



December 17, 2019

Delivered via Email

Wade Crowfoot  
Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 9<sup>th</sup> St #1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) and Long-Term Planning Priorities

Dear Mr. Crowfoot,

On behalf of Alianza Coachella Valley collaborative and Resilience Salton Sea group, composed of residents of the East Coachella Valley (ECV),<sup>1</sup> we submit this letter highlighting key priorities identified by community residents in relation to the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) and long-term planning for the Salton Sea. We look forward to working with you to ensure that these critical priorities identified by residents of the ECV - consistent meetings between the state and local residents, prioritization of dust suppression projects in nearby communities in the ECV, and long-term planning - are considered and implemented.

**Current Data Suggests Heightened Urgency for Dust Suppression in the East Coachella Valley**

In partnership with Dr. Ryan Sinclair from Loma Linda University School of Public Health, the Alianza collaborative has identified new and important air quality data points that have been analyzed and demonstrate the urgency and need to prioritize communities on the Northern side of the Salton Sea as new dust mitigation sites.

Data from the California Air Resources Board concluded that Salton Sea health impacts in the ECV are determined by wind patterns flowing north to south. However, this analysis did not consider data finding that wind patterns reverse in the summer and early fall months, resulting in a flow of south to north.<sup>2</sup> Thus, during the summertime, winds transport PM10 particulates from the Salton Sea and many other types of contaminants from the exposed playa soil in the Salton Sea to communities in the North and Northeast end of the Salton Sea.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, Dr. Sinclair conducted GIS balloon mapping on the Northeast region of the Salton Sea and found that the shoreline by the North Shore Yacht Club has receded an average of 160 feet from 9/2018 to 10/2019 (Figure 2). This rate of recession is alarming; the newly exposed playa unmask a variety of unstable soil types and contaminants that pose a threat to public health for ECV residents. Though the rate of playa exposure in other parts of the sea may also vary, the ECV community is uniquely aware of the rate of change occurring in their backyard.

<sup>1</sup> East Coachella Valley communities in Riverside County: Thermal, Oasis, Mecca, North Shore

<sup>2</sup> This wind pattern is depicted in Figure 1 from Dr. Will Porter, a UCR atmospheric scientist’s analysis of wind at the Torres Martinez sensor station

<sup>3</sup> Data from a preliminary atmospheric modeling investigation by Dr. Will Porter of UCR

Given persistent shortcomings in addressing air quality and health impacts at the Salton Sea, it is critical that we are engaged in this process. Given the severity of health impacts for residents, it is critical that they are engaged. There is a need to develop a robust structure that centers community residents living near the Salton Sea as key stakeholders in decision making for both short and long-term planning. Residents living in nearby communities are directly impacted by public health impacts that manifests in ways such as respiratory illnesses and nose bleeds.<sup>4</sup> The state must act quickly and local residents must be involved during that action. ECV residents have frontline experience and expertise that can help implement dust mitigation projects that strategically address public health impacts by achieving dust suppression and air quality goals and maximizing benefits to communities.

With that, community members from Resilience Salton Sea and Alianza request the following actions to be taken as we move forward on the SSMP:

### ***Dust Mitigation Project requests***

Prioritize the ECV communities in the SSMP as recipients for dust suppression and other mitigation projects in Phase 1 and 2, as well as provide a robust timeline with regularly updated details about the projects. Specifically:

- Projects should be guided and vetted with the community with their suggestions being included throughout the design concept and planning process.
- Use local reliable and diverse air quality data to make adequate decision for dust suppression projects and location of projects (i.e. Personal anecdotes, surveys, department of public health, university research, public school records, and reports from local non-profits).
- Amend RFP language to specifically require design-build contractors to continue with community engagement throughout the design and construction of the built works.
- Create meaningful project selection criteria that prioritize public health and communities in proximity to the Salton Sea like the ECV.

Schedule a meeting and collaboratively create an agenda with community for the month of February or March, and commit to meeting regularly with community residents in the ECV every other month to two months to discuss Salton Sea action such as (but not limited to):

- Future dust suppression project locations and implementation timeline in the ECV, multi-benefit project solutions, report back on priorities and asks generated from community (See Community Engagement Strategy Plan for outreach and engagement strategy).
- The creation of a designated community engagement budget

### ***Long-Term Planning requests from Community members from the Resilience Salton Sea and Alianza:***

Create a community steering committee in partnership with community residents that address long-term solutions in parallel to the 10-Year plan

- The community steering committee, to be mainly composed of local residents as key stakeholders for collaboration in decision-making, implementation, and monitoring processes in order to meet local long-term public health needs.
- Create opportunities for participatory budgeting as a method of engagement and decision-making.

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<sup>4</sup> Estamos Aqui: A Community Magazine, 2019

- Develop a shared vision and implement feasible long-term solutions that include (but are not limited to) cleaning the Salton Sea water.

We submit these comments on behalf of the Resilient Salton Sea community members and Alianza collaborative for the SSMP and long-term planning. We will provide additional comments as we continue to work alongside community residents and the state. We look forward to tonight's Community Engagement Meeting at Saul Martinez and in ongoing conversations. Thank you for your time and consideration of our comments. Should you have any questions please feel free to contact Patricia Leal at [patricia@alianzacv.org](mailto:patricia@alianzacv.org) or via phone call (760)398-0522.

Respectfully submitted,

Erika Ramirez-Mayoral,  
California Institute for Rural Studies

Jenny Binstock,  
Sierra Club

Dr. Ryan Sinclair,  
Loma Linda University

Paulina Rojas  
Youth Leadership Institute

Patricia Leal,  
Alianza Coachella Valley

Lauren Elachi  
Kounkuey Design Initiative

Cc:

Arturo Delgado, California Natural Resources Agency  
Tom Gibson, California Natural Resources Agency  
Lisa Lien-Mager, California Natural Resources Agency  
Vivien Maisonneuve, Department of Water Resources  
E. Joaquin Esquivel, Chair, California State Water Resources Control Board  
Laurel Firestone, California State Water Resources Control Board  
Manuel V. Perez's Office, Supervisor, Riverside County  
Eduardo Garcia's Office, California Assemblymember  
Raul Ruiz's Office, Congress Member  
Thomas Tortez, Chair, Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians Tribal Council

Figures:

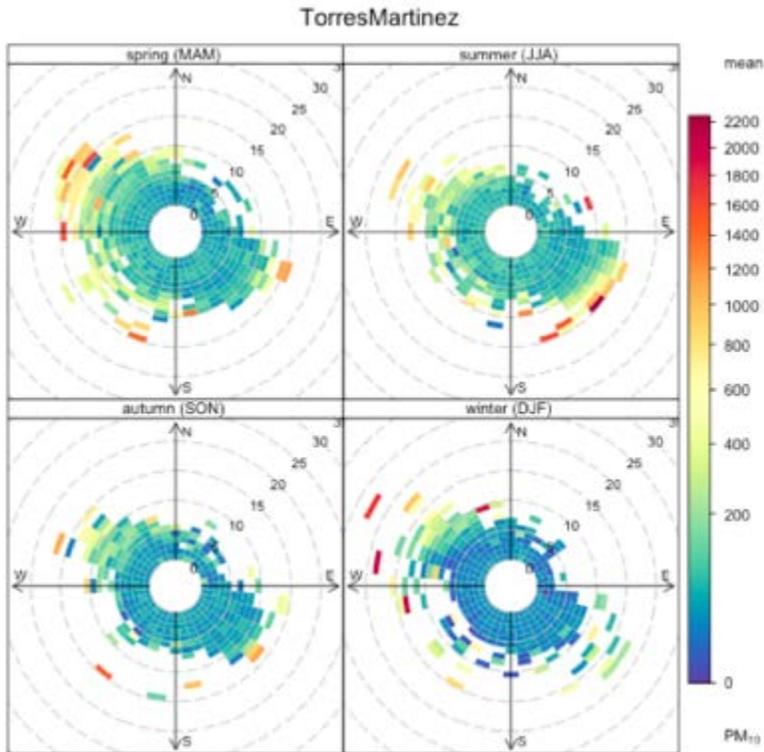


Figure 1. PM10 pollution roses for the Torres Martinez station using EPA data from 2012-2016. The color itself shows the average PM10 value associated with winds of that speed and direction. The red circle highlights that there are high PM10 counts coming from the SE wind direction in the summer. Shared by permission of Dr. Will Porter, an atmospheric scientist of the UCR department of Environmental Sciences.



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Figure 2. Balloon mapping image from 10/2019 overlaid (b) on a 9/2018 google map image (a). Available from navigating to the North Shore Yacht Club on the <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=9e7ce087b26640f6b08da310a8aa2162> website. This website is used as a repository of GIS balloon mapping images.