

Draft #4 of testimony to SE 10/7/2011 – DLG (2 minutes 55 seconds)

Good Morning/Afternoon Madam Hearing Officer, State Engineer and Staff, my name is Dennis Ghiglieri.

I'm a life-long Nevadan. I've been fortunate to have hiked and birded all of the mountains and valleys in the area and wildlife areas and refuges from Lake Mead to the Park.

In hearings like this one the talk is too often disconnected from simple observation; of being able to see what places mean to people. I want to offer my perspective on Spring Valley because I don't see a bathtub of water eager to be piped south.

Standing on a lookout near a large bat cave in Spring Valley the view is, to my eye, unique within Great Basin valleys. The dry foothills give way to a valley of a different landscape. Trees and meadows follow an arc carved across the landscape from south to north and stretch across as well as up and down the valley. The "Swamp cedar"s - or Rocky Mountain Juniper - don't grow above that line in the valley itself; they keep to the valley bottom where groundwater comes to the surface. The trees live in a yellow-green meadow stretching westward to the Shell Creek foothills.

Within the meadow are rivulets of water shining in the sun. Scattered widely about cattle graze. Antelope are in the far distance. When you're standing on the line of

trees there's a spring. Blue birds call from a nearby perch. A warbler flits through a juniper. A little way away a burrowing owls sit on a fence post – a convenient burrow at its base. Overhead a red-tailed hawk makes its presence known. Stay until the early evening the night critters take over. Bats from the caves start their evenings work scooping up insects.

A little south you can camp near Shoshone pond at the base of the Park's Wheeler Peak. At a small reservoir nearby, I've seen a car-load of kids popping in and out of the water – running along the grassy bank. Walk through the "swamp cedar" here and you know the local name is true. All around are wet meadows. More water flows out across the meadows from a flowing well. Put your hand in the water; it feels warm. South from the ponds cut hay lays in the field. In the far distance are meadows around small playa lakes. A small stream makes its way across the alluvial plain to enter a farm field. I wave to one of the farm workers picking up bales with a loader.

I'm 275 miles from Las Vegas in a remote desert valley true to its name. In Spring Valley that unique, scenic landscape results from the groundwater that manifests as springs, meadows, and the valley's "swamp cedar" forest. Hard working people have made these places productive despite drought and flood, heat and cold.

In my mind, I return just a life-time\* later to see that the meadows are dry – gone. The

springs extinguished. The ponds a dusty memory. The forest just a long-distant thought.

Virtually nothing that we see in Spring Vally today will be present after this unprecedented removal of water is operating as the SNWA resource plan depicts – after millions of acre-feet are forever gone?

It is not environmentally sound to take this place away and replace it with an unknown desert landscape. I ask you to reject the applications.

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\*\* 75 years of pumping equals 6.3 million AF deficit to Spring Valley at 84,000 AFA.