



CHEMEHUEVI INDIAN TRIBE

STATEMENT OF OPPOSITION TO THE CADIZ WATER CONSERVATION, RECOVERY AND STORAGE PROJECT

As the Chairman of the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, I issue this statement to assert our Tribe's opposition to the Cadiz Water Conservation, Recovery and Storage Project currently underway within the Tribe's traditional territory and the boundaries of the newly created Mojave Trails National Monument. The Chemehuevi people resided in this region since time immemorial. We are the indigenous people of this land and hold a sacred relationship with the plants, animals, and waters of the desert and the Colorado River. As a sovereign nation, the Chemehuevi people were given instruction by the Creator to be caretakers of the land and effectively use and respect the landscapes where the Creator placed us.

Our traditional lands have significant spiritual, cultural, and non-renewable resources that tie our people spiritually and physically to the land. The retention of culture, language, traditions, and land-based reference areas prominent in Tribal songs and oral history is critical to our well-being as a people. The Cadiz Project would be hugely detrimental to the traditional lands of our Tribe and any failure to prevent these impacts would violate the fundamental obligation of the federal government to protect tribal culture and preserve tribal lands.

The Cadiz Project proposes to pump one to two million acre feet of precious desert groundwater annually for 50 years. If constructed, it would be one of the largest water extraction developments ever to threaten Southern California. Current pumping to water Cadiz grapes and citrus averages roughly 5,000 acre-feet per year. In sum, this represents approximately 1.6 billion gallons of desert water. The Cadiz Project proposes to pump an average of 50,000 acre-feet per year, with peaks of up to 75,000 acre-feet in some years, upping the amount of water removed to 16 billion and 24 billion gallons, respectively.

Cadiz claims that the aquifer from which it draws is replenished at roughly 32,000 acre-feet per year, an estimate based in part on data extracted from a weather station in the relatively rainy Providence Mountains. Independent hydrologists at the United States Geological Survey suggested 10 years ago that 5 to 10 acre-feet per year was a more likely recharge rate.

Subsequent scientific studies consistently lower the upper estimate, due to better data and recognition that the desert will likely become much drier in the following decades. It is also worth considering that at least some of Cadiz's current pumping for irrigation rejoins the aquifer, so the loss to the aquifer from exporting water will be much greater than 10 times the current impact.

The Cadiz property site atop the Bristol and Cadiz Watersheds and the Fenner Valley Aquifer System would immediately be impacted if further extraction takes place. Extraction would threaten groundwater resources, such as springs and seeps, that are located in the Tribe's traditional territory beneath and inside the Mojave National Preserve and the Mojave Trails National Monument. These springs, seeps, and water sources are sacred to the Chemehuevi Tribe. The Tribe expressed ongoing opposition to the Cadiz Project when it was first reviewed under the National Environmental Policy Act in the early 2000's, at which time, the Bureau of Land Management determined the project would have significant environmental impacts, including depletion of ground water.

Our Tribe knows that the Cadiz Project is not a conservation project and its aggressive pumping of water fails to save water for our children, grandchildren up to the Seventh Generation. The springs, seeps, and water sources occurring in these areas are sacred because the water appears year-round and gives life to an array of plant and animals, including bighorn sheep, mountain lions, and bobcats. These water sources also represent sites along the Salt Song Trail, the sacred landscape of the Nuwuvi people.

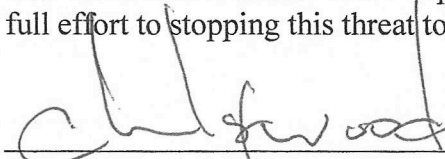
The Salt Songs are the sacred songs of the Nuwuvi people and describe a physical and spiritual landscape spanning ocean and desert, mountains and rivers, life and death. The landmarks identified through the Salt Song are described by the songs and represent ancient villages, gathering sites for salt and medicinal herbs, trading routes, historic events, sacred areas, and cultural landscapes. At ceremonies, Salt Song singers "throwing the gourd" are accompanied by dancers as they perform the 142-song cycle from sunset to sunrise to assist the deceased in their sacred journey along the Spirit Road (Nagupawraw). This ceremony is also a Healing ceremony!

The Salt Songs begin their journey at Avi Nava/Ting-ai-ay (Rock House), a sacred cave at the confluence of the Bill Williams and Colorado Rivers. The songs travel north along the Colorado River to the Kaibab and Colorado Plateau, into Southern Utah, and then west to the great mountain Nuva Kaiv (Mt. Charleston) -- the place of origination of the Nuwuvi people -- and then further west to rise above the Pacific Ocean before arcing back east through the Mojave Desert to their origin at Avi Nava. These places would be critically impacted by the Cadiz Project. Exhibit (A) Salt Song Trail Map

Many of the 25 known Springs, and seeps around the Old Woman Mountain's and especially around the Old Woman Mountain Preserve currently have no water. This particular Sacred Site is the property of the Native American Land Conservancy a 501(c), (3) non-profit organization. We feel the springs and seeps that no longer flow on the Preserve is a direct impact of the on going water extraction taking place at the citrus orchard at the "Citrus Orchard" in Cadiz.

The Congress of the United States, entered into numerous treaties with Indian Tribes, promulgated countless federal laws and regulations, and has undertaken a solemn obligation of trust towards the Chemehuevi people. This government-to-government relationship imposes upon the United States the highest standard of fiduciary duty to preserve and protect Tribal spiritual and cultural sites whether located on reservation or off, and to protect Tribal Lands, water, and air from contamination, pollution, or overuse. The Cadiz Project threatens the traditional lands of our Tribe and any failure to prevent these impacts violates the fundamental obligations of the federal government to protect tribal culture and preserve tribal lands.

The Chemehuevi Indian Tribe expresses its full opposition to the Cadiz Project and commits its full effort to stopping this threat to tribal culture and sacred lands.



Charles F. Wood, Chairman
Chemehuevi Indian Tribe