

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

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

"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**

"Over 500 miles of free flowing river at the heart of one of the most diverse bioregions in world, the Gila River and its environs is a national treasure well worth preserving and protecting. Congress passing the MH "Dutch Salmon" Wild and Scenic River legislation is a vital step forward in safeguarding the ecological and environmental health and well being of the Greater Gila bioregion; protecting the world-class outdoor recreation opportunities and reminding all of us that preserving wild places for future generations is a worthy endeavor."

- **Grant County Commissioner Alicia Edwards**

"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, the City of Bayard's Mayor**

"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**

"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**

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 Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján for working to permanently protect our wild and scenic rivers in the Gila."

- **Jason Amaro, a 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 Heinrich and Luján 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

"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**

“Several studies have shown that water-related recreation is a significant economic driver. That is true here, as 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. We applaud Senators Heinrich and Luján for recognizing the importance of these rivers to the businesses in this region.”

- **Craig Wentz, President, Southwest New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce**

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**

“The Main Stem of the Gila is a fantastically special river canyon. The wildlife, the fish, the history and incredible diversity of plant life make it one of a kind. Too many times our rivers have been dammed up. Cities and developers inevitably end up with the water. The river gives life. Not just to the plants and animals, but to the people and communities beyond the wilderness boundary. I believe the people of Southwest New Mexico are best served by the Gila remaining a free-flowing river.”

- **John Harned, Mimbres property owner**

“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**

“The Gila Region is one of the most ecologically diverse areas of North America 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**