



**AGENDA
 STAFF REPORT**

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Agenda Number: I
File ID: 000

Section Name: ACTION CALENDAR
Project ID:

MEETING DATE: November 14, 2023

SUBJECT: Direct the General Manager to sign and send a CVWD position letter regarding the proposed Chuckwalla National Monument.

TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FROM: SERVICE-ADMINISTRATION, SCOTT BURRITT

**GENERAL MANAGER
 RECOMMENDATION:**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board provide direction to the General Manager to sign and send a position letter regarding the proposed Chuckwalla National Monument to the US Bureau of Land Management/Department of Interior, Congressman Ken Calvert, Congressman Raul Ruiz, Senator Alex Padilla, and Senator Laphonza Butler, among others.

BUDGET IMPACT:

N/A

PROCUREMENT METHOD:

N/A

If other, please explain: .

BACKGROUND

An area becomes a national monument by an act of Congress or a Presidential Declaration through the Antiquities Act. The US Bureau of Land Management (BLM), part of the Department of Interior, will recommend the final map to the Interior Secretary and then the White House; however, stakeholders can engage and provide feedback throughout the process.

CVWD staff has been working with local advocates, Protect CA Desert, on the proposed Chuckwalla National Monument (Monument) for over a year. During that time, staff expressed CVWD's desire to exclude its service area from the Monument area. Attachment 1 is a document that Protect CA Deserts prepared in March 2023 for CVWD, containing some key facts and frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the Monument.

In September 2023, Congressman Ruiz launched a formal initiative for the Monument. BLM released a draft map (Attachment 2) showing the proposed boundary of the Monument. For reference, CVWD staff overlaid its service boundary and training dikes on the draft map (Attachment 3).

According to the draft map, some lands within the CVWD service area overlapped with the proposed Monument. The latest draft map shapefiles we received from BLM show that the Coachella Canal and the training dikes are no longer immediately within the proposed Monument. However, the latest draft still overlaps with CVWD's service area in Mecca Hills. CVWD needs full access and authority to operate, maintain, and protect existing facilities as well as construct new facilities within CVWD's spheres of responsibility. Based on Board direction, staff identified two main areas of concern before the Board would support the Monument, including:

1. The Coachella Canal and training dikes should be excluded from the Monument, along with a 500-foot buffer zone around them. The Canal is a vital source of water for the Coachella Valley, delivering Colorado River water to various users. The training dikes prevent flooding and erosion along the Canal. CVWD is contracted with the US Bureau of Reclamation to manage the Canal as far as Yuma, AZ.

2. CVWD's service area should not be in the proposed Monument, especially in and below the Mecca Hills Wilderness area. The Box Canyon Road corridor is not a wilderness area currently. These areas are within CVWD's service area and are subject to significant stormwater runoff and seismic activity due to the San Andreas fault crossing through them. CVWD needs the flexibility to work with BLM to fulfill its mission of providing regional stormwater protection. CVWD also needs to respond quickly to any emergencies or disasters that occur in these areas.

Attachment 4 and 5 are maps that show CVWD's recommended boundary adjustments and boundary comparisons that will be sent with CVWD's position letter. These adjustments are necessary to preserve CVWD's mission of providing reliable water supplies and regional stormwater protection.

CVWD's Government Affairs team will keep working and engaging with the various offices and departments.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION:

N/A

DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S)/OBJECTIVES(S):

N/A

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

This is not a project as defined by CEQA; therefore, approval does not require any CEQA action.

PUBLIC NOTICE REQUIRED

N/A

LEGAL REVIEW

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

- Att 1 – Protect CA Deserts Fact Sheet – March 2023
- Att 2 – BLM Draft Map
- Att 3 – BLM Map with CVWD Boundary & Facilities
- Att 4 – CVWD Comparison Boundary Map
- Att 5 – CVWD Recommended Boundary Map
- Att 6 – Draft letter for Congressman Calvert & Ruiz
- Att 7 – Draft letter for Senators Padilla & Butler
- Att 8 – Draft letter for Interior and CEQ

