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Office of the State Engineer
Attn: Susan Joseph-Taylor
901 S. Stewart St. Suite 2002
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To the State Engineer:
Regarding: Southern Nevada Water Authority applications

The late James E. Deacon, Distinguished Professor Emeritus in the Departments of Environmental Studies and Biological Sciences at UNLV, spoke many times over the years about the proposed transfer of water from northeastern Nevada valleys to Las Vegas. The recipient of the campus' highest academic honor as Distinguished Professor in 1988, Dr. Deacon's major research efforts centered on regional ecology, the biology and conservation of desert fishes and later, sustainable water supply and use. During his eloquent statements regarding the applications from the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) for the right to pump and transfer the water, Dr. Deacon said simply, "There is no extra water."

Any water transferred away from the rural ranching areas and towns in Spring, Cave, Dry Lake and Delamar Valleys will cause a decrease. The reduction in the resource may not be apparent right away but over time, springs, wetlands and groundwater levels will decline. Snowmelt and rain events recharge the

aquifers but not sufficiently to replace water that is transferred. There is no mitigation plan that addresses this inevitable condition.

The decision now being considered by the State Engineer is essentially whether to sacrifice the lives, livelihood and industry of those eastern Nevada valleys for the benefit of growth in Southern Nevada. It comes down to whether the generations old ranches, farms and residences in the target area are put at long-term risk for the benefit of future populations and businesses in and near Las Vegas.

Clark County, Nevada is already home to very likely an unsustainable number of people. As drought conditions and demands on the Colorado River continue to show the reduction in the amount of available water in Lake Meade where Las Vegas draws the majority of its water, the answer to the need for new resources should certainly not be to create a new water scarce region to the north.

It is clear that the water needs for possible unlimited growth in the Las Vegas Valley cannot be solely the business of SNWA and approval of applications by the State Engineer. Understandably SNWA does not want to be put in the position of restricting the growth of the region they serve but the first step in a move toward broader environmental consideration of the welfare of the people and resources in Nevada would be the denial of these current applications. Doing so would keep the people in the northeastern target area in a position to deal with times of natural drought in ways that they have for generations.

Manmade reduction of water cannot be effectively mitigated so as to allow the continuation of the traditional economy and quality of life that has existed there.

There are other options available to the cities dependent upon the Colorado for their water. Desalination technology is being developed and water can be adjusted between the states and reservoirs in the Colorado River system. If growth in some urban areas needs to be restricted, then so be it. Future urban growth cannot be justification for jeopardizing the lives and livelihoods of rural residents. As Dr. Deacon said, "There is no extra water."

Submitted by,

Judy Treichel