

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

EPA Region 9, WTR-4
7 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 9401 01

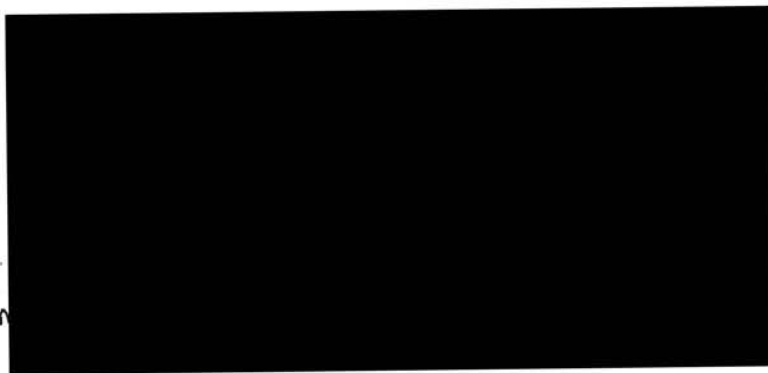
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ATT'N Charlotte Ely

Re: Joshua Basin Water District Recharge rj

FAX cover sheet + 7 pages to follow



Note: Please do not publish my name
nor number + remove it from
- All pages - Thank you

March 30, 2011

Charlotte Ely
EPA Region 9, WTR-4
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94015-3901

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March 30, 2011

RE: Joshua Basin Water District Water Recharge Project
and intent of EPA Region 9 to authorize the award of
a FY 2009 special appropriation grant to the JBWD

Dear Ms. Charlotte Ely,

This project should not have the support of the
EPA, which has based their decision on the EA
which uses information from the EIR and DEIR.

From this the EPA has prepared an unsigned
Finding of No Significant Impact. Please don't sign it.

This water Recharge Project will cause irreversible
and irretrievable damage to the environment
with regards to biology, air quality, water quality,
aesthetics and growth. Many of the mitigation
measures are not enough, indeed some impacts
cannot be mitigated.

Please refer to and incorporate all of my comments
objecting to this project in my letter in the
EIR for the JBWD, September 2009, SCH#2008111082.
In this same EIR are the letters and objections of
others. The EIR's responses to our comments
ignored some points made and were incomplete at
times. In fact, I believe the DEIR and the EIR
(which added a few mitigations - not enough - and is not
much different than the EIR except for the public
input) is in many areas incomplete, erroneous,

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contains conflicting statements, and there are omissions, some of which invalidate studies.

This project will cause an unacceptable amount of air pollution to the area. Project proponents claim it will only be during the construction phase of 1 year therefore effects are less than significant. Some of the contaminants are known carcinogens. Many residents suffer from respiratory diseases.

ANYM #3

Joshua Tree National Park, already suffers from more unhealthy air quality days than other Nat'l Parks. JTNP and Joshua Tree attract tourists and this is part of our economy. Also, site 3 will be visible from Rte 62 which is a county scenic highway.

ANYM #4

Traffic will become more congested as the supposed water availability will induce growth. And the scraping bare of 32 acres and then maintenance vegetation removal will expose us all to frequent dust storms from our many days of high winds.

ANYM #5

Diluting our higher quality aquifer water with SWP when there is no great need should not be allowed. As stated in the studies, SWP can vary from year to year and it can carry high levels of dissolved organic compounds & bromide and can exceed the drinking water standard for trihalomethane. SWP will also add a large quantity of salts. Over time, all of these additions can accumulate, including other unmentioned substances, such as pesticides.

ANYM #6

The latter may even be directly applied to the basins for mosquito control, as suggested in the EA (a non-toxic pesticide?) or mosquito fish - why would these be put in temporary water in - 1-2 wks?

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The transportation and storage of asphalt for road repair, etc, in the Quail Wash Flood Control has not been addressed. Although it is all along the South side, with storm runoff it flows to the North which is lower in elevation and into site 3 and vicinity. Any discharges from the busses at the MBTA building adjacent to site 3 would most likely drain there.

Allowing degradation to our water by the addition of SWP is not of maximum benefit to the people. The SWP quality varies, constituents in it can change, and amounts delivered will vary.

The location of site 3 next to a portion of the Pinto Mt. Fault and partially within the A.R. zone is troubling. No one can predict the outcome of an earthquake, nor when, the duration, ground movement, etc. Following a quake besides above ground displacement the depth at which it occurs may produce other considerations such as dropping the water table or sealing off areas which could affect the recharge as well as the existing water basin.

The report made reference to terracing existing slopes to prevent landslides. The only existing slope is the escarpment on the N of the site, which is the Pinto Mt. Fault. This would encroach into Joshua Creek.

EA and
PEIR

→ The report also states the proposed project could require a Streambed Alteration Agreement for the construction activities that would take place within Joshua Creek. The EIR added mitigation measure 3.3-5c stating final designs shall avoid infringing onto Joshua Creek & ensure no vegetation is removed nor v h i l encroach onto the creek - in response to my comment 100 and another comment 82. What will really take place?

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ANYM #7

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The entire N border of site 3 is adjacent to Joshua Creek, its course following the Pinto Mt. Fault scarp. It is an important ephemeral waterway as is Quail Wash to the E of Site 3. Along the E the wash has been formed into a flood control channel with high earthen berms to help contain the high volume of storm waters that occasionally flow down Quail Wash. The "small unnamed wash", 1.16 acres across the SE portion of site 3 is part of the many smaller channels off of Quail Wash and supports wash vegetation such as acacias which are visible all along its course.

These are some plant species associated with a riparian habitat.

Joshua Creek contains numerous (and some very large) Palo Verdes - (*Cercidium floridum*) and Desert Willows *Chilopsis linearis*. How a qualified biologist could possibly miss all of these trees, some greater than 20 ft. high and *Acacia greggii* as well, I cannot understand. Table 3.11-1 lists species observed within and in the vicinity of JBWD Recharge Basin Alternatives. Missing from this li but (there are) (on location)

Plants

Acacia greggii - catclaw - numerous
Chilopsis linearis - Desert Willow - numerous, some very large
Simmondsia chinensis - Jojo
Parkinsonia aculeata - Mexican Palo Verde
 — *Larrea tridentata*, creosote is listed but no mention is made of the very large specimens on site, 2 look to be 10-15 ft. in diameter. Also the *Opuntia*; silver chollas I believe, near those creosotes are very tall, perhaps 6-8'. Joshua trees on site (*Yucca brevifolia*) were said to be very few and immature. While not dense, as in a J.T. woodland, there are enough, perhaps.

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20 - 30 from my perspective. To call 10 - 12' and greater immature is misleading. Due to precipitation and elevation as well as other factors they may be the same age as larger specimens found in higher elevations with more rainfall and may well be old.

→ These are all plant species I have observed from off site, within and in site 3 that I am familiar with. How many more on site that were not listed is of concern, as well as the wildlife species.

June
+ July
2009

→ I observed antelope ground squirrels, 3 desert iguanas, mockingbirds, hummingbirds, cactus wrens, black throated sparrows, house finches, and numerous other lizards I could not identify at the time. I have seen many bats at dusk.

The biologist has made no mention of species of snakes likely to live there, such as the glossy, coachwhip (*Masticophis flagellum*), most likely 1 or more rattlesnake species and perhaps King snakes and more.

Coyotes travel along Quail Wash on the S. to the N side of 62 and into the site area. Golden Eagles occasionally fly over. I've heard screech owls in the area and great horned owls. Those large trees all along the wash are used by a multitude of birds and animals.

Of importance is all of the vegetation in the whole area upon which they all depend for food and shelter as well as the insects that feed upon it and are fed upon. It is its own whole system and more.

These species show this to be a diverse biological community with supporting habitat. And it is used as a corridor between Quail Springs all the way out to Coyote Dry Lake. Site 3 is located within the Joshua Tree Wildlife Linkage Design and is a recognized biological corridor. EPA / SWND Project

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Scraping 32 acres bare, excavating basins, building 6' earthen berms topped with 8' high chain link fencing, using concrete armoring and all of the other building practices for this project will certainly be an impediment to wildlife movement and its survival.

If areas such as these continue to be broken up it will have devastating effects, destroying forever these few waterways (even though ephemeral) which so many species are dependent upon for their survival in this arid environment.

To claim this loss can be mitigated and is less than significant is false.

Furthermore, a tortoise survey was not done at site 3 because it is thought to be unlikely for any to be on or near the site due to the degraded condition (junk, trash, and ORV use). This is irresponsible and unacceptable.

Site 3 is not the right place to build a recharge basin and neither were the other 2 alternatives.

Urban growth has not been properly accounted for in the DEIR, EIR nor EA. This recharge project would indirectly induce growth by removing an obstacle to growth (that being a limited water supply). The supposed water recharge to the aquifer could affect decisions for building resulting in more subdivisions and higher density housing. There is no infrastructure for the type of growth most likely to occur. There would be impacts to all of the resources. The citizens of Joshua Tree would bear the burden of costs and losses of natural resources.

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The cumulative effects from this project are unacceptable. The impacts will affect Joshua Tree National Park especially with regard to air quality.

Another concern is if this project is started then abandoned, areas cleared of vegetation cannot simply be replanted & return to their previous state nor can the life associated with it be replaced.

The EPA is supposed to protect the Environment.

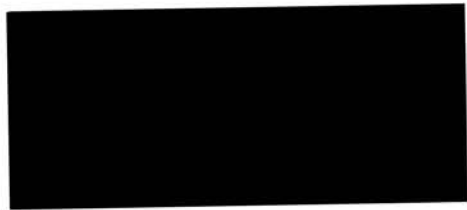
Please do not support this project which will cause so many significant irreparable impacts to the environment by helping it with funding.

Stewardship of our natural resources for future generations is a responsibility.

To spend a large amount of money to transport an unreliable amount of water in an inconsistent manner to an uncertain water basin next to a known active fault until the year 2022 is a poor use of funding.

Thank you for your time and attention. I appreciate the opportunity to express my opinions, reasons, and observations.

Sincerely,
A concerned citizen
of Joshua Tree, CA.



EPA / WD Project