

COMMITTEE:
ENERGY AND COMMERCE

SUBCOMMITTEES:
CHAIRMAN, COMMERCE,
MANUFACTURING AND TRADE
COMMUNICATIONS AND
TECHNOLOGY
ENVIRONMENT AND
ECONOMY



Mary Bono Mack
Congress of the United States
45th District, California

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
104 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5330
FAX: (202) 225-2961

DISTRICT OFFICES:
36-953 COOK STREET
SUITE 104
PALM DESERT, CA 92211
(760) 320-1076
FAX: (760) 320-0596

1600 EAST FLORIDA AVENUE
SUITE 301
HEMET, CA 92544
(951) 658-2312
FAX: (951) 652-2562

September 17, 2012

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor
State of California
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

Southern California is witnessing first-hand the impact of a dying ecosystem. Foul odors emanating from the Salton Sea were reported throughout the Inland Empire and Los Angeles Area last week, and the South Coast Air Quality Management District confirmed that the hydrogen sulfide in the air originated from the Salton Sea.

Though the incident did not present a serious health risk at this time, there is real concern that last week's issue could foreshadow more ominous events that could potentially harm our health and air quality and take away potential economic benefits in the future if we fail to meet the challenge of saving the Salton Sea. This incident should serve as a wake call. It also demonstrated that issues involving the Salton Sea no longer only affect the Coachella Valley, but also the broader Southern California area.

At the local level, political, business, agriculture and environmental leaders remain committed to restoring the Salton Sea. The potential of developing various renewable energy resources in the area has reinvigorated that support. We need that same commitment at the state and federal levels of government. The solutions are difficult – especially in these challenging financial times – but failure to act will ultimately prove more costly.


The degradation of the Salton Sea ecosystem has been an ongoing problem for decades. Numerous studies at the state and federal level have been conducted. Various alternative plans have been developed. The Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA), which mandated mitigation funding and that the state of California, through the appropriate lead agency, establish a restoration plan of the Sea, is now in legal limbo due to the lawsuit.

The state legislature failed to act on the California State Natural Resource Agency's plan and formed a Salton Sea Restoration Council to come up with a new plan. The Council has not met and was actually repealed in the current budget cycle. Veto of the \$2 million that the state legislature included in the budget for an action plan was very disappointing.

Yet, the Salton Sea continues to decline, the ecosystem continues to diminish, and the potential economic development remains untapped. We cannot continue down the path of doing nothing. Without leadership and commitment from all parties, the largest inland water body in the state and valuable habitat will be lost forever, along with the economic benefits of a healthy Sea. I urge you to bring together your state agencies and work with our local leaders, who need to have a greater voice in saving the Salton Sea. I am contacting federal agencies asking for their cooperation and partnership in this effort as well.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


Mary Bono Mack
Member of Congress

CC: Salton Sea Authority
California Natural Resources Agency
California Water Resources Control Board
California Air Resources Board

COMMITTEE:
ENERGY AND COMMERCE

SUBCOMMITTEES:
CHAIRMAN, COMMERCE,
MANUFACTURING AND TRADE
COMMUNICATIONS AND
TECHNOLOGY
ENVIRONMENT AND
ECONOMY



Mary Bono Mack
Congress of the United States
45th District, California

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
104 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5330
FAX: (202) 225-2961

DISTRICT OFFICES:
36-953 COOK STREET
SUITE 104
PALM DESERT, CA 92211
(760) 320-1076
FAX: (760) 320-0596

1600 EAST FLORIDA AVENUE
SUITE 301
HEMET, CA 92544
(951) 658-2312
FAX: (951) 652-2662

September 17, 2012

Dr. Barry Wallerstein
Executive Officer
South Coast Air Quality Management District
21865 Copley Drive
Diamond Bar, CA 91765

Dear Dr. Wallerstein:

As your scientists discovered firsthand last week, the health of the Salton Sea does, in fact, affect the air quality beyond the Coachella Valley. Though the incident was primarily a large odor event and not a health risk at this time, there is a very real concern that it could foreshadow more dramatic events in the future which could potentially harm our health, air quality, and economy if we don't meet the daunting challenge of saving the Salton Sea.

I appreciate the speed and effort of your team in looking at the causes and sources of this odor issue. Now, the difficult task of reducing the threat of a repeat episode or a potentially more harmful health incident by restoring the environmental health of the Salton Sea is more important than ever. In addition to the environmental and health benefits of a healthy ecosystem, there is great potential in developing renewable energy resources that could provide real economic benefits to the region. I am reaching out to all relevant agencies at the federal, state and local levels of government urging them to work together with the same goal – preserving the Salton Sea with a long-term strategy to restore and manage its ecosystem, which will lead to better air quality, improved habitat, and great potential economic growth.

Difficult decisions must be made in prioritizing our resources and budgets. As spending levels in yearly budgets are being decided - or other revenue sources come up, such as receiving air mitigation funds from the Sentinel project - it is appropriate to ask if these scarce dollars would be better spent improving the region's air quality by mitigating the harmful impacts of the Salton Sea, instead of a bike path with questionable air quality and economic benefits.

As I have shared with you in the past, I urge the District to use these mitigation funds wisely by approving projects that will improve the air quality in the Coachella Valley, especially in the eastern part of the Valley, which has some of the poorest air quality in the country. Thank you for your continued attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Mary Bono Mack
Member of Congress