

**Minutes of the Air Quality Task Force Meeting  
September 7th, 2017  
Imperial/Mexicali  
UCSD Calexico**

**Co-chairs: Reyes Romero; Margarito Quintero**

**I. Attendance:**

**Reyes Romero**, Imperial Valley Air Quality Control District; **Margarito Quintero**, Secretariat of Environmental Protection; **Fernando Amador**, California Air Resources Board; **Earl Withycombe**, CARB; **Raul Tovar**, SPA; **Jeremy Bauer**, USEPA; **Ray Askins**, environmentalist; **Juan Felipe Serrato**, CESPM; **Alejandra Alvarez**, OBSERBC; **Gabriela Ruiz Reyes**, OBSERBC; **Gabriela Murgado**, OBSERBC; **Axel Salas**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Francisco Gomez**, Technological Institute of Mexicali; **Carlos de la Cruz Diaz**, Technological Institute of Mexicali; **Oscar Romo**, Municipality of Mexicali; **Milton Minor**, attendee.

**II. Welcome and Initial Comments**

**Reyes Romero** said he really appreciated them having taken time out of their busy agendas to be at this meeting and thanked everyone for being at the meeting. **Margarito Quintero** said he was glad to be there together with everyone to hear about such an important topic as the Salton Sea. He thanked everyone for being there and said they should continue with their work.

**III. Review of Minutes from Prior Meeting**

**Reyes Romero** said now it was the time to make any comments or suggestions with regards to the minutes from the prior meeting. Since there were no comments or suggestions the minutes from May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017 was approved.

**IV. Presentations / Questions and Answers**

**The Salton Sea Current and Future Air Quality; Earl Withycombe, California Air Resources Board**

**Reyes Romero** asked how long the Salton Sea is.

**Earl Withycombe** indicated it is 35 miles long and about 15 miles wide at least until the year 2003.

**Ray Askins** asked if in order to mitigate some of the effects from the exposed areas at the Salton Sea, it would not be simpler to put a canal up from the Cortez Sea, and then just fill the lake as we need it.

**Earl Withycombe** responded that he had not studied the economics for either a channel from the Sea of Cortez or from the Pacific Ocean. He said the water engineers at the California Department of Water Resources are doing an evaluation on those two options and more. He said he had understood that their analysis would have been released by now. He concluded saying that they are going to see those analysis in the near future, and added that as they invest dollars in solutions they should be thinking over a longer period to make sure they would accommodate water structures to put in place in order to protect this area from sea level rise.

**Ray Askins** commented that is obvious it has been a lot of work on this project. However, he said that the 300 hundred million dollars expected to be spent on it, would more than pay for that canal coming out of the Sea of Cortez, as he had suggested earlier since the estimated cost of that was projected on 80 million dollars.

**Reyes Romero** mentioned that sometimes solutions that might make sense cannot be implemented as quick as needed, and that is what is happening here. He explained that to build the canal from the Sea of Cortez to the Salton

Sea would require a bi-national agreement that would take years to be implemented. He also mentioned that the Cucapá tribe was planning on bringing water to the Laguna Salada and that this would make it easier for the United States to get water to the Salton Sea. However, he said that all those are just plans so far, and that it would take some time for them to be done. He said that what were presented were a more immediate solution, and that bringing water from the Sea of Cortez into the Salton Sea it is indeed part of the plan. He said he wanted to mention that most of the technology being used to mitigate dust at Salton Sea comes from the efforts made at Owens Lake, and that the irony of this is that all the money, time and effort invested at Owen Lake might just go to waste since it is projected that Owens Lake is going to be re-flooded by rains coming from the north and he mentioned that as the saying goes, sometimes mother nature has a weird sense of humor.

**Earl Withycombe** added that the Owens Lake area was declared in a state of an emergency in April because of this and that they had taken measures to protect the investment that they have and that it has been quite an effort.

**Reyes Romero** said that the issue of the exposed playa at Salton Sea is bigger than it looks like because if funding is not made available for mitigation of the Salton Sea, this will have a great impact to the communities not only in Imperial County, but also in Mexicali because the dust that would be blowing is toxic dust.

**Fernando Amador** asked if there had been studies to predict how far this dust would blow, especially towards the south down to the border.

**Earl Withycombe** said that they were in conversations with the dispersion computer modelers at the Air Resources Board and the people that do health risk assessments to set them up to do that kind of work once they get some more data on what the concentrations of toxic metals and pesticides are in that dust. He said it was their plan to evaluate on the worst case basis what the impacts would be to the southern Coachella Valley and this area from the levels of toxic constituents in the dust to predict what the dust levels might be in the future.

**Fernando Amador** asked if he had information as to who would manage that ten year plan.

**Earl Withycombe** said that the plan is a multi-agency effort. He also said that within the state of California government, there is an entity appointed by governor Brown almost two years ago called the Salton Sea Task Force, which brings in the Department of Water Resources, the State Water Resources Control Board, the Air Resources Board, and the Office of Health Hazards Assessment, and that all of them are working together to move forward with controls and construction projects like the ten year plan in a way that will not inversely impact the environment and will benefit air quality and restoration of habitats. He mentioned that the chief of staff for that task force is Bruce Wilcox, who is the former environmental manager for Imperial Irrigation District.

**Reyes Romero** mentioned that this ten year plan is great as a first step to mitigate the exposed playa, but that it is his understanding that it only covers about 50% of the lake that is going to be exposed. Therefore, he asked what was going to happen to the other 50%.

**Earl Withycombe** said the other 50% will be handled for dust control only through measures that have been proven to be effective.

**Reyes Romero** asked who was going to pay for the mitigation of the other 50%.

**Earl Withycombe** responded that it was his understanding that the State of California would be in charge of that.

**Margarito Quintero** asked out of the elements contained in the toxic dust from the Salton Sea, which is the riskiest one.

**Earl Withycombe** said that selenium is the riskiest since it affects the reproduction of birds.

## V. Border 2020 Program Project Updates; Jeremy Bauer / USEPA

**Jeremy Bauer** said they had awarded new projects under the Border 2020 Program in August. The new project for air quality in the California / Baja California region is an expansion of an existing community air monitoring project in the San Ysidro neighborhood in order to expand it into Tijuana. He said they plan to add six community air monitors on the Mexican side of the border to have a bigger picture of air quality on both sides of the border at the San Ysidro port of entry and that this project would be kicking off soon. He said he also wanted to mention that they were having a similar meeting to this one in San Diego the following week on September 13<sup>th</sup>, and that it would be open to the public. He said it would address updates on the Baja California Pro Aire, monitoring networks both in San Ysidro as well as in Tijuana, other projects updates and comments from the public, and that if they were interested on attending to please let him know.

## VI. Federal, State, and Local Governments Updates

**Margarito Quintero** said that at the Secretariat of Environmental Protection in Baja California, they were working in a couple of projects to be submitted for funding from *Fondos Mixtos*, which are funds provided by the state and the Science and Technology National Council in order to solve economic and social issues in the state. He said that one of the projects that they had submitted was one to get funds to get the necessary infrastructure for the air quality monitoring program, as well as for the smog check program. He also mentioned they were working on a clean transit program and that through a private Company they were proposing to offer a training course for truck and bus drivers in the state of Baja California in order to reduce air pollution.

**Reyes Romero** mentioned they had held a workshop on their Ozone State Implementation Plan on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, and that they were taking this document for approval the following Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, at a public hearing. He extended an invitation to everybody at the meeting to attend, and added that this document is available on the Imperial County website to whoever would be interested on reviewing it.

## VII. Wrap Up / Date of Next Meeting

**Reyes Romero** thanked everyone again for their attendance, and said the next meeting would be in November, and that they would be informing them of the exact date as soon as it was determined.

**Meeting Adjourned.**