

Latest round of hearings conclude

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On Friday, Oct. 8, the Nevada State Engineer's Office concluded its latest round of hearings on the controversial plan by Southern Nevada Water Authority to take groundwater from eastern Nevada and pipe it over 250 miles to Las Vegas.

The two-week proceeding by the state's top water official comes after a state district court sided with White Pine County, Great Basin Water Network, and allies, finding that the previous 2012 rulings on the same applications granted more water than was available.

The court also found SNWA did not have specific plans to monitor and mitigate predicted impacts, or guarantee that senior water rights and the environment would be protected.

White Pine County and Great Basin Water Network, along with the Goshute, Ely Shoshone, and Duckwater Shoshone Tribes and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, presented evidence critical of the project to the State Engineer.

The \$15 billion project has been predicted to have devastating impacts to both senior water rights and the environment over a large area in eastern Nevada. Spring Valley, which lies to the west of Great Basin National Park in White Pine County, is among those targeted.

"Time and time again, we've shown that neither science nor law supports this disastrous proposal," said Gary Perea, a White Pine County Commissioner. "There is not enough water available in these valleys to support a multi-billion dollar pipeline. The only way for

the State Engineer to protect senior water rights and stunning habitat from irreversible harm is to deny these water rights applications.”

This latest remand hearing is the fourth round of hearings on water rights applications filed in 1989. Previous State Engineer decisions granting water to SNWA under the applications were overturned in court on a variety of due process, legal, and scientific grounds. Before the State Engineer makes a decision, he’s asked all parties to draft a proposal for how they’d like him to rule. A decision is not expected until February at the earliest, which will then likely go back to the court for review.

Attorney Simeon Herskovits, who has represented White Pine County and Great Basin Water Network in both state and federal challenges to the pipeline proposal, said “Once again SNWA has failed to come forward with any meaningful science or evidence that changes the basic fact that their groundwater export project is fundamentally unsound and unsustainable. On a practical level, if the State Engineer were to approve SNWA’s water rights applications, every senior water rights owner and every groundwater dependent natural resource in the affected area would be threatened with ultimate destruction.”

“We encourage anyone who couldn’t be at the hearing to mail written comments to the State Engineer,” said Abby Johnson of Great Basin Water Network. Address public comments to: Deputy Administrator Susan Joseph-Taylor at the Office of the State Engineer, 901 S. Stewart Street, Suite 2002, Carson City, NV 89701. Comments must be received by 5:00 pm on October 20. Emailed public comments will not be accepted. Written comments are limited to five pages, focused on the subjects of the hearing.