
State Water Resources Control Board

Summary of Written Comments Received from 2024 Salton Sea Management Program Workshop May 2025

The State Water Board staff provides the following summary of written public comments submitted for the State Water Board May 22, 2024, Salton Sea Workshop. The topics reflect the perspectives, concerns, and feedback shared by community members, organizations, and other stakeholders. Comments addressed the following topic areas below. Full comment letters can be viewed on the State Water Board's FTP site. To receive access to the FTP site, please email Salton Sea staff lead, Stephanie Holstege, (stephanie.holstege@waterboards.ca.gov) with "Request for ftp password" in the subject line.

- Community Needs and Participation
 - Requests for clearer integration of community feedback into planning and decision-making processes.
 - Desire for more transparency in how community input is acknowledged and addressed.
 - Encouragement to adopt concrete steps that reflect community-identified priorities.
 - Recommendation to continually evaluate the community engagement process and include an annual evaluation report in subsequent reports that outlines efforts and lessons learned and how engagement efforts have helped achieve goals of community participation.
- Water Quality
 - Encouraging the State and Regional Water Boards to take a more active role in monitoring and reporting water quality at the Salton Sea.
 - Recommend the development and enforcement of TMDLs (Total Maximum Daily Loads) to reduce harmful nutrient inflows and improve dissolved oxygen levels.
 - Call for better nutrient management to mitigate health and environmental risks, including harmful algal blooms and hydrogen sulfide emissions to benefit public health and surrounding communities by reducing their exposure to hydrogen sulfide, biological contaminants in the spray from the Salton Sea, and the overall ecological and aesthetic value of the Salton Sea.
 - Request regular water sampling, particularly in the northern part of the Sea, and clarification on TMDL enforcement responsibility.
 - Emphasize the need for comprehensive nutrient testing and public transparency on enforcement efforts.
- Water Availability
 - Advocate for realistic water budgeting for each project, with transparent allocation plans.
 - Highlight the need for increased water allocations to maintain habitat, protect migratory birds, and address health concerns.

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- Raise concerns regarding how the shrinking water levels and exposed playa impact public health and fish and wildlife.
- Frame water availability as not only a local but also an international issue due to the Salton Sea being part of the Pacific Flyway.
- Air Quality
 - Note the absence of air quality data in the 2024 Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) Annual Report, and asked for inclusion in future reporting.
 - Request that both air and water quality monitoring be used to assess public health outcomes from vegetation and habitat projects.
- Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) Project
 - Concern over delay in commissioning Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) ponds.
 - Concern that the annual report suggests as much as 2/3 of the 10-year plan total habitat acreage could be at the SCH site, which will concentrate habitat in one location. Recommendation to have more distributed habitat to reduce disease transmission and improve habitat resilience.
 - Hoping expansion of geothermal and lithium projects will not preclude the siting of habitat projects around the Alamo River delta (cited in Lithium Valley Action Plan and SSMP 10-year plan Environmental Assessment).
- Long-Range Planning
 - Request for clearer articulation of SSMP long-term goals to inform post-2024 projects and planning timelines.
 - Request for clarification on the SSMP's role in the Army Corps' Feasibility Study and where overall decision-making authority rests, including information on alignment with the State of California's contractual and statutory obligations to the Sea.
- Funding
 - Ask for more detailed accounting of both secured and unsecured funding and permitting needs for future projects.
 - Call for long-term funding to support operations and maintenance (O&M) of restoration projects and estimation of costs of long-term maintenance and operation of habitat projects.
 - Emphasize need for science and monitoring funding, including data collection.
 - Request Water Board ask SSMP Team to provide detailed information in response to the Water Right Order in a supplemental letter by October 1, 2024:
 - i. Detailed projections for funding needs for future projects, including infrastructure needs
 - ii. Accounting of O&M costs for individual projects, such as SCH, and the sources of funding for O&M costs
 - iii. Detailed list of permits that need to be secured
 - iv. Accounting of funding secured and future funding needs for science and monitoring, including data collection
- Habitat
 - Concern about declines in migratory bird populations.
 - Advocate for securing funding for long-term maintenance of habitat projects