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**Federal Legislation Helps Fund Pipeline Connection of
Indian Wells Valley to State Water Project**

Project will ensure future water supply for Ridgecrest, U.S. Naval Station and surrounding area

RIDGECREST, Calif. (January 8, 2025) — The recent approval of the federal [Water Resources Development Act of 2024](#) (WRDA) represents a major milestone in the long-running effort to ensure a consistent supply of water for residents and businesses in Kern County’s Indian Wells Valley.

The bill, which President Biden signed on January 5, 2025, includes authorization of an initial \$50 million for water and water supply infrastructure within the Indian Wells Valley. Specifically, it empowers the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to construct an interconnection pipeline linking the Valley groundwater basin to the California State Water Project. (The State Water Project, one of the world’s largest public water and power utilities, provides drinking water for more than 27 million people in addition to generating hydroelectric power.)

“This decision will help ensure an auspicious future for the Indian Wells Valley,” said Scott Hayman, chair of Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority. “Our community — including Ridgecrest residents, farms, businesses and the U.S. Navy — would severely struggle without a steady, reliable source of water. This legislation plays an essential role in enabling our region to grow and the naval base to expand as needed. Moreover, a significant portion of the costs associated with securing this water will be provided by the federal government, rather than borne solely by local residents and businesses.”

The WRDA supports key elements of California’s groundwater sustainability efforts. Once constructed, the pipeline will provide imported water supplies to the region, creating water resiliency and supporting the mission of the U.S. Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake. The pipeline is one of the state's most ambitious groundwater sustainability projects, and is supported by the federal government, the state of California, Kern County, Inyo County, San Bernardino County and the city of Ridgecrest.

Hayman noted that groundwater is the sole source of water for the Indian Wells Valley. Unfortunately, decades of unchecked withdrawals from the basin led to steadily declining groundwater levels, which in return lowered the groundwater table. This phenomenon, called "overdraft," can degrade water quality, cause severe land subsidence and trigger future water shortages. The state Department of Water Resources ultimately determined that the Indian Wells Valley Basin was “critically over drafted.”

In 2014, the California Legislature passed the [Sustainable Groundwater Management Act](#) to address declining groundwater supplies state-wide. Among other actions, this law prompted the creation of agencies such as Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority (IWVGA) to locally manage precious groundwater supplies.

The IWVGA conducted in-depth studies to identify solutions to prevent a long-term collapse in the local water supply; the most viable and cost-effective option was to import water from outside the region by connecting to the State Water Project. The passage of the WRDA is a major step forward in the IWVGA’s effort to secure a long-term source of supply.

While the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will oversee actual construction of the project, the IWVGA has already commenced project planning and environmental permitting and has completed some 60% of the necessary engineering and design plans. It also has acquired a considerable portion of the necessary construction rights-of-way.

Other planning elements (including an Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report) are expected to be concluded by early-to-mid 2026, with construction to follow.

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The Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority (IWVGA) is the groundwater sustainability agency for the critically over drafted Indian Wells Valley groundwater basin. The basin spans portions of Kern, Inyo, and San Bernardino Counties. It is home to the City of Ridgecrest and the U.S. Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, a critical low-flight, weapons development, and testing facility. The groundwater basin serves approximately 38,000 residents.

IWVGA is a joint powers authority that includes representatives from Kern County, the City of Ridgecrest, Inyo County, San Bernardino County, and the Indian Wells Valley Water District. Two federal agencies, the United States Navy and the Bureau of Land Management, are also represented as ex-officio members of the IWVGA Board.

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