

MEMORANDUM

Monte
Cristo HMA

7/9/03

TO: Don Henderson
FROM: Gary McCuin
SUBJECT: Duckwater reservation expansion
DATE: Jul. 9, 03

After attending the state clearinghouse informational meeting May 23, 2003 at DCNR it has become apparent that not all other state agencies share my concerns regarding the reservation expansion. I have attached a copy of my original comments to Jeff Weeks, Ely BLM to delineate my position. I am not against an increase in the size of the reservation for the stated purpose for the "tribe to pursue its goal of becoming economically self sufficient." However, I can see absolutely no justification in the information provided by the tribe to date, to increase the reservation from 3,785 acres to somewhere near 428,000 acres. One of the major economic enterprises being proposed by the tribe is agriculture. Agriculture can not provide the tribe the necessary economic base they desire for the remainder of the tribe to return to the reservation (over 300 people). The productivity of the area is simply not sufficient to accommodate that large of an economic base. Certainly it cannot be accomplished with range livestock requiring the land area of 428,000 ± acres. Other agricultural enterprises such as farming, aquaculture, feedlots, native seed production, etc. are all viable options which should be pursued by the tribe; however, none of these options require the land area proposed by the tribe. True economic success by the tribe must necessarily come from tribal enterprises engaged in off of the reservation. The tribe's trucking company and proposed oil field reclamation projects are perfect examples. While providing jobs for tribal members and opportunities to advance in careers widely sought after in the world, these enterprises do not require the tribal land base to increase, rather they require tribal influence to expand. The land base that the tribe has currently with modest increases for housing, farming or industrial enterprises is adequate. The greatest opportunities for tribal expansion is through utilization of federal and tribal funds, training and programs to venture into traditionally non-Indian enterprises of reservation and maintaining their cultural identity through education and functions on the reservation.

I would like to see specific projects proposed, delineating the land, water and funding required to accommodate the venture. At that time it will be much more realistic for state and federal agencies, and the public to make a determination of the land area required and how feasible the expansion may be in accommodating the tribes stated goals.

The natural resources of the area are important to all residents of the state of Nevada. The potential ramifications of tribal expansion and unregulated growth and resource use by the tribe affects a much larger area and constituency than the tribe or the 428,000 acres desired for expansion.

Mr. Jeff Weeks
Bureau of Land Management
Ely Field Office
702 North Industrial Way
Ely, NV 89301-1800

July 9, 2003

Dear Jeff:

Thank you for sending the information regarding the Duckwater Reservation expansion proposal. The Department has some concern regarding the proposed expansion. While we recognize and appreciate the Tribe's desire to become economically self sufficient, this should not be done at the expense of other local area residents. The proposed expansion area includes both private and public lands that have been utilized by area residents in their agricultural enterprises. Most of these ranches have been in existence prior to the establishment of the Duckwater reservation when the Florio Ranch was purchased for that purpose. The BLM grazing permits and private water rights to both underground and surface waters in this area are held and utilized legitimately. If the Tribe wishes to expand their boundaries and their enterprises they must accomplish this goal as all other citizens of the United States through purchase of land and grazing privileges from willing sellers. If the Tribe wishes to expand their land base for housing or industrial sites this can be accomplished in an area much smaller than 428,000 acres. The grazing allotments, both currently used by the Tribe and any potential purchase of grazing privileges by the Tribe, should remain under the administration of the BLM.

If such a purchase were made by any private entity, the buyer would be subject to the same use restrictions as the current owners. There would be no change in the status for wildlife, mining, oil and gas leasing, recreation, or any other use since the BLM would remain as the land manager. This procedure should be the same for the Tribe. The Tribe should be treated no differently than any other citizen of the United States desiring to use federal lands.

The Department respectfully requests to be kept abreast of all future actions regarding this proposal, including any legislative proposals for transfer.

Sincerely,

Gary McCuin
Agriculturist II, Range Specialist