

# SALTON SEA WATER IMPORTATION SUBMITTAL REVIEW

October 2021

## Technical Memorandum (TM) #2.1

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Subject Area: Screening and Evaluation Approach

Topic: Setting Criteria to Evaluate Water Importation Concepts

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*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.*

### 1.0 Role of Criteria in Panel's Deliberations

The Panel's goals are to winnow infeasible water importation concepts and then evaluate and rank feasible concepts. Criteria, or standards, are needed against which importation concepts can be judged.

The Panel has been given the authority to set its own criteria. However, the Panel must:

- Justify its selection of criteria;
- Include required topics; and
- Demonstrate cognizance of historical criteria used in long-range Salton Sea planning.

An early and important work product of the Panel will be its **list of criteria and justifications for why they were selected**. Once criteria are selected, the process of comparing importation to the criteria can proceed and conclusions reached.

### 2.0 Required Criteria and Guidance for Setting Criteria

Some criteria can be measured quantitatively (e.g., *the steady-state lake surface elevation should be within the range of XX-YY feet*), while other criteria require a qualitative or combined qualitative/quantitative analysis (e.g., *quality of life in the region should be improved*). Some criteria are amenable to yes/no results and ranking, while others are more complex. The Panel can select its own criteria subject to certain requirements. The following introduces sources for the Panel to utilize as it establishes its criteria:

**Required criteria**, or subjects calling for criteria, are listed in the contract that establishes the Panel. These criteria include (quoting from the contract):

“The screening process should include a fatal flaw analysis of the following factors for each proposal:

- a. Water source identification
- b. Concept design and engineering; including energy sources, conveyance and pumping facilities and intake structures
- c. Construction considerations for the proposed structure or system
- d. Long-term operations of the proposed structure or system
- e. Water treatment facilities
- f. Water and land use
- g. Flood control and climate change impacts
- h. Environmental parameters such as: water quality, air quality, hydrology, hydraulics, ecological impacts, biology, restoration, and endangered species
- i. International, Federal, State, and Local environmental laws, regulatory compliance, and permitting
- j. Stakeholder strategy and coordination (International, Federal, State, Local)”

and,

“The Feasibility Analysis should determine the viability of each proposal to plan, construct, and operate a project. The analysis should include but not be limited to:

- 1) Economic Analysis
  - a. Assess the total cost of construction and annual cost of operation and maintenance at an industry accepted concept planning level.
  - b. Assess the expected life of the project.
  - c. Calculate and/or describe the benefits when the project is implemented, such as improved human health, economic revitalization of the region, increased construction of residential, industrial, and recreational facilities, and increased tax revenues.
  - d. Calculate and/or describe the cost of inaction based on negative effects of poor air quality and declining environmental habitat.

- 2) Technical Analysis
  - a. Assess technical feasibility to construct and operate proposed projects.
    - i. Consider and evaluate the following, including but limited to: Water source identification, water quality and quantity, hydrology, concept design and engineering, construction, long-term operations, water treatment facilities, water and land use, flood control and climate change impacts, environmental parameters, regulatory compliance and permitting, and stakeholder engagement.
    - ii. Are the costs consistent with the scope of the project?
    - iii. Is the construction schedule realistic?
    - iv. Is it likely to be permitted for construction and long-term operations given current International, Federal, State, and Local environmental laws?
    - v. Is the long-term operation consistent with the proposal?"

**Other criteria** are mentioned in state legislation and Executive Branch publications, in one case in reference to this Panel. Paragraph 2931 of [Fish and Game Code §§ 2930-2933](#) (Article I of the Salton Sea Restoration Act) lists categories of importance to long-term restoration of the Salton Sea, including:

- (1) Restoration of long-term stable aquatic and shoreline habitat for the historic levels and diversity of fish and wildlife that depend on the Salton Sea;
- (2) Elimination of air quality impacts from the restoration projects; and (3) Protection of water quality.

The Governor's [Water Resilience Portfolio 2020](#) calls for minimizing air pollution and restoring habitat at the Salton Sea, at the same time calling for a panel to review importation concepts.

Still other criteria have been established over the past two decades as the state and region have undertaken numerous planning exercises and Environmental Impact Reviews. A list of some important studies includes:

- [2002 Draft Environmental Impact Report \(EIR\)/Environmental Impact Statement \(EIS\) Imperial Irrigation District Water Conservation and Transfer Project and Draft Habitat Conservation Plan](#)
- [2002 Final QSA Program Impact Report for Implementation \(PEIR\)](#)
- [2013 Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report](#)

- [2017 CEQA Addendum/Findings Analysis for the Salton Sea Species Conservation Habitat Project EIS/EIR](#)
- [2018 Salton Sea Management Program Phase I: 10-Year Plan](#)