

INDIAN WELLS VALLEY GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY

POLICY ON

SHALLOW WELL IMPACT IDENTIFICATION, EVALUATION AND MITIGATION PROGRAM

INCLUDING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

(MARCH 9, 2022)

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Indian Wells Valley (IWW) groundwater basin (Basin) has been in overdraft for several decades. Overdraft conditions, both historical and current, have resulted in a significant lowering of the regional and local groundwater elevations, and a significant reduction in the amount of useable water in groundwater storage. In addition, the Basin has hydrogeologic areas with poor water quality (high total dissolved solids), that can, and have, migrated to areas that previously had higher quality groundwater, resulting in water quality impacts to some wells. Most of the impacted wells are shallow wells, constructed to serve private homes, rural domestic/mutual water companies, small agricultural, and livestock water supply needs.

Under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), adopted in 2014, the Basin must achieve sustainability by year 2040 and eliminate undesirable results. The IWW Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) was adopted in January 2020. The IWW GSP includes a program to help mitigate impacts to shallow wells caused by the chronic lowering of groundwater levels and degraded water quality as Project # 4.

Despite having an adopted GSP in the IWW, pumping greater than the natural sustainable yield of the Basin is anticipated to continue, and consequently, groundwater levels will continue to lower and impact shallow wells until sustainability is reached by at least year 2040.

This “Policy” for the Shallow Well Impact Identification, Evaluation and Mitigation Program (Program) provides the guidelines for Well Owners with potentially impacted shallow wells and the Authority Staff to implement the Program. The Program is essentially a Groundwater Authority shallow well impacts verification and assessment, followed by potential Authority reimbursement of the shallow well owner’s mitigation costs. The Program includes provisions for impacted shallow well owners to request fast-track emergency assistance through the Authority General Manager.

SHALLOW WELL IMPACT IDENTIFICATION, EVALUATION AND MITIGATION PROGRAM

The Program is funded by the Shallow Well Mitigation Fee, which is included in the Replenishment Fee. The Replenishment Fee is assessed on all groundwater pumping in excess of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) sustainable yield of 7,650 AFY. The Shallow Well Mitigation fund is managed by the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority (Authority) Staff, under the direction of the Authority Board of Directors. The Program will be implemented and managed by the Authority Staff, under the direction of the Authority Board, on a “case-by-case” basis. The Program is designed to be primarily an “evaluation and potential mitigation reimbursement” process. Well Owners are responsible for maintaining their wells in good operating condition and maintaining reliable potable water supply. The Program is dependent on individual Well Owners voluntarily submitting their shallow well impacts information for consideration for potential mitigation support by the Authority.

The following outlines the initial steps to be taken by Well Owners and Authority Staff to initiate the evaluation of a potentially impacted shallow well (for emergency assistance, shallow well owners may submit a written request to the Authority General Manager that clearly describes the “emergency” and requested “assistance”, including technical support):

1. Well Owner shall submit a fully completed “Report Form for a Shallow Water Supply Well Negatively Impacted by Chronic Overdrafting of Groundwater in the IWV Basin” (Report Form) to the Clerk of the Board. The Report Form can be found on the Authority website at www.iwvga.org. Attachment C also provides the Report Form. (Subject Well must be fully registered with the IWVGA.)
2. Well Owners shall submit a complete well evaluation and performance review by a qualified, licensed well drilling and equipment contractor. The Report shall include a complete evaluation, including identification of potential causes for the well impacts and/or failure. The Report shall include the recommended mitigation measures and the estimated cost and schedule for completion.
3. Authority Staff will acknowledge receipt of the “completed” Report Form and well evaluation report within 10 calendar days. The Authority Staff Report will not be initiated until the Well Owner Report Form is deemed complete.
4. The Water Resources Manager (WRM) will conduct the independent evaluation of the Well Owners impacted well. The WRM will notify the Well Owner of the start date for the independent evaluation. The WRM will notify the Well Owner when it is determined the Well Owner supplied data and information is “complete”. The WRM will complete the independent evaluation and prepare a draft Staff Report within 45 days after notifying the Well Owner of a complete Report Form submittal.
5. The WRM draft evaluation report will be provided to the Well Owner for review and comment, prior to finalizing the Staff Report and presenting it to the Authority Board for action.

6. The WRM will present the evaluation report (Staff Report), including recommendations, for the Authority Board for action. The Well Owner will have an opportunity to address the Authority Board at the meeting.
7. Any Program-related mitigation costs incurred by the Authority shall be managed and accounted for by the General Manager.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

The Emergency Assistance program is designed to assist Shallow Well Owners experiencing an “emergency water supply” situation (shallow well has failed and no other potable water supply is available). The Shallow Well Owner must have fully registered the subject Well with the Authority and must demonstrate reasonable and prudent Well maintenance and repair. The Shallow Well Impact Identification Evaluation and Mitigation Program-Emergency Assistance Application (Form) is posted online.

The Form shall be submitted to the Authority General Manager (GM). The GM will determine if/when the Form is considered complete. Within three (3) work days of a “completed” Form, the GM will complete a Staff Report with recommendations. The completed Form and Staff Report must be approved by the GM and Authority Board Chairperson before implementation. The Water Resources Manager may provide assistance, as needed.

The Authority Board allocates up to \$50,000 per year to the Emergency Assistance program, to be allocated by the GM and Board Chairperson, and managed by the Authority GM and staff. The Authority GM will maintain current contractor contact information for the various well impact evaluation, mitigation and temporary water supply services.