proposed actions; instead, they focus on highlighting probable environmental outcomes associated with the proposed actions. Those outcomes are considered by the project co-lead agencies in making decisions on alternatives being considered. Evaluations are provided orally in some instances and as formal reports of the SSC in other instances.

### 8.6.4 Strategic Science Plan

It is recognized that restoration of the Salton Sea requires a long-term effort, that science needs for the immediate NEPA/CEQA evaluations differ somewhat from the long-term needs, and that a phased approach is needed for the science effort. A Strategic Science Plan (SSP) to guide the long-term integration of science within the project is described as a common action in Section 2.6.8 and is discussed further in a companion document to this NEPA/CEQA evaluation. The SSP builds upon the foundation provided by the SSC process and provides a blueprint for the science process, functions, and administrative structure, which are needed to sustain a long-term science component of the adaptive management approach.

### 8.7 Salton Sea Restoration Workgroups and Advisory Teams

In addition to the agencies and committees discussed above, several Salton Sea restoration workgroups and advisory teams have been established to assist in the restoration project effort. These groups include the Economic Development Task Force, formed by the Authority to investigate economic opportunities associated with restoration of the Sea, and the Alternatives Enhancement Subgroup, formed to address project goals and objectives.