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August 31, 2010

Environmental Working Group  
1436 U Street, NW Suite 100  
Washington DC 20009

Attn: Chris Campbell

Subject: Corrected Data Submitted to Environmental Working Group (EWG)  
Truckee Meadows Water Authority, Reno, Nevada

Dear Mr. Campbell:

This certified letter is sent to you to further document the attempts Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) has made to correct the numerous egregious errors made by EWG in its Drinking Water Quality Report dated December 14, 2009, concerning the quality of water delivered by TMWA. The EWG report grossly misrepresents the quality of that water. When TMWA learned of the widely-circulated report, it immediately contacted you regarding correction of the data. Although you assured TMWA that EWG would correct the information on its website and adjust TMWA's ranking, EWG has yet to do so.

In the beginning of 2010, we had several conversations with you and sent you email showing corrected data from 2005 and 2008 for your use. *A CD with that data is enclosed.* Of 233 data points showing detected values in the 2005 data set used by EWG, TMWA provided 82 corrections (35% error rate). Among the most glaring errors are the following:

- In 2005, the arsenic regulation was 50 parts per billion (ppb). EWG reported values over 10 ppb (the current standard) to be "over legal limit". (4 occurrences)
- PCE/TCE results were reported from untreated groundwater. Although certain source wells do have low levels of these solvents, the well water is treated to non-detect prior to being introduced into TMWA's distribution system. This resulted in PCE being reported as "over legal limit" and TCE being reported "over health guidelines". (16 occurrences).
- Data values were transcribed incorrectly in the database. This resulted in manganese being reported as "over legal limit" when the samples were within legal limits. (5 occurrences).
- The EWG "ranking/scoring system" is based in part on the total number of constituents detected in a water supply. For the EWG report, additional reporting errors resulting in over counting were as follows:
  - The same sample data point was reported in duplicate or triplicate (33 occurrences)
  - Incorrectly reported data – Samples were reported for wells that were not operated during the reporting period – no value should have been reported. (12 occurrences)

*Truckee Meadows Water Authority is a not-for-profit, community-owned water utility,  
overseen by elected officials and citizen appointees from Reno, Sparks and Washoe County.*

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- Double counting of same results. Nitrate results, and Nitrate plus Nitrite results counted twice by EWG. (12 occurrences)

Perhaps the most significant distortion of water quality occurred as a result of EWG's failure to weight sources in reporting "average/maximum" levels of contaminants. In calculating these average levels, EWG assumed each water source contributes equally to TMWA's water supply. Although all TMWA sources meet all drinking water standards, the Truckee River source of supply (Chalk Bluff and Glendale water treatment plants) is our highest quality source and accounts for 85-90 percent of our total water supply while our groundwater sources account for the remaining 10-15 percent. The average value needs to be calculated based on the amount of water produced by each source (weighted average). TMWA provided the corrected information for the 2005 data shown in their report, and for the 2008 data. A few examples of the corrected data are as follows:

- EWG showed system average arsenic at 7.06 ppb. The correct annual average arsenic value is 2.58 ppb for 2005, and 1.57 ppb for 2008.
- EWG showed average PCE at 1.67 ppb. The correct value is <0.05 ppb for both 2005 and 2008.
- EWG showed average manganese at 29.84 ppb. The correct value is 3 ppb in 2005 and 4 ppb in 2008.
- EWG did not take into account that 90% of TMWA's water supply came from the Truckee River in 2005, and 88.5% in 2008.

TMWA last communicated with you in an email on April 2, 2010, to follow-up on your assurances that EWG was "halfway completed with correcting the water quality data and would post to the website". We have had no further communications from EWG since this time.

Given the wide publicity EWG sought and received regarding the safety of the nation's water supplies, it is troublesome to learn that you apparently have little regard for the veracity of the information you disseminate. In the long run, your use of erroneous and distorted data can only undermine the cause you purport to be promoting. We cannot stress too strongly TMWA's commitment to providing high quality water to our customers and our dedication to ensuring the safety of our water supplies. We would like to have responsible partners in this effort.

Sincerely



Mark Foree  
General Manager  
Truckee Meadows Water Authority

cc: Ken Cook/President EWG  
Greg Kail, AWWA Public Affairs Director  
David B. LaFrance, AWWA Executive Director  
Sylvia Harrison, TMWA General Counsel