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NATURAL RESOURCES

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–0508

August 20, 2020

Chairman Mick Gleason
Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority (IWVGA)
500 West Ridgecrest Boulevard
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

RE: IWVGA Board Consideration and Adoption of the Engineer's Report for the Adoption of a Basin Replenishment Fee

Dear Chairman Gleason:

I write to ask the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority (IWVGA) to delay consideration of the Engineer's Report for the Adoption of a Basin Replenishment Fee.

Delaying consideration and adoption of the proposed fee will allow more complete discussion among affected communities and business to further understand the effects of this measure. I strongly believe that additional time to consider this will better serve the IWVGA's water sustainability goals as the Board can ensure wide-spread comment and discussion of an issue as critical as affordable water supply.

Further, delaying consideration and adoption of a basin replenishment fee will prevent an excessive fee being levied during a widespread pandemic that has had considerable adverse effects on local property owners, businesses, and economies. It is my understanding that the proposal will levy a $2,130 per acre foot Basin Replenishment Fee which will be used to fund part of IWVGA's groundwater sustainability projects. Searles Valley Minerals has estimated adding this proposed Basin Replenishment Fee to their current extraction fee would increase their water costs by 7,000 percent, an estimated $6 million dollars per year. A large fee increase would be a significant challenge for an area still recovering from damaging earthquakes and grappling with an ongoing pandemic.

I believe it is in the best interest of all stakeholders for IWVGA to delay consideration of adopting the proposed Basin Replenishment Fee. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

Col. Paul Cook (ret.)
Member of Congress
Eighth Congressional District of California

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