



**GREAT BASIN WATER NETWORK**

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NEWS RELEASE

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**PIPELINE FOES SLAM WATER RULING**

News that Nevada State Engineer Jason King granted the Southern Nevada Water Authority rights to pump up to 83,988 acre-feet of the groundwater from four eastern Nevada valleys drew a swift and stern response from pipeline opponents, who called the ruling “excessive and ill-considered.”

Simeon Herskovits, attorney for the pipeline opponents, said the ruling will be attacked in state courts.

“We believe that the State Engineer has ignored or dismissed compelling hydrological evidence that we and other protestants submitted – evidence that clearly showed that there is no unappropriated water available in Cave, Dry Lake and Delamar Valleys. Pumping the granted water rights from Spring Valley would be unsustainable, environmentally destructive and illegal groundwater mining,” said Susan Lynn, coordinator of the Great Basin Water Network. “We will consider our options carefully but this ruling will not go without challenge.”

“Pumping and exporting 12 billion gallons of groundwater annually from Spring Valley will dry up springs and harm existing water rights both in Spring Valley and down-gradient in Snake Valley, into which the groundwater flows,” said protestant Abigail Johnson. “The amount of pumping this decision allows would lower the groundwater table by up to 200 feet, and

equilibrium in the water table will not be reached for centuries, with strong likelihood of irreparably harming Nevada's only national park."

Simeon Herskovits, attorney for Great Basin Water Network and other pipeline opponents, said the acceptance of the so-called "monitoring and mitigation" process promised by the SNWA was particularly problematic given that few, if any, specifics exist for how that would be done.

"The supposed monitoring provides no assurance of protection for water rights holders, communities or habitat in the region," he noted.

Tom Myers, a hydrologist who has studied the Great Basin in detail, predicted that it would not be possible for SNWA to pump the billions of gallons annually from the well locations specified by the water agency. That means SNWA will have to "file countless change applications to drill additional wells," he said.

Las Vegas Launce Rake noted that SNWA has said repeatedly that they won't proceed with the pipeline project until they absolutely must have water for use in Las Vegas, which could be decades in the future. "This begs the question of whether SNWA has fully established a need for this water, and whether they have the ability to finance this enormously expensive project," Rake said.

"My biggest concern is that this will be an incentive to further degrade Las Vegas' already struggling water conservation programs in an effort to boost water use and justify the project," he said. "We can't afford the pipeline, fiscally or environmentally."

A businesswoman in the Snake Valley, near Great Basin National Park, agreed.

"Holding on to these water rights for 25 to 50 years without putting them to beneficial use not only flouts the prohibition against speculation in Nevada water law, but it unfairly inhibits opportunities for future growth and development in the affected basins in Lincoln and White Pine Counties," said Denys Koyle, Baker businesswoman.

And Native Americans who would be affected by pumping also were concerned with the ruling.

“The ruling brushes aside the need to protect the public trust, ignoring the negative effects of excessive pumping upon Great Basin National Park, tribal sacred and cultural sites, threatened and endangered species, and national wildlife refuges and wetlands,” tribal member Delaine Spilsbury stated.

“Great Basin National Park, which adjoins Spring Valley, faces great peril with the decision to ultimately pump over 61,000 acre feet each year,” said Lynn Davis, Nevada Field Office Manager for the National Parks Conservation Association. The national park’s historic and unusual caves are threatened because they are hydrologically linked to Spring Valley’s groundwater, according to Davis.

GBWN Utah Coordinator Steve Erickson said that Utahns should also oppose this ruling because of its impact on the ranching communities in Utah’s portion of Snake Valley.

“Thousands of acre feet of groundwater that now flows down into Snake Valley each year from Spring Valley will be pumped away before it can get there, and that will have negative impacts on farming, wildlife, and possibly air quality in the Wasatch Front.

"It is especially heart-breaking that we learned of this decision on World Water Day, a day that is supposed to be about human needs and the environment," said Ann Brauer of Indian Springs.

"Instead, this decision, if it stands, gives a green light to SNWA to defoliate the Great Basin, destroy Native American communities, dismantle conservation programs, plant water-hungry turf, encourage unneeded development and stick the ratepayers of Clark County with a \$15 billion bill."