



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
News Release

For Immediate Release: TBD

CASO-07-02

Contact: Jan Bedrosian (916) 978-4616 or John Dearing (916) 978-4622

INTERIOR APPROVES CADIZ PROJECT IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The Department of the Interior today signed a Record of Decision setting forth the Department's decision to issue a right-of-way grant for a pipeline and power facilities located on federal lands to allow for a groundwater storage and transfer project. The project, located in San Bernardino County, is called the Cadiz Groundwater Storage and Dry-Year Supply Program.

The Cadiz project has been developed by Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, in cooperation with Santa Monica-based Cadiz Inc., to use the groundwater basin underlying part of the Cadiz and Fenner Valleys in San Bernardino County to store Colorado River water for later use. The project also includes potential for export of native or indigenous groundwater under specified conditions to Metropolitan's customers for use in dry years.

The project requires a right-of-way from Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for a 34.6-mile pipeline and power distribution facilities that would cross public lands between Metropolitan's Colorado River Aqueduct and Cadiz Inc.'s private lands. Today's action sets forth Interior's decision to issue a right-of-way grant and temporary use permit which will require Metropolitan to comply with a wide array of some 130 terms and conditions to mitigate the project's impacts. Once the Metropolitan Board agrees to these conditions, Interior could then issue the right-of-way grant and permit to the Water District. The right-of-way grant and permit will be effective when it is officially approved and signed by Metropolitan, as well as by the Department of the Interior.

A key mitigation measure required is the adoption of the detailed Groundwater Monitoring and Management Plan, developed cooperatively by BLM, the National Park Service (NPS), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Metropolitan and the County of San Bernardino. The Plan provides for an extensive system of monitoring facilities and is designed to ensure protection of critical resources, including springs within the NPS Mojave National Preserve and surrounding BLM managed lands, the aquifer system, brine resources of Bristol and Cadiz Dry Lakes, and air quality within the Mojave Desert region. The Plan would be overseen by Metropolitan and BLM with advice from a technical review panel made up of expert advisors from Federal, State, and local agencies as necessary.

The Cadiz Groundwater Storage and Dry-Year Supply Program, proposed in 1999, has been analyzed in a draft, a supplement to the draft, and a final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act.

In issuing today's decision, Rebecca Watson, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management, said the Department acknowledges the concerns raised by Senator Dianne Feinstein and others regarding the project's potential impacts on groundwater resources as well as the Senator's request for a cap on the amount of water that could be transported across the right-of-way. "Whether the Department of the Interior has the authority to cap the groundwater resources of California raises serious legal questions," Watson said. "We believe that the management plan, which is based on science and a strong monitoring program, will assure the necessary protection of the natural resources for which we are responsible."

(more)

The Cadiz Record of Decision, the FEIS/EIR, and the Groundwater Monitoring and Management Plan are available online at www.ca.blm.gov and www.mwdh2o.com/ Copies of the Record of Decision are being mailed to interested parties of record. Copies are also available at local public libraries and are available upon request from BLM's Desert District Office at (909) 697-5200, the BLM's Needles Office at (760) 326-7000 or Metropolitan at (213) 217-6981.

-end-