



\$100,000 federal grant to fund water tests

EPA: The federal award will allow a local Inland tribe to monitor drinking-water pollution.

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By JENNIFER BOWLES / The Press-Enterprise

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced Tuesday it awarded an impoverished Inland Indian tribe \$100,000 to study groundwater used for drinking at its reservation near Salton Sea.

The grant will help the Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians and the owners of four trailer parks on the reservation conduct regular testing of the groundwater for harmful contaminants, EPA officials said.

"Any source of water, you want to make sure it complies with federal standards," said Linda Reeves, EPA project manager.

Contaminated water easily transmits illnesses and can seriously affect the elderly, pregnant women and infants, according to the EPA.

The grant was announced as EPA officials and 100 tribes gather today in Laughlin, Nev., to discuss tribal environmental concerns. The meeting is sponsored by the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe.

"The better the environment we offer our people now, the healthier they'll be tomorrow," Faith Morreo, the Torres Martinez's vice chairwoman, said in a statement.

The money will also help fund studies of the wastewater system at the reservation and help determine infrastructure needs for the next 20 years, the EPA said.

The announcement comes on the heels of EPA orders last fall to owners of four trailer parks on the reservation to test the water they supply to more than 2,000 residents. Since then, testing has begun for contaminants, including coliform, nitrate, lead and copper, but none have been found so far, said Everett Pringle, an EPA enforcement officer.

The grant is part of the EPA's tribal border infrastructure program for tribes within 62 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border.