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June 9, 2012

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Water grab

Posted: 06/09/2012 05:25:48 PM PDT

The May 31 op-ed by San Bernardino County Information Officer David Wert claims the county has made no decisions on the Cadiz water mining project, but this is untrue.

The Center for Biological Diversity has provided the county with a detailed analysis of the MOU, which plainly functions to deprive the county of practical enforcement authority over the Cadiz project. Among other things, the MOU requires that the county wait 10 years to calculate harm, radically narrows the concept of "overdraft," and forces the county into mandatory arbitration on most claims. If the county did not intend to exempt the project, there would be no point whatsoever in even considering the MOU, let alone approving it.

Contrary to Wert's claims, the Board of Supervisors agreed to concrete, actual terms which will limit monitoring and enforcement. The board should not be allowed to hide behind claims of "we didn't know" and "we haven't acted yet." The board did know, and did act - reprehensibly - to exclude the project. Wert also claims the county was somehow fortunate to "convince" Cadiz the project is subject to the groundwater ordinance - but it is not up to Cadiz to decide.

Likewise, Wert's claim that it is common practice to privately mine an aquifer for groundwater is just plain false - the Cadiz project is absolutely unprecedented in its scope and ambition. Imported water is indeed common - just not from privately draining the Mojave's aquifers.

According to Wert, the county will hold public hearings on future approvals for the Cadiz project, which is important because the next approval will fully exempt the project from the county's groundwater management ordinance. Residents should take note - and come out in force to stop this dirty water grab.

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