



September
2002

SEA NOTES

A newsletter of the Salton Sea Restoration Project

Kent SeaTech

Algae Farm in Research Phase

The Salton Sea Authority has awarded a \$250,000 contract to Kent SeaTech, the state's largest aquaculture company, to test a process to reduce nutrients flowing to the Sea.

The Salton Sea has an abundance of nutrients flowing into it from agricultural fields and municipal sources, particularly from Mexicali. These nutrients create what is known as a eutrophic condition.

Eutrophication is a natural process in the life cycle of a lake and it means that the Sea is highly productive. However, this high productivity has a down side that leads to algal blooms, which result in depletion of oxygen from the water as well as noticeable odors when the algae decomposes.

This lack of oxygen is a leading cause of fish die-offs.

The negative impact of eutrophic conditions has led the Authority to explore innovative techniques.

At one of its fish hatcheries near the Whitewater River, Kent SeaTech has diverted flows from the river into shallow ponds. Algae grown in them will use nutrients in the river water. The algae will be harvested both mechanically and by grazing Tilapia. If this demonstration project proves successful, full-scale application could reduce algal blooms and fish die-offs as well as associated odors at the Sea.

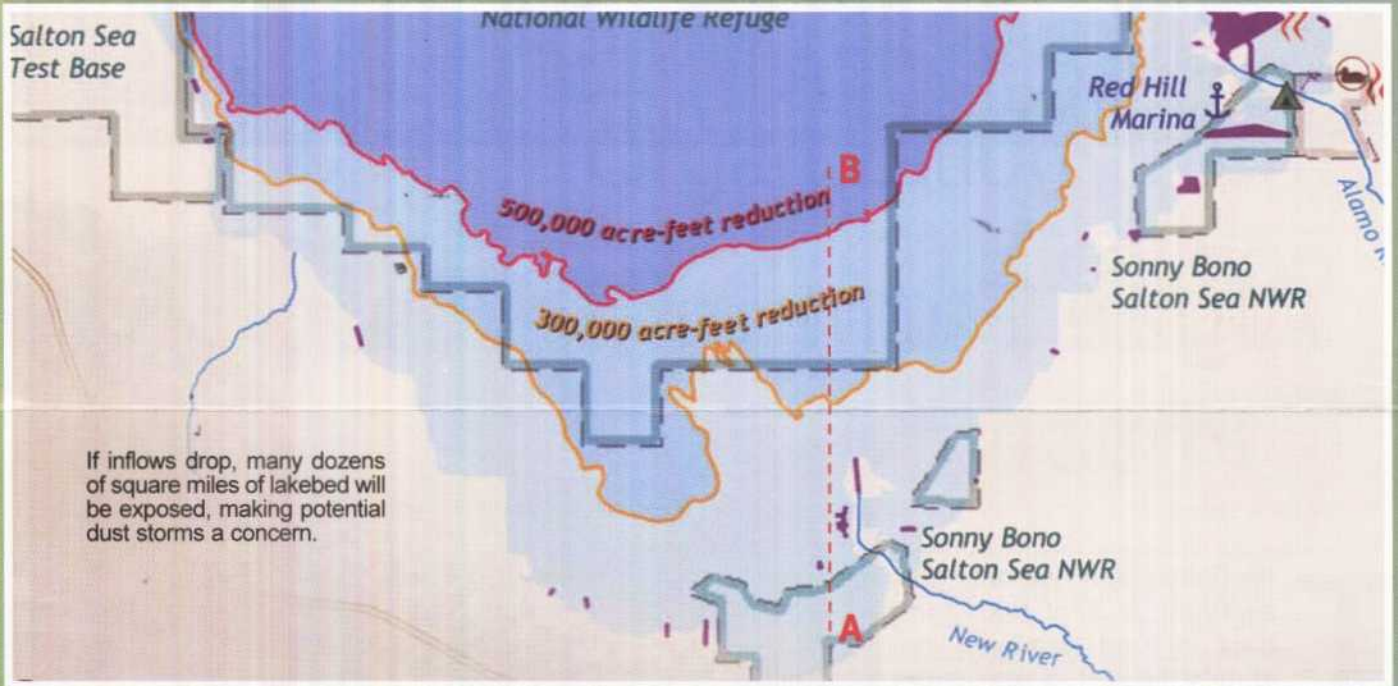


Source:
Kent SeaTech

Above are pictured various components of Kent SeaTech's Controlled Eutrophication Process (CEP) system like the one being used near the Whitewater River to help reduce the amount of nutrients entering the Sea and, thereby, controlling the amount of algal blooms and fish die-offs as well as associated odors.

At Risk

Water Level of the Sea



Source: University of Redlands Salton Sea Data Base

Authority Opposes HR 5123



The Salton Sea Authority Board voted in July to oppose legislation drafted by Congressman Duncan Hunter that would relax environmental laws to permit a transfer of Imperial Irrigation District water to the San Diego County Water Authority. The board found that the legislation would adversely impact the Salton Sea, and the opposition is in line with provisions of an Authority board resolution it unanimously adopted in March to oppose projects that would significantly lower the level of the Sea.

In testimony presented July 25 to the Subcommittee on Water and Power of the U.S. House of Representative Committee on Resources, Authority Executive Director Tom Kirk told committee members the Authority is not opposed to the Quantification Settlement Agreement, nor, necessarily, to a proposed transfer of water from the Imperial Irrigation District to the San Diego County Water Authority.

"The Salton Sea Authority understands the need and generally supports the implementation of the California 4.4 Plan that is designed to reduce California's use of Colorado River Water," Kirk said.

"However, the Salton Sea Authority is deeply concerned about the manner in which transfers are implemented, as some transfer options will have a devastating effect on the Salton Sea," he said.

The Authority did not support the Colorado River Quantification Settlement Facilitation Act in its current form, because:

- ***The Act facilitates water transfers implemented in a manner (on-farm conservation) that would substantially reduce inflows into the Salton Sea and render maintenance and restoration of the Sea infeasible.***



NEW OFFICERS ELECTED



The Salton Sea Authority Board in June elected Andy Horne, of the Imperial Irrigation District, as its new Board president.

Horne represents Division I of IID, which includes the El Centro area. He is a real estate agent and holds a Bachelor of Arts in history from the University of California, Riverside.

Horne serves on a number of IID study groups, including those focusing on the budget, groundwater, public affairs, the Salton Sea and the conservation and transfer agreement between IID and the San Diego County Water Authority.

He is a past president of the El Centro Rotary Club, the El Centro Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau and the Imperial Valley Board of Realtors. He also is a former trustee of the McCabe Union School District in rural El Centro.

Also elected were Supervisor Gary Wyatt of Imperial County as vice president and Peter Nelson of the Coachella Valley Water District as secretary.



Gary Wyatt attended Imperial Valley College and Southern California College and holds a Management Degree from Berean College.

As Imperial County Supervisor, he represents the north end of the Imperial Valley, which includes the Salton Sea.

Prior to being elected to the board, he worked in the Imperial County Sheriff's Department as supervisor of the Crime Prevention Unit and Volunteer Services. His duties included community services and liaison, public relations, special projects coordinator, and media contact. He also served on the California Rural Crime Prevention Task Force, the Red Ribbon Coalition and the California Crime Prevention Officers Association.

Wyatt is also a former member of the Brawley Union High School Board of Trustees.



Peter G. Nelson was sworn in as a member of the Coachella Valley Water District board of directors in June 2000 when he was appointed to serve out the unexpired term of Dorothy Nichols who resigned after having served 13 years as a board member.

Nelson, who has resided in the Coachella Valley since 1987, is general manager of agricultural operations for J&P Properties whose interests in the Thermal area produce citrus, dates and table grapes.

He has been in that position since 1989. Prior to that Nelson was associated with the Superior Farming Company for five years.

Nelson is a graduate of California State University, Fresno, with a degree in agricultural economics. He also is active in youth sports programs and serves as a director of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Indio.

● *The \$110 million committed by the Legislation to fund mitigation projects would be insufficient to fund even minimally effective habitat conservation programs.*

● *The Act commits the Secretary of Interior to remediate the severe air quality impacts threatened by a receding Salton Sea, but provides no funding for those remediation efforts that could cost tens, or even hundreds, of millions of dollars.*

The board took the action against H.R. 5123 after several presentations by Salton Sea area residents, urging that the legislation be opposed or rewritten.

There is strong evidence that dozens of square miles of lakebed would be exposed if inflows drop, posing potential air quality problems in the region.

The bill changes requirements under existing environmental law to facilitate the water transfers and it caps mitigation costs. It would also limit opportunity for lawsuits.

It provides for \$60 million in federal funds plus the possibility of another \$50 million from water districts for mitigation of damage to the Salton Sea. However, if costs are actually over those amounts, the legislation would arbitrarily cap funding of those costs.

With reduced inflows, "it would likely make full restoration impracticable or impossible," according to the staff analysis.

"To the degree the legislation facilitates reduced inflows, the cost implications of those reduced inflows greatly outweigh the potential \$60 million provided" in the proposed bill.

A significant reduction of inflows could boost restoration costs to more than \$2 billion.

The board resolution passed in March called upon the IID board "to pursue water transfer solutions which meet the terms of the Quantification Settlement Agreement and which properly mitigate impacts on the Salton Sea, and addresses economic and social impacts in the Imperial and Coachella valleys."

C O N C E R N E D

C onservation and Recreation Organizations Form Coalition



Milt Friend photo



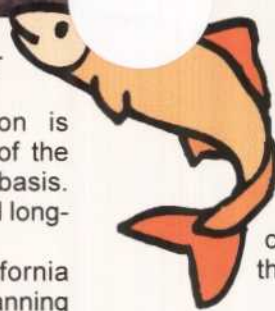
Ten conservation and recreation organizations have come together to protect the Salton Sea.

The formation of the coalition is notable for the diversity and size of the memberships it represents on a statewide basis. Concerns of the group include both near term and long-term viability of the Sea.

The ten organizations are the California Waterfowl Association, Defenders of Wildlife, Planning and Conservation League, National Audubon Society-California, National Wildlife Federation, The Pacific Institute, Sierra Club, United Anglers of Southern California, Western Outdoors News and Center for Biological Diversity.

"We believe that the Salton Sea is an important resource in serious need of protection," stated Kim Delfino, California Program Director, Defenders of Wildlife.

"We must find a long-term solution for the viability of the Sea's ecosystem if we are to ensure that the



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Kim Delfino, California Program Director,
Defenders of Wildlife

Sea will continue to be a resource for fish and wildlife as well as the local communities," declared Mike Cohen of the Pacific Institute.

The Coalition sees the proposed transfer of water from the Imperial Valley to San Diego as an immediate threat to the Sea.

In the view of the Coalition, the water transfer could adversely impact the fish and wildlife at the Sea, create enormous air and water quality problems and end any hope of finding a way to sustain the Sea's ecosystem in the future.

"If not done properly, this transfer could result in an environmental disaster at the Sea and its surrounding communities," said David Younkman of the National Wildlife Federation.

Meetings Schedule

Board of Directors Meeting

9/19/02 10:00 a.m.
VFW
50 Desert Shores Dr.
Desert Shores

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

10/3/02 10:30 a.m.
Location to be determined

Board of Directors Meeting

10/17/02 10:00 a.m.
Location to be determined

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

11/7/02 10:30 a.m.
Location to be determined

SALTON SEA



AUTHORITY

Plaza La Quinta
78-401 Highway 111, Suite T
La Quinta, CA 92253
www.saltonseaca.gov

Jacque Lesch
University of Redlands
1200 East Colton Avenue
Duke Hall
Redlands, CA 92373-0999

