Key Things to Know about the AWSA and the Gila River

In 2004 Congress passed the Arizona Water Settlements Act (AWSA) that authorized diversion of the Gila River if New Mexico agreed to pay for Central Arizona Project water to replace what we take out of the river. $100 million (2004$) has been made available through the AWSA. $66 million of this is available to meet local water needs in southwest New Mexico without diverting the Gila River. According to the January 21, 2019 Preliminary Draft EIS, the proposed diversion project could cost $70 million to construct and $1.9 million annually to operate and maintain. Construction costs are far greater than AWSA funds earmarked for construction reimbursement, potentially leaving New Mexicans to pick up the shortfall. Cost-effective non-diversion alternatives are available to meet water needs in southwest New Mexico far into the future and can create jobs now. The Secretary of Interior must make a decision on whether or not to build a diversion by the end of 2019.

GILA CONSERVATION COALITION

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Organized in 1984 to protect the free flow of the Gila and San Francisco Rivers and the wilderness characteristics of the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness areas, the Gila Conservation Coalition (GCC) is a partnership of three conservation groups, Gila Resources Information Project, Upper Gila Watershed Alliance and Center for Biological Diversity, that promote conservation of the Upper Gila River Basin and surrounding lands.

The Gila River is New Mexico's last major undammed river

- Flowing out of America's first Wilderness Area, the Gila is home to seven threatened or endangered species.
- The Gila River is proposed for long-term protection under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act.

Diversion will harm the Gila River

- The project will take water at low flow levels, during ecologically critical times.
- This will harm wildlife, limit recreation opportunities and potentially impact irrigators.

Diversion is unnecessary

- According to water studies, Southwest New Mexico groundwater supplies can meet water needs far into the future if sustainably managed.
- Proposed use of AWSA water would only benefit a small number of farmers and international mining giant Freeport-McMoRan.

It's expensive and wasteful

- According to the Preliminary Draft EIS, the AWSA construction reimbursement will not cover the project's full cost, leaving a gap of millions of dollars for citizens to cover.
- AWSA water will be many times more expensive than currently available water.

Diversion proposal is not functional and will have unreliable yield

- The concept proposed by the NM CAP Entity is not functional or practical for water development.
- The Bureau of Reclamation estimates the project would provide an average of 2,600 acre-feet per year, however in many years there would be no water at all.
- The ISC and NM CAP Entity have wasted $15 million to date and 15 years without identifying a feasible diversion project.

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 and create jobs now.