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610 Westview Ave.  
Carson City, NV. 89703

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STATE ENGINEER

Dear Mr. King,

We had the opportunity to attend the final hearings for the Southern Nevada Water Authority's applications for water in Spring, Dry Lake Cave and Delamar Valleys. Because we care deeply about the Great Basin and all the plants and animals that live there, we urge you to consider the SNWA's "needs", environmental soundness, economic feasibility and senior water holders rights with regard to interbasin transfers.

We are appalled at the SNWA's request to pump & export 57 billion gallons of water annually from our aquifers in central and eastern Nevada. Why would we pump our water to southern Nevada to support unsustainable growth when there are viable means of meeting the water needs through increased conservation, smart growth management, and desalination options?

The SNWA has never produced an analysis comparing the costs, benefits and risks of the various alternatives, but instead has focused solely on pursuing the groundwater-mining solution. Some of the options not seriously studied by the Water Authority are aggressive conservation, investment in modern and efficient indoor and outdoor water appliances and devices, expanding development of ocean desalinization, reworking the sorely outdated laws governing the Colorado River's water, and the Authority's own general manager's suggestion of diversion of the flood waters of the Mississippi.

Nevada's "interbasin water transfer statute," NRS 533.370(6), currently requires the State Engineer, you, to deny an application for an interbasin transfer of water if he finds that the proposed transfer would not be "environmentally sound" for the basin being diverted. Although the definition of "environmentally sound" is absent from the statute, it seems obvious and reasonable to deem the water authority's request as such, given the catastrophic and irreversible impacts that would occur as a result of this groundwater extraction, as documented in the Bureau of Land Management's "draft environmental impact statement" for the pipeline proposal.

Water tables would drop by 200', 192,000 plus acres of prime Great Basin shrubland habitats would be dried, destroyed and converted to dryland grasses and annuals, supporting invasive species like cheatgrass and Sahara mustard. Eight thousand acres of wetlands would be destroyed along with 310 springs and 125 miles of perennial streams.

The toll on species would also be staggering. Some species of desert fish and springsnails would become extinct. Widespread harm to other species would occur, including the imperiled greater sage grouse, southwestern willow flycatcher, Columbia spotted frog, pronghorn and elk.

These applications threaten the very natural heritage of the Great Basin in eastern Nevada and western Utah. Aside from being a financial disaster (under the \$15.5 billion estimate, average monthly water bills for residents would increase from \$36 to over \$90!), the Water Authority's pipeline proposal would destroy our priceless natural heritage and huge swaths of rural communities.


It makes no sense to rob Nevada's wildlife and these rural areas of the water they need just to quench the thirst of unsustainable growth. Considering dwindling water supplies and a hotter, drier climate, the creation of sustainable communities is crucial. The old paradigm of a growth-driven economy has failed and will not lead to a promising future.

The Southern Nevada Water Authority's applications should be denied based on the severe, environmentally unsound impacts they would cause. There are other, better options for addressing southern Nevada's long-term water needs and the Water Authority is responsible to explore these in order to meet reasonable water demands.

Thank you for reading our letter and PLEASE DENY THESE APPLICATIONS.

Sincerely,

  
Grant Gardner

  
Joan Baker Gardner

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