

WASHINGTON OFFICE
1605 LONGWORTH
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-8045
FAX: (202) 225-9073

CHULA VISTA OFFICE
333 F STREET, SUITE A
CHULA VISTA, CA 91910
(619) 422-5963
FAX: (619) 422-7290

EL CENTRO OFFICE
380 NORTH 8TH STREET, #14
EL CENTRO, CA 92243
(760) 355-8800
FAX: (760) 321-9664

VARGAS.HOUSE.GOV



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Juan Vargas
51st District, California

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES AND
RISK MANAGEMENT

HORTICULTURE, RESEARCH, BIOTECHNOLOGY
AND FOREIGN AGRICULTURE

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PRINTING

(3/18/15) Public Workshop
Salton Sea
Deadline: 3/11/15 by 12:00 noon

March 9, 2015

Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Comment Letter: Salton Sea

Dear Mrs. Townsend:

I write to provide comments for the State Water Resources Control Board's (SWRCB) Public Workshop regarding the status of the Salton Sea, which is located within my Congressional District. As the SWRCB Board recognized in its Notice of Public Workshop, this issue is an urgent one of statewide importance. It is also a particularly important issue for the residents, businesses, and local governments of the Imperial and Coachella Valleys, which will bear the most direct and substantial costs of the rapid deterioration of the Salton Sea.

The protection and restoration of the Salton Sea is imperative for the people of the 51st Congressional District. I applaud the efforts of this board for hosting the public workshop. This workshop comes at a critical time where there is a need to renew collaboration with all stakeholders in order to address the complex environmental, public health, and socioeconomic issues that the Salton Sea's receding shoreline and thousands of acres of exposed lakebed poses to the region. Without restoration, declining water levels and increasing salinity at the Sea will have significant negative impacts on the local communities. The decline of water levels resulting from water transfers under the Quantification Settlement Agreement will expose thousands of acres of lakebed. Emissions from this exposed playa will significantly worsen our region's already-poor air quality and cause many residents of the Imperial and Coachella Valleys to suffer from heart disease, asthma, lung cancer, and other health problems. Increasing salinity levels, which will accelerate sharply once the interim mitigation measures ordered by the State Water Board end in 2017, threaten to destroy the Salton Sea ecosystem. And the economic impact of a dying Sea will be a major burden on businesses, schools, public services, and the overall quality of life for residents in the Imperial Valley. This is the harsh reality facing our region.

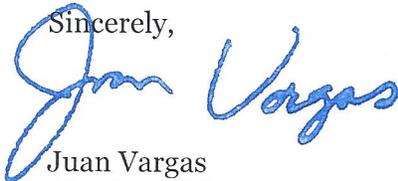


It is time for action. Several studies in recent years have confirmed that restoration is both feasible and necessary to protect the health and well-being of residents and communities around the Sea. I encourage the State Water Board to convene a collaborative process among key stakeholders that will identify a specific restoration plan that can be implemented and funded in time to avert the looming crisis threatening our region and the entire State.

I strongly believe that a restored and environmentally sound Salton Sea could be instrumental in providing water security throughout the region. We must make the necessary investments now that will create the conditions to realize the full potential of the Salton Sea. I remain optimistic regarding the possibilities of the Salton Sea and for all our partners to develop and implement restoration initiatives. I will also continue to work with my colleagues here on Capitol Hill to provide the support for the long-term sustainability of the Salton Sea.

Your board has demonstrated remarkable leadership in finding solutions to some of our state's most pressing water related issues and I am confident that with your collaboration, we will make some real progress in tackling this issue. I look forward to working with you. Thank you for your time and please feel free to contact my office if you have any questions or concerns at (202) 225-8045.

Sincerely,



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress
51st District, California

cc: Rep. Raul Ruiz, 36th Congressional District
State Senator Benjamin Hueso, 40th Senate District
State Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, 56th Assembly District
Secretary John Laird, Natural Resources Agency
Mr. Stephen Benson, Imperial Irrigation District
Mr. Ryan Kelley, Imperial County Board of Supervisors
Mr. Roger Shintaku, Salton Sea Authority