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Borrego Water Coalition – Synopsis of Progress

BORREGO SPRINGS, CA (July 15, 2013): On November 29, 2012 representatives of many of the primary groundwater users and producers in the Borrego Valley gathered around a single table for the first time in recent history to discuss the future of the Borrego Valley Groundwater Basin (Basin). Invited by staff members from California Department of Water Resources (DWR), the attendees of this inaugural meeting came from different backgrounds with different groundwater uses, but all came together in the interest of addressing the significant issues facing the Basin. This initial meeting was the impetus for what was to become the Borrego Water Coalition.

The formation of the Borrego Water Coalition (BWC) is an important milestone. Its members include representatives from agriculture, recreation, California State Parks, schools, resorts, business and the Borrego Water District. Initially, the group set aside their individual interests and unanimously agreed that the historic practice of overdrafting was the major issue facing the Valley. It has resulted in a persistent decline of groundwater levels in the Basin. If continued, overdrafting could result in deleterious impacts to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the loss of agricultural productivity in the Valley, a reduction of recreational alternatives, the loss of economic growth opportunities, collapse of real estate values, and ultimately, the loss of Borrego's vibrant community.

With a purpose in hand, BWC members agreed to meet monthly to work towards developing options for a technically feasible solution to overdrafting that would be amenable to the community. Within a few meetings, BWC developed and all members signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) committing to *"...establishing a collaborative, inclusive, transparent and robust planning process for managing the Borrego Valley groundwater basin..."*. With its mission established in an MOU, the BWC's goals were introduced to the community at the Water District's annual Town Hall meeting in March 2013, and thereafter, through the local press and a public website.

As part of its commitment to the Borrego Valley, DWR recently awarded the BWC a contract for Facilitation Services to assist in meeting its planning goals. Shortly thereafter, representatives from the University of California, Irvine (UCI) Steele/Burnand Anza-Borrego Desert Research Center approached the BWC offering to share its resources and assist the BWC in seeking a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to provide funding to update the Borrego Water District's 2002 Groundwater Management Plan (GWMP). It has also offered the assistance of a multi-disciplinary academic team to address technical issues and other items identified by the BWC.

For more information on BWC's activities, meeting minutes, press releases and other articles and documents, visit www.BorregoWaterCoalition.com.

The Borrego Water Coalition is an exciting coming together of this community for a common goal: "Water for the future!"

The Borrego Springs Chamber of Commerce is a 501(c)(6) mutual benefit membership nonprofit organization that has been serving the community of Borrego Springs since 1950. The Chamber provides leadership and acts as a catalyst in creating a vibrant economic environment that supports business growth and attracts people to visit and live in Borrego Springs. For more information, contact Linda Haddock, Executive Director, 760.767.5555, LHaddock@BSCVB.com, www.BSCVB.com.

The Borrego Water District provides water and sewer service to Borrego Springs. The mission of the Borrego Water District is to provide quality water and sewer service in an efficient, cost effective manner while providing a high level of customer satisfaction. For more information contact Jerry Rolwing, General Manager, 760.767.5806, Jerry@BorregoWD.org, www.BorregoWD.org.

The State of California Department of Water Resources is responsible for managing and protecting California's water. DWR works with other agencies to benefit the state's people, and to protect, restore and enhance the natural and human environments. For more in information contact Laura Peters, P.E., Sr. Engineer, Water Resources, IRWM Regional Planning Branch, Regional Partnerships Section, 916.653.7912, Laura.Peters@water.ca.gov, www.water.ca.gov.

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