

On Monday, November 17, 2014 the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) decided to allow a diversion project on the Gila River. This decision has extremely important implications for the water grab attempt on the Augustin Plains. Below is an analysis of how we will be affected, written by Max Yeh, one of the most knowledgeable water experts in the state:

I think that the excessive cost of the diversion, dam and pipeline, is calculated to force the state to seek private funding for the project. This “public/private joint venture” will be like other public/private actions. The public will give, and the private sector will take. While the private sector will put up funds, it will also recuperate those funds by successfully privatizing water in New Mexico. The process of privatization of water is behind many water projects in NM. The Augustin Plains Ranch project is just such a “public/private” venture which intends to take the control of water away from the State and put it in the hands and discretion of a for profit business. Now the Gila diversion is deliberately being set up to become private water, too. Protect New Mexico’s water tradition: keep NM water common.

In April I attended a New Mexico First Town Hall, a two-day event bringing together people from all over the state to discuss the future of water. I can tell you that an emphasis was placed on public/private partnerships, and NM First is considering a bill to be presented to the legislature this session furthering public/private partnerships.

Here is a link to Monday’s article about the Augustin Plains, written by John Fleck, that appeared in the Albuquerque Journal: <http://www.abqjournal.com/501430/news/nm-news/state-lacks-tools-to-sort-out-water-question.html>. In the article, Fleck states: “Depending on your view of the issue, this is either: a) an innovative approach to bring new water to the Middle Rio Grande Valley, or b) an inappropriate attempt to privatize a public resource that could devastate the rural community where the water originates.”

**Action is needed:** a letter to Gov. Susana Martinez protesting this decision by the ISC, and asking her to rule out privatizing water, could go a long way to help put a stop to the idea of public/private partnerships. PLEASE COPY DON TRIPP ON YOUR LETTER. We need to act fast. Go to [www.sanaugustinwaterreport.com](http://www.sanaugustinwaterreport.com) for a sample letter to send the Governor.