

**Open Letter to NM House Agriculture and Water Resources
Legislators Introduce HB 357 to Kill SW New Mexico's Future**

Dear Agriculture and Water Committee Members,

The opponents to recovering water lost in the Arizona v. California Supreme Court Decree have conned legislators into again proposing legislation to strip funding from water projects in Southwest New Mexico. House Bill 357 calls for prohibiting the use of the New Mexico Unit Fund for any water diversion projects or administration costs of the CAP Entity.

In December opponents celebrated their success in leveraging their political influence to delay planning and implementation of water development projects for over four decades. On December 20 the Secretary of Interior denied a request for an extension to reach a record of decision on the environmental impacts of proposed projects. The effect of the denial is the loss of up to 62 million dollars in construction funds. Those funds will now be spent developing water in Arizona.

The Secretary of Interior expressed his dismay in the December 20 denial letter, "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. Water supply infrastructure is a priority of this Administration, and the Department of the Interior is committed to helping deliver reliable water supplies to rural communities. 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."

The Secretary's letter concluded with, "Because the extension applies only to funding under Section 212(j) of the Act, the Entity retains the option to pursue the NM Unit with other funding sources, including funds available under Section 212(i) of the Act. The Department understands the importance of developing water infrastructure in the West, especially to communities and farms in southwestern New Mexico."

With the introduction of HB 357 legislators are continuing to block additional water for present and future generations of the region. In the years of state inaction upwards of one million acre feet of water have flowed into Arizona without any benefit to New Mexico. Arizona markets that water to users in their state. It makes one wonder if interests in Arizona might be funding the opposition.

HB 357 is attempting to amend the Arizona Water Settlements Act, a federal statute, with state legislation. Why do legislators not recognize the years of the opponent's exaggerations and lies. Do they not realize that if the region's elected officials are not able to secure the additional water for their citizens some moneyed interest in New Mexico or Arizona will take it?

Howard

Howard Hutchinson, Chair
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