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SB-369 Salton Sea: restoration projects: skilled and trained workforce. (2025-2026)

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ENROLLED SEPTEMBER 12, 2025

PASSED IN SENATE SEPTEMBER 10, 2025

PASSED IN ASSEMBLY SEPTEMBER 08, 2025

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AMENDED IN SENATE MARCH 17, 2025

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

SENATE BILL

NO. 369

Introduced by Senator Padilla

February 13, 2025

An act to add Section 2946 to the Fish and Game Code, relating to the Salton Sea.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 369, Padilla. Salton Sea: restoration projects: skilled and trained workforce.

Existing law requires the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency, in consultation and coordination with the Salton Sea Authority, to lead Salton Sea restoration efforts. Existing law, to the extent that funding is appropriated to the Department of Fish and Wildlife for Salton Sea restoration activities, authorizes the Department of Water Resources, in coordination and under agreement with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, to undertake certain restoration efforts.

This bill would require, except as provided, specified state agencies undertaking a Salton Sea restoration project in excess of \$1,000,000 to obtain, as part of a contract entered into on or after January 1, 2026, an enforceable commitment that every bidder, contractor, subcontractor, or other entity at every tier, as defined, shall use a skilled and trained workforce, as provided, to perform all work that falls within an apprenticeship occupation in the building and construction trades.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (a) Flows into the Salton Sea have declined in recent years, and the result is a shrinking, increasingly saline lake.
- (b) As the Salton Sea recedes, previously submerged lakebed is exposed, creating dust that is of concern to local communities.
- (c) California state agencies are advancing Salton Sea restoration projects critical to ensuring the health and well-being of the Salton Sea ecosystem, the residents of the Imperial Valley, and the surrounding communities.
- (d) The communities surrounding the Salton Sea are some of the most impoverished in the state.
- (e) More than 21 percent of the population of the County of Imperial lives below the poverty line, which is nearly double the national average of 11.6 percent.
- (f) Less than 10 percent of residents under 65 years of age in the County of Imperial have health insurance.
- (g) There is a significant gap in wages between the County of Imperial and the rest of the state, such that wages in the County of Imperial are up to 25 percent lower than the statewide average.
- (h) To help mitigate the gap in wages, it is the intent of the Legislature for all work that encompasses Salton Sea restoration projects that falls within an occupation that has an apprenticeship in the building and construction trades to be performed by a skilled and trained workforce as defined in Section 2601 of the Public Contract Code.
- (i) A skilled and trained workforce brings with it higher paying jobs, medical insurance, and training and development for the local workforce.
- (j) A skilled and trained workforce requirement will expand apprenticeship training in the County of Imperial.
- (k) A skilled and trained workforce requirement will promote safety and quality in the completion of Salton Sea restoration projects.

SEC. 2. Section 2946 is added to the Fish and Game Code, to read:

2946. (a) For projects in excess of one million dollars (\$1,000,000), a state agency undertaking a Salton Sea restoration project shall obtain, as part of a contract entered into on or after January 1, 2026, an enforceable commitment that every bidder, contractor, subcontractor, or other entity at every tier shall use a skilled and trained workforce to perform all work that falls within an apprenticeship occupation in the building and construction trades.

(b) This section shall not apply if all construction work on the project is subject to a project labor agreement that requires the use of a skilled and trained workforce.

(c) For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Entity" shall have the same meaning as defined in Section 1777.1 of the Labor Code.

(2) "Every tier" means all contracts at any level to carry out the project, whether negotiated or advertised, and includes contracts for the supply and manufacture of off-site aggregate materials for the project. "Every tier" does not include contracts for transportation services.

(3) "State agency" means the Natural Resources Agency, the Department of Water Resources, or the department.

(4) "Project labor agreement" has the same meaning as defined in Section 2500 of the Public Contract Code.

(5) "Skilled and trained workforce" has the same meaning as defined in Section 2601 of the Public Contract Code.

(6) "Salton Sea restoration project" means the erection, construction, alteration, repair, or improvement of any Salton Sea ecosystem structure, building, road, or other improvement that is undertaken as part of the restoration of the Salton Sea ecosystem.