



Morongo Basin Conservation Association, Inc.
mbconservation.org

September 13, 2012

Board of the Mojave Water Agency
13846 Conference Center Dr
Apple Valley, CA 92307-4377

Sent by Email: publicaffairs@mojavewater.org

Re: Opposition Resolution to the Cadiz Valley Water Conservation, Recovery, and Storage Project

Dear Board Members

The Morongo Basin Conservation Association [MBCA] is a 501C4 non-profit dedicated to the economic and environmental well-being of the Morongo Basin. As a board member of MBCA, I gave comments to the Board's agenda item "Cadiz Update Workshop" on August 23rd and alerted the Board of an October approval by the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors [BOS] of the Cadiz EIR and Groundwater Monitoring, Mitigation and Management Plan [GMMMP]. I also urged the Board to oppose the Project and to share their counsel to the BOS.

The PowerPoint of the Cadiz Project presented by hydrologist Anna Garcia to the MWA board articulated the concerns/controversy over the yearly acre foot extraction [50,000–75,000 AF] being proposed by the project proponents and the proponent's surprising "evidence" of the aquifer's sustainability. The Board unanimously voiced opposition to the Project objecting to the degree of water extraction and the exportation of water from an area of so little rainfall. But while the Board had great concerns about the gravity of the Project's consequences, the politics of formulating an overt opposition to the BOS is constraining action. Now a Resolution of Opposition is before you for a vote. As you contemplate a difficult but milestone leadership decision, please reflect on your commitment to the Agency's respect for quality of life, mission, vision, and some core values.

[From the MWA website]

Our Mission

To manage the region's water resources for the common benefit to assure stability in the sustained use by the citizens we serve

Our Vision

To become a recognized and respected leader in the community we serve through demonstrated knowledge, integrity and the quality of our actions.

Our Core Values: Service to the Community, Integrity

While this decision may have political risks, there is no doubt such a project will put desert communities at risk. This water is an insurance policy for our region against the possibility of unprecedented, possible dire climatic change. Approving the resolution will be a test of your leadership, integrity, and dedication to the service to the community because the greater good will then win over political expediency. Integrity and leadership are never without costs but you won't suffer the loss of a good night's sleep from doing the right thing for future generations.

While contemplating these higher values, let me share with you the conservation efforts of Santa Margarita Water District [SMWD] compiled by a water consultant from readily available published data:

SMWD Demand Management

Landscape Water Waste

- SMWD's total water demand includes up to 70% for irrigation purposes¹.
- Approximately 60% of SMWD's water demand is residential. CII (commercial, industrial, and institutional) including dedicated landscape consumes approximately 40% of SMWD's water supply¹.
- The typical home irrigation system is only about 40-50% efficient; meaning half of the water applied to the landscape is wasted, not benefiting the plants.¹

¹ California Urban Water Conservation Council. *Irrigate Efficiently*. Available at <http://www.h2ouse.org/tour/irrigate-efficiently.cfm>

- The District's 2010 Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) states that a majority of the conservation programs focus on efficient irrigation practices, however the high water demand for irrigation, which is more typical of desert communities with higher evapotranspiration rates, would indicate that landscape water savings have been modest at best.

Low Water Rates

- SMWD water rates are low compared to Morongo Basin communities near Cadiz. The average cost for 10 units of water in the Morongo Basin is \$64.33², while SMWD charges 58% less at \$27.20 per data from the San Bernardino County LAFCO Resolution 3162
- SMWD water rates are low compared to other water districts in the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC) service area. A 2009 study found SMWD's total rates to be third lowest of 10 districts. The same report noted that the same three districts "are able to offset a significant portion of revenues through property taxes" (33% for SMWD)³. See attached Mesa Cost Comparison chart-value of water.
- The Public Policy Institute of California noted the State's "renewed attention to the role of water rates, which often fail to provide residents with correct signals about the scarcity of water."

While desert residents value water and accept paying significantly more for their household water and while MWA supports programs to conserve residential landscape, SMWD is pouring water, eventually, *our* water to sustain their lawns and fill their pools. These are not helpless, needy folks needing to "stabilize" their water supply, but an uninformed and unrealistic populace that has not been brought into the 21st century of diminishing water resources. This project is a thinly veiled effort of stealing "cheap" water like the water robber barons of the infamous LADWP-Owens Valley era. Should such flagrantly wasteful and arrogant behavior be rewarded/condoned without even a protest? You have a part in this decision.

Please, I urge you to take this step to approve the resolution of opposition that will help convince the County that they have been inappropriately advised about the benefits of this project. Please act and do not allow this project to quietly set a precedent that violates the County Groundwater Management Ordinance.

Sincerely,

Claudia Sall

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Morongo Basin Conservation Association

Laraine Turk, President

David Fick, Vice President

Ruth Rieman, Treasurer

Sarah Kennington, Recording Secretary

Claudia Sall, Events Director

Deborah Bollinger

Pat Flanagan

Charla Shamhart

"Good water is a resource for which there is no substitute. Natural processes play an important role in maintaining reliable supplies of freshwater. Humanity must share water with natural ecosystems because of the numerous links between healthy natural ecosystems and the welfare of people. In other words, if we attempt to withdraw too much of a resource like water, we risk losing more than we gain".
John Harte 1993

² San Bernardino County LAFCO. Water Agency Rate Comparison in Resolution No. 3162 available at http://www.sbclafco.org/items/201206/Item_7.pdf

³ Mesa Consolidated Water District. Water Cost Comparison Study Report. Sept 2011.