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## Area leaders' opinion columns mirror peer's writings on NISP

BY KELLEY KING  
*Loveland Connection*

Two Northern Colorado lawmakers seeking to drum up support for a regional water supply project have published opinion columns in area newspapers taken from the writings of a colleague.

Columns purportedly authored by Rep. BJ Nikkel, R-Loveland, and Weld County Commissioner Doug Rademacher focused on the need for new water storage capabilities in Northern Colorado, highlighted their support for the Northern Integrated Water Supply Project, or NISP, and encouraged readers to attend a Thursday agricultural rally in Erie.

Nikkel's and Rademacher's columns published in the Berthoud Recorder, Windsor Beacon and Greeley Tribune closely mirrored a Sunday column published in the Denver Post written by Weld County Commissioner Sean Conway.

Conway admits he provided his writings to Nikkel and Rademacher after they expressed interest in spreading news about the agricultural rally and their support of NISP.

"Anyone who knows me knows that I'm a longtime supporter of NISP," Conway said. "Leading up the ag rally, I wanted people to know about the event. I submitted a column to the Denver Post as an exclusive update about the event, authored by me.

"Over the course of the next few days, my office mate, Doug Rademacher, said he wanted to submit something to the Greeley paper about the event. I offered him the column and said, 'Use what you want.' Essentially, he took it and ran with it, and I'm fine with that."

Conway said he also talked with Nikkel, who wanted to submit a column to newspapers in her district, in Loveland, Berthoud and Windsor.

"I sent her the column and told her she had my permission to use it," Conway said.

Conway said he has not yet reviewed the columns published as the writings of Nikkel and Rademacher. However, he is not overly concerned about their use of his work.

"From my standpoint, I gave my work freely and willingly," he said. "I don't have problems with them taking my work and using it. My purpose was to get information out and promote the rally."

Questions about who truly penned the columns surfaced this week as allegations swirled saying Republican gubernatorial candidate Scott McInnis plagiarized a series of essays in which he was paid \$300,000.

In the Nikkel, Conway and Rademacher columns, the lawmakers call for Coloradans to support NISP using strikingly similar language.

Conway's Denver Post column stated:

"Over the last 30 years, the population of northern Colorado has more than doubled, yet no new significant water supply facility has been built. In addition, growing cities in the Denver metro area are looking north to find the water supply their communities need. They now have their sights on thousands of acres of irrigated farmland in northern Colorado."

Nikkel's column published in the Berthoud Recorder and Windsor Beacon, a sister publication to the Fort Collins Coloradoan, stated:

"Over the past 30 years, Northern Colorado's population has more than doubled and yet no new significant water supply facility has been built. Growing cities in the Denver metro-area are looking north to find the water supply their communities need and they have their sights on thousands of acres of irrigated farmland in Northern Colorado."

Rademacher's column published in the Greeley Tribune stated:

"Over the past 30 years the population of northern Colorado has more than doubled, yet no new significant water supply facility has been built. In addition, growing cities in the Denver area are looking north to find the water supply their communities need, and they have their sights on thousands of acres of irrigated farmland in northern Colorado."

Some opponents to NISP picked up on similarities in the columns and alleged officials with the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District penned the column and asked local lawmakers to put their names to the words.

In response to this allegation, Brian Werner, spokesperson for the water district, flatly denied his agency had any role in writing the column.

"I can tell you Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District did not write the column," Werner said. "I have enough other things on my plate. The first time I saw the column was with Sean (Conway's) name on it."

Gary Wockner, director of Save the Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper, a critic of NISP, initially questioned who authored the column and alleged the water conservancy district was behind it.

"If these elected officials will deceive the public about who authored this editorial, what else are they deceiving us about?" Wockner asked in a news release titled "Water plagiarism expands." "We think the taxpaying public should know who really wrote the editorial and how much they were paid to write it."

In a subsequent telephone interview, Wockner acknowledged it's not uncommon for advocacy groups to serve as ghost writers for politicians. He initially said he, too, had used a ghost writer. In another phone call to the Coloradoan, Wockner said he did not use a ghost writer.

"It's common practice for elected officials, people in charge of organizations to have ghost writers," Wockner said. "So, I would say most people do it; on a very few occasions, I've worked with other people to write things, and I've always done my best to make sure no one else printed the same material. We have an area (online) where people keep their talking points."

Calls to Nikkel and Rademacher seeking comment were not returned.

## Additional Facts

**Want to see more?**

To review the columns published by BJ Nikkel, Sean Conway and Doug Rademacher, visit the following links:

> **Nikkel in Windsor Beacon:** [www.coloradoan.com/article/20100715/WINDSORBEACON04/7150303/1134/Soapbox++Water+storage+is+critical+to+Northern+Colorado+s+future](http://www.coloradoan.com/article/20100715/WINDSORBEACON04/7150303/1134/Soapbox++Water+storage+is+critical+to+Northern+Colorado+s+future)

> **Conway in Denver Post:** [www.denverpost.com/search/ci\\_15471328](http://www.denverpost.com/search/ci_15471328)

> **Rademacher in Greeley Tribune:** [www.greeleytribune.com/article/20100709/READERS/100709694&parentprofile=search](http://www.greeleytribune.com/article/20100709/READERS/100709694&parentprofile=search)

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