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September 17, 2015

Director Leo Drozdoff  
Chairman, Nevada Drought Forum  
901 S. Stewart Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Director Drozdoff:

Thank you for your efforts, and those of the other Forum members, for addressing the needs of Nevada in light of our unprecedented drought. The engagement of some of Nevada's finest water experts is a huge step forward in making Nevada more drought resilient, and the Nevada Mining Association commends Governor Brian Sandoval for his leadership on this critical issue.

The purpose of this letter is to clarify written, mining-related information that was submitted by non-mining representatives at the Forum Sector meeting in Sparks, Nevada, in August. We believe that it is critical that the Drought Forum have accurate and current information with regard to the mining industry and its activities surrounding water management.

With regard to dewatering activities, mining does pump significant amounts of groundwater in the state to order to safely access the mineral resource. To put this in perspective, however, mine dewatering represents less than 15 percent of total groundwater pumpage statewide. Within the Humboldt River Basin, the mining sector is far from the largest groundwater pumper in the area. While it is true that groundwater is pumped, it is equally true that as much as 85 percent of this water is returned to the basin of origin or substituted for other water rights. Under the watchful eye of the State Engineer, this water is reinjected or infiltrated back into the basin; substituted for other water rights, such as those used in irrigation; or discharged to a surface water source for use by downstream users. In essence, then, much of the water that is pumped from a mine is simply moved.

As described during our testimony at the Drought Sector Forum in Las Vegas in July, dewatering and groundwater impacts are closely monitored by the mining operations under the direction of the State Engineer. This information is provided to the Nevada Division of Water Resources (DWR) for evaluation and made available to the public on the DWR website. Additionally, most mines meet with the State Engineer on a frequent and regular basis to brief him and his staff on dewatering activities. These actions ensure that other

water rights holders are not adversely impacted and that unanticipated consequences do not occur.

There is no scientific evidence that subsidence is a general concern related to mine dewatering in the Humboldt River Basin. Some incidences have occurred, but they have been highly localized and relatively small. The written testimony cited a report by Dr. Tom Myers (June, 2015), but subsidence is not discussed in his evaluation.

Finally, pit lake evaporation was noted as a significant source of water loss in the Humboldt River Basin. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Nevada Division of Water Resources estimated that only 1,392 acre-feet of water evaporated from 25 pit lakes in the Humboldt River Basin in 2010. To put that value into perspective, it is less than one-half of one percent (0.47%) of the total average yearly flow of the Humboldt River and less than one-fifth of one percent (0.2%) of the surface and ground water rights within the Basin.

I hope this information provides clarity and context on Nevada mining's activities concerning groundwater. As always, the Nevada Mining Association stands ready to provide information and assistance to you and to the Drought Forum in your efforts in moving forward on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana", with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dana R. Bennett, Ph.D.  
President, Nevada Mining Association