

Board of Directors
Sierra Lakes County Water District
7300 Short Rd
P.O. Box 1039
Soda Springs, CA 95728-1039

July 26, 2008

Dear Water Board,

One of the greatest threats to the Sierra Lakes County Water District water supply would be a wildfire destroying the watershed. A denuded watershed would subject Serene Lakes to flooding, erosion and increased siltation, perhaps rendering them unusable after rains and during the snowmelt runoff season.

With a fire cleared watershed, the snow melt runoff season would occur earlier, be much more intense, and be much shorter in duration. A runoff period that ends earlier would cause the lakes' water level to fall below the dam much earlier, resulting in lower lake levels throughout the dry season.

Without the forest cover, water would run off, rather than absorb into the ground and the fractured rock aquifer. This would lower the surrounding water table and reduce the amount of seepage water available to recharge the lakes during the dry season.

Because of these and other factors, a wildfire in the watershed would have disastrous affects on our water supply and its quality. It would be in the water board's interest to work to prevent, or minimize the danger of a wildfire in the area. One of the greatest risks for wildfire is the excess fuel in the surrounding forests. These lands, both privately and publicly owned, have been neglected for so long that the wood fuel density is much too high. Encouraging forest landowners to remove deadwood and ladder fuel, and to reduce the tree density, should be a priority of the water district.

Since most of the forest is on private or USFS lands, the water district needs to ask the individual landowners to do the fuel reduction work. My request to the water board is for them to immediately work with forestry and fire experts to assess the excess fuel situation and to determine how to work with the USFS and individual landowners, including Royal Gorge LLC, to get the proper work done before we are faced with a fire damaged watershed.

Sincerely,

Joseph Gray
4042 Serene Road
P.O. Box 902
Soda Springs, CA 95728

CC:

Joanne Roubique, Tahoe National Forest
Chief Keller, Truckee Donner Fire Service
Mike Livak, Royal Gorge LLC