

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** August 1, 2022

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## **Niagara Bottling Request Tabled Indefinitely**

**Los Lunas, NM:** Last Thursday, July 28th, the Los Lunas Village Council voted to “table indefinitely” the Niagara Bottling corporation's request to increase their water draw from the Albuquerque Basin aquifer from 285 acre-feet/year (92+ million gallons/yr) to 700 acre-feet/year (228+ million gallons/yr).

While Valencia Water Watchers is cautiously optimistic about Niagara’s request being indefinitely tabled at this meeting, we remain watchful. The community should have the opportunity to review the Water Rights report that the Village of Los Lunas is waiting on, and should be actively involved in major decisions such as these that will impact the Albuquerque Basin aquifer for generations to come.

***At a time when New Mexico is in a severe drought and the aquifer is not being recharged with surface water, we need elected officials to be good stewards of our most precious and finite resource: Our water.***

This is the third time in five weeks that the Los Lunas Village Council has tabled this agenda item.

**On June 23, 2022,** the Niagara expansion was item #1 on the Los Lunas Village Council Agenda. Valencia Water Watchers (VWW) rallied community opposition to Niagara’s request and 75 people showed up to express their opposition to the expansion, many holding “NO to Niagara” flyers. The Council chambers were filled, with dozens of community members spilling over into the overflow area outside the chambers. That evening, the Village Council tabled the agenda item to July 14th, because a report from the Village’s “water rights experts” was missing. After the item was tabled, Mayor Griego was not going to permit the community members to make public comments, but local attorney Del Conroy persuaded the Mayor to allow commentary from those in the audience.

**On July 14th,** the Niagara expansion was on the Village Council agenda, but it was tabled again (to July 28th) because the Water Rights Experts’ report was still missing. Then, **on July 28th,** the Village Council tabled Niagara’s request “indefinitely.”

Faced with Niagara’s renewed request for more water (to 228 million gallons/year), VWW has collected 2,981 signatures on a petition launched in mid-June, asking the Village of Los Lunas Councilors to Vote NO on Niagara’s request for more water. In addition, VWW is conducting an ongoing online survey targeting the Valencia County community.

Local opposition to Niagara’s requests is overwhelming. From the ongoing survey:

- 79.9% report being Very Dissatisfied with Niagara Bottling’s operation in Los Lunas,
- 76% are Extremely Worried about Niagara’s current use of local water (and another 16.2% are Very Worried), while

- 93.5% Strongly Oppose Niagara's request for more water (and another 3.9% Oppose the request)

Valencia County residents are not the only ones who oppose Niagara's taking of community water. In 2016, people in Bloomfield, CN, also protested the secretive water deal that Niagara negotiated with their city leaders and water authority. And in June, 2022, the people of Eau Claire, WI, rallied against Niagara coming into their community.

Valencia Water Watchers formed in January, 2020, when Niagara first gave notice of their intent to request more water from the Village Council. In late January, 2021, after a one-year delay, Niagara submitted a request for more water – to 650 a-f/year. Valencia Water Watchers organized a rally, started a petition that garnered over 3,000 signatures, and got the press to cover the February 9, 2021 rally. Niagara ended up withdrawing their request on February 10th, one day before the scheduled Village Council meeting.

***Valencia Water Watchers continues to remain diligent in protecting water for the people of Valencia County, and beyond.***

**About Valencia Water Watchers (VWW):** Valencia Water Watchers is a non-political, non-partisan grassroots coalition of local residents advocating for water conservation to ensure a sustainable and equitable future for generations to come. We advocate, promote, and educate about water issues with our community.

## References

Bloomfield, Connecticut:

[https://foodandwaterwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/fs\\_1605\\_niagara-boling-web.pdf](https://foodandwaterwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/fs_1605_niagara-boling-web.pdf)

Eau Claire, Wisconsin:

<https://www.weau.com/2022/06/14/community-members-rally-against-proposed-eau-claire-water-boling-facility/>