

Journal of the Nevada Water Resources Association

Fall 2006

A publication of the Nevada Water Resources Association, providing hydrologic information to the people of Nevada and adjacent States



Volume 3, Number 2

Editor's Notes

Central Nevada Regional Water Authority

Jon Hutchings, Ph.D., Executive Director, Central Nevada Regional Water Authority

It is with pleasure that I respond to the NWRA Journal Editorial Board's invitation to provide a guest editorial about the recently formed Central Nevada Regional Water Authority. As a co-founder and the Authority's first Executive Director, I have invested dearly in the organization's success. The local measure of that success will be predicated on the honesty, ambition and plain hard work we lay out here in central Nevada. More importantly, though, is that our activities one day be contemplated as a solid contribution to water resource management for Nevadans statewide. After all, rural and urban, north and south, our contribution today defines the Nevada of tomorrow. With that prelude, I offer your readers the following overview of the Central Nevada Regional Water Authority, its structure, its goals and its ambitions.

What is the Central Nevada Regional Water Authority?

The Central Nevada Regional Water Authority (CNRWA) is a unit of local government that collaboratively and proactively tackles water resource issues common to communities in Nevada's rural interior. CNRWA exists under Nevada's Interlocal Cooperation Act and performs its delegated authority separate and apart from the member counties. The organization was formally chartered in August of 2005 with six members. With the addition of Churchill County in September of this year, the members number seven. The members are Churchill, Elko, Esmeralda, Eureka, Lander, Nye and White Pine Counties.

CNRWA's Mission

The CNRWA mission is to prepare communities in central and eastern Nevada for sound water-resource decisions that promote prosperous economies and strong civic institutions in a healthy natural environment. Under the interlocal agreement, member counties work toward water resource solutions that

1. Support their local and regional economies by
 - *developing and maintaining cost-effective water infrastructure, and*
 - *maximizing economic benefit from regional water resources.*
2. Meet the needs of their citizens by
 - *providing access to clean, inexpensive water supplies, and*
 - *sponsoring water-resource education aimed at local governments and the public.*

3. Build their capacity for making sound water-resource decisions by
 - *assisting member counties to predict long-term water needs,*
 - *identifying gaps in water resource data and information,*
 - *developing a uniform and accessible base of knowledge about regional water resources,*
 - *creating a regional water plan based on common aspects of county plans, and*
 - *assessing impacts of regional water resource development proposals.*
4. Maintain their natural environment in a healthy condition by
 - *assessing impacts of development on the region's ecosystems, and*
 - *protecting against the irreversible impacts of over-development.*

What is the Central Region?

The Central Hydrographic Region consists of 78 ground water basins in 11 Nevada counties (figure 1). The region is the largest of our State's 14 Hydrographic Regions, encompassing much of central, eastern and southern Nevada. The Central Region is distinguished by 1) its arid environment, 2) absence of regional surface water flows, 3) productive alluvial aquifers and 4) deeper, largely uncharacterized bedrock aquifers. Ground water basins in the Central Region receive little contemporary recharge, are often interconnected by subsurface flows and depend largely on ground water discharge to supply present and future natural and human uses.

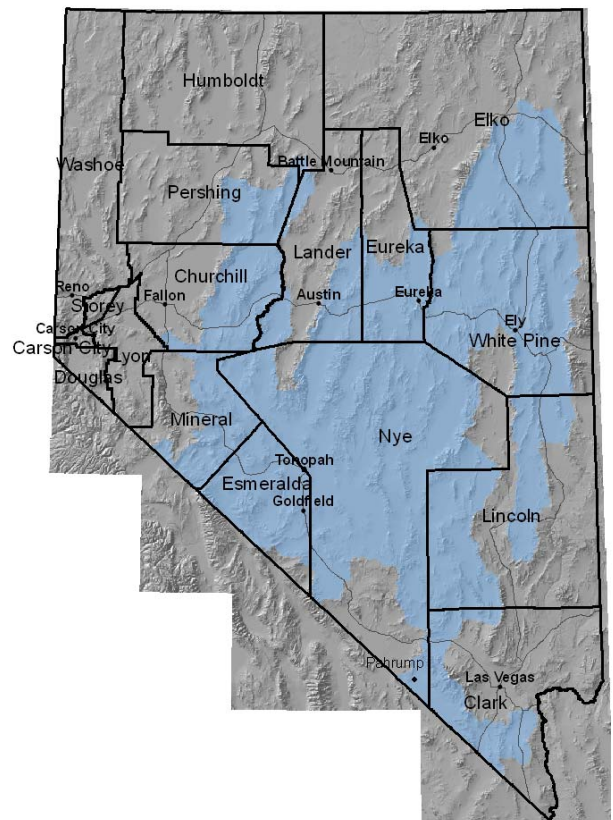


Figure 1. The Central Hydrographic Region as defined by the Division of Water Resources

What does a county's involvement in CNRWA mean for its citizens?

The physical distance of these ground water basins from population centers and the absence of perennial streams to readily transport water have protected the Central Region from past development pressures; however, their near pristine condition renders them a valuable future resource. The hydrologic, geographic and political hurdles to effective management of these resources for local benefit are shared among the Authority's members and is the common thread underlying CNRWA activities. CNRWA is a forum for finding solutions to these hurdles and leveraging those solutions through coordinated project funding, resource planning and policy making.

Current activities

CNRWA Members judge the primary hurdles to sound water resource decision-making to be 1) insufficient hydrologic information at the local government level, 2) inadequate local and regional water resource planning and 3) an ineffective voice in State and Federal actions. To overcome these hurdles CNWRA is presently collaborating with the Division of Water Resources and the U.S. Geological Survey to develop an information management system that will efficiently avail all existing water-level information in the Central Region to local government decision-makers and the capable public. CNRWA is preparing a comparative analysis of Member water resource plans and continues to engage the Interim Legislative Committee on Use, Management and Allocation of Water Resources on water resource issues that affect its members.

What's the cost?

Member Counties are committed to contributing \$7,500 per annum (the amount is determined each new fiscal year) to the daily operation of the Authority. Staff commitments are modest, requiring quarterly meetings, periodic consultations, document review, etc... The most important contribution, that most essential to the Authority's legitimacy, is that at least one County Commissioner is truly committed to the effort, regularly attend meetings and transmit the benefits of the Authority's work to the to the public at home. The overall fiscal impact to each Member is estimated to be less than \$10,000 per year.

For more information contact:

Jon Hutchings, Executive Director
PO Box 475
Eureka, NV 89316
Phone: (775) 237-6010
jhutchings@eurekanv.org

Jon Hutchings is the Natural Resources Manager for Eureka County. By virtue of his position, Jon is deeply involved in natural resource and public land concerns across the state. He is focused on balanced results for Nevada's rural communities in the areas of energy development, water resource development, land tenure changes, mine permitting, livestock grazing, range management and general quality-of-life concerns. Before coming to Nevada, Jon headed up the geochemistry component of a regional ground water flow system analysis in southwestern Idaho for the Idaho Water Resources Institute. Jon is a soil scientist and hydrologist by training. He received his Ph.D. in Soil Science and M.S. in Hydrology from the University of Idaho in Moscow. Jon, his wife and their three children presently reside in Eureka.

This page left blank intentionally