
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Species Conservation Habitat Project?

The Species Conservation Habitat Project (SCH Project) is a State project that will be constructed at the Salton Sea (Sea) to implement conservation measures necessary to protect the fish and wildlife species dependent upon the Sea. Up to 3,770 acres of shallow water habitat ponds may be constructed depending upon funding availability.

What is the schedule for the SCH Project?

SCH Project design is expected to be completed by the end of 2012. Construction will begin in early 2013 and would last through 2015, about two years.

Why build the SCH Project?

The SCH Project is intended to serve as a “proof of concept” for restoration of shallow water habitat that currently supports fish and wildlife dependent upon the Sea. Critical habitat is being lost due to increased salinity and the declining water surface elevation at the Salton Sea. Without the SCH Project, the fishery and many of the waterfowl species dependent upon the Sea will likely become locally extinct or be eliminated from the Sea within the next 5 to 10 years.

What grants authority for construction and how will the SCH Project be funded?

The SCH Project is being developed under the authorization of California Fish and Game Code, Section 2932, which established the Salton Sea Restoration Fund. The Legislature has appropriated \$5.4 million in Proposition 84 (Chapter 5) funds for the SCH Project. An additional \$20 million in Proposition 84 funds will need to be appropriated and placed in the Salton Sea Restoration Fund for completion of the project. The Salton Sea Mitigation Fund (up to an as yet appropriated \$30 million) would be used for operations and maintenance of the project.

Where will the SCH Project be located?

The SCH Project will be constructed at the southern end of the Salton Sea, near the New or Alamo river delta areas depending on the selected alternative. To the extent feasible, the SCH Project will be constructed on land owned by the Imperial Irrigation District or the federal government.

[continued]

What are the benefits of the SCH Project?

Aside from specific benefits to fish and wildlife, the SCH Project will help improve the local economy through the creation of short-term construction-related jobs. Project construction and operations will likely require the use of local construction companies and the purchase of equipment and materials from local businesses, and may result in an increase in tax revenue and local business revenue. Up to 3,770 acres will be provided through the SCH Project for passive recreational activities that will include day use, hiking, bird watching, photography. Non-motorized watercraft use and possibly limited hunting, subject to seasonal restrictions, could also be allowed as part of the SCH Project. Once the SCH Project is in place, environmental benefits will include a reduction in dust emissions since the project ponds will cover otherwise exposed playa areas.

What types of jobs and how many jobs will be created through the SCH Project?

Construction activities will be extensive and involve earthwork, concrete placement, and electrical and structural processes. It is anticipated that between 47 and 115 workers would be needed for the construction of the SCH Project depending upon the alternative selected. The State's preferred alternative described in the EIS/EIR for the SCH Project will require 115 workers. These positions will include managers, foremen, truck drivers, laborers, and heavy equipment operators. Post-construction jobs, although far fewer, may also be created for conducting operations and maintenance activities associated with the SCH Project.

Why are so many studies and pilot-projects needed for the SCH Project?

This SCH Project requires that sufficient background information be developed to support sound environmental and engineering design. The science behind successful design and restoration of shallow water ponds that meet fish survival requirements and minimize mosquito vector, pesticide and selenium exposure risks and seismic stability, are not well understood at the Salton Sea. Focused studies and special investigations were necessary to provide detailed information for the biological and engineering design of the project.

This SCH Project is independent of, but related to and consistent with, the early start habitat restoration and the conservation actions described in the 2007 Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Program's Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). Any Salton Sea restoration activity will likely include shallow water habitat as a key component of the overall project.

What has the State planned for long-term restoration of the Salton Sea?

The preferred alternative for restoration of the Salton Sea was described in the final 2007 PEIR. The Legislature has not yet acted on the plan and is deliberating over what restoration actions will be needed moving forward and the possible funding for those actions. The Administration will be working with the Legislature to determine an appropriate long-term policy for the future of the Sea.