**Gila River Fact Sheet: Community Uses vs. Destructive Dam**

People have used the Gila River for thousands of years, but more recently urban and agricultural interests intend to take more than the river can give. Imperiled fish, birds and other wildlife need the river’s water too, as do people who find solace and refreshment in fishing, birding, rafting and hiking. Bureaucrats and politicians continue to eye this last wild Southwest river for water “development” projects, such as dams and diversions.

Then Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) is considering a recommendation to dam and divert 14,000 acre feet of stream flow from the river annually. The allotment is available under the Arizona Water Settlement Act (AWSA). Limited federal funding is available to construct the project **OR** be used for community projects and like conservation.

**What you should know about the diversion/dam:**

**It’s not our water.** The water is repeatedly mischaracterized as “New Mexico’s water” but New Mexico only has the right to buy expensive water to trade with Arizona tribes under the Arizona Water Settlement Act. New Mexico will pay the Bureau of Reclamation in advance $146 for every acre-foot of Gila River water diverted. The Bureau will then deliver an equal amount of Colorado River replacement water in advance to Arizona tribes.

**Construction, operation and maintenance of the diversion dam is very expensive.** Bureau of Reclamation’s July 2014 report shows the project will cost **$1.1 billion** for construction and operation. Water bills in Deming would have to increase more than 10 fold even if the Legislature kicked in $250 million of State taxpayer funds for construction. Municipal bonds would need to be issued for the remainder.

**It is unclear that there is a real need for the water.**

**Very little or no usable water is actually available.** The ISC’s engineer, RJH Consultants, recently admitted that the reservoir sites would not hold water losing significant volume to evaporation and seepage.

**The main beneficiary is the international copper mining company, Freeport MacMoRan.** New Mexico taxpayers and southwestern New Mexico municipal water customers will subsidize water for the lands of this huge international corporation.

**Viable Conservation Alternatives are available:**

If used sensibly, this funding could provide the financing for critical water and wastewater infrastructure and municipal and agricultural conservation needs without additional funds from New Mexico taxpayers. These measures could conserve 15,000 acre feet/ year, more than the diversion dam could deliver.

**Alternatives to the diversion dam include:**

* Municipal Water Conservation
* Agricultural Water Conservation
* Effluent Reuse
* Sustainable Groundwater Management
* Watershed Restoration

Non-diversion alternatives can secure our water future without building a costly diversion project that will alter the Gila River forever. Common-sense conservation saves the taxpayer money and protects the Gila River for future generations.