



Photo: Jay Hemphill

Key Things to Know about the Gila River and the AWSA

In 2004 Congress passed the Arizona Water Settlements Act (AWSA) that authorized diversion of the Gila River if New Mexico agreed to buy water from Arizona to replace what we take out of the river. The AWSA provides \$100 million (2004\$) for water supply demands. \$66 million of this is available to meet local water needs in southwest New Mexico without diverting the Gila River.

Diversion is infeasible & will have low net yield

- The diversion proposal will be difficult to build, if not impossible, due to its remote location.
- The project will yield much less than a third of the legally available water due to low flows on the Gila. Evaporation and reservoir leakage could consume all the water leaving none for human use.

Diversion is unnecessary

- According to water studies there is a huge aquifer under the populated areas in southwest New Mexico that can supply needs far into the future.
- There are effective water supply alternatives that are cheaper, faster, and easier than a diversion and pipeline.

It's expensive

- Project costs are estimated at over \$1 billion. AWSA subsidy won't cover the full cost of a project, leaving a gap of \$900 million for taxpayers and water users to cover.
- Paying Arizona for the water we use and the annual operation and maintenance costs of a diversion will cost taxpayers as much as \$11 million dollars per year.

Diversion will negatively impact the hydrology and ecology of the Gila River

- The ISC claims that water will be taken only during high floods but water can actually be taken out of the river at low flow levels.
- This will harm wildlife, limit recreation opportunities and potentially impact irrigators.

Healthy rivers are a priority for an overwhelming majority of New Mexicans

A recent poll shows that 85% of New Mexicans believe we should use our current water supply more wisely. Voters prefer this option to diverting more water from New Mexico's rivers to communities where more people live.

Water needs can be met cost-effectively through non-diversion alternatives

We can immediately spend the \$66M on community water projects that will meet our needs far into the future without building a costly Gila diversion that we will be paying off for many years and may fail due to long-term drought.

What You Can Do Contact Governor Susana Martinez and your state representatives and tell them that they should protect the Gila River for people, wildlife and future generations. New Mexico should immediately spend the \$66M in AWSA funding on cost-effective, non-diversion community water projects that can meet water needs far into the future while keeping water in the Gila River. More info at www.protectthegila.org

