

## Two Cents Worth: Did I imagine a subtle shift in upstream jargon?

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If you look at the news stories that came out of a Mineral County Commissioner meeting last week, with four representatives from Senator Harry Reid's office, you can see that a whole lot of information was provided to those present.

ADVERTISEMENT Reid's State Director, (Legal) Counsel for the Majority Leader, and Senior Policy Advisor for Public Lands offered to-the-point presentations and responded directly and without hesitation to questions, primarily from the Commissioners, but also a few from a mistrusting public. The Senator's Rural Rep was also on hand but was never called upon.

I hope I wasn't the only one there from Mason/Smith Valleys who sensed a subtle shift in the way the presentations were offered and questions answered. Was I imagining it?

I thought there was more of an obvious effort to always provide reference to the necessity of including upstream water right holders in discussions and legislative considerations, and the need to accomplish restoration at Walker Lake "without devastating upstream agricultural production".

Was my feeling way off base?

I hope not.

Now that the time for actually drafting the water settlement legislation is at hand, can upstream participants like the Walker River Irrigation District, their constituents and other folks dare to dream of working "with" our Congressional delegation?

Reid's spokespersons left no doubt that his desire is still to settle litigation on the river system and restore Walker Lake, but they seemed to leave the door open for real consideration of upstream concerns--particularly agriculture--as well.

If so, that's a monumental shift, from my point of view. If not, we're no worse off than we were before.

Should we look at the glass as half full or half empty? I'm reasonably certain the Senate's top Democrat will let us know exactly where we stand right away; and the other members of the delegation will react accordingly, as one is seeking reelection and the other doesn't have to worry about that for a few more years.

June is still the month targeted for draft legislation to appear. If they follow through with their predictions, no entity will get everything it is seeking, but each will be able to live with the outcome.

I'm still afraid, very afraid. Senator Reid, you can allay that fear. What've you got to say?

Leasing looks like a go

As the discussions continue and comments go public, it appears that some kind of water leasing program will definitely be included in the Walker River Basin Project legislation.

And, it would appear WRID involvement is a near certainty. The Irrigation District took the proactive approach last year and outlined details of its proposal for a water leasing program; and it would appear that was a wise move.

Just about every discussion/presentation now includes a water leasing program; and last week, it was indicated that a leasing program is destined to be written into the legislation.

"The devil is in the details," as they say; but WRID has been on the mark and has even made trips to Washington, D.C., to outline exactly how it sees the program working.

Mason Valley Game Ranch talk

Part of the discussion at the meeting in Hawthorne (attended by 60-75 people, including at least three from Lyon County) centered around the water rights held and used at the Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area.

At least one Mineral County Commissioner bravely said he felt that water should go to the lake, and he criticized the State of Nevada for what he called "poor management" of the lake and the water at the game ranch. As a Mineral County Commissioner, he felt the value of that water was more important to Walker Lake.

Being that he is an elected official from Mineral County, resides there, was talking to primarily to his