

Abigail C. Johnson

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December 1, 2011

Jason King, P.E., State Engineer  
Nevada Division of Water Resources  
901 S. Stewart St., Suite 2002  
Carson City, NV 89701

STATE ENGINEER  
2011 DEC -2 PM 3:35  
RECEIVED

RE: Comments on SNWA applications in Spring, Cave, Dry Lake, and Delamar Valleys

Dear Mr. King,

Thank you to you and your staff for your attention and courtesy to all parties during the grueling six weeks of hearings this fall on Southern Nevada Water Authority's applications in Spring, Cave, Dry Lake and Delamar Valleys.

As a protestant in Spring Valley since 1989 and a property owner and part time resident of Baker in Snake Valley, down gradient of Spring Valley, a board member of Great Basin Water Network, and as a Nevadan, I have the following comments.

1. Process: During the hearing, I believe that the Great Basin Water Network case was not fully represented or recognized for the number of individual protestants and for the number of protestants who signed on with GBWN. The sign-on was done in part to expedite the proceeding at the suggestion of the staff of your office. I believe that objective was achieved, but I also think that people who did sign on should have at least had their names read into the record rather than admitted by motion. It made it appear that GBWN was a sole entity rather than the representative of a massive number of families and individuals directly affected by the applications.
2. Public comment day: Thank you for scheduling public comment day and for being committed to ensuring, with the financial support of Great Basin Water Network and others, that there were remote locations. I staffed the Ely site and know

that if we had been able to secure a location in Baker, you would have heard from others who were unable to travel to Ely or to leave their businesses for the day to make the journey to be heard.

3. Public interest: I am attaching an article that appeared in Ruralite, the magazine for members of the Mt Wheeler Electric Cooperative. It documents the EskDale Christmas tradition of celebrating the season with a banquet to raise money to support the music programs and choir at EskDale High School. When it is argued that Spring and Snake Valleys have no future, please consider that the future is being nurtured by EskDale high school (designated by the State of Utah as a public high school, serving both Nevada and Utah students). I believe that it is possible for both rural Nevada and southern Nevada to survive and thrive. Draining Spring and Snake Valleys to "save" the faltering economic engine of Nevada is not in the public interest, in rural Nevada or in Las Vegas.
4. Financial feasibility: You must consider the exorbitant cost of the project and deem it to be infeasible. It equals Boston's Big Dig, and rivals the cost of the space program. How can the city with one of the worst economies in the United State afford this project? I believe that ultimately, Nevada taxpayers will have to bail out this project. You heard evidence about the multi-million dollar costs of dust mitigation in the Owens Valley. How can SNWA customers afford those costs? Why create another Owens Valley when we can instead learn from the mistakes that were made.
5. Mitigation is an empty promise: I am also attaching a thoughtful and compelling editorial from the Deseret News 11/25/11 concerning the decision that you face. "The proposed transfusion of one region's lifeblood to another is predicated on the gamble that the effects on the health of the donor will be gentler....it is a wager in which the stakes are simply too high." We heard in days of testimony that the impacts of pumping as much groundwater as SNWA wants will be severe. I have read the BLM's Draft EIS which confirms this. Their EIS also makes it clear that mitigation measures will not work. The severity and duration of the pumping render mitigation just an empty promise from this generation to the next.
6. Require an open 3M process: At the heart of the mitigation mess are the stipulated agreements which have enabled the federal agencies and SNWA to operate secretly. What do they have to hide? I believe you have both the authority and the obligation to require all technical panels, monitoring and mitigation committees to operate under Nevada's Open Meeting Law. For example, it is wrong that the county of

origin (White Pine) is not allowed to participate in the monitoring and mitigation process under the current stipulated agreement for Spring Valley. In order for them to participate, they would have to give up their protests. That is not fair, and I believe that you have the power to stop this feudalistic approach to land and water management. It doesn't mean that parties can't settle, but the State Engineer, in accepting a role in those agreements, must require an open process. I urge you, for the short term and the long haul to set Open Government precedents now. I completely agree with Mr. Echohawk's closing remarks in that regard, and by leaving out the County, the tribes and the public, the real stewards of the land are excluded. I urge you to take action to ensure that backroom deals do not become a way of life for this multi-generational project.

7. Stop the project: I believe that you have been presented with the evidence that you need to stop this project. Agreeing to give SNWA the water they have requested will destroy some of the best parts of Nevada and displace the people who live there. This should not be an "either or" proposition. Evidence was presented that current technology has offered options that would be more sustainable in the long run for SNWA. The proposed project is the world's most expensive Band-Aid. \$15 billion is too much for a temporary fix.

I urge you to deny the applications, and thank you for considering my point of view.

Sincerely,



Abigail C. Johnson

# A Christmas Tradition

*EskDale High School banquet raises money for student travels*

By Sharon Conrad

EskDale High School is a tiny school in Utah's western desert, eight miles from the Nevada border. Don't let the small size fool you, however EskDale's reputation for musical excellence is well-known throughout Utah—as is its music teacher, Lois Faber.

Last year, EskDale's small choir—which involves every student in the high school and junior high—toured Washington, D.C.. The group experienced the rich history of the nation's capital and performed at prominent and historic locations.

The trip was paid for by their own fundraising and the continuous support from the communities of EskDale, Baker and Garrison.

One of the school's main fundraising events is the annual Christmas Banquet. Beginning in 1994 as a means of raising money for a choir trip, the banquet has become a favored tradition. Many travel from throughout Utah and Nevada to attend, including numerous alumni who cherish the banquets among their favorite high school memories.

The order of events at each banquet is similar. The orchestra begins at 6:30 p.m. (MST) playing Christmas music, both traditional and contemporary.



Above, students performed "It's a Wonderful Life" at last year's Christmas Banquet.

## **EskDale High School Christmas Banquet**

December 15, 16, 6:30 p.m.  
Call (435) 855-2148 for reservations. Tickers are \$20 and includes the meal.

The choral program featuring a range of choral numbers, small ensembles and solo performances begins at 7 p.m., as the appetizer is served. Then the stage is set for the drama portion of the evening, and dessert is served.

By the end of the night, each student has been involved in at least one of the

presentations.

Photos by Janille Baker

presentations.

Last year's staging of "It's a Wonderful Life" was well received. This year's production is "Gifts for Madge and Guy," an entertaining variation of the classic O'Henry story "Gifts of the Magi." ■

*This year's Christmas Banquet will be Thursday, December 15 and Friday, December 16. For more information, or to make reservations, call EskDale High School at (435) 855-2148.*



Right, Annie Iverson and Malcolm Wright perform during the show.

Photo Tips from David LaBelle

## Body Language: From the Back

I remember sitting unnoticed in the corner of a classroom watching two children work on a science project. Backs to me, their body language communicated their joyful collaboration.

I waited, camera ready, for other children in the foreground to move out of the frame and allow me a clean composition. But just as the foreground children moved out of the frame, the teacher saw me and barked at the children, "Turn around, he wants to take your picture."

The busy room grew silent and every head turned to look at me, like startled chickens.

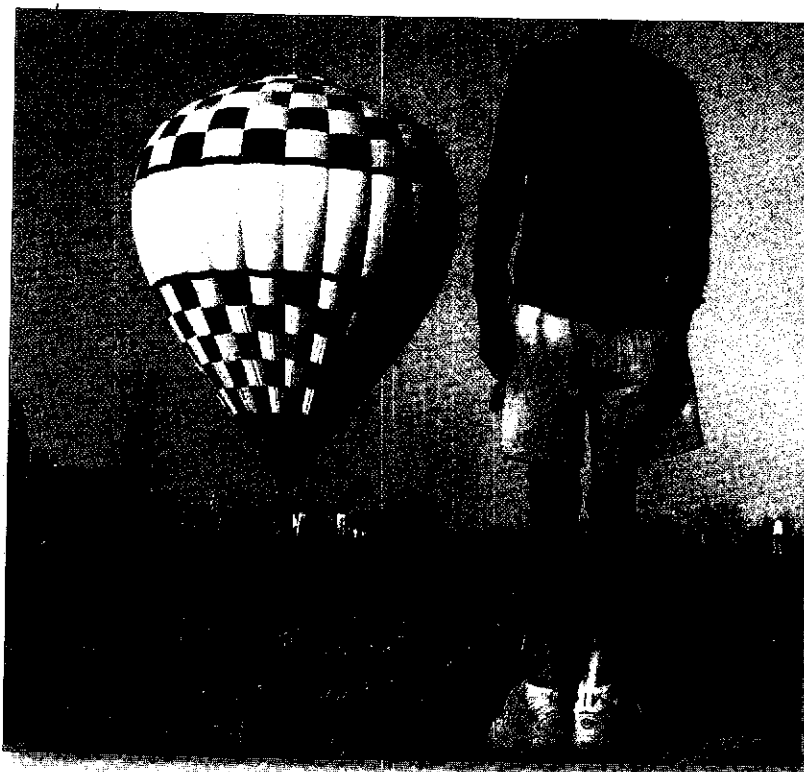
Arghhh! I missed the shot; the fleeting moment gone forever, snatched away by a well-meaning third-grade teacher.

It wasn't the first time, nor will it be the last time, a "helpful" person intervenes and ruins the "moment," thinking they are doing me a favor.

It is all part of the challenge of shooting "real," candid moments.



David LaBelle is an internationally known photographer, teacher, author and lecturer. He has worked for newspapers and magazines across the United States and taught at three universities. He grew up on a frog farm in rural California, roaming the creeks and hills with his coon dogs. Many of the lessons he learned during those magical boyhood years have been applied to photography and teaching the essence of this artform. For more information, visit [www.greatpicturehunt.com](http://www.greatpicturehunt.com).



At the core of these missed opportunities is a misunderstanding—some ancient belief handed down from generation to generation—that photos of people should always show faces.

Many of my favorite pictures don't show a subject's face. Nat Fein's famous Pulitzer picture of Babe Ruth's farewell to Yankee Stadium is at the top of my list. W. Eugene Smith's photograph of his children, titled "A Walk to Paradise Garden," is another compelling faceless image.

The human face has beauty and power and can communicate much, but so can faceless

backs of creatures—humans included. If the eyes are the window to the soul, the rest of the body is the frame. And our frame, our body language, often unknowingly communicates with visual clues.

The way a head tilts or a body leans may speak volumes about the emotions of the heart.

In a sense, photographs made from the backs of individuals are like winding roads without endings. Without faces—literal stopping points—we are given room to dream, to wonder what expressions subjects may be wearing.

You likely will feel uncomfortable photographing people from the back at first—probably hearing that scolding voice from high school—but you will learn with time this angle is just another tool or technique in your storytelling bag.

A few more thoughts:

One of the complaints against a large portion of photography is it's too literal, leaving little room to imagine or dream. I find photographs without faces allow my imagination to fill in the blanks, the emotions.

© David LaBelle

- When people or animals are unaware they are being watched or photographed, our body language is different—more natural, pure and unrehearsed.

- There is a time for posed pictures and a time to be invisible and watch. I am not advocating stalking, either. Intent in most every act in life is the line between good and evil, and it is true in candid photography.

- People's shapes are often every bit, if not more, interesting than their faces.

- Take time to read a situation before shooting. My father tried to teach me this when I was a kid learning to hunt. He kept reminding me to look behind and beyond my target. He didn't want me plunking one of our neighbors who might be working in the yard or on his house.

- Before you try to help another photographer make a better picture, take a moment and see if you can see what he or she is seeing.

- Study up on body language, paying close attention to the "language" part. ■

# Deseret News

## Editorial: Protect Utah's water

*Published: Friday, Nov. 25, 2011 12:00 a.m. MST*

The debate over plans to pipe underground water from the Great Basin to thirsty Las Vegas is producing more and more clarity that the project carries a downside risk big enough to justify sinking the proposal, once and for all.

A recent series of public hearings held by the Nevada water engineer, who will pass judgment on the plan early next year, has offered a platform for a vocal and diverse array of interests opposed to the \$3.5-billion project. And while experts from various agencies have conflicting assessments on the precise environmental impacts, the opponents have on their side a single salient and inescapable truth: once the water is taken, there is no putting it back.

Scientific studies have described the potential for a nearly catastrophic impact on the Basin's fragile ecosystem should the project go forward. It would claim to up to 57 billion gallons of water from the aquifers that span the area beneath the Utah-Nevada border, and pipe it nearly 300 miles to sprawling Las Vegas.

Studies cited by the proponents say there is plenty of excess water, and what would remain will suffice for the ranchers and wildlife that share the already arid territory. But studies cited by opponents question whether the amount Las Vegas would take can be adequately or easily replenished, and if not, might there follow a chain-reaction of dangerous, if unintended consequences?

Critics warn of potential devastation to wildlife habitat, the decimation of wetlands and severe impact on ranching and agricultural operations, rendering the area a virtual dustbowl, from which the metropolitan areas of the Wasatch are just downwind.

Southern Nevada water managers have long had their eyes on the Snake Valley aquifers, knowing the Las Vegas growth arc demanded desperate measures. But in recent years, the economy has stalled, and Southern Nevada's two-decade growth spurt has ended.

Pipeline proponents say the economy will rebound, and new water supplies are critical to ensuring that growth resumes. Such considerations may or may not factor into the decision the Nevada State Engineer's office must make as it considers the applications for the inter-basin water swaps. Whether to help facilitate another Las Vegas boom may also be a factor of some weight in the deliberations by federal land managers who must approve the pipeline plan.

But it is also important that engineers and regulators consider there are natural limits to urban growth. Resources are finite, and water is the Great Basin's most precious resource.

The proposed transfusion of one region's lifeblood to another is predicated on the gamble that the effects on the health of the donor will be gentle. In terms the denizens of Las Vegas should appreciate, it is a wager in which the stakes are simply too high.

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*Attachment to Abigail Johnson's comments*