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STATE ENGINEER

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October 27, 2011

**Nevada State Engineer
Office of the State Engineer
901 S. Stewart Street, Suite 2002
Carson City, Nevada 89701**

Attention: Susan Joseph-Taylor, Chief Hearing Officer

Regarding: SNWA applications for eastern Nevada

Dear State Engineer

I am a 40-year resident of Nevada, a wildlife enthusiast, birder, photographer and back country explorer. Eastern Nevada has long been a favorite location for me to pursue my interests since it's features include more dense varied vegetation and more water, compared to arid western Nevada. Eastern Nevada also includes some of the most scenic countryside in our fair state.

I have looked at the BLM draft EIS and have submitted comments to BLM regarding that document. I will summarize my concerns in this letter as well. My focus is on wildlife issues and outdoor recreation.

Before continuing, I understand that those of us who register concerns about SNWA's proposals have been characterized as zealots or something similar by SNWA's representative at the beginning of the hearing process. If so, I am proud to be a zealot in defense of the virtues of eastern Nevada because I owe that countryside a lot for 40 years of enjoyable out-of-door experiences.

And I do wish for others yet to come, to have the chances I've had, to travel from north of Ely to south of Caliente, down Meadow Valley Wash, and from Pahrangat National Wildlife Refuge, to Crystal Springs, to Key Pittman, and particularly to our Great Basin National Park which was simply known as Wheeler Peak when I first started going there over 30 years ago.

My travels have been for camping, hiking, photography and birding purposes. I don't know if you are aware of it, but southern Nevada has the best migratory birding in the

entire state. Meadow Valley Wash, south of Caliente, is not only an incredibly scenic area, it has terrific birding, including everybody's favorite, the brilliantly red Summer Tanager, unusual migrants from Mexico such as the Common Black Hawk, and lots of things in between....Bell's and Gray Vireo, plenty of warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks and the rest.

Not far behind, the stretch of birding spots from lower Pahranaagat up through the refuge, to Ash Springs, and particularly Crystal Springs continually produces breathtaking species of migrants from late April to mid-October. Crystal Springs, if you've never visited it (at the junction of highways 375/318/93), is an incredible oasis...an artesian spring of great beauty, surrounded by cottonwoods and other vegetation which host many interesting species of migrant birds each year. What a shame if it were to dry up!

Aside from birding, I've been plagued with an obsession these past 35 years which keeps me going to fish and game meetings (NDOW, Board of Wildlife Commissioners) even though I'm not a sportsman. I've learned a lot, though, about wildlife in eastern Nevada. Did you know, for example, that a good portion of the state's mule deer herd lives in eastern Nevada....from the Ruby's all the way down to I-15. The Ruby Mountains/East Humboldt Range are reputed to contain 25% of the state's mule deer herds all by themselves.

The state elk population lives there as well, highly concentrated in the Schell Creek and Snake Ranges, but extending southward, straight into SNWA's well application locations.


The state bighorn populations are a source of great pride for sportsmen and the state fish and game agency. Nevada has the biggest bighorn population in the lower 48. NDOW has spent a lot of time and money looking after bighorns in the Delamar Range, for example, where many coyotes and mountain lions have been killed to "protect" these animals. (I do not favor NDOW's actions. I simply report them to advise you of their efforts.)

And, what can I say about Great Basin National Park, one of our national treasures which was actually created in my lifetime. I watched the process. I camped and hiked there before it was a national park, and I go back now, most every year to do the same. I like driving up the back (west) side of Mt. Washington on that jeep road (above the old mine) which has switchbacks so steep and tight that you need 4-wheel drive coming DOWN the road in order to back up on some of the tight turns to take a second shot at completing the turn. Great Basin National Park sits dead-center, in the bulls-eye as it were, where SNWA's draw downs would coalesce.

I must say, BLMs EIS, though paid for by SNWA, and therefore, perhaps, casting doubt on absolute objectivity of the document, nonetheless paints horrifying scenarios to contemplate, even at reduced pumping rates, and even though the projections are done on modeling data and not from actual well site information. How the glorious countryside I've briefly referred to in my letter could sustain water level drops of 50-200 feet in wide areas and look anything like it does today, is beyond comprehension. I'm sure you would agree.

So, it seems to me that inflicting this kind of harm...nay, damage...on our state's environment for the sake of Las Vegas expansion, is not a sensible thing to do. Particularly if there are sensible alternatives, such as conservation efforts (which I recognize are already underway, and I credit the Las Vegas community for doing so), the desalinization option (which be absolutely necessary if climate change dries up Great Basin and Colorado River drainage runoff), and perhaps even some limitation of growth in S. Nevada. (Hey, I'm in favor of that. It's a desert, after all!)

To conclude, I thank you for allowing me to send my letter, and perhaps for reading it as well. This is one of these issues that you deal with all the time, I suppose.....what's the benefit versus the downside, with value judgements mixed in on both sides. The difference here is that if we, as a state, go the wrong way (admittedly, I'm on the side of my fellow zealots) on this, the downside is almost unimaginable. And while I won't be around to see it, I really do not want future generations to be deprived of what I have so greatly enjoyed.

Sincerely

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