

Stantec to Lead Engineering of \$800M Mojave Groundwater Bank Project

By Angela Shah



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Photo courtesy Cadiz

March 19, 2025

Design and engineering firm Stantec will serve as owner's engineer of the \$800-million Mojave Groundwater Bank project, designed to bring affordable water supplies to desert communities in California and Arizona.

Cadiz, the private company leading the project, announced the deal in late February, saying in a [statement](#) that Stantec will oversee design, development and construction of the project that, once completed, is expected to provide 1 million acre-feet of underground storage and 2.5 million acre-feet of new water supply.

The Mojave Groundwater Bank is an aquifer system holding as much as 50 million acre-feet of water, roughly the capacity of Lake Mead and Lake Powell combined, the companies stated. The project includes linking the reservoir to a 350-mile pipeline network connecting to both the Colorado River and California aqueducts, making it the largest new water infrastructure project in the Southwest, Cadiz says.

“Water supply variability resulting from climate change threatens long-term water security throughout the western U.S., and the water delivery system must be updated and expanded to safely and reliably meet the needs of our communities,” John Hanula, Stantec senior vice president, said in a company [statement](#).

Under the agreement, Stantec will assist in selecting the project’s contractor under a construction management-at-risk delivery model. Cadiz did not provide an estimated date for completion, but stated that Stantec is expected to "bring the project online on an accelerated construction timeline."

The project represents a significant addition to the 2,000-sq-mi watershed in the eastern Mojave Desert, located about 40 miles north of the Colorado River Aqueduct and 220 miles east of California State Water Project facilities. The aquifer is naturally recharged by 1,000 years of rain and snowmelt from surrounding high-desert mountains. The project is designed to capture water otherwise lost to evaporation and store it for redistribution to surrounding communities in the Mojave River Basin, Colorado River Basin and California’s Inland Empire.

Also, the Groundwater Bank project will mark the first large-scale water infrastructure project to be located on Native American tribal lands. In late 2024 Cadiz had announced a partnership with the tribes to construct, own and operate the project.

Typically, tribes have advocated for water rights through initiatives with federal or state governments, which would then oversee and work with private partners in construction of the necessary infrastructure. In this deal, the Native American communities in the area opted to be equity partners and operators of the venture, creating a collaboration model that could reshape how water resources are managed in the future.

Cadiz also announced the addition of a lead investor, a public company it did not name, that has committed as much as \$175 million in capital in the Mojave Groundwater Storage Co., an LLC newly established by Cadiz to construct, own and operate the groundwater banking project. In addition to that funding, the Lytton Rancheria of California tribe is also an investor and has agreed to invest as much as \$50 million in the project.

“Cadiz’s partnership approach to developing this groundwater bank puts tribal communities at the forefront of water delivery in the region, ensuring that decisions about the region’s water supply will be guided by those with deep connections to the land,” David Sickey, former chairman of the Coshatta Tribe and currently a senior advisor for energy and water projects at Cadiz, wrote in a December op-ed column in The Desert Sun newspaper.

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