

Reply to Howie Morales

Our Senators Hendrich and Udall along with Howie Morales have publicly supported implementing The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act on the Gila, San Francisco and their tributaries. Don't be fooled by the camouflaged and pleasing name of this act. The facts are, if implemented, it will take our current and future water rights, handing them without claim to Arizona water users.

Our senators' actions are compounding frustration when you consider the importance of land and water in our state's history. Prior to admitting NM into the union, the congress and both presidents Roosevelt and Taft required expanded use of our number one natural resource, water, along with irrigation and improvement of our lands. This government support has continued historically to the present day where The Department of Agriculture through the USDA energetically financially supports ongoing irrigation projects and conservation water use within our county through EQIP programs, grants and funding. That is a meaningful fact, known to our senators, yet they have engaged section 7 of the Act which controls all water usage on private property. This same section 7 Act language has the potential to stop all water usage, essentially ending economic growth and depleting our tax base. Why would the senators oppose our Agriculture Departments ongoing positive efforts within our watershed?

If the senator's special interest groups agenda is successful, water will flow freely into our neighboring state where it will be used to Arizona's financial benefit rather than fulfilling New Mexico needs. To further explain Howard Hutchinson wrote. *Lt. Governor Howie Morales in his opinion piece says that designating the Gila and San Francisco Rivers Wild and Scenic will protect these rivers. If he were truthful, he would have stated the purpose is to stop New Mexico from obtaining 14,000 acre feet of new water for the state. In addition he would have said that the state is in favor of ceding state jurisdiction to the federal government and environmental litigants over the waters of the two rivers.*

We now know that the Secretary of Interior is denying an extension for reaching a record of decision that cost the state 62 million dollars, "It's a disappointment this project, that would bring critical water supplies to rural communities in New Mexico, has faced such scrutiny and a lack of support from the State of New Mexico. And, "The State's lack of action undermines the importance of the water supplies provided by the NM Unit in ensuring that rural communities in southwestern New Mexico have the water security necessary to thrive and grow."

In thinking this through I find it disturbing that outside entities have more influence on the Senators and Lt. Governors position, that will affect our county, than those citizens living within our county.

Should it not be expected from our professional Senators to spend equal time with stakeholders that will be affected by their actions as with those single-minded outside influences.

You will hear from those outside influencers' "private land and water will not be affected". Truth is; if you own land or water rights on designated rivers or any tributary to our waterways you ultimately lose control of land maintenance and improvements. This will be due to section 7 of the Act and/or law suits that will be implemented by those outside interest groups, who the senators support.

Yes, the senators are attempting to wash their hands clean, while building a foundation for law suits and river management actions that will facilitate their unspoken goal. You'll see mining, agricultural and industry slowly shut down and tax base decrease, along with population. This reality is likely the long-term goal of those strategically implementing the Act, leaving an empty watershed devoid of population.

Some segments of our government and conservation districts are keenly aware of this coming threat and have asked our senators to take their opposition of the Wild and Scenic River Act seriously. In response, the senators sponsored 6 meetings, managed through their representative's, who invited input from a small selected group. This was in a veiled attempt to claim public comment is being gathered. To the senators surprise an uninvited overwhelming majority of opposition to the Act gained access to those meetings (that majority mobilized with a 2-day notice) asking all stakeholders input be documented and not simply a select few.

I believe it is required of our senators and Howie Morales to stop ignoring those NM citizens whom their oath was given to represent.

Sincerely,

Haydn Forward,

S.F.S.W.C.D.