



BIG PINE PAIUTE TRIBE OF THE OWENS VALLEY

Big Pine Paiute Indian Reservation

P.O. Box 700 · 825 South Main Street · Big Pine, CA 93513
(760) 938-2003 · fax (760) 938-2942

www.bigpinepaiute.org

July 18, 2016

California Water Commission
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, California 94236

Subject: Support for DWR Recommendation on Owens Valley Basin Boundary Modification

Dear Commissioners:

The Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley (Tribe) applauds the recommendation by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) to deny the basin boundary modification requested by Inyo County. In addition, the Tribe agrees with the determination to append the Fish Slough wetland area to the Owens Valley Groundwater Basin. The DWR determination should help the area's local agencies focus on sustainable management for the whole groundwater basin as we plan to meet local environmental and human needs and consider the uncertainties of climate change.

The Tribe appreciates DWR's consideration of comments submitted on the basin boundary modification request, because Inyo County made only nominal efforts to engage stakeholders at the local level. The Tribe has expressed to Inyo County officials its desire to be informed of issues and pending decisions regarding water management in the region. Although Inyo County included the Tribe when it sent out press releases regarding meetings where matters related to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) would be presented, the Tribe requested government to government meetings between the Tribal Council and members of the Inyo Board of Supervisors to discuss these important matters (see attached letter). Consultation did not take place. As evidenced by the county's interactions with DWR staff and your Commission, Inyo County appears unwilling to reach out and do more than the minimum the law requires to hear and consider the Tribe's concerns.

Thank you for considering these comments; the Tribe looks forward to the Commission upholding the recommendation made by DWR staff.

Sincerely,

Shannon Romero
Tribal Chairwoman

Attachment

C: Anecita Agustinez, Tribal Policy Analyst DWR
Inyo County Board of Supervisors



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SHANNON D. ROMERO
TRIBAL CHAIRWOMAN

March 11, 2016

Inyo County Board of Supervisors
P. O. Drawer N
224 N. Edwards Street
Independence, CA 93526

Subject: Tribal Request for Consultation regarding CA Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

Dear Inyo County Supervisors:

The Tribe respectfully requests consultation concerning any actions considered by the County of Inyo with regard to California's new Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). This includes, but is not limited to, modifications to basin boundaries, formation of Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs), and development of Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs). In addition, the Tribe requests consultation regarding communications with and annual reporting to the state of California for compliance with the County of Inyo's position that portions of the basin be treated as an adjudicated area.

The Tribe has repeatedly raised concerns about the lack of sustainable water management in Owens Valley. The City Los Angeles (LA) Department of Water and Power tapped into the Owens River basin in the early twentieth century and diverted all of the valley's surface water, which, of course, resulted in the desiccation of Owens Lake. Groundwater pumping for export began in earnest in 1970 with the second barrel of LA's aqueduct. Some pumps, such as those located at Fish Springs in the Big Pine wellfield, have been operating continuously since 1970, and because their rate of pumping exceeds natural recharge, sustainable groundwater management is not being achieved in the Big Pine area.

SGMA offers new opportunities for entities to work together at the local level to appropriately manage vital water resources. The legislation provides a forum for the stakeholders to meet and begin devising strategies to address the future of water in their local communities. The Tribe envisions a future for the valley where once again springs flow, wetlands support wildlife and plants, and people have reliable access to fresh, clean water to sustain our communities, and it is hoped that County leaders share such a vision.

Please contact the Tribe's Water Program Coordinator, Alan Bacock, regarding SGMA consultation and communication. He may be reached at a.bacock@bigpinepaiute.org and (760) 938-2003 ext. 235.

Sincerely,

Shannon D. Romero
Tribal Chairwoman



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Dear Supervisors:

The Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley (Tribe) respectfully requests Inyo County abide by the recommendation of the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), in which DWR denied the basin boundary modification request. The determination by DWR should help the Owens Valley fulfill the intent of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), which “empowers local agencies to adopt groundwater management plans that are tailored to the resources and needs of their communities.” By calling for planning at the local level, SGMA also promotes sustainable groundwater management in order to provide a buffer against drought and climate change, and to contribute to reliable water supplies for local communities. In addition, the Tribe agrees with the determination by DWR to append Fish Slough to the Owens Valley Groundwater Basin, so this sensitive hydrologic area can continue to be studied and protected.

The Tribe reiterates its request made in a letter to your Board dated March 11, 2016, (attached) to engage in consultation on SGMA-related matters and decisions regarding water management in general. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Shannon Romero
Tribal Chairwoman

Attachment

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