



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Washington, DC 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

MAR 08 2019

Erik J. Ortega
President, Board of Directors
Imperial Irrigation District
Operating Headquarters
P.O. Box 937
Imperial, CA 92251

Dear President Ortega,

Thank you for your letter dated March 7, 2019. We appreciate receiving your communication and also appreciate the opportunity to review the correspondence and detailed background information that you previously provided Secretary Perdue.

I wanted to respond to your letter and emphasize that we recognize the urgency of taking action promptly to protect the resources of the Salton Sea given the current and anticipated decline in its elevation. We also have clearly articulated our views that actions are needed immediately to reduce the risk of Lake Mead declining to critically low elevations. As your letter to Secretary Perdue pointed out, IID's sole source of water is the Colorado River. Should Lake Mead be permitted to decline to critically low elevations, the waters that support the livelihood of the Imperial Valley and the environmental resources of the Salton Sea would be simultaneously imperiled. We simply must work together as partners – with IID, the other California contractors, and the other six Basin States – to avoid such a devastating scenario. I also want to emphasize that we understand that the Imperial Valley, its residents and its farmers will be directly impacted should the conditions of the Salton Sea not be addressed. Prompt adoption of the Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) is the best set of steps that can be taken now to protect the Salton Sea and all that rely on the Colorado River. The California water districts should be commended for finding a solution last year that ensures that adoption of the DCP will not cause adverse impacts to the Salton Sea.

At the same time, as we work together to finalize the necessary DCP agreements, we also want to affirm our partnership with the State of California and our colleagues at the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding ongoing efforts to implement the Salton Sea Management Program. The Department of the Interior has an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State of California that, among other things, a) recognizes the responsibilities of the State of California under the 2003 Quantification Settlement Agreement, b) supports the goals and principles of the Salton Sea Management Program, and c) recognizes, *and we continue to affirm*, our commitment to “pursue a multi-year partnership with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service, tribal governments, local agencies, and others, to advance projects to protect air quality and improve water quality of

major inflows to Sea habitat.” We recognize that the enhancements to the 2018 Farm Bill (Public Law 115-334) noted in your letter to Secretary Perdue may provide an important opportunity to accelerate implementation of the Salton Sea Management Program, and we stand ready to support the efforts of our USDA colleagues as they work to implement the new provisions of federal law.

It is our hope that our agencies continue to work together to take prompt action this year to protect the water supplies that are so critical to the agricultural community of the Imperial Valley and the Salton Sea as local, tribal, state and Federal governments enhance efforts to protect the resources of the Salton Sea and surrounding communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'B' followed by a series of connected loops and a wavy line extending to the right.

Brenda Burman
Commissioner