

County of San Diego
Planning & Development Services
C/O: Jim Bennet
5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 310
San Diego, CA 92123

April 24, 2019

Ref: Groundwater Sustainability Plan
Borrego Valley Groundwater Basin
Borrego Springs Sub-basin

Dear Mr. Bennet:

In the final GSP for the Borrego Basin, the human consumption and use of water must have priority over agricultural and recreational claims. There cannot be any equal proportional reduction by all users. Such an argument for that position from anyone ignores the fact that for 70 years agriculture has been profiting from and over-drafting the basin and consuming 70% of the aquifer use on an annual basis. Even in recent years when Borrego Springs ratepayers have reduced their usage from 2,400 afy to 1,700 afy, agriculture has continued its same excessive consumption rate, if not more. The public record is clear. Twenty-five (25) agricultural corporate interests farming 4,000 acres do not deserve equal treatment and a financial reward for decades of aquifer abuse. We believe water case law in California supports this position of human consumption priority.

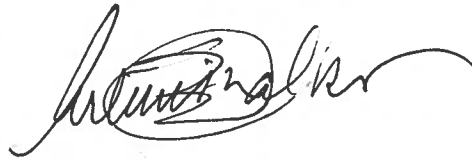
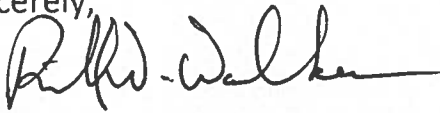
Borrego Springs must survive as a retirement and service-related community of 3,000 to 10,000 (including snowbirds) residents. Perhaps even more importantly, the town provides a destination and hub for thousands of annual world visitors, hikers, and campers to the largest desert state park in the nation, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Borrego Springs has been designated one of the few international dark sky communities easily accessible to the public. That basic survival requires a minimum of 1700 annual feet of water per year to be protected under the GSP for the use of ratepayers and visitors. Without that minimum amount of water, property values will plummet, and Borrego Springs could die. Such a demise would also threaten the communities of Ocotillo Wells, Ocotillo Wells Off Road State Vehicular Recreation Area, Ranchita, and Warner

Springs which all depend on the convenient goods and services found year-round in Borrego Springs.

Implementation of the GSP cannot wait 20 years. The threat of decreased water quality as the aquifer declines mandates a much sooner completion timetable.

If the GSP fails to provide the 1700 afy of water Borrego Springs ratepayers and visitors need annually just to preserve the status quo, the State of California and the County of San Diego must provide the Borrego Water District with the necessary funding to buy out farming interests. Neither the community nor the water district have such assets.

Sincerely,



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