

WRITTEN COMMENT OF MARTIN KOPPEL  
RE: WHITE PINE PIPELINE AND DESERT TORTOISE SURVIVAL  
TO: SUSAN JOSEPH TAYLOR, OFFICE OF STATE ENGINEER

My wife and I were newspaper reporters for the Mojave Desert News in California City, California, which is also home to the Desert Tortoise Preserve where we understand they have been successful in killing off more than 90 % of the adult male tortoise due to Upper Respiratory Disease. While investigating the Disease, I asked some of the locals, who had permitted desert tortoises what they did to combat this dread disease - their answer was the disease was easily controlled by supplying the tortoise with the disease with enough water so they could clear the (phlegm)) infection.

Further investigation led me to understand that the tortoise had, for thousands of years, relied on naturally recurring (Riparian) springs that were accessible to the Desert Tortoise, but that, in the last century the excess water usage [over drafting] for agriculture in the area had depleted the water supply, lowering the water table to the point were the water springs that the desert tortoise had relied on for centuries had dried up, denying the tortoise of the water supply they needed to live and combat the upper reparatory disease.

I recall, vividly, calling the top bureaucrat in charge of the Preserve and suggesting that the simple solution to combating the upper respiratory disease that was annihilating the desert tortoise population was to give them a water source to replace the naturally occurring springs they had been used to and was no longer available to them due to the over drafting. It was one of the most frustrating calls I have ever made because as I recall all too vividly, his position was that the desert tortoise needed to learn to live without any water other than what they could get naturally from the now over drafted and severely depleted desert water supply. This conversation went on that way for about an hour, and caused me to question the agenda of those who controlled the Desert Tortoise Preserve. Now I'm not a tree-hugger, but consider if you will, if children had the flu and were made to crawl around in the desert dust and were deprived of the liquid or water they needed, that would be considered extreme criminal cruelty. No wonder the tortoise are dying.,

Now I live in Las Vegas and am not taking a position on the White Pine Pipeline. However, I am seriously suggesting that it will overdraft the White Pine area, removing the springs that have been available to the dessert tortoise. If there is any consideration to try to maintain the desert tortoise population of that area then plans should include how that water that used to come from the springs will be replaced before the project is started and that determination and planning should take place before the project is stated. If it does not, I am sure the desert tortoise will be adversely affected, as they were in Kern County, California. When that happened in Kern County, the burden for the desert tortoise genocide fell on the citizens of the area with costly environmental fees and restrictions. Is it not the innocent citizens that are always adversely affected for bureaucracy irresponsibility? What is most infuriating is a little bit of understanding and pre-planning can provide these animals the water they need to live. This is not a new idea, It is one cattle ranchers have used to grow their herds in the West for centuries.

As former newspaper reporters and both of us former elected members of a Water District Board of Directors in California and considering past president we are seriously concerned about the future of the desert tortoise in the White Pine area that the pipeline will overdraft.

Written comments submitted by Martin Koppel 10-7-11



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