



NEW MEXICO FARM & LIVESTOCK BUREAU

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Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
DSOB 304
Washington, DC 20510

New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau (NMF&LB) is New Mexico's largest agriculture organization, representing members involved in all aspects of agriculture including dairy, livestock, fruits and vegetables. Our mission is to promote and protect agriculture in the great State of New Mexico. We are charged with the important task of representing our members' interests, especially when it comes to impeding and burdensome regulations. NMF&LB respectfully submits these comments on behalf of our 20,000 member-families.

Today we write to you in opposition of S. 3670 the M.H. Dutch Salmon Bill, which aims to designate portions of the Gila river as wild, scenic, and recreational. NMF&LB actively opposes designating any rivers or streams in New Mexico as wild, scenic, and recreational. The proposed designation would remove the local management authority of our natural resources and place them in the hands of federal agencies who are very limited in resources and personnel and are not fully capable of properly managing them.

As you may recall, the Gila watershed was fully evaluated for consideration as wild, scenic, and recreational in 2002. According to the United States Forest Service (USFS) Plan Amendment, an interdisciplinary team with various scopes of professional experience and knowledge evaluated over 99 segments of the river. The team determined that 9 segments of the river were eligible for some level of protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The current legislation looks to designate roughly 69 segments of the Gila river and its tributaries, this far exceeds the professional recommendation issued by the interdisciplinary team. The legislation ignores the professional public process initiated by the USFS and designates river segments that have never qualified for such protections. It is apparent that this legislation is an outright attempt to bypass the NEPA process by designating the additional segments without proper legal procedure. While the Senators did allow for public comment, there is no proof that these comments were taken into consideration and that local input was included in the development of the legislation, as the current legislation lacks substantive changes from the original draft. Local input in these processes is absolutely required and must be taken into consideration.

Members of the local community have observed the degradation of the Gila river over multiple years. Endangered species listings near the river has reduced the allowance of conservation and land management practices in multiple areas. It is crucial that our local communities are able to continue the successful local land management practices which they have utilized for generations including management of noxious weeds and nonnative species. Further, land management practices in compliance with state and county requirements should not be prohibited. New Mexico's farmers and ranchers are the best stewards of our state's natural resources, and it is vital that management of these resources are maintained at the local and state level where they are best addressed.

Farmers and ranchers are cultural icons not only of NM but of the entire Western United States and even worldwide. Farming and ranching in NM has been a way of life for multiple generations. NMF&LB is strongly opposed to any legislation that could potentially remove individuals from their cherished homes and operations which are the livelihood of their families and have provided economic stimulus to the local community for years. The [one pager](#) posted on the Senator's website states, "This Act **will** protect the traditional river values and uses while also permanently protecting the free-flowing nature of these river segments," yet the proposed legislation includes no protections for the viability of agricultural practices or the private property rights of individuals who have **traditionally** utilized the river. Many of the segments along the river contain irrigation and grazing improvements which are necessary for the grazing and farming that is dependent upon the consistent delivery of water. The legislation also lacks specific language authorizing the repair, maintenance, and improvement of these existing facilities. Further, the legislation will grant the USFS the authority over New Mexico water rights by controlling when, where and if such maintenance and improvements can be made.

Lastly, the legislation claims to protect existing grazing and livestock improvements yet again lacks any provisions allowing for grazing lease renewals, permit renewals for water improvements, fencing, or continued access to these rivers and their waters.

For the multiple reasons listed above we request that you vote in opposition of S. 3670 the M.H. Dutch Salmon Bill. The legislation has explicitly bypassed the professional public process initiated by the USFS as well as greatly exceeded the professional recommendations pertaining to qualifying designated areas. We thank you for your time, and hope that you will continue to fight not only for NM's farmers and ranchers, but for the great agriculturalists across this nation that continue to grow the world's safest and most abundant food supply which nourishes each and every one of us multiple times a day.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a stylized "S" for "Smith".

Chad Smith, Chief Executive Officer