



The Honorable Senator Tom Udall
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Senator Martin Heinrich
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

July 16, 2018

RE: Gila Wild & Scenic Rivers

Dear Senator Udall and Senator Heinrich,

We write to you today to express our strong support for the introduction of Wild & Scenic Rivers legislation to protect and conserve the outstanding ecological values, wildlife, and natural resources in the Gila River, San Francisco River, and their tributaries.

As sportsmen and women who spend a considerable amount of time in the backcountry areas of the Gila National Forest and among the banks and riparian areas of the Gila and San Francisco Rivers, we know how critical this level of protection is for one of the most important hunting and fishing areas to New Mexico Sportsmen.

The Gila is home to the nation's first designated wilderness and helped set the stage for the North American Model of Wildlife conservation. More than 100 years ago, conservationist and sportsman Aldo Leopold in his research and writings recognized the remarkable ecological qualities of the Gila and the wildlife therein. Wild & Scenic Designation would help ensure that these outstanding qualities can be conserved and enjoyed for another 100 years by all New Mexicans and Americans alike. The Gila is more than deserving of this designation.

Wild & Scenic designation would also ensure the integrity of biological diversity and wildlife corridors adjacent to the Gila River and support the river's natural flows, which have a direct impact on the riparian habitat that sustains healthy populations of non-coastal breeding birds, intact native fish populations that include the threatened, Gila Trout, Gila Chub, and spokedace, and game species such as elk, bear, mountain lion, deer, bighorn sheep, javelina, wild turkey, and pronghorn antelope.

We thank you for your continued support of conservation efforts in New Mexico that help preserve the culture, tradition, and heritage of hunting and fishing in New Mexico and strongly encourage you to support Wild & Scenic designation in the Gila.

Signed,

Todd Leahy

Acting Executive Director

New Mexico Wildlife Federation

Toner Mitchell

New Mexico Water and Habitat Coordinator

Trout Unlimited

Katie DeLorenzo

Southwest Chapter Coordinator

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Oscar Simpson

Chair

New Mexico Sportsmen

Jim Bates

Co-Chair

Southwest Consolidated Sportsmen

C.J. Goin

President

Wild Turkey Sportsmen Association