

NATIVE AMERICAN LAND CONSERVANCY

STATEMENT OF OPPOSITION TO THE CADIZ WATER CONSERVATION RECOVERY AND STORAGE PROJECT

As the President of the Native American Land Conservancy (NALC), I issue this statement to express our organization's opposition to the Cadiz Water Conservation Recovery and Storage Project. For over a decade, the Cadiz Project has posed an unacceptable threat to the Mojave Desert, its wildlife, its water, and its immense cultural significance for the peoples who have called the Southern California desert home since time immemorial.

Founded in 1998, the NALC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization focusing on the traditional territory of tribes in present day Southern California. The NALC restores sacred sites and provides educational programming for Native American youth and the general public. Our organization works to protect numerous cultural sites within the California desert, most notably, the 2,560 acres of private land in San Bernardino County known as the Old Woman Mountains Preserve, which falls within the boundaries of the Mojave Trails National Monument. The NALC acquired the Preserve in 2002, with the intent of protecting and preserving this traditional tribal use area, as well as providing cultural continuity to promote cross-cultural understanding of the value and significance of Native American sacred lands.

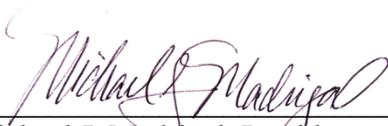
This site is one of many sacred landscapes within the Old Woman Mountains, a mountain range 15 miles wide east to west at its widest point and 25 miles in length from north to south. The Old Woman Mountains receive very little precipitation, with just 4-10 inches of rain falling in a normal year. The region is a sacred landscape punctuated by landmarks held in reverence by the Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, Mojave, Serrano, and Southern Paiute peoples.

Today, the Old Woman Mountains are accessible by four wheel drive or an extremely long and arduous wilderness hike. They are filled with beautiful canyons, rocky spires, sacred sites and special seeps and springs that give sustenance to many animals including the red-spotted toad, chuckwalla, northern Mohave rattlesnake (Mohave green), Nelson's bighorn sheep, kit foxes, bobcats, and kangaroo rats, bats and many migrating and resident bird species, including the rare Elf Owl. The seeps, springs, and water sources found in the mountains and low desert represent a

connected landscape found in story, song, and ritual through the Salt Song Trail of the Chemehuevi and southern Paiute Tribes.

For our organization and area tribes, the Cadiz Project is not about water conservation. Cadiz Inc.'s aggressive pumping would remove an average of 50,000 acre feet over a 50 year period totaling between 1 and 2 million acre feet over the life span of the project. While the company claims that there will be no impacts to seeps, springs or other sensitive receptors, we disagree. The National Park Service states that some of the Old Woman Wilderness and Mojave National Preserve springs are likely connected to the aquifer subject to Cadiz extraction. Other independent hydrologists point out that the impacts of the Project's groundwater mining are uncertain. Irreparable damage to the waters known for millennia by area tribes could result.

The NALC expresses its full opposition to the Cadiz Project and commits its full effort to protecting tribal culture and preserving sacred lands. We welcome the new scientific and peer-reviewed study published in the Journal for Environmental Forensics as it highlights the true nature of the springs in the Cadiz area, and supports what our organization has known all along, that this project will cause irreversible harm. Today, just as they did hundreds of years ago, tribal people depend on the resources of the area- its wildlife, plants and water for their cultural survival. Our organization seeks to protect this legacy for tribal youth and future generations and well as the public at large. We strongly urge meaningful government-to-government consultation with all impacted tribal communities and call on our state and federal agencies to protect these lands.



Michael J. Madrigal, President
Native American Land Conservancy