

**IWVWD PRESS RELEASE – July, 2008**  
**Tom Mulvihill, July GM Column**

Anyone who has lived in Ridgecrest for even a short amount of time will tell you that this is a special and unique place. Look around you and you will find friendly, hard working neighbors, gorgeous scenery, world renowned outdoor recreation, a concentration of artistic and musical culture and opportunity.

One of the main building blocks of our way of life is water – our sole source of which happens to be our aquifer, a natural underground reservoir. It is the position of the IWV Cooperative Ground Water Management Group (IWVCGWMG) that the amount of fresh water located beneath our feet is finite. And, according to a report published by that same group, Valley residents and businesses pump nearly 30,000 acre feet (AF) a year while replenishment from rain and snow is closer to 10,000 AF. This means we are all using water at a faster rate than it is being replaced, a situation that necessitates a search for future water sources.

Recently, the Water District completed a Groundwater Banking Site Evaluation, Reconnaissance Level Assessment. The purpose of this “reconnaissance level” study was to assess the potential of possible water banking sites in the Valley. Water banking, also known as Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR), involves putting water into an aquifer through injection wells or by surface ponding and infiltration and then pumping it out when needed. The aquifer essentially functions as a water bank. Deposits are made in times of surplus, typically with runoff from a heavy snow year, and withdrawals occur when available water falls short of demand. Water banking can be an essential component of a multi-faceted water supply enhancement program.

At this time the District does not have a specific program involving a water banking facility. This study was undertaken as a preliminary workup for a possible future project with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power in a so-called “put and take” operation. A banking facility such as this would be part of a larger program whose details have yet to be worked out. In a typical water bank, the balance of water available for subsequent retrieval is slightly less than the amount put in.

A formal presentation of the ASR findings was conducted by Kerry Cato of Cato-Geoscience, Inc. and Dave Scriven of Krieger & Stewart at the IWVWD July Board meeting on July 14 as well as the regular monthly session of the CGWMG on July 17.

The study methodology was precise and extensive. In determining the most advantageous sites, several types of “avoidance” and “preference” criteria were used. For example, areas where bird concentrations might interfere with civilian and military aircraft got poor ratings while land near the aqueduct with

groundwater at a reasonable depth was deemed highly desirable. Consideration was also given to the presence of clay, possible contamination due to run-off; environmental permitting requirements, foreseeable future land use, the habitat of protected species, the interference of Highway 14, existing wells, etc.

The two methods of returning water to the aquifer were compared and contrasted – percolation ponds and injection wells – and both would have to be investigated more fully before a final decision could be made.

In the past two decades, underground water banking has become increasingly more commonplace throughout California. It is the kind of practice that lends itself to a wide array of coordinated water management efforts and is therefore an important tool in water stewardship.

If you would like to learn more about this subject, please contact Water District offices at 384-5511. Your Indian Wells Valley Water District is here to serve you.