

## **'Flailing' CAP Entity needs to face facts before it's too late**

Dear editor,

The New Mexico CAP Entity's own chair recently admitted they're "flailing."

The Entity can't agree on a feasible diversion and storage plan for the Gila, let alone find something that won't cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. Worse, it wasted months (and thousands of dollars) on a proposed location that depended on approval of the landowners. Which was — predictably — denied.

Now they are stuck between 1.) going back to the ethically-tainted consulting firm, AECOM, that spent months analyzing the recently rejected proposal, and 2.) hiring their own engineer/consultants to advise them.

Both options would take many months the Entity does not have. There is a December 2019 deadline for a final decision from the Department of Interior on any Gila diversion proposal from the Entity. Before that decision can be made, an Environmental Impact Statement has to be written. The

Entity's current "flailing" means the EIS process can't even get started until next year, leaving less than two years for a complex EIS. In fact, there will have to be a scoping process, a preliminary draft EIS, a draft EIS, a preliminary final EIS, a final EIS, and then a Record of Decision. Getting all that done in less than two years would be a long shot, even for an outfit that isn't "flailing."

Now is the time for the Entity to take a deep breath and reflect. Instead of wasting scarce dollars on an EIS process for a diversion that is unlikely to result in anything feasible, and at this point is likely to miss its deadline, they should pivot and spend the AWSA money on shovel-ready water projects in Catron, Grant, Hidalgo and Luna Counties. The great majority of Southwest New Mexicans would cheer. And despite the wind, you'd hear the Gila sigh.

(s)Shelby Hallmark  
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