



Saving the Salton Sea

California's desert jewel

The **Salton Sea Coalition** is a group of organizations that support and advocate for the protection and revitalization of the Salton Sea -- an important part of California's natural, cultural and agricultural heritage. The Coalition's environmental and recreation groups, as well as two local tribes, represent more than 1.3 million people.

Providing for People and Wildlife Shimmering under the bright Southern California sun is California's largest inland lake – the Salton Sea. A tremendous resource for people and wildlife in Imperial and Coachella Valleys, this desert jewel also serves as an international haven for the millions of migratory water birds that use it as a major stop over as they travel along the Pacific Flyway. This vital ecosystem is also home to five endangered species.

The Sea provides social, cultural and economic value to the people that live around its shores and to the visitors that bird and fish here. The Desert Cahuilla Indian tribes are connected to the Sea through their heritage and through their land that is adjacent to and beneath its waters. The booming Imperial Valley agricultural industry relies upon the sea to absorb the water that drains from their fields and the surrounding farmland provides habitat for an abundance of birds.

The Declining Sea With no outlet and most of its water coming from agricultural fields, the Sea is suffering from increasing salinity and an overload of selenium, phosphates and other contaminants. Each year, the sea's water evaporates in the hot dry desert climate. This further concentrates the contaminants in the water and causes oxygen-depleting algal blooms that kill a large amount of the sea's fish.

The Sea at Risk An agreement to transfer Imperial Valley water to coastal San Diego communities means that the water flowing to the Sea will decrease. The Sea will shrink and the shoreline will recede up to a mile, potentially exposing more than 50,000 acres of fine dust (PM10) that lodges deep into a person's lungs. With the high wind events common to this region, the contaminated sediments could cause an extreme public health emergency for the more than half million people living in the surrounding valleys and the Salton Sea Basin. Much like the Owens Valley catastrophe, local and state entities would pay billions of dollars in damage control.

More than 90% of California's wetlands have been wiped out, thus the sea plays a significant role in providing habitat for the estimated 400 species of birds that visit and live here. Without a healthy ecosystem in this region, many birds, including a number of endangered and threatened species will disappear forever.

Saving the Salton Sea The Salton Sea Coalition members are working with the State of California to develop an *ecosystem restoration plan* for the Sea. The plan should address water quality and air quality impacts of the water transfer and should provide for the protection of the wildlife that depends on the Salton Sea ecosystem for survival. This is an open public process and your voice is important in choosing a feasible and successful Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Plan. To review the plan and submit your comments, go to www.saltonseawater.ca.gov.

Contact the **Salton Sea Coalition** today to learn how you can get involved!

Salton Sea Coalition

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Our mission is to protect and
revitalize the Salton Sea for the
people, fish and birds that depend on it.

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