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June 19, 2009

Author lays out plan to restore the Salton Sea

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For close to two decades the deteriorating ecosystem of the Salton Sea has become a fact of life in the Coachella Valley.

Notorious for the smell of dead fish and birds, killed by agricultural runoff pollutants, the once-popular leisure site is no longer a destination for many.

Beachside hotels have long been boarded up.

But some believe there is still hope for the Salton Sea.

In author Irv B. McMurren's ideal world, the Salton Sea's ecosystem would be restored to a healthy condition and the valley would prosper because of it.

“Back in the '60s when I used to drive all the way back (to the Coachella Valley) from dove shooting in Yuma (Ariz.), the sky above the Salton Sea was black from geese ... I remember there was water skiing and there was the yacht club. It looked like a nice place to be,” McMurren said.

In McMurren's novel, “Just Imagine: Restoration of the Salton Sea,” the environmental health of the sea is restored.

McMurren believes this could be a reality, and his supporters say his ideas about the sea could be on target.

The Rev. Dr Amanda Burr, pastor at United Methodist Church of Palm Springs, said the book is easy to read and effective in giving information in the context of a story.

“He's not just giving you a list of facts,” Burr said.

McMurren, who attends the church, is selling the book independently for $17.95, and donating $4.95 of each sale to the church.

McMurren lays out a hypothetical plan in the book for restoring the Salton Sea by creating a canal from the sea to the Gulf of California. The canal would be built by a partnership between a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Mexican laborers.

In the book fish come into the Salton Sea from the Gulf of California. Water from the gulf helps clean the sea. The bird population would return.

In this happily-ever-after mode, tourists travel down the sea's canal to Baja and tribes along the sea benefit from riverboat gaming.

“I'm enjoying the whole darn scenario,” McMurren said. “I just want to see the darn thing happen.”

McMurren said he understands that the Salton Sea Authority has its own ideas for cleaning up the sea. But a goal of his book is to encourage public awareness.

“All I want to do is get people talking again, because they've stopped talking about the Salton Sea,” McMurren said.

Additional Facts

Buy the book

"Just Imagine: Restoration of the Salton Sea" by Irv B. McMurren
Cost: $17.95 per copy ($4.95 of each purchase will be donated to the United Methodist Church of Palm Springs)

Order: Call (760) 322-3277 or mail 255 N. El Cielo, Suite 140-252
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