

September 4, 2014

Subject: Gila River diversion makes no sense—stop the wasteful planning now

Dear Governor Martinez,

The Interstate Stream Commission continues to heavily invest in plans to build a destructive diversion from the wild Gila River. New Mexico is entitled to divert a small amount of Gila River flood waters, but New Mexico will have to pay the federal government to make Arizona's current users of that water whole by replacing every drop. The ISC will make a decision before the end of the year whether or not to proceed with federal development of Gila River water for export to Deming and Silver City and to supplement irrigation supplies.

A Gila River diversion has been shown to be a state-funded "bridge to nowhere," another Spaceport with high costs and limited or no benefits.

This project will be massively expensive. At best, only a few will benefit. New Mexico taxpayers, endangered species, the wild Gila River, and those of us who want the wild Gila River to remain wild would suffer great harm.

The Bureau of Reclamation's estimated costs for the diversion project, though still incomplete, already vastly exceed benefits, even though BOR assumed continuously full reservoirs and full supplies to overstate the benefits. No one needs the water enough to pay the exorbitant costs. Freeport McMoRan, Inc., one of the world's largest mining companies, owns most of the irrigated land that would receive supplemental water from this diversion project. They are using barely half of their Gila River water rights.

Huge amounts of State funds, potentially a billion dollars, will be required to develop Gila River water. The local community cannot or won't foot this bill so it will fall to New Mexico taxpayers to pay the certain costs for speculative benefits to only a few.

The diversion will be grossly inefficient. The ISC's consultants have warned the proposed reservoir sites will leak. This leakage will exceed evaporation and could be so high that the diversion project would produce no usable water. No ISC study or plan can fix this.

New Mexico's best choice is to use the \$90 million (2013 dollars) from funds that Senator Domenici appropriated to New Mexico in 2004 to fund non-diversion alternatives proposed by stakeholders and improve public drinking water systems infrastructure so that drinking water supplies are safe and sustainable.

Please encourage your Interstate Stream Commission to stop wasting money on studies and plans and instead use the available federal funding for cost-effective non-diversion alternatives including infrastructure improvements for drinking water systems, water conservation, and use of treated wastewater for irrigation.

Sincerely,