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**Sent:** Tuesday, August 23, 2011 2:53 PM  
**To:** Roepke, Craig S., OSE  
**Subject:** Impoundment dams on tributaries to the San Francisco River

## Impoundment dams on tributaries to the San Francisco River

The entities in Catron County are disappointed that the concept of having impoundment structures on the tributaries to the San Francisco River has been declined. We would much rather have a main stream dam on the San Francisco River. As a secondary project to the main stream, we have proposed the concept to have several dams in the best locations in the chosen tributaries to the San Francisco River.

Catron County the largest county in New Mexico has 2 lakes, Quemado Lake in the north part of the county and Snow Lake in the high country. We continually suffer from low water for our crops to erosion of our levees and private land.

Catron County is home to most of the headwaters of the San Francisco River and a good part of the Gila River. Having a low population and very little political clout we have to suffer the consequences of having extreme flooding because we have no main stream or significant secondary impoundment structures. It is imperative that these headwaters be used for water storage and flood control. Water is needed for in-stream flow for aquatic life, wildlife, irrigation purposes and to lessen the erosion of flooding our land.

After over 100 years of Gila National Forest management, we have no hope that our San Francisco River watershed will ever be restored to function again. The ISC did approve our Catron County proposal of watershed restoration on three tributaries to the river. This is a small area of the forest and well down stream of most water users of the river water.

The concept of this important impoundment project has been put in jeopardy for reasons beyond our capabilities. We cannot be specific about dam sites or diversions to impoundment sites without help from expert engineers. There are many creeks and canyons that need to be analyzed for the best selections. Starting in the north we have Trout Creek, next is Apache Creek, Tularosa River, Saliz Canyon, Deep Creek, Pueblo Canyon, Kellar Canyon, Vigil Canyon and there may be others to consider.

Quemado Lake in comparison will give us some idea of size and costs. It is 131 acres and cost \$670,000. An engineer has estimated the cost today of this structure to be 3 times, or approximately \$2,000,000. We hope for more than one structure and built in a more substantial stream to impound more water and give us true flood protection and better recreation prospects.

We hope for at least 4 structures to substantially provide water and flood protection. The price range for these larger structures could be up to \$6,000,000 each.

Another concept is Bill Evans Lake in Grant County; this lake is filled from a diversion out of the Gila River. We need the full gambit of engineering expertise to determine the best impoundment plan for our river health and economic benefits.

It will do little good to spend our money on ditch diversions, pipelines and irrigation systems when the San Francisco River flow is steadily declining. A yearlong substantial quantity of water is more important, other funding can be found for improving our irrigation systems. **This AWSA funding and water is the only chance Catron County has to sustain its water supply and any future of economic growth.**

It is important that the AWSA money be spent on substantial long lasting projects that will carry our water needs into the future.

As a reminder, the Gila-San Francisco Water Commission represents all the elected personnel in this SW area. This Commission has unanimously endorsed its approval of this project. Also the town of Reserve, SCS and Catron County Commission have given their full blessing.

It is especially frustrating to have our projects declined. I and others have been attending ISC sponsored AWSA water meetings for over 6 ½ years. We ask that the ISC **reconsider** and give approval to our requested concept of impounding water in the San Francisco River watershed.

Hugh B. McKeen, Chairman of the Catron County Commission and member of the Gila San Francisco Water Commission.