

Permaculture In Practice: 'Damriddle' planned for Gila River

Print  Font Size:  

Posted: Saturday, February 28, 2015 7:00 pm

By **Nate Downey**
For **The New Mexican**

I pondered, Googled and even Facebooked it, but no synonyms for *boondoggle* exist. In the interest of our language and its blessed diversity, herein I hereby coin the first synonym for *boondoggle*.

The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission's plan to spend \$1 billion to \$2 billion removing 12,000 acre-feet of water annually from the Gila River, moving it around mountainsides, storing it in three evaporation-prone reservoirs, and delivering it to the 15,000 people in Deming, is a "damriddle" waiting to happen.

Although the term is derived from the aforementioned boondoggle, "damriddle" does not have to be used in the context of a dam project that threatens New Mexico's last wild river. From now on, damriddle can refer to any puzzling waste of money and precious time.

Technically, all the commission did last November was tell the U.S. Department of the Interior that it hopes to do something with water that it could legally access based on the federal Arizona Water Settlements Act. "Hey," the commission was saying, "we want that \$66 million of federally earmarked dollars." In the high-



Be entered to
Win an iPad Pro

With your free trial of the **NEW eNewMexican** app for iOS and Android.

Get it NOW

*Must download from page linked to this ad.

stakes, real-life strategy of water in the West, I understand the desire to keep chips on tables, but the problem is that the project is a loser.

First, it's too expensive for the amount of water that might be acquired. Although the commission says its project will cost \$775 million, the former head of the commission has done some math. At www.protectthegila.org, Norm Guame explains that it's more likely to cost above \$1.1 billion.

“How sound are those numbers?” I asked Steve Harris, the executive director of Rio Grande Restoration.

“Remember the Buckman Diversion, Albuquerque's drinking water project and the Navajo Reservoir?” Harris replied. “That's three recent New Mexico water projects that went two to two-and-a-half times over budget.” Making matters worse, Harris continued, “The water we'd take would have to be paid back in cash to the tribes in Arizona who we'd be taking it from.”

The project is wrong on many ethical levels, too. It's not only wrong to take water from indigenous people, but it's also wrong to destroy a wild river, to kill endangered species, to ruin a healthy tourist and recreation industry, and to depress property values in an area that depends on natural beauty and the pristine wilderness that Aldo Leopold established as our nation's first official Wilderness Area. And it's wrong to develop major projects in the most remote parts of our watersheds. These places represent permaculture's Zone 5, where the only thing that humans should harvest is information.

Forget that water-project estimates could easily double over time. Using Guame's numbers translates to \$178,000 per Deming household. That's expensive water, *qué no?* Is the commission thinking in terms of Las Cruces? With \$1.1 billion, every housing unit in that city could buy a \$25,000 cistern system. Now we're talking serious, long-term job-creation.

It's time to contact Gov. Susana Martinez and ask her to consider her fiscal and ethical responsibilities. She could tell the Interstate Stream Commission to stop this damriddle. Will she?

Nate Downey, the author of Harvest the Rain, has been a local landscape consultant, designer, and contractor since 1992. He can be reached at 690-7939 or via www.permadesign.com.

Discuss

Print 

Posted in Santa Fe New Mexican Home Real Estate on *Saturday, February 28, 2015 7:00 pm.*

More Stories

Santa Fe home sales climbed in 2015, but oil industry slowdown could cool market

This startup wants a stake in your home; poor credit no problem

Spouses Selling Houses: New Year's resolutions

About This Place: Eldorado – a subdivision with soul

Santa Fe In Bloom: Refresh your space with orchids

Most Read

Employee arrested in pawn store shooting

A history of innovation and dysfunction at Los Alamos National Laboratory

Many claim they've solved Forrest Fenn riddle, but treasure hunt continues

Former Gov. Bill Richardson cited after leaving scene of accident

Former Gov. Bill Richardson cited after leaving scene of accident

To our readers, Santafenewmexican.com now uses Facebook to power its comments forum. You will need to login using your Facebook account to post comments to news articles. As always, we do require you to use your real, full name when posting and to be courteous to others when posting.

Sections

- Home
- News
- Sports
- Opinion
- Pasatiempo
- Magazines
- Life
- Multimedia
- Weather

Services

- Place Classified Ad
- Subscription Services
- Submission Forms
- Site Index
- Featured Ads
- Featured Ads Reprints
- Open House Listings
- Open House Re-Prints
- Add Search Toolbar
- Commercial Printing
- Ad Rates

Connections

Phone number: 505-983-3303

E-mail:
webeditor@sfnewmexican.com

Address: 202 E. Marcy St.
Santa Fe, NM 87501

- Contact us
- The Taos News
- The Sangre de Cristo Chronicle
- Enchanted Homes Real Estate Magazine

Search

Search in:

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All | <input type="checkbox"/> Pasatiempo | <input type="checkbox"/> Opinion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> News | <input type="checkbox"/> Magazines | <input type="checkbox"/> Photos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Life | <input type="checkbox"/> Video |

© Copyright 2016, The Santa Fe New Mexican, Santa Fe, NM.