



3 August 2020

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, Kathleen Krause.

Supervisor Mick Gleason,	District 1:
Supervisor Zack Scrivner,	District 2:
Supervisor Mike Maggard,	District 3:
Supervisor David Couch,	District 4:
Supervisor Leticia Perez, Chair,	District 5:

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Dear Supervisor Gleason and All Members of the Kern County Board of Supervisors;

RE: Indian Wells Valley Groundwater in Overdraft

As your constituent, I am writing to advise you and the Board of Supervisors that The Indian Wells Valley (I WV) is in a critical condition of groundwater overdraft, to the point that recovery cannot be achieved by conservation or water recycling. As you know, the I WV is home to the China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station covering 1.1 million acres in Kern County, north of Ridgecrest, the valley's biggest town (Population 27,000+).

Currently, 60% of water used in I WV is for Agriculture; Alfalfa – 990 acres. Pistachios 3000 acres. The pistachios were planted starting in 2010. Soon after, water tables started quickly dropping (.5-1.5 feet/year). The Navy became alarmed at the groundwater drop and brought the issue to Kern County, which rezoned the entire valley in 2015, cutting out all new agriculture. The Indian Wells Valley Water District (I WVWD) proposed a fallowing program, which would use eminent domain to buy existing farmland. The I WVWD serves around 12,000 water users, with a yearly average of 13.1 Acre Feet per user.

Last November, Mojave Pistachios, LLD filed suit against the I WVWD, asserting that agriculture was the best and highest use of water, and that they had enough groundwater beneath their property to farm for 20 years.

Having pumped themselves into a corner, the I WVWD must import water from either the;

NORTH: tie in with the LA aqueduct, 6 miles of pipeline, \$55 Million.

Department of Water and Power (DWP) has been reluctant to commit, and has made it clear that they would be the major beneficiary of any agreement. During public comment, the Board was encouraged not to trust DWP based on their history in Inyo/Mono. I WVWD may bank water in their aquifer for DWP during wet years. This would not cost a lot, but would not yield much for the water district.

or



SOUTH: tie in with the Antelope Valley/East Kern Water District near California City, 60 miles of pipeline, \$177 Million.

Ironically, this water will arrive from the South, but will be purchased from the State Water Project and originate from the North, namely the Sacramento Delta. Estimated yearly cost is \$50 Million for 8000 Acre Feet. Such an agreement would mandate the water district to pay full price for a yearly allotment. They would receive a percentage of the allotment each year based on available water. Although very expensive the water district might well end up needing both North and South options.

It is unlikely that the State Water Project will provide water, since on 16 July 2020 three California environmental nonprofits secured a landmark settlement agreement with the California State Water Resources Control Board to uphold the common law Public Trust Doctrine and other legal protections for imperiled fish species in the Sacramento River and San Francisco Bay/Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta Estuary. <https://mavensnotebook.com/2020/07/21/lawsuit-settlement-landmark-lawsuit-settlement-between-environmentalists-and-state-water-boards-strengthens-delta-protections/>

There are 2 agencies involved in planning these Indian Wells Valley diversions; the IWVWD and the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority (IWVGA). These two agencies appear to operate independently of each other, which is evidenced by the IWVGA planning to decide the North/South question at a meeting in August 2020. The IWVWD wants to delay any such decision because they are unsure of the accuracy of current cost estimates, and don't know what other fees or costs will be involved with either option. They have not yet made any formal application to the water districts involved with either option or to the State Water Resources Control Board.

As you know, China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station is the largest Naval facility in the United States. Its role in testing Naval weaponry makes it crucial to the defense of the nation. The Navy recently spent over \$3.5 Billion to repair the base following the July 2019 earthquake. It employs over 4,000 civilians, many of them scientists. Civilians will not come to live in Ridgecrest and Inyokern, if there is little to no water there.

The Kern County Supervisors must support a "no ag" position in the Indian Wells Valley in order to prevent the loss of one of the greatest resources in Kern County, the China Lake Naval Weapons Station.

Respectfully submitted,

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