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*"The best kept secret in New Mexico"*

**Anita A. Hand**

Commissioner  
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District No. 2

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**Bill Green**

County Manager

May 29, 2020

Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski  
DSOB 304  
Washington, D.C. 20510

To whom it may concern,

The Catron County Commissioners that I represent stand emphatically against the M.H. Dutch Salmon Bill S. 3670. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act will not provide benefits or improvements for the individuals who live in the area, it will do the opposite, taking away rights of people who have lived and worked here for generations. If accounts of meetings held by Senators and others in Catron County are reviewed, you will find that over 95% of attendees stood against the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Why should the preference of special interest groups be valued above the needs and livelihood of people that historically have made a living utilizing the river for farming, ranching and wildlife access? The river is already protected by Forest Service and Wilderness guidelines, this act is not necessary.

While we have been assured by the senators' representatives that the rights of ranchers and farmers will be protected, the proposed legislation does not provide specific provisions guaranteeing their rights to make repairs and improvements. In fact, their failure to include requested changes leads you to believe that more restrictive control over local entities is the main goal of the bill. Some of these families have lived here for over a hundred years. The Native American, Hispanic and Early Mormon settlement descendants who have made their living from the land and have maintained that land in a manner that allows wildlife to thrive, tourism to grow. They also work in conjunction with current Forest Service personnel and their goals for their respective Forests. Why enact policy that can potentially upset a balance that has lasted for generations?

This new legislation is attempting to change history and designate river segments as wild and scenic that never qualified as "Wild and Scenic" under the guidelines as originally set! Over 400 miles of river will be designated without undergoing proper NEPA procedures. Will Congress conduct a proper appeal process before acting on any decision? Proper due diligence should be adhered to on any bill or act that has ramifications on the

livelihood of our citizens. There is no evidence that the senators considered comments from the people who actually live in the areas of the rivers or that any substantive changes were made from those local concerns.

One last, important point. Catron County is currently fighting for the water rights that belong to our citizens. Our water flow unrestricted to Arizona. Now our attempts to make improvements that better utilize spring water flows and allow South Western New Mexico citizens to have increased water usage for farming, ranching and wildlife are in question. The water that originates in our mountains should benefit our state before ultimately ending up in Arizona reservoirs. Our goal is better utilization of the water, we have over 4000 acre feet of water rights for Catron County that goes on through before we have a chance to use it.

We ask you to please consider our side of the issue. Special interest groups cannot continue to hold more influence on decisions made for our county and our neighbors. We live here, please listen to us.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Bill Green, Manager  
Catron County