



COACHELLA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

Established in 1918 as a public agency

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Jim Barrett

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER
Robert Cheng

CLERK OF THE BOARD
Sylvia Bermudez

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER
Dan Charlton

November 2, 2023

Secretary Deb Haaland
Department of the Interior
100 Ohio Drive SW
Washington, D.C. 20242

Chairwoman Brenda Mallory
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place
Washington, D.C. 20006

Re: Boundaries of Proposed Chuckwalla National Monument and the Coachella Valley's Water Reliability

Dear Secretary Haaland and Chairwoman Mallory:

For more than 100 years, Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) has been working to protect the water resources that are vital to a thriving Coachella Valley. CVWD is the agency responsible for reliably delivering irrigation and drinking water, collecting and recycling wastewater, providing regional stormwater protection, replenishing and protecting the groundwater basin, and promoting water conservation for the Coachella Valley. CVWD is also the steward of the 123-mile Coachella Canal, which provides Colorado River water that is vital for the region's agriculture, economy, and replenishment of our groundwater basin.

I am writing to express CVWD's position on the proposed boundaries for a Chuckwalla National Monument, which have the potential to interfere with CVWD's ability to protect and maintain the Coachella Canal and provide reliable water supply and stormwater protection in CVWD's service area. 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. For over a year, CVWD has consistently reiterated the following requests to advocates for the monument:

1) The proposed boundaries must be aligned so that neither the Coachella Canal nor the training dikes that protect it from stormwater are included within the monument's boundaries. The boundaries should allow a 500-foot buffer zone around the Coachella Canal and training dikes to allow for maintenance, protection, and repairs. In early September 2023, a 1,000-year monsoonal rain event washed out portions of the Coachella Canal, requiring emergency repairs to resume vital water deliveries, and demonstrating the need to maintain the training dikes that protect it from stormwater. Climate change is projected to increase the need for stormwater protection, emergency repairs and maintenance for the Canal and the Valley's water infrastructure in the coming years and decades.

2) The proposed boundaries should be adjusted so that CVWD's service area that includes Mecca Hills is not included within the monument. CVWD is charged with providing stormwater protection in and below the portion of Mecca Hills that is covered by CVWD's service area. As the climate changes, what used to be 100-year or 1000-year storm events are occurring with much higher frequency, and CVWD needs the ability to work with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to fulfill its mission in and below the non-wilderness areas of Box Canyon and Painted Canyon. This portion of CVWD's service area is also crossed by the San Andreas fault, and CVWD needs the flexibility to work with BLM to respond to any seismic changes to the topography, hydrology, and infrastructure in the area in the coming years and decades.

Attached is a map that depicts the boundary adjustments that CVWD believes are necessary to preserve our mission of providing reliable water supplies and stormwater protection for the region.

CVWD appreciates your partnership in strengthening the region's water reliability and climate resilience, and we wish to continue our dialogue about adjustments to the proposed boundaries for a Chuckwalla Monument that are needed to accommodate this vital mission.

Sincerely,

J. M. Barrett
General Manager

CC:

Camille Calimlim Touton, Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation

Michael Brain, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Water and Science

Laura Daniel Davis, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals
Management

Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management