

SVM praises court ruling as positive outcome for the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin

News Release
Jul 29, 2025

						
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Searles Valley Minerals is pleased with the decision of Orange County Superior Court confirming that the Navy’s federal reserved water right within the Indian Wells Valley groundwater basin is limited to 2,008 acre-feet per year. This provides the Navy all of its ongoing water use plus some additional water for future growth.

The court calculated this amount by adding the Navy’s most recent 10-year average annual water usage of 1,536 acre-feet, which amounts are for test, target area, and wildfire management. The court then allocated water for potential future weapons programs and additional personnel, to reach the total amount of 2,008 acre-feet per year.

This decision brings certainty and reasonableness to the Navy’s water right in the basin while respecting and ensuring the Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake has the necessary resources to carry out its mission effectively now and in the future.

The 2,008 acre-feet is far less than the 6,350 AFY that the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority allocated to the Navy. The discrepancy is because the GA incorrectly allocated water to the Navy that is currently being pumped by the Indian Wells Valley Water District to serve Navy personnel living off base. Because the GA’s Groundwater Sustainability Plan and fees are based on its incorrect conclusion that the Navy had a right to 6,350 acre-feet of water, the validity of the GSP and fees are now seriously in question.

Other stakeholders in the basin will now have more access to the water they need to support their communities and operations. The decision also reaffirms the importance of evidence-based decision making, transparency, and collaboration in water management decisions.

We remain committed to working together to protect our local water supply to ensure that it is available for everyone who depends on it. This decision marks another major step towards achieving that goal.

