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Interstate Stream Commission Endorses a Proposed Settlement Agreement for Gila Basin Waters

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – Interstate Stream Commissioners passed a resolution today to support a proposed settlement agreement for Gila Basin Waters, which would provide from \$66 million to \$128 million in federal support to the State of New Mexico for water improvement projects.

The agreement presented to Commissioners was reached after more than three years of negotiations between New Mexico and Arizona. The proposed agreement defines how New Mexico will be able to use the water in the Gila River apportioned to the state in the 1968 Colorado River Basin Project Act.

“This proposed settlement agreement would assure water would be available for southwestern New Mexico’s future and present needs,” said Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López. “Funds are not restricted to the development of any project that would take water from the Gila River, but can be used to support any water improvement project such as water conservation, watershed enhancement, or other ecologically beneficial projects.”

Commissioners also were presented with and adopted a general policy statement, which assures activities funded under the settlement will be assessed using the best available science and will fully consider the unique ecology and traditional uses and needs for water in the Gila Basin as well as in southwestern New Mexico.

The nine-member Interstate Stream Commission is charged with duties, which include protecting New Mexico’s right to water under eight interstate stream compacts, ensuring the state complies with each of those compacts, as well as water planning.

The Office of the State Engineer is charged with administering the state's water resources. The State Engineer has power over the supervision, measurement, appropriation, and distribution of all surface and groundwater in New Mexico, including streams and rivers that cross state boundaries. The State Engineer is also Secretary of the Interstate Stream Commission and oversees its staff.

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