

November 14, 1996

Politics and Science

On yet another matter, what the Negotiation Model represents, I think, is a political document, not a scientific one. It's telling the principles, namely the Feds, Sierra Pacific, and the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe what they want to hear. Any time this was not true, the model was examined to see if the "problem" could be "fixed." No more clear example of this phenomenon occurred than a couple of months ago when the model said, during Environmental Impact Statement runs, that the cui-ui were better off without the Truckee River Operating Agreement (TROA) than with it. Rod Hall went into the model and found the "problem" and—surprise—now the cui-ui do better under TROA. I suspect this happened a lot. Any time the results were not favorable, they would look hard for a problem, or change a process or parameter to give the politically acceptable "more reasonable" result. By contrast, however, I suspect that if the model were telling them what they wanted to hear, errors would go undetected.

I think we're talking about politics, not science. There even seems to be a feeling that we don't want to worry about the science now, or let it get in the way of the agreement. The idea seems to be to push the agreement through, and that we can fix up the science, and in particular the hydrology, after the fact. Whew! That seems assume a lot of confidence in being able to change Mother Nature at our will. The three principle parties seem to be counting on the litigants not being smart enough, or willing enough, or organized enough, to mount a serious challenge. I would question that logic.

Best regards,

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