

Assembly Agriculture Committee  
January 20, 1977

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Hickey  
Assemblyman Price  
Assemblyman Serpa  
Assemblyman Rhoads  
Assemblyman Polish

MEMBERS ABSENT: Assemblyman Jeffrey  
Assemblyman Jacobsen

GUESTS: Roland Westergard. Division of Water Resources

Chairman Hickey called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. on January 20, 1977 and stated the purpose of the meeting was to hear from Roland Westergard of the State Division of Water Resources. Mr. Hickey stated that the committee was interested in water conservation and its relationship to agriculture in the State of Nevada. He went on to say that they were not particularly interested in studies but in some positive action.

Mr. Westergard stated that his office has been active in development of a state water planning effort. Agreed that the day comes when you stop studying and investigating and start making some decisions. Purpose of their effort was to address themselves on a statewide basis to the water availability, the current and existing requirements and the potential requirements for the future. Then they attempted to develop some alternatives, area by area as to what the solutions might be. This was submitted to the 1975 Session.

He went on to state that the conclusion that you come to is that the State of Nevada, in a lot of areas, is just "flat out of water for additional development". He added that they had just designated 3 more ground water basins. Warm Springs and Cold Springs Valley out by Reno, Mason Valley around Yerington. What this means is that appropriations of ground water that they have allowed are approaching what can be allowed and the time is imminent in the future when they will have to start denying there. Winnemucca area has had to curtail further ground water appropriations. Carson City's situation is critical. Smith Valley is approaching the critical stage. Almost any place that there has been a real interest in developing. They are at the point where there is more interest to develop then there is water to satisfy that interest.

Mr. Westergard went on to state that with surface water sources there are problems that have been placed on these because of the competition for water. The Indian interest, the recreation interest, duck hunters, farmers, municipal interests, people at Tahoe all add to these problems. Problem statewide is that we are rapidly approaching the point where supplies are going to limit future growth and development. This was reported to the last session of the Legislation. There was no specific action taken by that body at that time. However, he stated, they did not propose any specific legislation. This however, is not necessarily a negative effect.

As far as what might be done, Mr. Westergard stated that they are continually looking at this. There's an effort going on right now to re-evaluate the consumptive use requirements for agriculture. Any place that conservation measures can be installed they encourage it.

Mr. Hickey asked Mr. Westergard to be more specific on this. Mr. Westergard stated that in some of these ground water areas they are monitoring the water levels. In Smith Valley they have set a limit on what is a economic pumping lift for ground water. Actually regulated diversion of further pumping from wells in that area to satisfy the prior rights. One of the problems that you run into is that there are people who would attempt to impose measures that would be costly on practices that have been in effect for years and years. However, if you have an economical means of doing and it results in a beneficial effect those practices as well as the rights have to be recognized. Do not advocate going and imposing a lot of changes. You can talk and encourage conservation but you must protect the individual rights along the way.

Mr. Serpa inquired whether Mr. Westergard's Division would be having any specific legislation to which Mr. Westergard replied that they do not have any bills requested at this time.. The general consensus around the stated is that the law is flexible at this time.

Mr. Rhoads inquired if Mr. Westergard was aware of a study that the University was making on the Humboldt Rivert. Mr. Westergard stated that he was and that it was not completed. Mr. Westergard went to to explain briefly the background on the Humboldt River studies. He stated that in 1950 3 dams were authorized on tributaries of the Humboldt and that at that time there was a provision that local interest nonfederal costs would be 2.7 million dollars. The positive aspect of that project is that if those dams were constructed today the local interest costs would still be only 2.7 million dollars. The Corps has done study after study on the Humboldt River. 1973 Legislature passed a concurrent resolution endorsing those upstream storage dams, providing it could be shown that it was in the economic, esthetic, and environmental interests of the Humboldt River drainage basin. They appropriated

\$50,000 to the Division to do a environment and wildlife assessment which has been completed. Results showed that there would not be significant adverse environmental affects. Corps has come back and stated that the project is feasible.

Mr. Hickey asked if there was something that the legislature could do to stimulate this project. Mr. Westergard stated that he had no real answer to that but that there was still some opposition to the project.

Mr. Rhoads stated there were two difinite sides to this project. He stated that one of the biggest objections to it other then the chance of people losing their water rights is that the federal government would be building it. He said that he thought if the state could somehow pick up the tab for at least one dam it might help. He stated that most people feel the Mary River dam is impractical but that you could perhaps sell the Hilton dam to the ranchers particularly if the state could run it.

Mr. Serpa stated that the Lovelock people are really against it as they feel that once that water is up there it won't get down to Rye Patch.

Mr. Hickey inquired if there were some way the state could build by way of federal grants. Mr. Westergard stated that as far as keeping federal intervention out of it that would be good but that it would amount to millions of dollars. He was not aware of any grants available. The positive part of this project is that it is primarily flood control.

Mr. Polish inquired if there are new facts or figures coming out since the Idaho dam went down. Mr. Westergard stated that he knew of none but that he felt that the costs would be going up because they were going to have to have more scrutiny of the design etc.

Mr. Hickey then requested that Mary Lou Cooper of the Legislative Counsel Bureau Research Division research the possibility of some type of funding similar to the way the highways are funded.

Othere suggestions that could be researched would the possibility of using some of the in lieu of tax monies, the accumulation on the room tax monies that Elko has, etc.

Mr. Serpa asked for Mr. Westergards opinion on the legislation introduced to study the feasibility of bringing water from the Columbia River Basin. Mr. Westergard stated that this has been addressed several times. Many studies have been done but there is great opposition to this from the Northwest. It would take a tremendous selling job. The people of the Northwest can show that they require all the water that they have.

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Mr. Hickey asked Mrs. Cooper to research the area of dams and determine if there are any areas where dams have been built by state with state control or where dams have been built by federal government with state control.

Mr. Serpa stated that he felt that the people of Lovelock would object to the dams no matter who built them.

Mr. Serpa also inquired whether Mr. Westergard's office was involved in the Watashema project. Mr. Westergard stated that they were not since it was a Bureau of Reclamation project but they were aware of what was going on. However, before water could be stored there they would have to issue water rights and grant permits to store water there. They have encouraged the federal government to come up with some conclusions as to what the effects would be downstream through Carson Valley and all along the River. They have not as yet come up with anything.

As there was no further discussion, Chairman Hickey adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandee Gagnier  
Assembly Attache