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NEVADA DROUGHT FORUM
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The Truckee River Yacht Club has been around since 1988 and was one of the early players in reshaping the Truckee River Flood Project through public participation. Today we are concerned about the health – even the survivability – of the Truckee River itself. While the TRYC has no yachts, we have worked on Truckee River protection and in-stream-flows and water quality for more than 2 decades.

We have 3 key questions for the panel today.

1) Is this a drought that will mimic the droughts of the 19th and 20th centuries? Or is the current dry spell something more?
2) How will we address the protection of rivers and lakes and wetlands and the fish and wildlife that depend on them?
3) How will the public be educated to conserve the limited water resources of Nevada ? Who are the leaders to tell Nevadans that the natural water resources of Nevada are tapped out?

We ask that the panel recognize that there are absolute limits on the extraction of more water resources from already overstressed rivers and wetlands. We also know that today the Truckee River isn't supplying water except to those who have private storage rights like the TMWA. We know the "water rights" to use the river and actual "water" are two entirely different things. We also know that groundwater pumping borrows water from hoped for future rains. And we know that the Truckee River and its tributary streams could shrink under increased groundwater pumping.

Of course, the problem isn't confined to just the Truckee River. The Humboldt River is dry before it reaches Rye Patch Reservoir. The Carson River is a mere trickle at Fort Churchill State Park. The Walker River doesn't reach Walker Lake – even in average years. Washoe Lake dried up before summer even began.

The Truckee River was dry or nearly so at the Sparks measuring gauge for 4 days last week and for almost two days a week before that. Despite significant upstream storage capacity on the Truckee River watershed, those reservoirs are mostly depleted. Lake Tahoe stands below its rim – a condition that has now persisted for more than a year resulting in no flow into the Truckee River.

Pyramid Lake has fallen more than 25 feet in the last 15 years of mostly drought conditions. The drop is the result of a deficit of millions of acre-feet of water. Continued losses of water for the Lake threaten the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe and the endangered species found there and in the Truckee River.

Our view of the drought as an inconvenience – almost a distraction – to economic pursuits leads us deeper into our current water problem. Our failure to recognize a drying trend which began firmly at

the turn of this current century is part of the problem, too. Another is our denial of climate change – very likely one of the reasons for warming and drying of the western US.

Our rivers, lakes, and wetlands and our uses of water cannot be sustained if the rainfall/snowfall of the past 15 years repeats into the future. Over the next 15 or 50 years, we will have to choose what to keep and what to change. Even in good times, Reno is a desert with only an annual average of 7 inches of precipitation.

This panel needs to recommend engaging all Nevadans in a discussion of where we go from here. The water crisis we face won't be solved by looking to past solutions. We need national and state experts from climatology, hydrology, and natural resources to provide the facts of our current situation and what to expect, most likely, going forward. We need to engage in research to understand how to keep our rivers and lakes intact and functioning, what water uses we can continue, what water uses we need to change, and how to get the public buy-in to implement necessary solutions.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dennis Ghiglieri
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