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First name: Kristen

Last name: Anderson

Organization:

Title:

Comments: In my childhood (1950's and 1960's), as we drove the switchback of 87 to and from Sylvan Lake, we always stopped at the "fountain", a spring-fed pipe that the CCC installed through the rock wall they constructed on the switchback. Cool, clear water was a simple treat on any hot summer day. A few decades ago that fountain was shut down due to cattle bringing giardiasis to contaminate what may have been the last source of a drinkable natural water supply in the Hills.

Only yesterday, Smithsonian Magazine (emag), presented an article regarding a reason scientific research has offered for the abandonment of Tikal, a Mayan city in northern Guatemala abandoned in the 900's AD:

"Commonly cited explanations for Tikal's downfall center on a confluence of overpopulation, overexploitation of the surrounding landscape and a spate of withering megadroughts. Now, reports Kiona Smith for Ars Technica, a new study of the ancient city's reservoirs outlines evidence that mercury and toxic algae may have poisoned Tikal's drinking water at a time when it was already struggling to survive the dry season." Over time, the citizens had constructed a series of reservoirs within the city to catch and store run-off when it rained. Analysis of sediment from 4 reservoirs revealed 2 deadly elements. One was mercury, found to come from cinnabar, a mercury-based ore mixed with iron oxide to create a red pigment and dye used in high-status burials. The second was a toxic blue-green alga whose growth was promoted by phosphates, which were a by-product of daily smoke fires and washing of ceramic dishes in the reservoirs. One of these reservoirs was adjacent to the royal kitchens. So the royal family was fed with food contaminated with these toxic elements. It could be considered poetic justice that the heads of the civilization were so immediately impacted by mercury from a process used to aggrandize their own stature after death. Except that at that time they did not have the scientific knowledge to prevent this.

Today we have a little more scientific knowledge, but do we have the will and the wisdom to prevent the destruction of our environment and our species despite that knowledge.

Economics 101 teaches that Needs are food, clothing and shelter.

From the internet I find that the mission statement of the National Forest is: To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. And this: "The phrase, "Caring for the Land and Serving People," captures the Forest Service mission. As set forth in law, the mission is to achieve quality land management under the sustainable multiple-use management concept to meet the diverse needs of people."

I believe it's fair to extrapolate water to be included under food. The first sustainable descriptor listed is health. Simply taken, if we poison our waters we, "as set forth in law", fail to meet the first basic need for present and for future generations. [I give you from 2.2 Alternative B: "The Forest Plan designates that no new mineral development (including exploratory drilling to inform future mineral development) is allowed and the majority of the MA around Pactola Lake has been withdrawn from mineral entry."] Recent history has taught us how easy it was to inadvertently contaminate the water table feeding the CCC's switchback fountain. Older history teaches us ignorance of nature's laws will not protect us from the consequences of violating the laws.

Samuel Coleridge wrote of the consequences of killing the Albatross - what can be seen as a metaphor for Nature/Planet/Water - with which we are inextricably interwoven. I give you these 3 excerpts:

At length did cross an Albatross,  
Thorough the fog it came;  
As if it had been a Christian soul,  
We hailed it in God's name.

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!  
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!-  
Why look'st thou so?'-With my cross-bow  
I shot the ALBATROSS.

Water, water, every where,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, every where,  
Nor any drop to drink.

Water requirements for exploration and for mining will draw on water supplies needed in an area for wildlife sustenance and with dramatically increasing human population growth. Inevitable drainage from the Jenny Gulch area into the Pactola reservoir will contaminate water supplies within the immediate area and n downstream. Our Needs are relatively simple; our Wants have created a much more complicated tangled web that we are not fully capable of weaving without further toxic entanglement. Please put away your cross-bow; heed the laws of Nature and of this Land; do not permit further augers of exploration and mining in the Paha Sapa which will inexorably lead to the spiral of history repeating itself in our destruction.