





CVAG

COACHELLA VALLEY ASSOCIATION of GOVERNMENTS

Blythe • Cathedral City • Coachella • Desert Hot Springs • Indian Wells • Indio • La Quinta • Palm Desert • Palm Springs • Rancho Mirage
County of Riverside • Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians • Cabazon Band of Mission Indians • Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians

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October 7, 2002

To: Victoria Whitney, Program Manager
Hearings and Special Projects Section, Division of Water Rights
State water Resources Control Board

In Reference: Petition of Imperial Irrigation District and San Diego County Water Authority

The Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) is writing on behalf of the **sovereign nations of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, and the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, and on behalf of the cities of Blythe, Cathedral City, Coachella, Desert Hot Springs, Indian Wells, Indio, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage, and on behalf of the County of Riverside.** This letter comes at the unanimous direction of the members of our Executive Committee at its regular meeting of September 30, 2002.

We are astounded by the finding of "overriding consideration" in regard to air quality issues related to the Imperial Irrigation District water transfer to the San Diego County Water Agency in your draft decision dated September 26, 2002. We earnestly and vigorously request that you delete that finding in your final decision.

We all know that the impacts of the water transfer are mitigable and avoidable so that is not the issue. What we find offensive is that a basis for your finding of "overriding consideration" is the premise that some people are worth more than others. I believe you may have drifted to that conclusion through that oft heard catch phrase in this matter that "17,000,000 Coastal people cannot be denied". On a triage scale of 17,000,000 to 500,000 that might be true, but that comparison is smoke and mirrors mathematics. Let's examine:

San Diego County Water Authority indicates that 1 acre ft./yr. supplies water for two households. Therefore, the 200,000 acre foot transfer from Imperial Irrigation District (IID) to San Diego will supply 400,000 households. The population of the Coachella Valley and Imperial County is in excess of 500,000 people. While 400,000 households is not the same as 500,000 people, it is far more accurate than the 17,000,000 'manifest destiny' figure.

I remind you of the Aral Sea which while many times larger, and not directly comparable to the Salton Sea, nevertheless sounds a grim warning of huge health consequences from toxic air pollution. You heard testimony regarding conditions at Owens Lake from Mr. Ted Schade in regard to the potential for the same disaster at the Salton Sea.

In the cross examination of Mr. Schade, Senior Project Manager of the Great Basin Air Pollution

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Control District, Mr. Schade responded to a question as follows:

"...when we work at Owens Lake we are all required to carry full face respirators. If you get stuck in one of these storms and don't* have a respirator, you will have immediate health effects. You may not make it out*. You're to a point where there is more dirt in the air than oxygen. It's impossible to describe to a group of people in a clean room."

Due to the enormity of significant danger and the relatively close ratio of those benefitted by this water transfer vs the potential for serious, even life threatening, damage the people living in the Coachella and Imperial Valleys, the Coachella Valley Association of Governments respectfully requests that you eliminate any reference to air quality "overriding considerations".

Yours very truly,



Richard S. Kelly
Chair, Executive Committee
Mayor, City of Palm Desert

cc: Congresswoman Mary Bono
Senator Jim Battin
Assemblyman Dave Kelley
Agua Caliente Tribal Chair Richard Milanovich
Cabazon Tribal Chair John James
Torres Martinez Tribal Chair Mary Belardo
Mayor Robert Craig, Blythe
Mayor George Stettler, Cathedral City
Mayor Juan De Lara, Coachella
Mayor Matt Weyuker, Desert Hot Springs
Mayor Conrad Negron, Indian Wells
Mayor Ben Godfrey, Indio
Mayor John Peña, La Quinta
Mayor Richard S. Kelly, Palm Desert
Mayor Will Kleindienst, Palm Springs
Mayor Harvey Gerber, Rancho Mirage
Supervisor Roy Wilson, County of Riverside

* by a word in the quotation indicates a typographical error that was corrected