

January 13, 2025

Mrs. Wilhelmsen and the Division of Water Rights:

I am writing to express my deep concern about the water situation in the Pahvant Valley, and more particularly with Clear Lake. The lake was truly a desert oasis supplied by underground springs. That precious water supported numerous species of birds and wildlife for many years. Early indigenous tribes settled around Clear Lake and lived off the wildlife and resources there. Clear Lake was later purchased by the State of Utah in the 1930's as a wildlife management area for public use and enjoyment. It was home to the Least Chub, a surviving species of concern from Lake Bonneville. School groups from Millard County and throughout Utah visited Clear Lake to learn about the ecosystem, migration patterns, and to enjoy the wildlife and nature in the area. In the 1990's, Clear Lake was completely full and the marsh was ten miles long. Now, it is 200 yards long. Clear Lake has dried up and is now almost completely gone, and so is an entire ecosystem. Those things cannot be replaced, nor can the educational value and enjoyment Clear Lake provided for so many for so long. What an ecological disaster and loss! This public desert oasis has been traded for the surplus farming of a few.

Unmonitored pumping of the aquifer and overuse of the water resources in the Pahvant Valley is a significant factor in losing Clear Lake. The use and reckless overuse of some water users is eliminating the enjoyment and use of the resources by many, now and for future generations. We have witnessed senseless wastes of water sprinkling empty harvested fields long after the growing season has ended. Is that a wise use of a precious resource? Is watering in 100+ degree temperatures or strong winds the best use of the resource? Homeowners are asked to conserve water by not watering during peak heat, so why not the farmers? It is senseless to water in high winds. Is that considered, or are the pumps just turned on regardless and precious water wasted? The ever increasing water use has been a great concern since the 1980's, but it has not been adequately studied and addressed, in spite of decades of warnings and protests. Nobody wanted to talk about it. Now Millard County has lost the valuable resource of Clear Lake, and our over pumped aquifer is collapsing because it cannot recharge.

What else needs to happen before an equitable, fair water management plan is put into place and enforced? I applaud and fully support the proposal to put meters on every well and pivot in the county. Some protest this saying their livelihoods will be affected by water restrictions, and businesses that supply farmers will see declines. Agriculture is only one stakeholder. Millard County has already lost revenue the tourists and hunters who visited Clear Lake brought to our local businesses. The pig farm

representatives and legal counsel assured the public their significant year-round water use would be closely monitored with meters on all wells. Is that being done?

If water users are honestly and responsibly using that which is legally allocated to them, an enforced water management plan should not be a concern. Monitoring, accountability, and consequences for overuse must be established and enforced! There needs to be a minimum flow established and protected for Clear Lake. Water measurements have been recorded at Clear Lake since 1960. At present, there is zero water to be measured there. Clear Lake should be like the canary in the coal mine. It is a total indication of what is coming, if things do not change. Please come look at Clear Lake and see what has happened. It is shocking! Whose well is next?

Sincerely,

Lori Zubeck