



For Immediate Release

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Searles Valley Minerals Withdraws Petition for Injunction of Exorbitant Groundwater Replenishment Fee to Allow Further Discussions

Company will continue to fight the fee, which threatens to put Searles' longtime employees out of a job and cut-off affordable water supply to Trona residents

Trona, CA — Searles Valley Minerals, Inc. (Searles) announced Thursday it will withdraw its request for an injunction against enforcement of an excessive \$2,130 per acre-foot Replenishment Fee imposed by the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority (Authority), which threatens the viability of the business and the livelihoods of and water supply to community residents. The decision to withdraw the petition in Orange County Superior Court was made to allow for further discussions and cooperation with the Authority on the issue of supplying water to Searles Domestic Water Company, a subsidiary of Searles that serves 720 households in the disadvantaged community of Trona.

The decision comes a week after the Authority conducted a second public hearing to determine whether its threat of shutting off Searles water supply for nonpayment of the Replenishment Fee would also negatively impact the residents of Trona, who rely on Searles Domestic Water Company for their domestic water. After gathering further information and consultation with Searles, the Authority is expected to make a decision by July 1.

“We sincerely hope that the Authority comes to understand that Searles cannot physically operate its system to supply only Searles Domestic Water Company,” said **Burnell Blanchard, Vice President of Operations for Searles**. “However, if that does not happen, Searles will continue fighting the Authority’s efforts to cut off its water supply as well as oppose the exorbitant Replenishment Fee. We have been an economic bedrock of this community for more than 140 years, surviving two World Wars, the Great Depression, earthquakes, a global pandemic and the ups and downs of the economy. We refuse to allow this Fee to drain our resources and push us out of business.”

Searles had sought to prevent the Authority from pursuing the enforcement of a \$2,130 per acre foot “Replenishment Fee,” which, if paid, would cause Searles to suffer devastating and irreparable harm, including permanent business line closures and the layoff of more than 700 employees. Searles has argued that the Replenishment Fee is unlawful and unenforceable due to the Authority’s failure to



comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, established water law principles and Proposition 218.

A [‘Save Searles’](#) campaign has been in place for several months, representing a coalition of Searles’ employees and their families as well as local residents and businesses from the historic town of Trona and nearby City of Ridgecrest. As people have learned more about the Authority’s proposed actions, the [‘Save Searles’](#) campaign has grown.

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