

January 9, 2001

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

P108

Dear Mr. Safely:

P108-1 I am writing to state my concerns with the problems associated with the proposed water mining that Cadiz, Inc. is planning on the aquifer that underlies the Mojave National Preserve and five Bureau of Land Management wilderness areas.

P108-2 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.

P108-3 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 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.

P108-4 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.


P108-5 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.

P108-6 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.

P108-7 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.

P108-8 This decision has enormous ramifications for the future of water management, public health and the protection of the natural resources of southern California. We need to urge the Metropolitan Water District and the Bureau of Land Management to make a decision that is informed, reasoned, and that promotes the public interest rather than private profit.

Sincerely,

  
Tom Camara  
474 Green Glen Way  
Mill Valley, CA 94941