

To: IDWR Hearing Officer, Complainant, Watermaster
From: John Sylte
Date: 10-24-16
Subject: NOI - Watermaster Removal

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DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

I absolutely do not support Laurin's removal and I intend to testify. Like Dan Park, the watermaster before him, he has done the best he could with little support. He has volunteered for a thankless job, has performed it as best he could, and is now being unnecessarily criticized and attacked by someone with a personal agenda.

In addition to Rathdrum creek problems, I have had a problem concerning "unnamed stream" with my neighbor for years and Laurin has done his best to help. Each time he has followed IDWR protocol and nothing has changed. If he were biased in my favor or otherwise insincere in his duties, I would have liked to have benefitted from it. I do not blame Laurin or IDWR, but a private property owner who has only his own interests in mind.

I don't know what took place between Laurin and Colby. I know Mr. Scarcello to be an honest and upright gentleman who cares for his community. Clearly Colby is ambitious in scope and passionate about his work. It is also clear that this removal is being used for personal reasons, as well as a springboard to challenge all relevant water law on Rathdrum Creek. Larger motives at work here are obvious. For certain, it is not fair that Laurin become the sacrificial goat for a dysfunctional system's shortcomings. If Colby thinks Laurin is a terrible rotten no-good watermaster (and wants his job)... he should wait his turn to throw his hat in the ring, like anyone else.

As for complaint 1, does anyone really know outflows and inflows? Are we guessing? Are we counting all of the inflows? Are we counting everyone who pumps out of the lake/creek during dry season to irrigate lawns and such?

Complaint 2, more water than necessary is being released... Who decides what is "necessary"? If no water reaches us, more is necessary. If we have a neighbor that is dead set on obstructing our water rights, and hundreds of upstream junior water right users, that is everyone's problem, not just ours.

With regard to complaint 3, how is it that recreation on Twin Lakes is not benefitting? Because someone's boat isn't floating all recreational value is lost? Who decides which recreational activities are most important? Why was no recreation claim filed for Rathdrum Creek? Did someone drop the ball? Is this a problem in other communities? When did we miss our chance to protect a year round stream that has benefitted Rathdrum Creek folks in the same way that it benefits lake folks for generations? There has always been recreational and wildlife value in Rathdrum Creek. A vacation home speculator claims Rathdrum Creek has no recreational or wildlife rights because "none were filed"? Does it really come down to this? If so, it's a tremendous oversight on the part of naïve and non-litigious community members, but certainly not a sign that our creek has no value.

Complaint #5 claims water is being delivered to end users at the expense of lake users. This is a complicated issue. I believe there is enough water for everyone. I contend that we should focus our scrutiny on areas of waste and neglect. When one private property owner is publicly vocal about his contempt for a neighbor's water rights, damns the creek to create backflows, pumps the creek into fallow fields, makes no effort to maintain healthy stream beds, and prevents others who are willing to do the work in the best interests of everyone, it's a problem for all of us. We *must* work together to find a solution. We *must* determine best practice that is good for everyone, and look at the bigger picture. The bigger picture includes forestry practices, accurate water measurement, monitoring and enforcement, and positive collaboration among all stakeholders. None of these things are within Laurin's scope of responsibility. He has done a good job and should stay.

Sincerely,

John Sylte