

# Salton Sea Authority wants answer from state on dam construction

**Silvio J. Panta, Imperial Valley Press, 9-16-10**

Salton Sea Authority officials want to determine from the state the standard to which a proposed dam should be built as part of a slated \$9 billion effort to restore the lake, a representative said Wednesday.

Andrew Schlange, a consultant with the Salton Sea Authority, said the authority wants to know what its options are in the construction of a barrier at the lake, he said.

“We need to know what is going to be required to build the dam,” Schlange said.

Schlange and Salton Sea Authority Executive Director Michael O’Connor appeared before the governing board of the Imperial Irrigation District on Tuesday to inform it about the idea of seeking a waiver from the state Department of Water Resources on how the dam should be built. The board took no action.

IID directors would need to decide the issue at some point, Kevin Kelley, IID spokesman, said.

“The IID board is going to have to consider this waiver and vote on it,” Kelley said.

Kelley explained that concerns over whether a dam can withstand an earthquake would come up since the Salton Sea is a seismically active area.

Restoration of the Salton Sea has been an issue for many years and involves making it viable, Kelley said.

Should the authority receive the waiver, Schlange estimated \$100 million could be saved on the construction of the dam. Schlange said the authority is not seeking a permit at this point but wants to know the building standard under which the dam has to be constructed.

But getting a response from state officials could be tricky as lawmakers in Sacramento are mired in adopting a spending plan and a gubernatorial election that is weeks away, Schlange said. Getting an answer from the state on the waiver could take four or five months, Schlange speculated.

“Once we get through it all it has to come back to the board to figure out what it wants,” Schlange said. “All we’re trying to do is answer a question.”