

March 20, 2024

The Honorable Tom Tiffany
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joe Neguse
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Tiffany and Ranking Member Neguse:

Thank you for agreeing to hold a legislative hearing on H.R. 6209, the Sloan Canyon Conservation and Lateral Pipeline Act. As detailed below, the legislation will help remedy a substantial vulnerability within our existing water transmission system, ensuring the reliability of water service for Southern Nevada residents, and expanding the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area.

The Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) is responsible for acquiring and managing the community's regional water supplies, developing, and administering regional water conservation programs, maintaining and protecting water quality, building and operating major facilities and protecting environmental resources. SNWA maintains a vast network of transmission facilities that provides reliable water service to Southern Nevada's 2.3 million residents and more than 40 million annual visitors. In general, this system includes redundancies that enable us to isolate pipeline segments to make repairs and move water from other parts of our system, allowing for uninterrupted service to our customers.

However, at present, a significant portion of residents and businesses in Southern Nevada receive water exclusively from the South Valley Lateral, a lone transmission line constructed 25 years ago. The South Valley Lateral, unlike other major system components, lacks interconnections with the rest of our regional infrastructure and it is imperative that we secure the ability to shut the lateral down for maintenance or emergency situations. To be clear, a failure or disruption within this part of the system could have severe consequences for our community and pose risks to public health and economic stability. In fact, the South Valley Lateral serves approximately 1,000,000 people and 40 percent of the businesses in the Las Vegas Valley, including the City of Henderson.

To help solve for this problem, H.R. 6209 would require the Bureau of Land Management to grant the Southern Nevada Water Authority a right-of-way across a portion of the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area to install the Horizon Lateral Water Pipeline. Critically, the construction of the Horizon Lateral would occur underneath the NCA (50 to 2,000 feet below), will not be seen or heard, and will not compromise in any way the natural values that the NCA was specifically designated to protect. The extremely minimal surface disturbance that would occur would be temporary access to drill seventeen, 6” diameter geotechnical boreholes to ensure the sound operation of the tunnel boring machine. The drilling will occur on 50’ x 140’ temporary pads and the equipment necessary to carry out that work will be air-lifted; those areas will be returned to their pre-drilling conditions upon completion.

The legislation would also expand the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area by 9,290 acres, increasing its total acreage to 57,728 acres. The legislation also maintains the existing management plan for the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area as established in §16 U.S.C. 460qqq. Finally, H.R. 6209 also ensures that Federal Land Policy and Management Act requirements for environmentally protective terms and conditions in right-of-way grants and BLM’s right-of-way regulations are followed, as previously provided by Congress.

The construction of the Horizon Lateral is endorsed by the City of Henderson, Clark County Board of Commissioners, Clark County Department of Aviation, Dignity Health – St. Rose Dominican Hospitals, Henderson Chamber of Commerce, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 12, Las Vegas Asian Chamber of Commerce, Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance, Latin Chamber of Commerce – Nevada, LiUna! Laborers’ Local No. 872, Nevada Governor’s Office of Economic Development, Nevada Resort Association, Nevada State AFL-CIO, Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, Retail Association of Nevada, Southern Nevada Home Builders Association, Teamsters Local 631 and Vegas Chamber.

H.R. 6209 not only reflects the strong support from the above-listed organizations in Southern Nevada, but it also reflects input from the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. As you know, the Senate companion legislation, S. 2042, was reported favorably to the Senate by majority voice vote during an open business session in September 2023.

SNWA appreciates the leadership from Congresswoman Dina Titus in authoring H.R. 6209 and the leadership from its Senate delegation in helping to advance this measure. As appropriate, SNWA would be happy to answer any questions on this measure from the House Committee on Natural Resources.

Sincerely,



John Entsminger
General Manager