



SUPPORT FOR THE M.H. "DUTCH" SALMON GREATER GILA WILD AND SCENIC RIVER ACT

For nearly a decade, a groundswell of support for preserving portions of the Gila and San Francisco rivers and their tributaries has been growing from Tribes, sportsmen and women, veterans, small business owners, faith and civic organizations, local municipalities and governments, and outdoor recreation and conservation organizations.

Local Community Leaders

"Now more than ever, New Mexicans want to ensure that future generations will be able to experience the full glory of a protected wild Gila River: clean drinking water, wildlife habitat, and a huge driver of outdoor recreation. Thank you, Representative Vasquez, Senator Martin Heinrich, Senator Luján, Representative Leger Fernandez, and Representative Stansbury for working to preserve these incredible waters." - **Grant County Commissioner Chairman Chris Ponce**

"Re-introducing a bill to protect the Gila River and its tributaries will get us one step closer to protecting our heritage, diversifying our economy, and preparing for climate change. It's so important in so many ways that support for it crosses the usual political and ethnic divisions in our community: Hispanics and Anglos, hunters and hikers, businesspeople and old hippies." - **Grant County Commissioner Harry Browne**

"Reintroducing the M.H. Dutch Salmon Wild and Scenic River legislation is a vital step forward in safeguarding our way of life here in Grant County. I want to thank the entire New Mexico delegation for working to protect the world-class outdoor recreation opportunities. Preserving wild places for future generations is a worthy endeavor." - **Grant County Commissioner Alicia Edwards**

"I was born in Santa Rita, New Mexico, and have lived my entire life, 73 years, in Grant County... For many years, some of us would take the challenge of rafting down the Gila River in spring when the runoff was the highest, from The Forks to Turkey Creek. We made our own rafts from large truck inner tubes and cut-off 55-gallon barrels, carried our own food and fishing supplies. It was always a thrilling adventure, filled with breathtaking scenery and wildlife. We frequently encountered the remains of other people's attempts at rafting the Gila in canoes, rafts, etc. The Gila River is a jewel to be enjoyed for generations, to appreciate the beauty, enjoy the thrill, and I want to thank the New Mexico delegation for reintroducing this important bill." - **Danny Vasquez, Member, Silver City LULAC Chapter**

"We believe it is vitally important that we protect these critical watersheds and rivers that have been very meaningful to our people for centuries. The artifacts found in Mogollon Box and other locations along these waterways can never be replaced, so it is imperative that we do what we can to conserve them. Designating these rivers as Wild and Scenic will protect them for future

generations and allow those who come after us to stay connected to those who came before us.” - **Lori Gooday Ware, Chairwoman, Fort Sill Apache Tribe**

Hunters and Anglers

“For generations, my family has been visiting the Gila and San Francisco Rivers to fish, hunt, and picnic. I am thankful that Representative Gabe Vasquez, Senator Martin Heinrich and the entire New Mexico delegation re-introduced legislation to safeguard our time-tested traditions.” - **Larry McDaniel, a hunter in Silver City**

“Hunters and anglers have long understood the value of the Wild Gila River. It is where we go to find peace and unwind, and where we harvest food to sustain our families. I am not surprised that a recent poll showed that my friends and neighbors overwhelmingly support protecting the Gila and San Francisco Rivers.” - **John Trujillo, an avid hunter and angler who frequents the Gila area**

Business Leaders

“Representatives Gabe Vasquez, Senators Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján, and Representatives Melanie Stansbury and Teresa Leger Fernandez understand the Gila and San Francisco Rivers are a powerful economic driver in Western New Mexico. People come from near and far to explore all that Grant County has to offer, and that keeps the wheels of our local economy turning.” - **Diana Ingalls Leyba, owner of L&I Arts**

“In 10 years, I want to be certain our four sons can still bring my grandchildren to the river. I want them to have a place to teach our grandchildren patience as they wait all morning for the first hit of a Gila Group on their line. I want to be sure they can learn resilience as they hike through a crossing of the last free-flowing river in the state. I want to thank Representative Vasquez, Senator Heinrich, and the whole New Mexico delegation for helping me realize this future.” - **Rocky Mondello, owner of Morning Star Sports**

Local Residents

“My daughter and I used to go to the San Francisco River, and today she takes her son – my grandson—to the same spots we went. It is such a joy to watch multiple generations enjoy this natural gift. I want to thank Representative Gabe Vasquez, Senators Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján, and Representatives Teresa Leger Fernandez and Melanie Stansbury for listening to small businesses, hunters and anglers, and residents like myself and working to protect the San Francisco River.” - **Gregory Smestad, Catron County Landowner**

“Every trip to the Gila, watching my family, truly showcased how much my Grant County community loves to enjoy our outdoors together, and reminded me that we must not take our wild and beautiful places for granted. I want to thank Representative Vasquez, Senator Heinrich, and the entire New Mexico delegation for working together to ensure that my daughters, our children, are afforded the same pleasures and opportunity to get outdoors and have fun.” - **Vyncent Bourne, Silver City resident**

“Representative Vasquez, Senators Heinrich and Luján, and Representative Leger Fernandez and Stansbury understand that preserving the river in free-flowing condition is in the best interests of those who have been able to enjoy it as such in the past

as well as those who will come to our state to experience it in the future. Let's care for our state by supporting efforts to preserve as much of it as we can." - **Patricia Cano, Western New Mexico University, Professor Emerita**

"I use the rivers and tributaries for hunting, fishing, and viewing the spectacular scenery and ecological features while on horseback. I am also a trail advocate and a person concerned about retention of public lands and feel wild and scenic designation would help protect my interests." - **Gerry Engle, Gila Chapter of Backcountry Horsemen**

"I flew to our nation's capital to show my support for protecting the wild Gila River for future generations. And it was great to return home to a newly re-introduced bill to preserve this amazing, free-flowing river. I wanted to thank Representative Gabe Vasquez, Senators Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján, and Representatives Teresa Leger Fernandez and Melanie Stansbury for listening to New Mexicans and safeguarding these amazing waters." - **John Harned, Mimbres property owner**

"The Gila River, originating in America's first designated wilderness area, deserves to stay wild and free as nature intended... It is wonderful to see our entire New Mexico delegation working with New Mexicans to gain national Wild and Scenic River designation for the Gila River." - **Brett Myrick, Veteran**

"The Gila Region is one of the most ecologically diverse areas of North American with over 1,500 vascular plant species and mammal diversity second only to the Sierras; the Gila River is the lifeblood of this magnificent diversity." - **Dr. Kathy Whiteman, Associate Professor, Department of Natural Science, Western New Mexico University**



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