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George McGrath: A proposed landfill near Winnemucca will have economic benefits

by George McGrath

It is both surprising and disappointing that two prominent politicians, U.S. Sen. Harry Reid and state Sen. Dean Rhoads, with qualified staff to assist them in fact-checking, have signed a Your Turn column so factually inaccurate and legally unsound as the one that ran last week ["Keep California garbage in California," Dec. 22].

The collection and disposal of waste is an essential and highly regulated service that Recology has been providing to communities for more than 90 years. Moreover it is governed by local, state and federal law, and the Supreme Court has held that under the "Commerce Clause" of the Constitution, no state or local government can discriminate against the disposal of waste based upon its point of origin.

The proposed landfill, which is located more than 28 miles from Winnemucca, was approved by the Humboldt County Regional Planning Commission in April 2007. The project was subsequently presented to the Humboldt County Landfill Committee and the Humboldt County commissioners in 2007. After its approval by Humboldt County, the project was submitted for approval to the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, which is currently reviewing the application.

There will not be any hazardous waste received; in fact, it is prohibited by law. While some of the waste (less than 1 percent) will include materials containing asbestos, Nevada law allows it and it is common practice in landfills.

The assertion that NDEP "has determined that leachate from the site will pollute local groundwater" is not true. No such determination has been made. Moreover, the senators' assertion that state law prohibits a landfill within 100 feet of any underground water supply is also incorrect. State law allows for such landfills if approved by NDEP with the requirement of sophisticated liner systems to insure that there will be no contamination to groundwater.

The Jungo Road proposal, like many existing sites in Nevada, is within a seismic impact zone. Unlike others, the Jungo project has been engineered to withstand any anticipated earthquake.

Lastly, the project will create approximately 30 permanent, high-paying jobs with full benefits. The Nevada Department of Economic Development has calculated that the project will generate substantial annual revenues, including new tax revenues of approximately \$2.5 million a year, community economic benefits of \$3.4 million a year, plus a host fee in excess of \$1 million a year.

The senators suggest that the stigma from waste disposal will be a deterrent to future companies locating to Northern Nevada. This statement ignores the fact that the existing Lockwood landfill, adjacent to the Reno-Sparks area and in close proximity to the Truckee River, currently receives hundreds of thousands of tons of waste from northern California each year.

The Jungo Project is the most thoroughly investigated landfill site in the history of Nevada. The permitting process has included expert review on hydrology, geology, geotechnical, civil and landfill

engineering, all of which is readily available on the NDEP Web site. The Jungo Project is subject to an open and public permitting process and is entitled to fair consideration by the appropriate Nevada regulatory agencies without misinformed political intervention.

George McGrath is chief operating officer of Recology.
