

## Augustin Plains Ranch OpEd makes astounding claims – OpEd by Carol Pittman, Datil. April 26, 2018

[http://www.dchieftain.com/opinion/editorials/augustin-plains-ranch-oped-makes-astounding-claims/article\\_a3aa37e4-48a4-11e8-9fbb-dfe3eea05d19.html](http://www.dchieftain.com/opinion/editorials/augustin-plains-ranch-oped-makes-astounding-claims/article_a3aa37e4-48a4-11e8-9fbb-dfe3eea05d19.html)

Michel Jichlinski's OpEd in El Defensor Chieftain responded to an earlier piece by Senator Heinrich about the proposed mining of water in the San Augustin Plains. The Jichlinski response needs a response itself. Mr. Jichlinski, representing the Augustin Plains Ranch LLC, makes some astounding claims and conjectures that are not supported by facts and reason.

Jichlinski states that we citizens who object to his project have "deprived" the APR LLC "of its right to a hearing as per the New Mexico constitution." That is absurd. There have been several hearings before both the State Engineer and the 7th Judicial District Court. Three times their plan has been judged not acceptable under New Mexico law. We objecting citizens have no control over the Office of the State Engineer and the New Mexico courts. So let's call this propaganda and baloney.

Mr. Jichlinski states that progress in the New Mexico economy is dependent on new water. In essence he declares that a key engine of New Mexico's economy, the Rio Grande valley, requires water from the Augustin Plains to survive.

That is not the case. As a matter of fact, the LLC has found no buyers for the water they want to acquire. The Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority has specifically said that they do not include water from the Augustin Plains aquifer in their hundred-year water plan.

We can also call this propaganda and baloney.

Jichlinski does not address what the water mining would do to Catron County's economy. The economy has already been brought to near stagnation by the LLC's threat to our water hanging over our heads for eleven years. Why would anyone start a new enterprise when it is unclear that an adequate water supply could not be counted on. For example, a promising crop for this altitude and climate might be quinoa, but who is going to invest in exploring a new agricultural enterprise when there is doubt about the water supply?

Jichlinski seems to be saying that Catron County has to be a sacrifice zone for the urban areas to thrive. This sacrifice is unnecessary (not to mention undesirable). New Mexico has proven time and time again that conservation and wise use of water is the most effective way to maximize our water resources. Again, we have been fed baloney.

There are more technical misrepresentations in the Jichlinski piece, such as the notion that the aquifer can be significantly recharged from surface flows. I will leave those matters to someone more expert in that realm.

Mr. Jichlinski offered in his OpEd to meet with the community to discuss the LLC's proposal and to hear the community's views.

That has already been tried with no beneficial effect. From our point of view, such meetings with the APR LLC yield a report on how great the project is, but nothing to show how the project would benefit Catron County. We hear how great the project would be for someone or someplace else. In fact, this LLC "corporate citizen of New Mexico" (whose actual owners are unknown) has designed a project to benefit itself and its investors. For this, the citizens of Catron County have been held hostage for eleven years.