

8340 Squaw Valley Ave.  
Las Vegas, NV 89128  
December 1, 2011

Ms. Susan Joseph-Taylor  
Chief Hearing Officer  
Office of the State Engineer  
901 S. Stewart St., Suite 2002  
Carson City, NV 89701

Re: Danger in the Ground Water

Ms. Joseph-Taylor,

Damaging the environment and the way of life in Lincoln and White Pine Counties, and placing upon tax-paying water customers the high cost of the pipeline are a few of the projected negative consequences of the proposed pipeline that will bring ground water to Las Vegas Valley. Although the important reasons are sufficient in themselves to halt the construction of the pipeline, there is a more subtle danger that needs to be considered: the presence of toxic metal mercury in the ground water to be pumped from Lincoln and White Pine Counties directly into the Las Vegas Valley.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in a briefing on November 11, 2009, indicated that 49% of American lakes and reservoirs contain fish with potentially harmful levels of toxic metal mercury. The EPA briefing confirms data obtained by state environmental agencies and research institutions in southern Idaho, Great Salt Lake, Utah, and Wild Horse Reservoir, Nevada. Although the levels of mercury in the surface water is low, mercury was detected in the tissues of wild life and fishes because of the process of bio-magnification in which mercury from the surrounding waters is ingested and accumulated in the tissues of the fish and wildlife. In addition, bio-magnification of mercury also takes place in human beings to the detriment of susceptible children and babies.

Because of the intimate connection between surface waters and ground waters the presence of the contaminated fish and other wild life in surface waters indicates a high probability of mercury contamination of ground water in the

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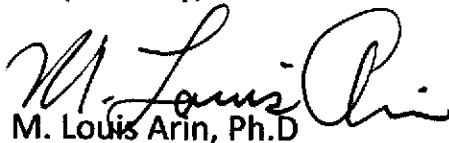
basins in northeast Nevada. The Southern Nevada Water Authority wants to pump water directly into the Las Vegas Valley from this very same area.

A significant portion of the metal mercury detected was generated by the gold mines in the western part of northern Nevada and carried on prevailing winds to the northeast Nevada region. Gold mining continues at the Bald Mountain Mine in White Pine County. The sources and extent of metal mercury contamination from gold mining operations in Nevada are not expected to diminish because of record price of gold.

In the sites mentioned, mercury was detected in ducks, fish and other wild life in aquatic environments where bio-magnification of mercury (collection of mercury in tissue) already had taken place. As mentioned, bio-magnification of mercury takes place in human beings to the detriment of susceptible individuals, our children and babies. The detection of a significant amount of mercury in ducks, fish and other wild life is analogous to the use of canaries in coal mines to detect toxic gases before miners were overcome. Today, in place of toxic gases, there is mercury in fish and fowl. Hopefully appropriate action will be taken so that "our canary" doesn't stop singing.

In conclusion, considering the observed mercury contamination of fish and wild life in northern Nevada, southern Idaho and Utah, the use of ground water from the region is an undesirable gamble for the continued health of 2 million residents of the Las Vegas Valley. We ask the SNWA to listen to the "mercury canary" and direct all efforts and energies toward the more effective and efficient conservation of water. The residents of the Las Vegas Valley deserve high quality water.

Respectfully,

  
M. Louis Arin, Ph.D

(702) 240-2580

P.S. Upon request supporting documents gladly will be provided.

Cc: Henry Brean, LV Review Journal

Jason King, State Engineer, Nevada Div. of Water Resources

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2011 DEC -5 PM 12:33  
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