

## Two Cents Worth: Government is here to help you? Wilderness proponents play games with on-air radio time

JUNE 27, 2008

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"Hello, I'm from the government, and I'm here to help you."

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I believe it was President Ronald Regan who coined a phrase something like that and labeled those the scariest words on earth.

Seems not much has changed. Those attending the EIS Informational Meeting for the Walker River Basin Acquisition Program presented by the Bureau of Reclamation in Yerington Tuesday night expressed their general distrust of government for what we fear they will do "to" us, not "for" us, and even labeled them the "enemy."

In truth, there is widespread distrust of government in general these days, and Mason and Smith Valley residents have every right to feel they have been targeted by a "legacy" proposal from U.S. Senator Harry Reid to save Walker Lake at any cost to upstream water users.

The public would really prefer to express its concerns, ideas and anger to the Senator and the other members of our Congressional delegation; but because the dirty work is handed off to federal agencies like Reclamation, we are forced to make them the target.

Tuesday's meeting was actually pretty decent when it came to trying to provide information, and locals had a chance to ask questions and offer comments. But in actuality, the BOR is limited in what it can and cannot do and can and cannot include in its Environmental Impact Statement by the law, as written by Reid.

They can only look at acquiring water to send to Walker Lake, period. It would seem that related issues--like river channel restoration--should be considered here, but they are not. Those issues fall to some other federal agency, like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

This leads one to wonder if the right hand knows, or cares, what the left hand is doing, or if the separate efforts are coordinated in any way, if information is shared.

Frustration was the name of the game at Tuesday's meeting--mostly coming from the public, but not always. (Due to Wednesday deadlines, more about the meeting in next week's column.)

Oh, the games they play"»

Think the wilderness issue for Lyon County is over? Think again.

We have asked many times from supporters of wilderness designations why we don't trust the powerful environmental groups backing such proposals. How about this as one reason?

KUNR radio broadcast a program on May 30 featuring a Wilderness Coalition representative for its 30-minute Nevada Newsline show. An Esmeralda County Commissioner was also invited as was a representative from our own Citizens for Public Access.

After some soul-searching and pointed discussion, the CPA turned down the invitation, sensing a "set up."

Turns out the CPA's take was pretty accurate, at least from the point of view of the wilderness proponents.

An email to UNR students from Cameron Johnson (who was one of the three wilderness activists appearing at the second public meeting in Smith Valley which drew 750 opponents) calls on the UNR students and any other supporters of wilderness to jam the station's phone lines so opponents could not get through.

"It will be a generic show that highlights why wilderness is so controversial, why we advocate for it, and generate lots of calls," reads his email (obtained from a reliable source in Mineral County).

"Our goal is to generate enough phone calls to jam the lines and keep the anti-wilderness advocates from trying to do the same thing."

Devious way to suppress opposing public opinion"»

The email to impressionable college students later labels the Wilderness Coalition as "honest and credible with a long track record."

Of what, getting its own way, any way it can?

Hopefully, Nevada's Congressional delegation will take note. So should the public. Other government entities