



TWENTY-NINE PALMS BAND OF MISSION INDIANS

46-200 Harrison Place . Coachella, California . 92236 . Ph. 760.863.2444 . Fax: 760.863.2449

Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians

Statement in Opposition to the Cadiz Project

The Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians actively opposes the Cadiz Water Conservation Recovery and Storage Project currently underway within the Tribe's traditional territory in the Mojave Desert. The United States entered numerous treaties with Indian tribes, promulgated countless federal laws and regulations, and undertook a solemn obligation of trust towards our Tribal Nation. This government-to-government relationship imposes a fiduciary duty on the federal government to preserve tribal spiritual and cultural sites and to protect tribal lands and waters. Failure to prevent impacts, like the extreme overuse that would occur as a consequence of the Cadiz Project, violates the fundamental obligations of the federal government to the Tribe.

The Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians is a federally recognized tribe located in Southern California. They are descendants of the Chemehuevi people, a people whose territory once covered parts of California, Utah, Arizona, and Southern Nevada. The Twenty-Nine Palms Band settled at the sacred site known as the Oasis of Mara, located near the town of Twentynine Palms, California. With the European occupation of the West, many Tribal members were relocated to the Coachella Valley and Banning Pass areas. The Twenty-Nine Palms Reservation was established by the Executive Order of 1895 in Twentynine Palms and the Reservation was later expanded in 1979 with an additional parcel in Coachella, California.

Today, the Tribe employs over 700 people through its business enterprises and governmental operations. The Tribe has a strong relationship with the California Desert, including the Joshua Tree National Park and the Mojave Trails National Monument. As traditional keepers of California desert, the Tribe works to promote land conservation, protect sacred lands, and support descendants of the Chemehuevi, desert Cahuilla, and Southern Paiute lineages in California and beyond.

The Cadiz water mining project poses a grave threat to the California desert and should not be approved. If constructed, the Cadiz would be one of the largest water extraction developments ever sited in southern California. The Cadiz property, just east of the small desert town of Amboy, sits on top of the Bristol and Cadiz Watersheds and the Fenner Valley Aquifer System. The proposed project would consist of 34 wells that would pump an average of 50,000 acre feet of water each year, equivalent to 16.3 billion gallons for a total of 1 to 2 million acre feet over the 50 year life span of the project. Cadiz proposes to export significantly more water than can be replenished naturally. The U.S. Geological Survey and the National Park Service — the agencies responsible for assessing effects on the environment — both concluded that the natural recharge rate for this sensitive desert aquifer ranges from 2,000 to 10,000 acre-feet per year.

The current iteration of the Cadiz project is not the company's first attempt to tap scarce desert waters. During the 1990s, Cadiz proposed a similar highly controversial development plan. The

1999 version of the project proposed to store Colorado River water in the groundwater system below the Cadiz property and only export it in dry years. At this time, and throughout the following decade, the Tribe opposed these proposals.

The Chemehuevi people of the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians resided in this region since time immemorial. These deserts are our homelands and a source of teaching for Native youth. The water sources found in the mountains and low desert represent a connected landscape found in story, song, and ritual through the Salt Song Trail of the Chemehuevi and southern Paiute Tribes. These places are key to connecting our children and grandchildren to our past and our culture. The sites, seeps, and springs are living history and preserve cultural and historical legacies. The protection of this region means we can continually teach traditional ways in traditional settings. These are invaluable lessons that cannot be taught in a classroom.

As a sovereign nation, our Tribal people were given instruction by the Creator to respect the landscapes where the Creator placed us. Our traditional lands have significant spiritual, cultural, and non-renewable resources that guide our people spiritually and physically. 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.

We welcome the new scientific and peer-reviewed study published in the Journal for Environmental Forensics as it highlights the true nature of the springs in the Cadiz area, and supports what we have known all along, that this project will cause irreversible harm. The Cadiz Project threatens the traditional lands of our Tribe. The Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians expresses its full opposition to the Cadiz Project and commits to stopping this threat to tribal culture and sacred lands.



Darrell Mike, Tribal Chairman
Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians