

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee.

Thank you for your continued interest in the concerns of the citizens of Catron County.

I'm Eileen Dodds, Secretary of the San Augustin Water Coalition. With me today are Linn Kennedy, our Treasurer, and Anita Hand, our newly-elected Catron County Commissioner.

We are founding members of the San Augustin Water Coalition, which was formed in 2008 to protest the original application by the Augustine Plains Ranch, LLC, to appropriate 54,000 acre feet of water annually from the San Augustin Plains and sell it to still-to-be-named entities. This is pure speculation with a finite resource from a rural corner of New Mexico.

Ms. Kennedy and Ms. Hand are neighbors of the LLC holdings on the Plains. Their wells will be "ground zero"---the first to go dry---if this application ever succeeds. Ms. Hand has been told that by their California hydrologist.

The Hand family ranch is in jeopardy of its very existence. Her father, John Hand, has been ranching that land since 1952, raising cattle and feeding New Mexicans.

The Modena family, citizens of Italy, bought about 18,000 acres on the Plains in 1969 through a holding company with a New York City lawfirm. We understand that their original plan was to subdivide the land for residential use. That never happened. The family has never ranched, or hunted, or farmed, or even met with the people of Catron County.

They did however, lease grazing rights to a local rancher, and have leased the hunting rights to a local outfitter.

If you bought almost 28 sections of land, wouldn't you at least go look at it ?

When we last met with you in October, 2013, we reported that the OSE had denied the original 2007 drilling application in March of 2012...and that the LLC

had appealed to the District Court in Socorro, which upheld the denial in November 2012. In January, 2013, the LLC appealed to the NM Court of Appeals, and a hearing was finally set for August 21, 2014.

On July 14, 2014, the LLC submitted another application to the OSE, almost identical to the original one which was denied. It's much more polished, and much more in-depth, but they're still looking for the same 54,000 acre feet of water to sell to some still-unnamed entity at some unknown time in the future. The speculation hasn't ended.

On or about August 19th, the NM Court of Appeals dismissed the LLC's appeal as "Moot" due to the new application.

As of now, the OSE has yet to accept or deny this new application.... It's still under review.

One of your handouts in the black folder is a chart showing land ownership on the Plains. The LLC acreage represents 1.4% of the total area, yet they've applied to appropriate 54% of what they claim is the annual amount of water falling every year on the whole 1,250,000 million acres of the basin. Their figures are from the Blodgett/ Titus report of 1973.

There is nowhere near that amount of recharge in the current drought conditions, or any evidence that the hundreds of millions of gallons of water they speculate is underground even exist

The concerns of the people of Catron County remain the same. We filed almost 1000 protests with the OSE regarding the first application. We're ready to do that again.

Such a project will bankrupt our rural economy. Subsidence caused by this project will destroy the Very Large Array radio telescope system (another neighbor of the LLC). That's 255 jobs in Catron and Socorro Counties. They have families, too.

This project is an affront to conservation efforts, a detriment to public welfare, and will impair the property rights of everyone in the area except the LLC.

Frank Titus told our membership before he passed away that he calculated the basin would be emptied within 10 years at the rate the LLC wants to withdraw. Yet their claim is 300 years !!

All we want is a real study by New Mexico hydrologists who are familiar with New Mexico water resources.

On November 16th, “60 Minutes” did a story on the groundwater depletion in the California Central Valley. It’s available on the “60 Minutes” website. It was part of a broader study by NASA’s Jet Propulsion Lab and the Univ. of California, Irvine, and includes satellite imagery for the last 10 years. Change in water mass was measured from Dec. 2004 to Nov. 2013, by NASA’s GRACE satellite (Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment) in the Colorado River Basin. The basin, which covers Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, and California, showed a loss of 53 million acre feet of water---and about 41 million acre feet was from groundwater.

We have included a related article in your folders. Please have your staff review it and the “60 Minutes” story. It is riveting—

Finally, we’d like the OSE to either accept this application so we can protest it, or deny it in a more timely manner. They’ve had it since July 14th.

We remain concerned as well that such speculation will set off a chain of similar speculation in every rural corner of New Mexico.

Thank you for your time. Now, I’d like to turn the floor over to Ms. Hand.
