

Bureau of Land Management
California Desert District
Management Group
Attn: Mr. James Williams
6221 Box Springs Boulevard
Riverside, CA 92507-0714

Metropolitan Water District
Water Resources STOP
Attn: Mr. Jack Safely
P.O. Box 54153
Los Angeles, CA 90054-0153

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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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CALIFORNIA DESERT DISTRICT
RIVERSIDE, CA.

Dear Mr. Williams, and Mr. Safely,

I am informed that the project described below currently proposed by the Cadiz organization presents threats to fragile, precious, and irreplaceable natural environments which are unacceptable (please see excerpts below.) I urge you to employ your best judgment and use the authority of your offices to avoid levels of controversy, tragic loss and damage, and mitigation such as we have witnessed/experienced in areas such as Mono and Owens Lakes. If errors are to be made, let us error in the common sense direction of safety and preservation.

Thank your for your consideration and for your efforts in this regard.

Michael Rifkind

5899 Empire Grade Rd.
Santa Cruz, Ca. 95060

Cadiz, Inc. is an agricultural company in the California desert that is laying down plans to drain an ancient aquifer that underlies the Mojave National Preserve and five Bureau of Land Management wilderness areas. The company wants to drain up to 652 billion gallons from this aquifer that has sustained the fragile ecosystems of the western Mojave Desert for millennia. The Mojave Desert is home to a wide variety of rare and vulnerable plants and animals, including the threatened desert tortoise and desert bighorn sheep.

Cadiz's customer is the Metropolitan Water District, water purveyor for businesses and residents in Los Angeles and San Diego. In addition to selling off the native groundwater, Cadiz intends to pump Colorado River Aqueduct water into the aquifer so they can call it a Colorado River "storage" project and distract the public from the fact that this is groundwater mining. Recently, cancer-causing toxins were discovered in this groundwater, making it clear that the Cadiz project would require expensive water treatment. By draining this aquifer, the Cadiz project could turn two nearby "dry" lakes into sources of toxic dust storms, comparable to the air pollution which resulted from the infamous drying of Owens Lake and cost Los Angeles tens of millions of dollars to control.

This project could endanger the unique and rare plants and animals of this desert community, including the threatened desert tortoise and desert bighorn sheep. Two of the several wildernesses that could be impacted by this project are the Trilobite and Clipper Mountain Wildernesses, home to the second largest herd of desert bighorn sheep in the state.

The "monitoring and mitigation" plan is ill defined and offers questionable management for environmental impacts. Under this plan, all monitoring and decision-making will be dominated by Cadiz, Inc. and its customer, Metropolitan Water District, both of which have built-in incentives to favor continued

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groundwater extraction. This puts profit-focused decision-makers in charge of the protection of our public resources. This does not protect the public interest. The document needs to spell out the criteria it will use to stop this project before it causes irreversible damage.

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The Bureau of Land Management's authority is not defined in the latest environmental report and instead will be defined in closed-door negotiations, subject to political pressure instead of public oversight. The terms of BLM's authority and oversight needs to be addressed and publicly disclosed in another environmental impact statement.

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The document needs to justify the actual need for this project and examine alternatives that are actually sustainable, safer and less environmentally destructive, including water conservation measures. The review of such viable alternatives is a requirement under both state and federal law. Alternatives that should be considered include other existing, planned or feasible water storage projects and a host of easily adopted water conservation measures that have successfully reduced water demand in other areas.

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The public lands that could be impacted by this project include two national parks and five wilderness areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management. These lands were set aside by Congress to be permanently protected for their nationally significant natural and cultural resource values. This project is likely to undo that protection for future generations.

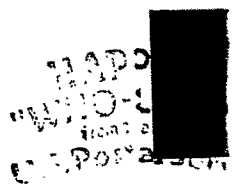
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The SEIS does not contain complete information on the water quality of the groundwater or the Colorado River water that would be imported to this aquifer. This is troubling, given the recent discovery of extraordinarily high levels of chromium 6 in the groundwater and the likelihood that one or both of these water sources contain arsenic, radon, MTBE and perchlorates (rocket fuel). This water will be very expensive to treat, likely at the expense of taxpayers and/or water customers in southern California.

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This decision has enormous ramifications for the future of water management, public health and the protection of the natural resources of southern California. Metropolitan Water District and the Bureau of Land Management must make a decision that is informed, reasoned, and that promotes the public interest rather than private profit.

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*BLM
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Management Group
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Riverside Ca 92507-071*