

IWVWD Opinion Editorial

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New analyses suggest the Indian Wells Valley has more groundwater than previously estimated

In an effort to ensure the best available science is used to determine the most accurate estimate of Indian Wells Valley groundwater basin supplies, the Indian Wells Valley Water District and other entities representing 80% of the valley's total groundwater production organized a Technical Working Group. The Group consists of experts from six professional hydrogeological science and engineering consulting firms. Their goal was to determine both a basin safe yield and the total water in storage within the valley. To achieve these goals, the Technical Working Group analyzed the most complete, comprehensive, and up-to-date data sets available using state-of-the-art analytical methodology. The results are significantly different than the current values used by the Groundwater Authority.

The Technical Working Group's analysis estimates that the Indian Wells Valley safe yield is 13,400 acre-feet per year (AFY), significantly higher than the 7,650 AFY sustainable yield estimate in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

Additionally, the Technical Working Group's analysis found that approximately 40 million acre-feet (AF) of potable groundwater remains in storage within the IWV. The GSP estimates the readily available amount of groundwater in storage to be about 1.75 million AF. This should give us all great optimism for the future in the IWV.

These new findings raise serious questions about how the IWV Groundwater Basin should be managed to achieve sustainability moving forward. For example, the cost of the proposed imported water pipeline project currently being developed by the local Groundwater Authority is enormous. The project is expected to cost over \$200 million to construct and another \$10 million+ annually to operate and may not be necessary.

While the Groundwater Authority has requested about \$175,000,000 in Federal and State Grant funding to offset this expense, significant costs will still fall on IWV Water District customers as well as other IWV residents including local industries, businesses, and farmers of all sizes. The new findings show us that it is time to reevaluate which projects are actually necessary to ensure water in the valley for years to come.

The IWV Water District is fully committed to ensuring sustainable water to all residents and other beneficial users of water in the IWV who rely on the Basin Aquifer. With that said, the cost to our customers and the quality of the water provided are of utmost importance to us.

For its part, the Water District looks forward to collaborative meetings and discussions with all parties involved in achieving sustainability within the IWV as we move toward the very best solutions to our water sustainability challenge.

Mallory J. Boyd, President of the Board, IWW Water District