

NEWS

Hon. Congressman

JERRY LEWIS40th District, California

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**LEWIS URGES METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT
TO REJECT CADIZ GROUNDWATER SUPPLY PLAN**

WASHINGTON – Congressman Jerry Lewis on Friday urged the Metropolitan Water District to reject a plan to tap into a Mojave Desert groundwater basin to provide a new source of water for millions of Southern Californians. Lewis sent a letter to the district's directors following the positive Record of Decision released by the Bureau of Land Management for the Cadiz Groundwater Storage and Dry-Year Supply Program.

"I am convinced that this plan endangers the water supply for Mojave Desert residents and the Mojave National Preserve – and I believe it may not be in the best interest of MWD's customers to be dependent on desert groundwater," Lewis said. "The MWD will ultimately be responsible for the success or failure of this project, and I have urged them to reject it as a bad plan and bad precedent."

Lewis said he understands the need to find alternative sources of water for Southern California, and would consider the Cadiz proposal if it was simply a plan to store excess water from the Colorado River Aqueduct in the groundwater basin during wet years, and withdraw the same amount of water during dry spells.

However, the plan also gives Cadiz the right to sell water from its Mojave Desert basin to MWD, and replenish that groundwater through natural recharge – meaning the extremely limited desert rainfall, Lewis said. Every agency involved admits that there is no reliable science on which to predict how long that recharge will take, and it could take decades to prove the accuracy of any prediction, he said.

"The Interior Department claims they have a monitoring and management plan that protects the water needs of the desert, but the simple truth is that no one has compiled ample evidence of desert hydrology to implement this plan," he said. "A spring could show signs of reduced flow one day – and be entirely dry the next. Many have predicted that by the time the monitoring system shows trouble, it will already be too late to prevent serious problems."

The groundwater management plan allows some oversight of the project by the BLM and San Bernardino County. But it is clear that the MWD has the primary responsibility to ensure that this desert groundwater basin is not seriously overdrafted to supply the never-ending needs of Southern California, Lewis said.