



# THE M.H. DUTCH SALMON GREATER GILA WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT

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**Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich**

## Support for the M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act

### Local Community Leaders

*“Wild and Scenic designation for the Gila River and its tributaries is about 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**

*“The headwaters of the Gila is where the ancestors of the Apache and other indigenous peoples walked, and today it remains sacred ground that connects us to our past. I want to thank our United States Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich for honoring our history and our culture by protecting the Gila for future generations.”*

- **Joel Davis, an attorney for the Fort Sill Apache**

*“It is important that we call for the protection of the Gila River because we have been going there to fish, hunt, and picnic with our families for many years and we want to continue to do so while securing it for future generations.”*

- **Chon S. Fierro, Mayor of the City of Bayard**

*“We believe it is vitally important that we protect these critical watersheds and rivers, and that by designating them Wild and Scenic Rivers, it will protect them for future generations.”*

- **Lori Gooday Ware, Chairwoman, Fort Sill Apache Tribe**

*“Many of our families have lived in this area for multiple generations, passing our profound respect for our land, water, and other natural resources down to each succeeding generation. In an ever-changing world, this is a tradition worth preserving.”*

- **State Representative Rudy Martinez**

*“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, Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich for working to preserve these incredible waters.”*

- **Grant County Commission Chairman, Chris Ponce**

*“Strictly from my position as County Assessor, the property values of the area are affected positively by the presence of the Gila River as a major attraction and draw to relocate in southern New Mexico. Personally, being a fourth-generation native, I am fortunate to live here near the Gila and feel we need to continue to preserve it for future generations. The Gila is rare and valuable as one of the last free-flowing rivers in the United States, flowing from the first wilderness area in the United States. Todos juntamos por la conservación de nuestro río Gila, se lo debemos a generaciones futuras.”*

- **Raul Turrieta, Grant County Assessor**

*“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.”*

- **Danny Vasquez, Member, Silver City LULAC Chapter**

## **Sportsmen and Women**

*“Sportsmen and sportswomen have long understood the value of the Gila River, not only because it is a place where we find peace in the world, but also a place where if we work hard, we can find a meal or two. Thank you, Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich for working to permanently protect our wild and scenic rivers in the Gila.”*

- **Jason Amaro, sportsman in Grant County**

*“For generations, my family has been visiting the Gila and San Francisco Rivers to fish, hunt, and picnic. I am thankful that Senators Udall and Heinrich introduced legislation to safeguard our time-tested traditions.”*

- **Larry McDaniel, hunter in Silver City**

*“As a Sierra County property owner and sportsman, I treasure the wildlife habitat and free-flowing waters of the Gila and San Francisco Rivers. I want to thank Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich for their leadership in preserving these rivers for future generations.”*

- **David Soules, hunter in Sierra County**

*“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, avid hunter and angler who frequents the Gila area**

## **Business Leaders**

*“Supporting designations such as Wild & Scenic is important to help maintain and preserve our waterways.”*

- **Polly Cook, owner of Javalina Coffee House**

*“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.”*

- **Rocky Mondello, owner of Morning Star Sports**

*“The Gila River is a powerful economic driver. Our store, Gila Hike and Bike, relies heavily on visitors to the Gila purchasing gear for their adventures or spending time in our community.”*

- **Chris Schlabach, owner of Gila Hike and Bike**

*“People come from near and far to explore all the Gila and San Francisco Rivers and the lands they sustain. If our ‘main attraction’ dries up, many business owners would lose their livelihoods.”*

- **Gordon West, President of the Southwest New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce**

*“The Wild and Scenic bill to give additional protections to the Gila River watershed will not just add significant protection for the wild life and the river, but will also strengthen our tourism economy,”*

- **Jamie Crockett, local business owner**

## **Local Residents**

*“Years ago, when I first came to these Rivers, the Gila and San Francisco and tributaries, I spent great lengths of time camping in the lush gentle bends, swimming in the clear deep pools, warming on the sunny rocks, seeing bear, hearing mountain lion call, soaking in the warm waters. And, still now, we visit these places as often as we can. We camp at the river or have birthday celebrations or just bring the kids to play for the day. These are the places our children want to play, wild, magical places. When I am by the river, I am free from worry and stress, and overwhelmed by beauty. These places will continue to enrich and nurture humanity and must be permanently protected.”*

- **Claire Bergeron, Catron County resident**

*“That trip to the Gila a few weeks ago, 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. We must work 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**

*“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**

*“Throughout our planet wild places are disappearing and under constant threat. River walking in the wild waters of the Gila National Forest is amazing! We are so lucky to have these unique places to honor and protect by getting them designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers. The joy they bring to my life cannot be duplicated.”*

- **Lisa Fields, Private property owner, certified crop advisor CCA-retired**

*“I look forward to springtime in the Gila. Despite the relentless wind, it is a time of beauty and renewal. The snow melts off of the Mogollon Range, the flowers bloom and the river swells. I love being on the river. The waters flow free from the high peaks and wind down through the canyons. I see signs of bear. Deer scatter as I round the bend. Countless springs add to the river’s flow. The waters give life. Not just to the plants and animals, but to the people and communities beyond the wilderness boundary.”*

- **John Harned, Mimbres property owner**

*“Twenty-five years ago, my first visit, the San Francisco Canyon -- beautiful, remote River Canyon -- watching the Big Horns come down the canyon walls and seeing beaver in early dawn. I've never lost the desire to believe this could be designated Wild and Scenic.”*

- **Ken Lee, Catron County resident**

*“As a property owner within the Gila National Forest; An Oasis in the desert is how I refer to the Gila River and enjoy sharing its beauty as I hike, camp and backpack with friends along its banks and watershed. The Continental Divide Trail hikers rely on this precious water source, as do the variety of flora and fauna which are provided the critical habitat needed for sustenance and a joy for me to observe.”*

- **Carol Martin, Grant County resident**

*“The Gila River, originating in America's first designated wilderness area, deserves to stay wild and free as nature intended... We can all work together to gain national Wild and Scenic River designation for the Gila River.”*

- **Brett Myrick, Veteran**

*“While women of a certain age may no longer be designated scenic, we are most certainly still wild. There is no finer place than the unspoiled wilderness of New Mexico to really unwind, let our hair down and form lasting and meaningful relationships. One might say that this exceptional group of retired ladies is finally in their element.”*

- **The Walkie Talkies**

*“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**

## **Conservation Leaders**

*“There is no greater gift we could leave our grandchildren than the permanent protection of New Mexico’s last free-flowing river, whose headwaters start in the birthplace of America’s first designated Wilderness. This bill honors the original vision of Aldo Leopold and river champions like the late Dutch Salmon, without whose efforts this river we love would have been greatly diminished. As New Mexicans struggle with the fear and heartbreak from the pandemic, we realize now more than ever how irreplaceable our natural and cultural heritage is. We thank Senators Udall and Heinrich for their leadership and for this gift of hope for the future.”*

- **Mark Allison, Executive Director of New Mexico Wild**

*“Protecting the Gila Wild and Scenic River is so incredibly important. Southwestern rivers are rare to begin with. And so many have been drastically altered by development over the past century, that this river stands almost alone as a remnant of the biodiversity that was our region’s heritage and is now fading away. We New Mexicans are very fortunate to have, as our Senators, men who will act to preserve such a valuable natural asset.”*

- **Steve Harris, river outfitter and conservationist, Rio Grande Restoration**

*“The Gila River is precisely what the architects of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System had in mind when they set out to keep our nationally significant and outstanding rivers flowing freely. The leadership of Senators Udall and Heinrich will help preserve the free-flowing nature, outdoor recreation, and growing source of economic benefits for surrounding communities and people of New Mexico.”*

- **Bob Irvin, President and CEO of American Rivers**

*“What a wonderful tribute to Dutch Salmon’s legacy! As a co-founder and a chairman of the Gila Conservation Coalition for 35 years, Dutch worked tirelessly to protect the Gila and San Francisco Rivers. I know he would be so pleased with this legislation that will protect his beloved Gila for future generations.”*

- **Allyson Siwik, Executive Director, Gila Conservation Coalition**

*“San Francisco River, the Gila meanders through Grant County, and both waterways sustain surrounding communities, provide a place for families and friends to recreate, and support wildlife that depend on their waters to survive. For decades, a diverse coalition has been working to protect more than 450 miles of the Gila and San Francisco rivers and their tributaries as wild and scenic—a designation possible under the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, which Congress passed to protect our nation’s most outstanding free-flowing rivers by ensuring clean water, safeguarding fisheries, and preserving cultural resources, scenery, and outdoor recreation opportunities for current and future generations.”*

- **John Gilroy, U.S. public lands and rivers conservation program director, The Pew Charitable Trusts**

*“The Gila has long been known for its wild forest and untamed waters, but the region has also faced many threats over the years which leave the last free flowing river in New Mexico at risk. Wild and Scenic River protection can help ensure the Gila River gets the scientific and resource protections that are needed. The leadership of Senators Udall and Heinrich, through this legislation, will ensure that future generations of people and wildlife can equally benefit from the waters of the Gila.”*

- **Michael Casaus, New Mexico state director for The Wilderness Society**