

bined EIS/EIR has been prepared. The EIS/EIR for the Salton Sea Restoration Project describes the existing environmental and socioeconomic conditions at and near the Salton Sea, and the environmental consequences of the project alternatives, including no action.

The US Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation and the Salton Sea Authority along with a number of other cooperating agencies have prepared the joint draft EIS/EIR. The Lower Colorado Region of the Bureau of Reclamation is serving as the NEPA lead agency. The Salton Sea Authority, a joint powers authority formed by the Coachella Valley Water District, Imperial County, the Imperial Irrigation District, and Riverside County, is serving as the CEQA lead agency. These lead agencies are responsible for the content of the EIS/EIR.

The Importance of Public Involvement

The public has played an important role in shaping the alternatives and the issues addressed in the EIS/EIR. Public meetings and workshops were held throughout the alternative development process to inform the public about progress and receive comments and suggestions. Separate meetings with members of the Torres Martinez band of the Desert Cahuilla Indian Tribe were designed to receive comments from the tribe on their interests. Meetings have been conducted in the Palm Springs area as well as in communities such as Desert Shores, El Centro, and San Diego.



Salton Sea Authority and Bureau of Reclamation Project Managers addressed issues raised at a Salton Sea area public meeting.

Principal investigators presented their findings at a public meeting held at the US Fish & Wildlife Service Sonny Bono National Wildlife Refuge.



PHOTOS BY PATTI KICLEN

How can I Become Involved?

There are many ways to become involved in the Salton Sea Restoration Project:

1. **Get on the mailing list.** You may get on the Salton Sea Restoration Project mailing list by contacting the Authority at (760) 564-4888 (voice) or (760) 564-5288 (fax), or sending a note to The Salton Sea Authority, 78-401 Highway 111, Suite T, La Quinta, CA 92253. Once on the mailing list you will receive the quarterly newsletter, SeaNotes, as well as notices of meetings and other important events.
2. **Visit the web-site.** The official project web page can be accessed from the Reclamation web-site located at <http://www.lc.usbr.gov>. This web page contains useful information plus email links to the project leads.
3. **Attend Board and TAC meetings.** The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Board of Directors of the Salton Sea Authority hold monthly meetings that are open to the public. TAC meetings are typically held on the first Wednesday of each month and Board meetings are typically held on the third Thursday of each month. Meetings are held at locations around the Sea. Meeting times and locations are provided in flyers that are sent to members of the mailing list and can be obtained by contacting the Authority.
4. **Attend hearings and workshops.** Workshops are held frequently on various topics related to restoration of the Sea. In addition, public hearings will be held on the draft EIS/EIR. Information about the project will be provided and public comments will be solicited.

Input from the public is an important part of the process. The lead agencies welcome public participation and encourage everyone's involvement.



SeaNotes, a quarterly newsletter for the project that includes general interest articles and details on scientific research underway at the Sea, is mailed to interested stakeholders, federal, state, and local entities, and members of the general public.



PHOTOS BY PATTI KROEN

Science Subcommittee Director Dr. Milt Friend, addresses the kickoff meeting for principal investigators.



Sono Bono Wildlife Refuge Manager Clark Broom leads a tour and briefing for project team members.

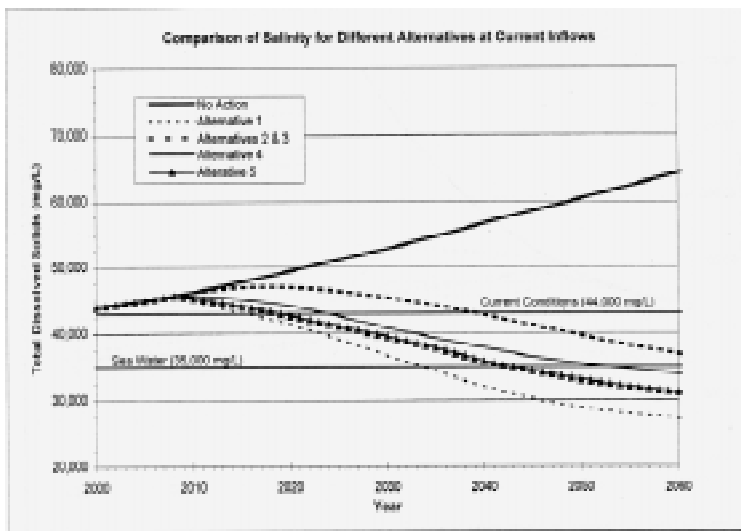
THE IMPORTANCE OF TIMELY RESTORATION

Timely restoration of the Salton Sea would preserve the ecological and economic values of the area, however it should be noted that solutions are not immediate and salinity continues to increase. If restoration activities started today, it would take several years for major benefits to be realized. And the longer we wait to get started, the more deteriorated the environment becomes.

Need for the Salton Sea Restoration Project

The Salton Sea Restoration Project is needed to maintain and restore ecological and socioeconomic values of the Salton Sea to the local and regional human community and to the biological resources dependent upon the Sea. Increasing salinity in the Sea, which is currently about 44,000 mg/L, already may be threatening the reproductive ability of some parts of the biota. If the current trend of increasing salinity continues, sport fish in the Salton Sea will be eliminated over the next few decades. Therefore, controlling salinity is critical if the Salton Sea is to support biodiversity similar to what currently exists. In addition, the Sea is located along the Pacific Flyway, the most western of the major migration corridors for waterfowl and other species. Fish in the Sea are an important food source to fish-eating birds that use the Pacific Flyway, especially since other wetland areas in the Flyway have been lost in recent years. Other issues include unacceptable levels of bird and fish die-offs, high nutrient loading to irrigation drains leading to the Sea, and perceptions and concerns about pollution from selenium, other chemicals, and microbes. All of these issues must be addressed to benefit the fish and wildlife resources and habitats of the Salton Sea and to meet the directives of Congress.

Salinity of the Sea is predicted to continue to increase beyond the tolerance of bird and animal species that depend on it if no restoration action is taken.



Additional benefits that may result from the restoration project include enhanced recreational opportunities and economic development. Historically the rising water levels have flooded such facilities as campgrounds, boat launching ramps, and resorts. Control of water surface elevation within an acceptable range could stimulate future investments in shoreline development, in addition to stimulating biological values from sustaining wildlife habitat. The long-term monitoring and management strategies that would be part of the restoration program would seek to balance the possible conflicts between shoreline development and maintenance of wildlife habitat.



What Will Happen Without Restoration: The No Action Alternative

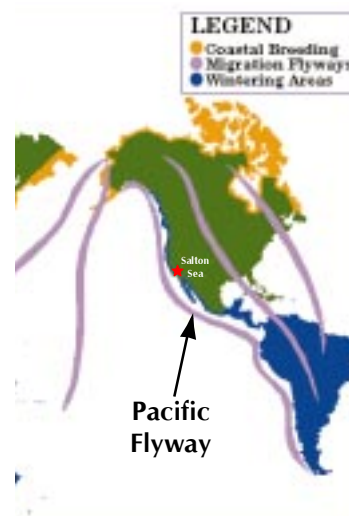
Project alternatives must be evaluated against a scenario that could reasonably be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project is not approved. This evaluation allows decision-makers to compare the effects of approving a project against the effects of not approving a project. The No Action Alternative describes probable future conditions based on the potential for current conditions to continue plus other assumptions about physical, biological, and socioeconomic changes that might occur without the project.

Projecting hydrologic conditions for this project is complicated by uncertainties of future water flows into the Sea. The flow of water will depend on external factors not associated with the Salton Sea Project, and the timing of the flow is unknown. Thus, possible No Action conditions can be defined with both current and reduced flows. For purposes of analysis, project effects have been evaluated against three No Action/No Project inflow scenarios:

Current (present-day) inflow conditions continue throughout both Phases 1 and 2, with average annual inflows of 1.36 maf/yr;

Annual inflows are incrementally reduced throughout Phase 1 to 1.06 maf/yr at the beginning of Phase 2; inflows remain at 1.06 maf/yr throughout Phase 2; and

Annual inflows are incrementally reduced throughout Phase 1 and continue to decline into Phase 2 until they reach 0.8 maf/yr.



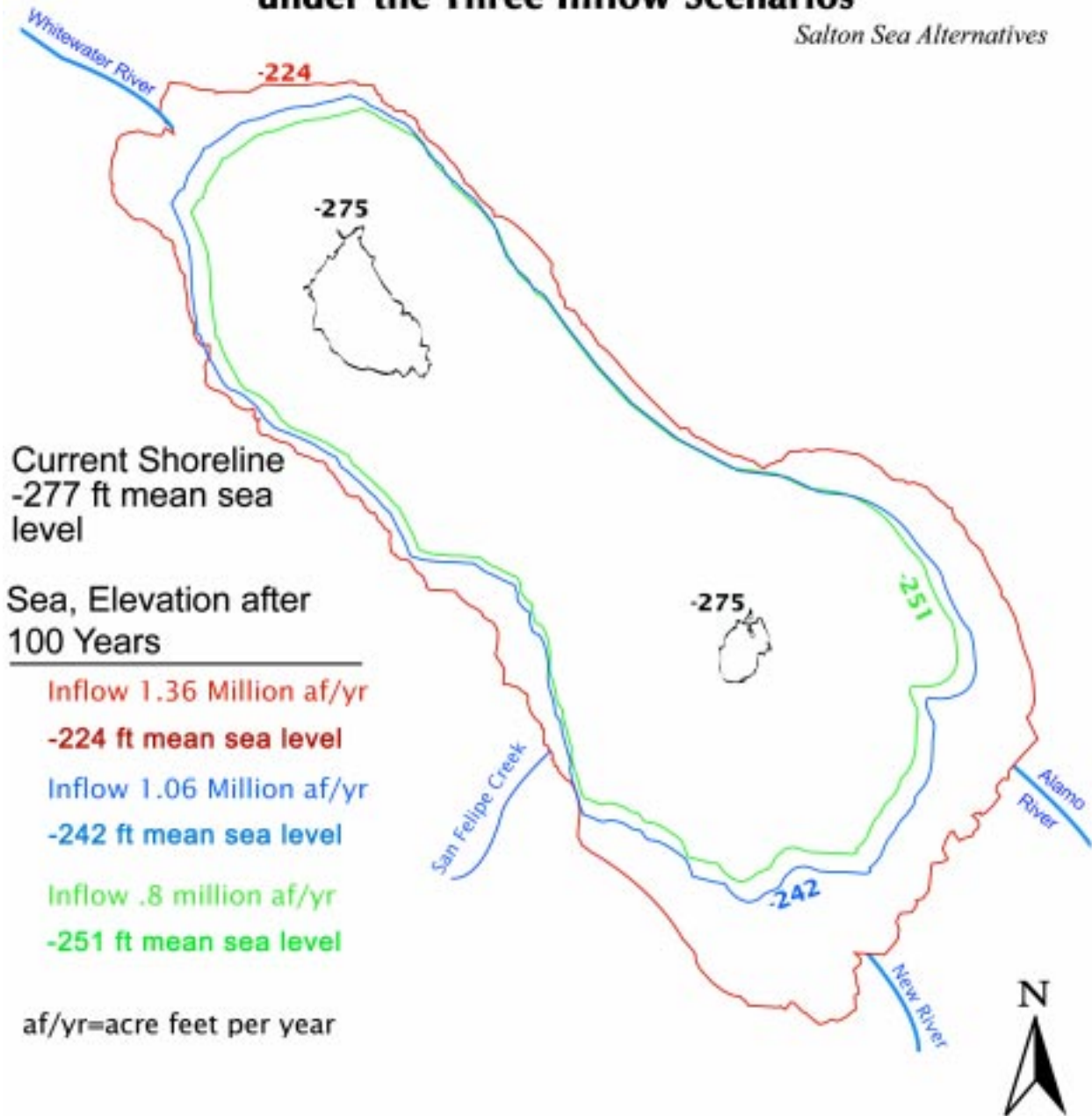
The Salton Sea, situated in the middle of the Pacific Flyway— one of several major avian migratory routes — is a vital link in many bird species wintering and feeding stopover refuges.



Rising water levels, unpleasant odors, and occasional fish die-offs along beaches are some of the factors that are affecting optimal use of the sea. The Restoration Project will address ways to improve the economy of the sea without sacrificing its ecology.

Projected No Action Shorelines at Year 2060 for Salton Sea under the Three Inflow Scenarios

Salton Sea Alternatives



These potential future inflows are considered reasonable future scenarios, in light of the varied other projects in the region currently under consideration that may ultimately gain approval and affect the inflow of water to the Sea. If present-day inflow conditions continue, the salinity in the Sea is expected to reach 53,000 mg/L by 2030. Under either reduced inflow scenario, the salinity is projected to reach 75,000 mg/L in the same year. At this salinity it is unlikely that any fish could survive.

Possible future shorelines without the project are shown on the map on the preceding page. The map shows projected shorelines for 2060 under the three inflow scenarios. Under the lowest inflow scenario, the area of the Sea is projected to be about 100 square miles smaller than it is currently.

In the future, in addition to changes in the quantities of inflows, the quality of inflowing water may also change. Requirements of the Clean Water Act will tend to improve the quality of water that flows into the Sea. However, under the reduced inflow scenarios there may also be a higher concentration of salts in the inflowing waters.

Regardless of the future inflow scenario, these effects can be expected without restoration:

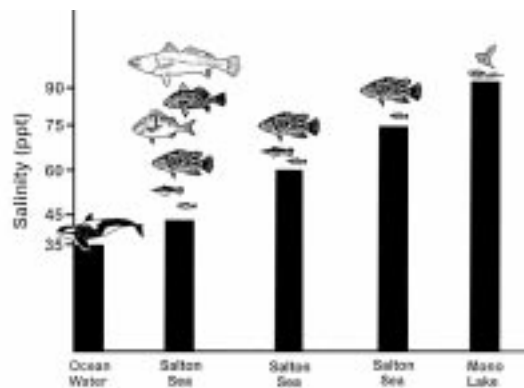
- The existing fishery will deteriorate and disappear;

- Bird species would be threatened by loss of fisheries;

- A significant drop in Sea elevation and decrease in surface area could occur if inflows to the Sea decrease in the future; and

- Local economic conditions and recreational opportunities would continue to decline.

As illustrated in the chart above, without restoration, the sport fish species in the Sea are projected to die off over the next 20 to 30 years as salinity values reach 50,000 to 60,000 mg/L.



Potential impacts of rising salinity on fish life of the Salton Sea.

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Some actions are needed sooner than others are, and some project components can be designed and constructed sooner than others. For example, water imports will be needed only if future average inflows to the Sea decline. Therefore, a phased alternative implementation strategy is proposed. Phase 1 actions would be implemented between the years 2003 and 2015. Phase 2 actions, if needed at all, are generally planned for the year 2030 and beyond. Phase 1 actions are



SUMMARY OF SALTON SEA RESTORATION PROJECT ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS

Future Inflow Scenario (maf/yr)	-----Phase 1 (before 2030)-----			-----Phase 2 (2030 and beyond)-----	
	2003	2008	2015	2030	2060
Alternative 1					
1.36	Fish Harvesting Improve Rec. Facilities Shoreline Cleanup Wildlife Disease Control North Wetland Habitat	2 Ponds at 98 kaf/yr Pupfish Pond	Accelerated Export – 150 kaf/yr		
1.06	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above, plus Displacement Dike	Import Central Arizona Salinity Interceptor (CASI) Water (up to 304.8 kaf/yr, as required)	
0.80	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above, plus Import Flood Flows	
Alternatives 2 and 3					
1.36	Fish Harvesting Improve Rec. Facilities Shoreline Cleanup Wildlife Disease Control North Wetland Habitat	150 kaf/yr EES (showerline technology)			
1.06	Same as above	Same as above	Displacement Dike Import Flood Flows	Import CASI Water (up to 304.8 kaf/yr, as required)	
0.80	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	Additional Displacement or Inflow
Alternative 4					
1.36	Fish Harvesting Improve Rec. Facilities Shoreline Cleanup Wildlife Disease Control North Wetland Habitat	100 kaf/yr EES 1 Evaporation Pond (S) at 68 kaf/yr Pupfish Pond		Increase EES capacity to 150 kaf/yr	
1.06	Same as above	Same as above	Displacement Dike Import Flood Flows	Same as above, plus Import CASI Water (up to 304.8 kaf/yr, as required) Reduce EES at 100 kaf/yr	
0.80	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	
Alternative 5					
1.36	Fish Harvesting Improve Rec. Facilities Shoreline Cleanup Wildlife Disease Control North Wetland Habitat	150 kaf/yr EES in-Sea Evaporation Pond (N)		Export – 150 kaf/yr	
1.06	Same as above	Same as above	Displacement Dike Import Flood Flows	Import CASI Water (up to 304.8 kaf/yr, as required)	
0.80	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	Additional Displacement or Inflow