

Will You Give-Away Your Water and Land?

Our Senators Hendrich and Udall have publicly supported implementing The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act on the Gila, San Francisco and their tributaries. Don't be fooled by the pleasing, misleading and camouflaged name of the resolution. The facts are, if implemented, it will immediately take all your future water rights and ultimately take both your land and existing water rights.

Our senators' actions are compounding my frustration when you consider the importance of land and water use in our state's history. To explain, prior to admitting NM territory into the union, the congress and both presidents Roosevelt and Taft required expanded use of our natural resource water along with irrigation development and improvement of our lands. Our governments support of water use has continued historically to the present day where The Department of Agriculture through the USDA has energetically and financially supported ongoing irrigation projects and conservation water use within Grant County through EQUIP programs, grants and funding. That is a meaningful fact, unknown to our senators, who need only ask county government to gain the knowledge. However, rather than spend time in the county to understand the importance it's land and water, they allow special interest groups to write the very legislation that will take-away water and land rights.

Why would the senators oppose our Agriculture Departments ongoing positive efforts within the county? If the senator's special interest groups agenda is successful and the county loses our water, where will our lost water go? It will flow freely into our neighboring state where it will be used to their financial benefit. We in NM will be left to deal with poor conservation of our lands, visual erosion and loss of our agriculture producer's tax base.

In thinking this through I find it disturbing that outside entities have more influence on the Senators positions, that will affect Grant County, than those citizens living within the county.

The senator's supported legislation calling for designation of our water ways to be classified wild and scenic, without visiting the county government, discussing the topic or learning of unintended consequences should be unthinkable. It is expected from our professional Senators to spend equal time within the county to be affected by their actions as with those single-minded outside influences.

You will hear from the senators' "private land will not be affected". Truth is; if you own land within ¼ mile of any tributary to our waterways you lose control of land maintenance and improvements and ultimately must relinquish your property.

You will hear "all water rights are protected". Truth is; 1000's of future acre feet of water will be taken away and any current irrigation water rights within that ¼ mile boundary are at serious risk.

You will hear “the tax base will increase due to visitation on the river”. Truth is any documentation on that topic is thin at best. Any outside example of increased river visitation is actually a result of business-friendly state benefits which increase populations.

The truths listed above are all backed up by the lawsuits handed to landowners, who live within the ¼ mile boundary, attempting to protect their private rights.

Our county government and conservation district are keenly aware of this coming threat and waiting for our senators to openly discuss their positions of the Wild and Scenic River Act. No doubt the county will welcome honest dialogue on the topic, however our senators continue to have that dialog strictly with those special interest groups behind closed doors.

I suggest our senators stop ignoring those NM citizens who will be most affected, and whom their oath was given to represent.

Sincerely,

Haydn Forward