

SALTON SEA WATER IMPORTATION SUMBITTAL REVIEW

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Technical Memorandum (TM) #2.3

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Subject Area: Screening and Evaluation Approach

Topic: Proposed Screening Criteria

This Technical Memorandum (TM) was prepared as part of the Salton Sea Water Importation Proposal Review to provide information to support and reflect the Independent Review Panel's evaluation of submitted ideas to restore the Salton Sea by water importation and provide the Salton Sea Management Program (SSMP) with approaches that are feasible. Parts of this TM may be used in the Panel's Screening Report, Fatal Flaw Report, Feasibility Report, and/or Summary Report (Reports). In the event that any discrepancies are found between the Reports and this TM, the Reports shall take precedence.

The purpose of this TM is to document the Panel's proposed draft criteria and their justifications for the screening evaluation. Screening criteria must be met for project success. Proposals that satisfy the screening criteria will be further evaluated in the Feasibility Analysis. Any proposals that do not meet the screening criteria will not receive further review or consideration.

1.1 DRAFT SCREENING CRITERIA

Below are eight proposed criteria, summarized in Table 1. The Panel can accept, modify, or reject these criteria, and/or identify new or alternative criteria. Other relevant Technical Memos include TM 2.1: Setting Criteria to Evaluate Water Importation Concepts and TM 2.2: Previously Used Criteria.

Table 1: Draft Screening Criteria

No.	Category	Criterion
1	Conformance With RFI	The submission must have a water importation component.
2	Conformance With RFI	The submission must be complete, with the five sections detailed in the RFI: 1. Identification of Project Team 2. Narrative description of project concept and how/when it will benefit the lake 3. Planning and design process of project 4. Cost projection 5. Plan for funding of proposed project
3	Permitting	The submission must have a reasonable likelihood of being permitted, including withstanding legal challenges, within 5 years of project initiation.
4	Risk	The submission utilizes established, non-speculative technologies
5	Risk	The submission would not create a risk of catastrophic flooding in the Salton Sea basin in case of seismic or other extreme events.
6	Legislative	The submission will meet the State’s minimum commitments to the region as stated in the Quantification Settlement Agreement.
7	Public Health	The submission must result in improved air quality through reduction of exposed playa and/or dust control
8	Ecology	The submission’s salinity goals and modeled outcomes are within Protected Species and Species of Importance salinity tolerance range.

1. The submission must have a water importation component.

Submissions that do not have a water importation component can be referred to the SSMP for its evaluation. Reviewing non-importation concepts is not part of the Panel’s charge.

2. The submission must be complete, with the five sections detailed in the RFI:

- a) Identification of Project Team**
- b) Narrative description of project concept and how/when it will benefit the lake**
- c) Planning and design process of project**
- d) Cost projection**
- e) Plan for funding of proposed project**

Incomplete submittals may not have sufficient information to be reviewed completely or compared to other submissions in the feasibility evaluation. However, if the Panel and Support Team can extrapolate from the materials submitted reasonable and consistent answers to all five sections, then the submission can be considered complete.

3. *The submission must have a reasonable likelihood of being permitted, including withstanding legal challenges, within 5 years of project initiation.*

Five years is selected due to the rising salinity levels of the Salton Sea and its declining viability as habitat (see Technical Memos TM 4.1: Salinity, TM 8.1 Salton Sea Ecology, and TM 8.2 Species Salinity Tolerance). “Reasonable likelihood” means that there are no readily-foreseen impediments to permitting, triggers for lawsuits, or contracting challenges that could delay a project longer than 5 years from the time a commitment to pursue it is made by the state of California. Examples of possible impediments, triggers, and challenges could include concepts that alter the ecology of the Reserva de la Biosfera del Alto Golfo de California y Delta del Río Colorado (Upper Gulf of California and Colorado River Delta Biosphere Reserve), adversely affect tribal lands, or adversely impact existing residential areas. Impacts could occur during the building or operation of the program. This criterion applies to permitting only, not the construction phase.

4. *The submission utilizes established, non-speculative technologies.*

The water importation project, if implemented, would be of regional economic, public health, and environmental importance and must be based on established, proven technologies. Established technologies deployed in novel ways are acceptable. Technologies that have minimal or no performance record present too much risk for a project of this magnitude and importance.

5. *The submission would not create a risk of catastrophic flooding in the Salton Sea basin in case of seismic or other extreme events.*

The Salton Sea’s elevation is over two hundred feet below sea level. Many of its surrounding towns and farmland in the Salton Basin also are below sea level. No project should introduce the possibility of a catastrophic flood of seawater into the basin caused by catastrophic failures due to earthquakes, fire, mismanagement, or other causes.

6. *The submission will meet the State’s minimum commitments to the region as stated in the Quantification Settlement Agreement.*

The State of California, as a party to the 2003 Quantification Settlement Agreement, committed to implementing and funding necessary activities to address public health and wildlife impacts at the Salton Sea. The submission must demonstrate a strong likelihood of meeting the State’s obligations. An

exception to this criterion would be a proposal that would provide incremental benefit when considered in a portfolio of approaches.

7. *The submission must result in improved air quality through reduction of exposed playa and/or dust control*

Local public respiratory health has been in decline in part due to wind-borne particulate matter from the exposed playa as the lake shoreline recedes. Projects must reduce exposed playa and/or utilize dust control measures, and therefore improve air quality.

8. *The submission's salinity goals and modeled outcomes are within Protected Species and Species of Importance salinity tolerance range.*

Some species have special status in the Salton Sea region, among them the Desert Pupfish, American White Pelican, and Yuma Ridgway Rail. Any long-term project to restore the Salton Sea should result in salinity ranges consistent with their viability. Submissions that exceed the maximum or drop below the minimum salinity needed to preserve these species should not be considered. This issue is discussed further in Technical Memo 8.2: Species Salinity Tolerance.

1.2 FEASIBILITY EVALUATION

Feasibility criteria will be established once the screening of proposals has been completed and, in general, feasibility criteria are envisioned to be more logistically based and more detailed. Examples of potential topics that may be considered during the feasibility analysis can be found below. Projects that pass the Screening Analysis will be reviewed in more technical, engineering, permitting, economic, social, and ecological depth. Possible Salton Sea Importation Project feasibility criteria topics may include:

- Project capital and O&M costs
- Potential revenues
- Beneficial uses
- Power/energy requirements
- Regulatory/permitting considerations
- Engineering considerations
- Salt/brine management
- Constructability
- Schedule of implementation