



Gila Resources Information Project

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Mission Statement

Recognizing that human and environmental systems are inseparable and interdependent, Gila Resources Information Project pursues two goals: to protect and nurture human communities by safeguarding the natural resources that sustain us all; and to safeguard natural resources by facilitating informed public participation in resource use decisions.

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To become a member and receive a copy of *Get A GRIP*, a minimum annual donation of \$20.00 is appreciated. (\$10 for students and low-income residents.) GRIP is a 501(c)(3), tax-exempt organization; your contribution is tax-deductible.

Other Sites:
www.vivaverdenm.com
www.gilaconservation.org



GRIP BOARD OF
DIRECTORS AND STAFF
GATHERED RECENTLY AT
THE GRIP OFFICE IN
SILVER CITY.

(GRIP PHOTO)

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Control Commission agreed, rejecting the company's arguments and finding that the purpose of the state's Water Quality Act is to protect all present and reasonably foreseeable uses of groundwater.

FMI continues its attempts to roll back New Mexico's environmental regulations. Now, with a sympathetic state government administration, the company has pulled out the stops to reverse water quality regulations to allow it to pollute rather than prevent groundwater contamination. GRIP and its partners in the New Mexico Mining Act Network will go before the Water Quality Control Commission this spring defending the Water Quality Act against industry attempts to gut it (see *MINING UPDATE* on p. 1). Continued litigation is likely for a number of years.

Gila River Protection

Ten years ago the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission came to town to organize local support for a Gila River diversion and storage project. After three failed attempts to dam and divert the Gila over the past 50 years, the ISC was in the process of cutting a deal with Arizona for Gila River water and federal funding. Hearing of the ISC scheme, local conservation groups, including GRIP, sprang into action. Realizing that this time around, with talk of a federal subsidy for a project, the outcome for the Gila could be different. GRIP, Upper Gila Watershed Alliance (UGWA) and Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) came together to resurrect the Gila Conservation Coalition (GCC). GCC historically operated as an informal group of volunteers. Reading the tea leaves, GRIP and its partners decided GCC needed organizational support and the ability to fundraise to defeat this latest threat to the Gila. GRIP serves as GCC's fiscal agent and provides office space. GRIP, UGWA, and CBD all provide staff to GCC's efforts. GCC partners have been successful in opening up the AWSA planning process to all stakeholders and getting a wide range of non-diversion projects on the table for consideration. GCC continues to advocate for cost-effective non-diversion alternatives to meet southwestern New Mexico's water needs while maintaining the free flow of the Gila River (see *AWSA UPDATE* on p. 1).

Settlement of Natural Resource Damage Claims Against Freeport-McMoRan

Since a chance inspection in 2000 found at least 100 birds had died in and around the Tyrone tailings ponds, the U.S. Department of Justice, Department of Interior, and the New Mexico Office of the Natural Resources Trustee investigated civil violations by Freeport-McMoRan of the Natural Resource Damage provisions of the Superfund law. Under the authority of the Superfund law and Clean Water Act, groundwater damages were settled for \$13-million and wildlife and habitat damages settled for \$5.5-million and transfer of 715 acres of grassland to City of Rocks State Park. Settlement funds are being used to implement projects that restore, rehabilitate, replace, or acquire the equivalent of the injured groundwater, wildlife and habitat resources. GRIP's proposal for removal of tailings from San Vicente Creek was a priority for groundwater restoration funding and cleanup will begin early this year. The proposal submitted by GRIP and its GCC partners to acquire the 6200-acre Double E Ranch and conserve three miles of valuable riparian habitat along Bear Creek is included in the list

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