

Alan Welch
U.S.G.S. Water Science
Center 2730 No. Deer Run Rd.
Carson City, NV **89701**

Dear Mr. Welch:

The White Pine County Commission appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft BARCAS Study Report.

The Commission would like to **thank** you, Kimball Goddard, and all of the U.S.G.S. staff involved with the BARCAS project. We have appreciated your attendance at our meetings and the periodic reviews of the study's progress. The public meetings have given White Pine County citizens the opportunity to learn a great deal about our area's geology and water resources.

The citizens of White Pine County have a sincere interest in maintaining the quality of our environment and understand the critical importance of water resources in supporting both the environment and our economic future. The Commission strongly supported the addition of the funding for the BARCAS Study in the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act. We believe that scientific studies of the carbonate aquifer are essential to establishing accurate baseline data and an understanding of our water resources.

The County Commission and our Water Advisory Committee submit the following comments on the draft Report:

Aquifer Storage: The selection of 100 feet as a gauge for basin-fill aquifer storage appears to be arbitrary. We understand that a requirement of the study was to determine the volume of water in storage. However, the discussion on page 2 of the **Summary** of Major Findings regarding the 36 million acre feet of water per 100 feet of saturated basin-fill could be very misleading as to the quantity of water that can sustainably be removed from the area. There is substantial concern that without further clarification, the focus on storage in the first 100 feet could lead to inaccurate conclusions about the amount of water

available for exportation. Ranchers in Snake Valley report that based on their well data, it is likely that the first 100 feet represents the majority of the basin's water and once depleted it could not be replenished. The actual feet of saturated basin-fill that would equal the annual recharge should be provided as a practical comparison. For example, from the information provided on Spring Valley, the actual recharge would approximate two feet of basin-fill.

The study result that has created significant concern in White Pine County is the potential that water from Steptoe Valley flows east to Spring and Lake Valleys, then to Snake Valley and possibly becomes discharge to the Greater Salt Lake Desert. In the Water Advisory Committee's discussions with Kimball Goddard on June 19, he acknowledged that the conclusion is based on theory and circumstantial evidence rather than data from pumping tests. Because the relationship of the water resources in each of our hydrographic basins is important in understanding the potential long term impacts of substantial water exportation from Spring and Snake Valleys, the Commission believes this finding supports the need for further study including the pump tests to provide data required to test the conclusions that are based solely on existing evidence and theory.

3) The Water Advisory Committee and the County Commission have reviewed the report submitted to the Great Basin Water Network by Tom Myers, PhD. The Commission concurs with his findings and asks that you include the sixteen specific recommendations identified on pages 21 and 22 of the report (attached) as a portion of White Pine County's comments.

Again, the White Pine County Commission and our Water Advisory Committee appreciate the working relationship we have developed with the USGS Water Science Center throughout the BARCAS Study process. We hope that this study is the initial phase of the scientific study U.S.G.S. will be able to devote to a thorough understanding of the geology and hydrology of the Great Basin.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Pound,
Vice Chairman

cc: Senators Harry Reid, John Ensign
Congressman Dean Heller