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December 15, 2020

Ms. Natalie Stork  
State Water Resources Control Board  
Groundwater Management Program  
Office of Research, Planning, and Performance  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject:** Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan  
Groundwater Basin No. 6-054  
Comment Response Letter

Ms. Stork,

The Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority (Authority) sincerely appreciates the positive comments and supportive technical feedback submitted by the State Water Resources Control Board's (State Board) Groundwater Management Program on the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). This letter provides the Authority's preliminary response only and a more detailed follow-up technical responses letter will be submitted in the near future.

As your aware, the Authority faces very unique and daunting circumstances in managing the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin (Basin) under SGMA.

Currently, the Basin is roughly four times overdrafted and, if left unchecked, Basin modeling shows that the groundwater infrastructure will be unable to meet the Basin's demands in roughly 45 years. Furthermore, it is expected that long before then, all of the Basin's small domestic wells, several hundred in number, will be unable to produce groundwater.

The estimated 7,650 acre foot per year sustainable yield does not meet even the most basic domestic needs of the Basin. Future conversion of the Basin's waste water processing will lead to some additional water supplies but, even with those supplies factored in, the Basin's sustainable yield is insufficient to meet the current domestic demands; domestic demands that have already been drastically reduced as part of State water conservation mandates. Faced with these daunting facts, it is simply self-evident that an import water supply must be obtained on an expedited basis.

During the Basin's transition to import water supplies, additional overdrafting will occur and as a result shallow wells will be damaged. The GSP's Shallow Well Mitigation Program was developed to provide funding to those experiencing damages from the Basin's continued decline in groundwater levels. As the State Board has noted, "[t]he Well Mitigation Program

will directly benefit beneficial users that unreasonably experience water supply hardships, some of whom are expected to be members of disadvantaged communities.” In support of the Program, the Authority adopted a volumetric pumping fee to fund the Program earlier this Summer. In order to provide groundwater users a transition period to this new pumping fees, the Board provided nearly 6 months’ notice before the fee was actually imposed. Nonetheless, some have publicly requested further delay, with very little supportive reasoning, and to date the Board has rejected those requests as overdraft is causing real and current harms that must be addressed. In fact, just yesterday the Authority was made aware of a potential dry well claim. Simply put, the modeling shows that the continued overdraft of this Basin is having real consequences right now and the continued overdraft is an exigent threat to the health of the communities relying upon Basin water. The Authority sincerely appreciates the State Board’s expressed support for the Shallow Well Mitigation Program and rest assured the Authority is committed to the Program.

The Authority appreciates and shares the State Board’s concerns regarding the Searles Domestic Water Company. Accordingly, domestic uses in the Searles Valley Basin are excluded from the Basin’s Replenishment Fee and they have been since the Fee’s inception. We understand that some have repeatedly and publicly made false statements on this issue and we appreciate your concern as a result of those false claims. Rest assured, however, the domestic uses in the Searles Valley Basin are excluded from the Replenishment Fee and they have been since its inception. Any claims to the contrary are simply false. The relevant portions of the Basin’s Replenishment Fee are readily available for review on the Authority’s website. Please note, sections 2.6 and 3 of the Basin’s Replenishment Fee Ordinance which expressly provide that Replenishment Fee will not be charged to Trona’s domestic needs of 217 acre foot per year. We regret that the State Board has had to devote precious time and resources to such outrageously false claims and we would hope that the State Board will consider the falsity of these claims when assessing the credibility of those making them in the future.

As the State Board is aware, GSP’s are living documents subject to yearly reporting requirements, a review process and future amendments throughout the planning horizon. The Authority will eagerly meet and exceed these requirements throughout the GSP planning and implementation horizon and we sincerely look forward to working with the State Board in that process.

The Authority again thanks the State Board for its support and positive feedback on the Indian Wells Valley GSP. The Authority welcomes future input from the State Board and other governing agencies on this GSP. We look forward to working cooperatively with governing agencies and the public to achieve the Basin’s sustainability goal and fully comply with the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mr. Don Zdeba at 760-384-5555 or [don.zdeba@iwwvd.com](mailto:don.zdeba@iwwvd.com).

Sincerely,



Mick Gleason  
Chairman of the  
Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority