

**JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES
ASSEMBLYMEMBER EDUARDO GARCIA, CHAIR**

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
ASSEMBLYMEMBER CRISTINA GARCIA, CHAIR**

INFORMATIONAL HEARING:

AIR QUALITY IN CALIFORNIA'S BORDER REGION

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2017

2:00PM

IMPERIAL CENTER, 1131 YOURMAN ROAD, HERBER, CA 92249

This informational hearing will highlight the unique air quality challenges that exist in California's Border Region. The first panel will discuss the Salton Sea, a significant influence on air quality in the region. The second panel will discuss past and present work around community air quality monitoring and mitigation efforts in the region, with the goal of helping inform how the California Air Resources Board (ARB) and community groups might approach the community air monitoring and emissions reduction strategy components of AB 617 (C. Garcia, Chapter 136, Statutes of 2017).

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE SALTON SEA

The Salton Sea is a terminal sea and California's largest lake. Originally formed by Colorado River overflows, most of the new water that flows into the sea each year comes from the Colorado River and agricultural drainage. The sea has become an increasingly important stop for migrating birds as wetland habitats have dried up across the Pacific flyway. The southern end of the Salton Sea is a rich source of geothermal energy, a renewable energy source that can contribute to the State's renewable energy goals while mitigating dust from exposed playa at the sea.

Increased demand for water in southwestern states and improved water conservation strategies have reduced the amount of water that flows into the Salton Sea. Temperature variability bringing more extremely hot or cold days and increasing salinity as water levels decline pose a grave danger to the sea's fish. Without fish, migrating birds will no longer be able to stop at the sea. Further, the sea's beaches create significant air quality issues when exposed due to dust and other particulate matter that is blown into nearby communities. Public health experts and community advocates claim that the current level of exposed playa has already had a direct and negative impact on respiratory and other illness rates in the region, an impact they expect will get more severe as more playa becomes exposed. Finally, dead fish and other organic material in the bottom of the sea produce Hydrogen Sulfide, which causes a rotten egg odor when severe wind events occur and bring the gas to the surface of the water; one such incident in September 2012 created a Hydrogen Sulfide plume that spread 150 miles across Southern California and lasted for several days.

The Salton Sea Authority has identified PM 10, PM 2.5, ozone, hydrogen sulfide, arsenic, selenium, and other pollutants as pollutants of concern as nearby communities are exposed to dust from exposed playa at the Sea. The health risk from exposure to dust from the Sea has yet to be fully characterized.

Potential questions for the panel:

- a) How has the condition of the Salton Sea impacted local air quality and health concerns?
- b) How is the condition of the Salton Sea expected to change in the future?
- c) What progress has been made to address the challenges or take advantage of the opportunities at the Salton Sea?
- d) What additional policy, regulatory, or funding changes need to happen?

IMPLEMENTATION OF AB 617

AB 617 expedites pollution control retrofits on large stationary sources of pollution and increases the penalties for air pollution violations. This bill also requires ARB to prepare a statewide monitoring plan to identify the availability and effectiveness of air monitoring technologies as well as the need for additional community air monitoring systems by October 1, 2018 and every year thereafter; any air district with a high priority location identified by ARB must install additional community air monitoring systems by July 1, 2019 and every year thereafter. Finally, this bill requires ARB to prepare a statewide strategy to reduce emissions of toxic air contaminants and criteria air pollutants in communities affected by a high cumulative exposure to pollution by October 1, 2018 and every five years thereafter; any air district with a location identified by ARB to create a community emissions reduction program within one year of ARB's final selection.

AB 617 created several new requirements and programs with the goal of improving air monitoring and addressing cumulative air pollution burdens. Effective implementation of AB 617 will require state-level innovation and robust community engagement. Shortly after AB 617 became law, ARB started to convene stakeholder calls to inform their implementation of these new requirements. This hearing provides an opportunity for committee members to examine one case study of successful community air monitoring as a potential model for future monitoring and air quality work across the state.

Potential questions for the panel:

- a) What community or public health data informed the decision to install air quality monitors in this region?
- b) What are the contributing factors that impact air quality in the border region?
- c) What interventions are needed to improve air quality in this region?
- d) What lessons from the Calexico air monitoring project can be applied to other community monitoring efforts across the state?