

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2025-2026 SIMULATION SESSION

SENATE BILL

NO 46

Introduced by Senator Padilla

October 1, 2025

This bill aims to establish and fund the first UC Salton Sea Research Cohort, a selected group of Ecological Science faculty and post-graduates researching conservation methods and for the currently receding Salton Sea.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 46, as introduced, Senator Padilla. Salton Sea Research Grant.

The UC System in the State of California is funded heavily in part by the State of California in the realms of housing, payroll, There are existing programs that provide state funding for research grants within the UC system, as allocated and approved by this house, relevant administrative bodies and by the UC Regents, i.e. the 'Blue and Gold' Financial Aid system. Support for specific programs through state grant funding is precedent.

The Salton Sea is currently suffering from critical recession in shoreline, having lost roughly 229 feet in total since 1929; with this further recession, higher and higher quantities of noxious hydrogen sulfide gas are released into our air, which is directly and aggressively dangerous to citizens living in Desert Shores and Salton City, alongside every other citizen within the state. Beyond the immediate cost of neglecting the issue, the Salton Seas critical role ecologically and historically is a treasure of our state. Prior efforts like that of former governor Jerry Brown have been unable to do much more than slow this progression.

This bill, beginning January 1st, 2026, will provide a total of 2 million dollars through the California Department of Education to UC San Diego for the construction and formation of the Salton Sea Research Cohort. Consisting of 10 post-graduate applicants selected from across the UC System due to their academic excellence, they will be granted individual stipends of 100,000 dollars in order to adequately and comfortably support themselves in San Diego and Salton City while researching. Their primary objective will be mandated in finding effective and thorough methodology for preserving the Salton Seas wildlife and unique natural habitat; alongside this, it will find means of preventing further recession, pollution of water and hydrogen sulfide emission.

Vote: Majority Appropriation: No Fiscal Committee: Yes Local Program: Yes

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

SECTION 1. This Act shall be known, and may be cited, as the Salton Sea Research Grant Act.

SEC. 2. Definitions

(A) 'Salton Sea' is defined as all area ascribed to the saline endorheic lake of its namesake, settled in Imperial and Riverside Counties. This applies to exclusive reserved within the Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, as well as publicly available and adjacent areas ala Bombay Beach, North Shore, Salton Sea Farms, Desert Shores, Salton Sea Beach and continual areas.

(B) 'Conservation Method' is defined as practical applications in which could be used to preserve the natural flora and fauna of the Salton Sea, as well as stem evaporation and toxic runoff into the boundaries of the Salton Sea.

(C) 'UC System' is defined as all resources attached to the state-wide University of California administrative system, particularly through The University of California, San Diego due to its proximity to the site of research.

(D) 'Applicants' is defined as all 10 individuals selected for this cohort of post-graduate students. Environmental Science, Coastal Management and Environmental Health are specifically emphasized in this course of research.

SEC. 3. Appropriations

\$2,000,000 in total will be appropriated annually from the discretionary budget for this project, drawn from the General Fund to the Department of Education, which shall then allocate the sum to University of California.

(A) The sum of \$2,000,000 is appropriated annually from the General Fund to the Department of Education for the purpose of implementing this Act. Use of funds will be therein granted to the University of California Board of Regents to supply to the University of California, San Diego.

(B) Funds will be distributed as followed:

(1) 1,000,000 will be granted to the total of 10 students selected from all post-graduate applicants to the first Cohort. Each will be paid an annual \$100,000 stipend, gauged to account for living costs in the city of San Diego and surrounding areas adjacent to the Salton Sea.

(a) Payment for faculty involved in the direction of postgraduate students will continue as directed by the University. Stipends will end upon completion of desired postgraduate degree, exiting from the program or removal due to disciplinary or ethical conduct.

(b) Payment will supercede alternative stipend options provided through the university to prevent overlap. Ala, pre-existing 45,000 dollar stipends will be replaced by the provision of the granted 100,000 dollar stipend.

(2) 1,000,000 will be used for the supplying of essential resources and academic material to each post-grad, tallying up to a total of 100,000 in reserved expense funds for each student. This qualifies for money used in surveying the local public, observational equipment and all other materials required to continue the experiment. Supplemental resources

(3) Should residual funds be available due to lack of use in Column 2, they will be redirected to a reserve fund in the California Department of Parks and Recreation. This funding will be promptly used for beautification efforts in the Salton Sea State Recreation Area.

Sec 4. Effective

(A) Appropriation of funds will take place immediately after passed.

(B) Distribution of funds will take place upon formation of Cohort and beginning of academic year, 2026.