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August 10, 2001

Terry Robertson
6135 E. Carey
Las Vegas, NV 89156

Dear Terry:

I am happy to offer my opinion in regard to the importance of protecting the Tule Springs archaeological and paleontological site.

The Nevada State Museum excavations of 1962-63 were on a scale that had never been seen before and that will probably not happen again in the search for the earliest Americans. Industry contributed the use of the largest bulldozer in the world at the time, a slightly smaller bulldozer, a motor scraper, a 30 inch diameter soil auger, a precisely surveyed grid, and maps with a 1-foot contour interval over the entire grid. All fuel and lubricants were provided free as were the services of local equipment operators. Camping and mess facilities were provided by the Nevada State Museum who employed over 20 scientists, staff, and graduate students. An advisory panel of the top archaeologists, geologists and physicists in the nation was appointed to evaluate the work and were assisted by 19 other top scientists who visited the site during the excavations.

The excavations indicated that the earliest human occupation of the Las Vegas Valley was about 13,000 years ago (11,000 rcybp) and that evidence for earlier habitation by humans was equivocal. The bones of vertebrate ice-age fauna were shown to be abundant and well preserved. It is apparent that the deposits still contain abundant skeletal remains of extinct animals such as mammoths, camels, horses, bison, large cats, and wolves. There is also a rich fauna of invertebrates. The study of fossil pollen from the deposit provided an excellent record of vegetation changes during the late Pleistocene and early Holocene. The geological investigations provided the geochronological framework for all of these data as well as the geologic maps that provided bases for recent studies.

The overall result is that the Tule Springs site provided a quantum leap in knowledge about the climate and ecology of southern Nevada. It triggered many other studies to follow. Furthermore, the site still maintains the strata that contains bones,



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shells, pollens, and charcoals for future study as well as archaeology. We still do not know for sure about the validity of pre-Clovis occupants of the New World, but Tule Springs remains one of the best places to look for evidence. The important archive really needs to be preserved for all of the above reasons.

Best wishes,



Vance Haynes
Regents Professor Emeritus

VH/baf

P.S. I am finishing a paper on springs as important archives of paleoecological and paleoclimatic data on the Pleistocene and Holocene. Tule Springs plays an important part in it. I will send you a copy when the draft is completed.