



SALTON SEA MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Presentation to the
Regional Tribal Operations Committee,
USEPA Region IX

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The Salton Sea

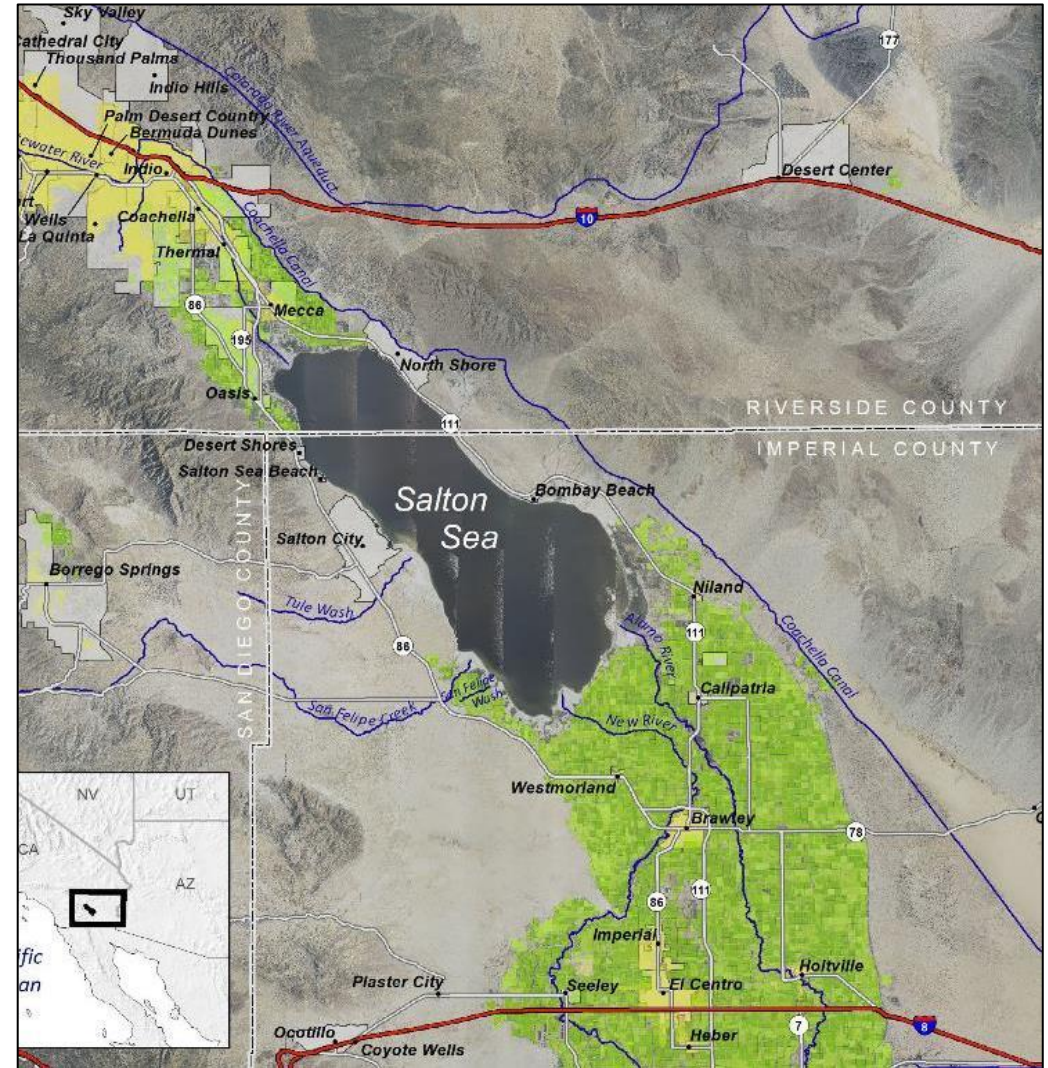
- The Salton Sea, located in Riverside and Imperial counties in Southern California, is California's largest lake.
- Although large seas have cyclically formed and dried over historic time in the basin due to natural flooding from the Colorado River, the current Sea was formed when Colorado River floodwater breached an irrigation canal in 1905.



- The Sea has since been maintained by irrigation runoff and local rivers.
- The Salton Sea has become a critical resource for many species of resident and migratory birds, including several special status species, due to widespread loss of wetland habitat in the United States and Mexico.

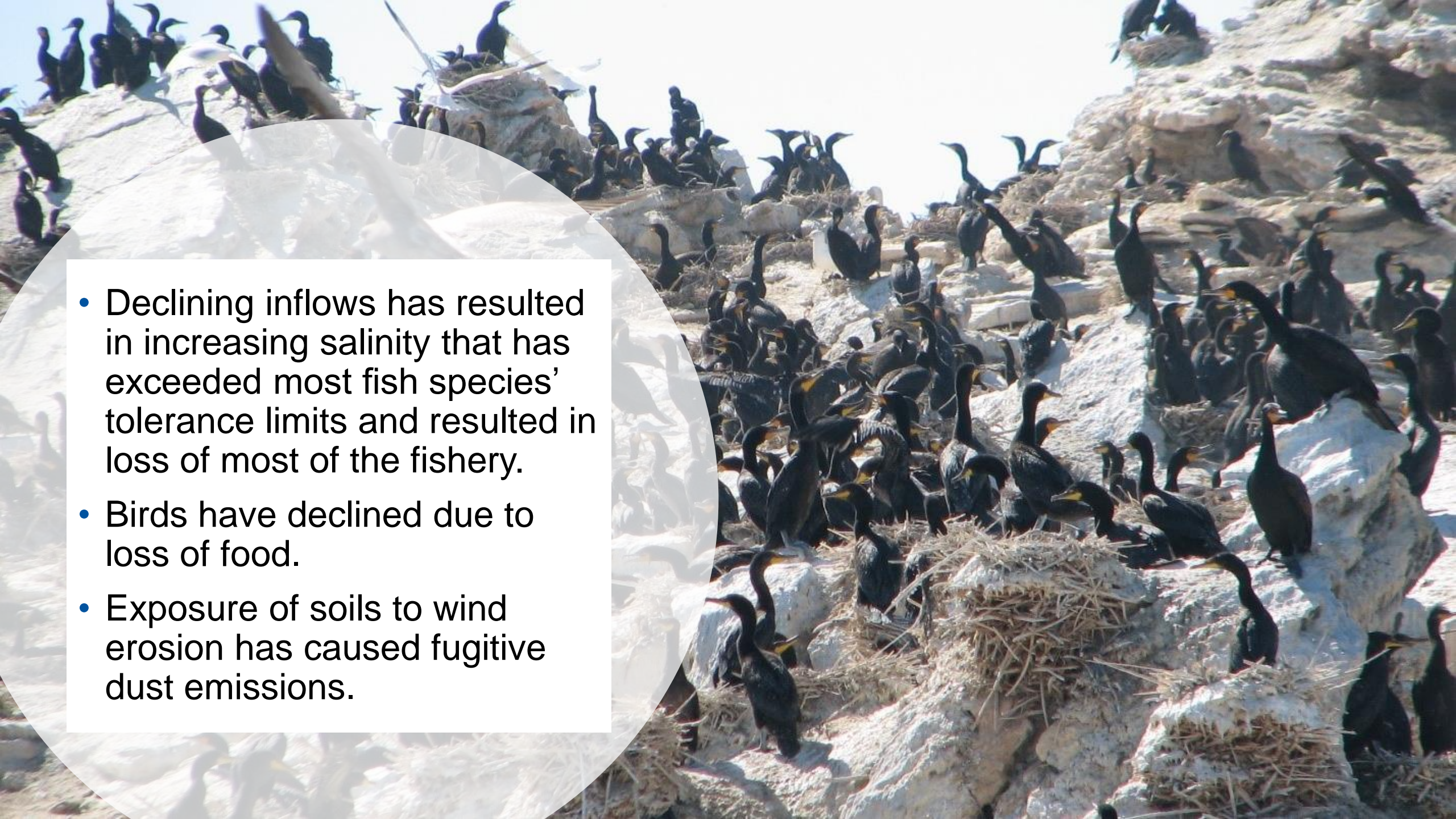


- A series of water transfer agreements known as the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA) have contributed to declining inflows to the Salton Sea.
- California historically used more than its normal year apportionment of Colorado River water.
- The amount of unused apportionment previously available has diminished, however, and is unlikely to be available in the future for various reasons including climate change.



- The QSA was made among the federal government, California, and several water districts in 2003.
- The QSA imposes water conservation measures that reduce the volume of agricultural runoff that constitutes the Salton Sea's chief source of water.



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- Declining inflows has resulted in increasing salinity that has exceeded most fish species' tolerance limits and resulted in loss of most of the fishery.
 - Birds have declined due to loss of food.
 - Exposure of soils to wind erosion has caused fugitive dust emissions.

- The State of California's Salton Sea Management Program is charged with, among other things, implementing a 10-Year Plan and developing and implementing a long-term plan to address these issues.



Presentation Overview

- This presentation provides updates on completed SSMP projects, the status of planning activities, ongoing partnerships and community engagement activities.
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Program Priorities

- **Implementation of the SSMP's Phase I: 10-Year Plan**
- **Establish a long-term pathway for the Salton Sea beyond the Phase I: 10-Year Plan**
- **Continue to build the SSMP Team**
- **Strengthen partnerships with local leaders and communities**



Priority

***Drive Implementation of the SSMP's
Phase I: 10-Year Plan***



SSMP 10-Year Plan Goals

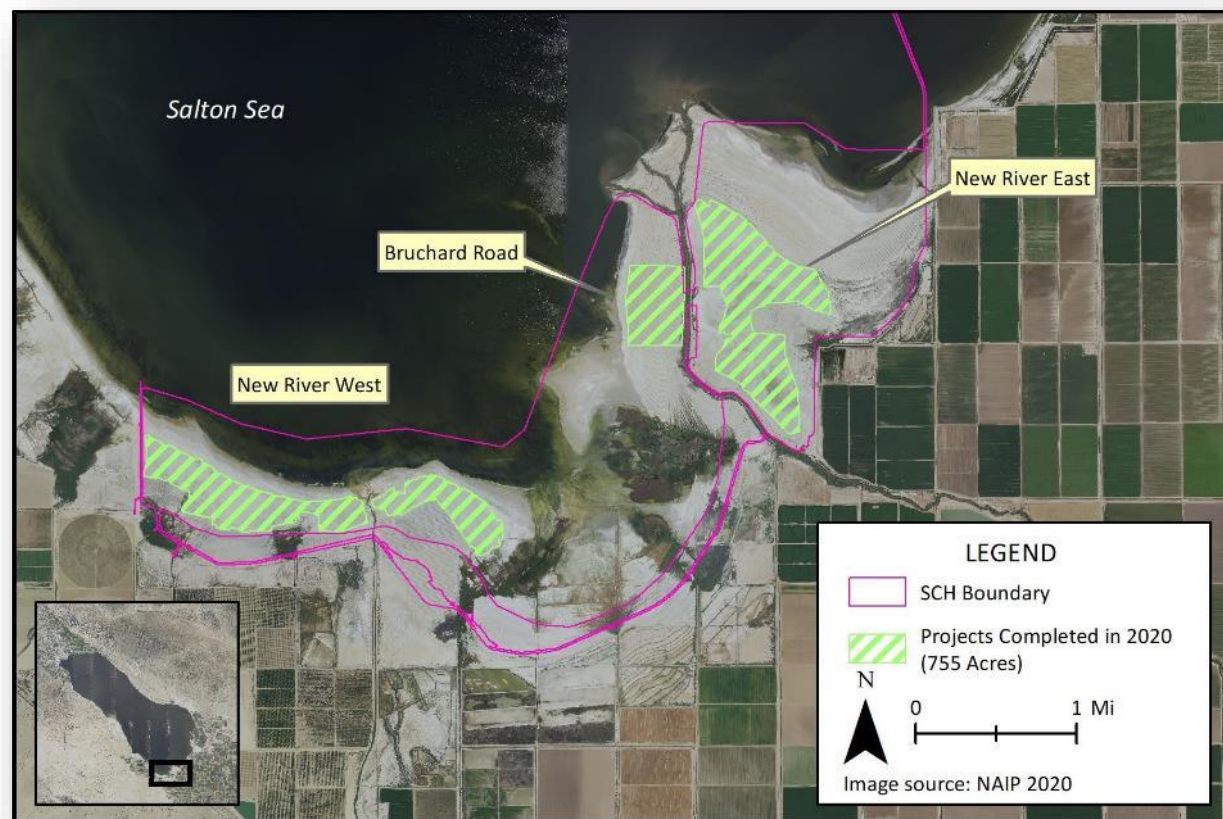
- **State Water Board order requires 30,000 acres of projects**
- **At least half to be habitat projects**
 - **ponds and wetlands**
- **The balance are dust suppression projects**

Making Progress: *Species Conservation Habitat (SCH) Project*

- Will create habitat and suppress dust on approximately 4,110 acres of exposed lakebed.
- State awarded design-build contract in September 2020.
- Construction began in January 2021 and is to be completed by end of 2023.



Making Progress: Interim Dust Suppression Projects Completed



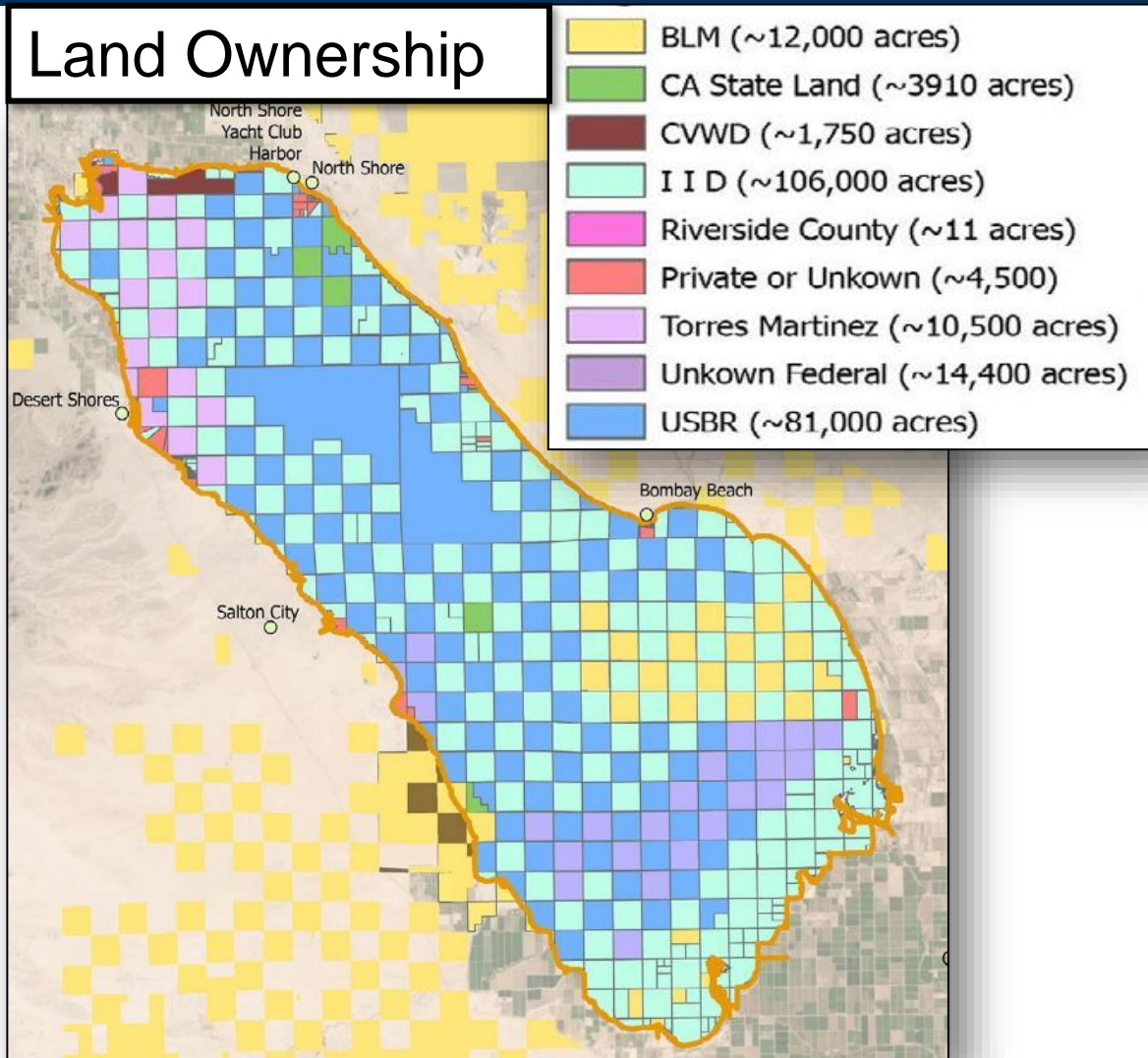
Work Completed in 2020:

**Bruchard Road Project
(approximately 112 acres)**

**New River East Project
(approximately 341 Acres)**

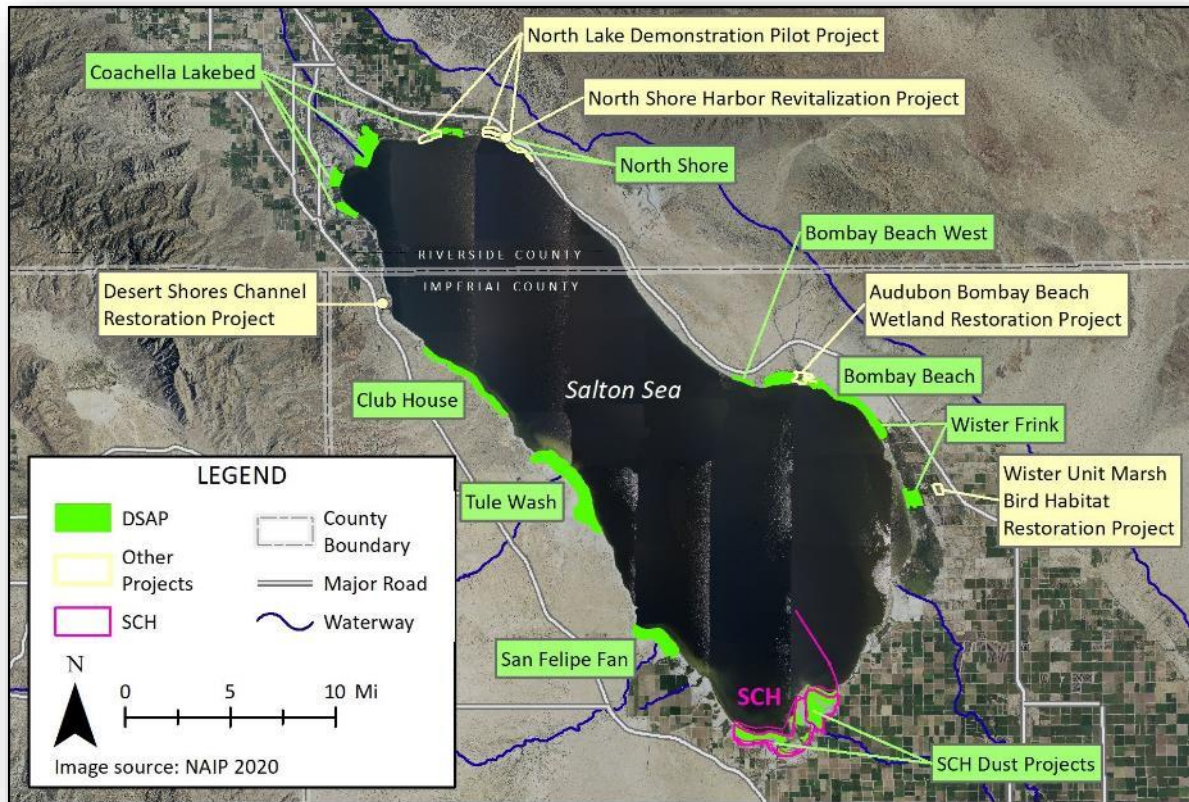
**New River West Project
(approximately 302 Acres)**

Making Progress: Obtaining Land Access



- Since state is not a significant landowner at the Sea, collaboration with landowners is critical to enable project delivery.
- SSMP Team is prioritizing work to secure land access.

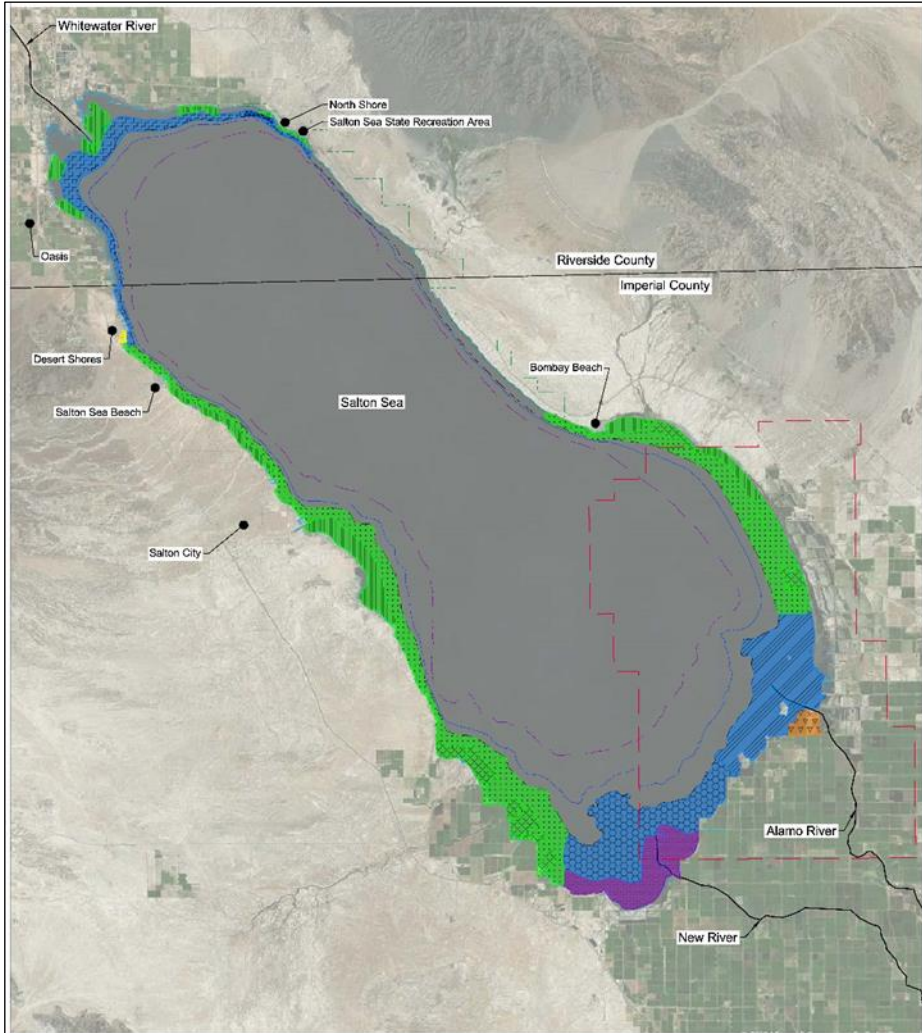
Making Progress: Projects in Progress



SSMP Team collaborating with partners to develop a broad range of projects, such as:

- US Bureau of Reclamation and SSMP Collaborative Projects
- North Lake Demonstration Project
- Desert Shores Channel Restoration Project

Making Progress: Complete Environmental Planning for SSMP 10-Year Plan Projects



- SSMP and US Army Corps of Engineers completing NEPA:
 - 2020: Released Draft Project Description, held public workshops
 - March 2021: Released Public Notice, launching formal NEPA process; 30-day comment period
 - Summer 2021: Release Draft Environmental Assessment, hold public workshops
 - End of 2021: Issue Final Environmental Assessment
 - Federal Cooperating Agencies include USBR, US Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Bureau of Indian Affairs, and NRCS

Priority

***Establish Long-term Pathway
Beyond 10-Year Plan***

Establishing Long-Term Pathway: *Advance Development of Long-Term Plan*

- Establish a strategy for long-term restoration
- Evaluate range of feasible restoration alternatives to inform Plan, ranging from project build-out based on projected future water inflows to a potential whole-sea alternative based on water importation, if feasible.
- Path Forward:
 - Spring 2021: Independent Reviewer begins feasibility analysis of water importation.
 - Spring 2021: Launch public engagement on Long-Term Plan.
 - Spring/Summer 2022: Complete feasibility analysis of water importation.
 - End of 2022: Complete final Long-Term Plan and submit to the SWRCB.



Priority

Strengthen Partnerships to Deliver Projects and Institutionalize Inclusive Community Engagement

Strengthening Partnerships: *Engaging with Partners*



- Strong partnerships enabled key milestones:
 - SCH Construction Start
 - NEPA Project Description
 - Creation of Dust Suppression Action Plan and implementation of Dust Suppression Work
 - MOUs with partners
 - Funding for North Lake Demonstration Project



Strengthening Partnerships: *Community Engagement*

- In 2020 held 6 public workshops and 2 public comment periods.
- Presentations, materials, outreach, and advertising in Spanish and English
- Community Engagement Committee and Working Group to refine Engagement Plan and Committee Charter
- Updates via eNewsletter and website:

www.saltosea.ca.gov

Looking Ahead



- Continue construction of the SCH.
- Secure land access agreements to implement dust suppression and habitat projects.
- Complete Final EA for Phase I: 10-Year Plan.
- Pursue federal funding opportunities for SSMP projects.
- Launch development of long-range plan.
- Continue to strengthen community engagement.
- Support advancement of projects led by partner organizations.

Recognition of Partners

- 29 Palms Band of Morongo Indians
- Alianza Coachella Valley
- Audubon California
- Cabazon Band of Mission Indians
- California Air Resources Board
- California State Parks
- CBI
- Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD)
- Colorado River Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Comite Civico Del Valle
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Environmental Defense Fund
- Imperial Irrigation District
- Imperial County
- Imperial County Air Pollution Control District
- KDI
- Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
- Loma Linda University School of Public Health
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Oasis Bird Observatory
- Pacific Institute
- Point Blue Conservation Science.
- Riverside County
- Salton Sea Action Committee (SSAC)
- Salton Sea Authority
- Salton Sea Coalition
- San Diego County Water Authority
- Save Our Sea/EcoMedia Compass
- Sea and Desert Interpretive Association
- Sierra Club California
- South Coast Air Quality Management District
- State Water Resources Control Board
- Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Bureau of Land Management
- US Bureau of Reclamation
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Geological Survey

