

City of Cathedral City

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FAX TRANSMISSION COVER SHEET

Date: January 16, 2007
To: Dale Hoffman-Floerke
Fax: 916-654-4925
Re: Salton Sea PEIR Comments
Sender: Julie Baumer, Deputy City Manager
City of Cathedral City

YOU SHOULD RECEIVE 5 PAGE(S), INCLUDING THIS COVER SHEET. IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE ALL THE PAGES, PLEASE CALL (760) 770-0372.

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CITY OF CATHEDRAL CITY CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

SUBJECT: Council Support of Salton Sea Restoration Plan #7

DEPARTMENT: Community Development Dept.
CONTACT: Julie Baumer, Administration

MEETING DATE: January 10, 2007
DEADLINE FOR ACTION: N/A

APPROVED: Julie Baumer
Department

Donald E. Bradley
City Manager

Kami E. Scott
Administrative Services Dir.

RECOMMENDATION: To support the Salton Sea Authority's Restoration Plan among the eight plans being considered by the State Resources Board, but to encourage further exploration of longer-term solutions that would more greatly benefit wildlife, boost commerce, control dust and generate tourism.

BACKGROUND: In October, the Council voted to support a restoration plan for the Salton Sea that has been developed by the Salton Sea Authority (SSA). However, that resolution did not encourage the state to continue exploring a longer-term approach to the restoration problem.

Known as Alternative #7 or the North and South Lakes plan, it takes into account a gradual decline in the total volume of water available to the sea and divides it into two parts, a deep marine sea to the north and a moderately deep marine sea to the south; a saline habitat complex along the southeastern shoreline; a brine sink and a protective salt crust designed to hold down dust.

Out of the eight restoration plans, this is the only one proposing a salt crust as the primary air management tool. All the others suggest dry lakebed stabilization with brine and irrigation of water-efficient vegetation. Plan #7 saves as much of the limited amount of water available for the deep water marine sea, does not risk clogged irrigation pipes because of the high salt content and provides for water circulation with pumps.

Stabilization of the sand particles lining the exposed playa is critical to good air quality of the surrounding region for future generations. While the SSA plan does not guarantee control of dust pollution, of all the plans, it covers more acreage with water and pilot programs have shown that evaporation of the briny sea water creates a rock-hard crust that could serve as a protective cover to the soil.

The flow of new water into the sea would be more likely to breathe life back into it and also better assure that dust pollution would not plague the Coachella Valley. However, the two plans that have been studied, importing water from the Sea of Cortez or the Pacific Ocean, are extremely expensive. Also, bringing in water from the Sea of Cortez would involve working with the government of Mexico and would require a bi-national canal. The Pacific Ocean option is complicated by the need for canal water to be pumped because of changing elevations and the fact that the Salton Sea is 260 feet below sea level. Nevertheless, greater engineering and diplomatic feats have been achieved, and

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if enough effort and funds are committed to the Salton Sea, perhaps sometime in the future this more ambitious concept could be accomplished. Implementation of Plan #7 in the near future would not preclude exploring or putting in place a program that imports a fresh source of water in the more distant future.

The California Department of Water Resources and the California Department of Fish and Game, under the direction of the California Resources Agency, are circulating the draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the Salton Sea ecosystem restoration program. Comments are due by January 16. After considering all comments and information about the various plans being proposed, the secretary of the Department of Water Resources will make a recommendation to the legislature.

The legislature is expected to make a decision by next year. Then funding mechanisms will be studied, hopefully in conjunction with efforts already underway on the federal level. The SSA is also exploring potential local levels of support for sea restoration, including bed tax, recreational tax, assessment district and some sort of tax on business.

FISCAL IMPACT: None. However, ultimately, local sources of funds may be requested to help pay for Salton Sea restoration.

ATTACHMENTS: Attached is a proposed resolution supporting the SSA plan but also asking for further consideration of a longer-term approach.

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CATHEDRAL CITY, CALIFORNIA, SUPPORTING THE SALTON SEA AUTHORITY PLAN #7 FOR ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION AND ENCOURAGING THE STATE TO CONTINUE EXPLORING LONGER-TERM SOLUTIONS FOR IMPORTING ADDITIONAL WATER

THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CATHEDRAL CITY DOES HEREBY RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

WHEREAS, the Salton Sea Authority is a Joint Powers Agency formed under the laws of the State of California by a Joint Powers Agreement dated 1993, and is the regional agency for identifying and implementing corrective measures to preserve the beneficial uses of the Sea; and

WHEREAS, the Salton Sea Authority has conducted extensive research and scientific investigation of the Salton Sea and has studied numerous alternative measures to restore and revitalize the Sea; and

WHEREAS, on June 29, 2006, the Board of Directors of the Salton Sea Authority voted unanimously to adopt the Executive Summary of the Salton Sea Authority Conceptual Plan; and

WHEREAS, the City of Cathedral City finds that of eight plans being promulgated, the Salton Sea Authority Plan #7 best meets the needs to provide wildlife habitats, improve water quality, and protect air quality in our region; and

WHEREAS, the Salton Sea Plan also creates major recreational and economic development opportunities in the Coachella and Imperial Valleys; and

WHEREAS, the Salton Sea Authority Plan is superior to other alternatives that the State of California and The U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation are considering during their current programmatic EIR and alternative study; and

WHEREAS, prior to the formal adopting or implementation of any restoration plan, the Salton Sea Authority will cause any project to undergo a thorough and environmental analysis pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the Council's support for Plan #7, at the present time, Council encourages the State to continue to explore long-term solutions that import additional water to the Sea.

WHEREAS, the City of Cathedral City finds that of eight plans being promulgated, the Salton Sea Authority Plan #7 best meets the needs to provide wildlife habitats, improve water quality, and protect air quality in our region; and

Resolution No.
Salton Sea Authority Plan #7
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NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Cathedral City as follows:

1. The City of Cathedral City hereby supports the "Salton Sea Authority Conceptual Plan for the Multi-Purpose Project" as the current preferred plan for restoration and revitalization of the Salton Sea; and
2. The City of Cathedral City encourages the State of California and the Department of Interior to select the Salton Sea Authority Conceptual Plan as their preferred alternative for Salton Sea restoration and revitalization; and
3. The City of Cathedral City encourages the State to continue exploring longer-term solutions to bring additional water to the sea.

PASSED, APPROVED and ADOPTED by

_____ this 10th day of January, 2007.