

of Tier 1 projects for funding in the ONRT/USFWS draft restoration plan for wildlife habitat, to be finalized this year.

### Climate Change and Sustainability

Climate change is one of the most important challenges of our time and threatens the survivability of all species on our planet. GRIP served on the Silver City Climate Committee to develop a Climate Action Plan calculated to reduce the Town's greenhouse gas emissions as well as to establish the Office of Sustainability. With the involvement of many volunteers and organizations in the community, GRIP organized the weekend-long Viva Verde Expo to provide education on how to reduce one's carbon footprint. GRIP also developed two editions of the Viva Verde Guide (including a 2011 bilingual version) and a green jobs curriculum for New Mexico high schools. The Viva Verde Residential Energy Efficiency Program improved the energy efficiency of over 60 homes in Luna County. GRIP is working with the Office of Sustainability on its Sustainability 2030 Plan that will include measures to adapt to climate variability and increase the resiliency of our community to the impacts of climate change. GRIP continues to update the Viva Verde Guide at [www.vivaverdenm.com](http://www.vivaverdenm.com) to provide green living resources to southwestern New Mexico.

### VISTA Program

Through GRIP's VISTA program with the Western Hardrock Watershed Team, GRIP has sponsored three VISTA members since 2010. These dedicated and hard working young people—Regina Willis, Dan Hintz and Claire Catlett—established the Silver City Watershed Keepers to routinely monitor the health of the Silver City watershed, worked on clean up of legacy mine sites such as the San Vicente tailings, assisted with trails development with the Grant County Trails Group, and participated in a variety of environmental education activities to expose students to the outdoors and teach them watershed monitoring concepts and techniques. GRIP's fourth-year VISTA staffer, Andrew Lindlof, will put in place elements needed to ensure that GRIP can sustain the Silver City Watershed Keepers for the long term (see *GRIP WELCOMES* on p. 6).

We greatly appreciate your support of GRIP's efforts over the past 15 years. To quote another over-used, but true, cliché: "We couldn't do it without you!" Your presence at public meetings, kind words of support and financial contributions all help us tremendously to keep our operation going. GRIP will continue to keep you informed about the most important environmental issues confronting our region through our website, Facebook page, and weekly Gila-Mimbres Community Radio program, Earth Matters. Check out our redesigned website at [www.gilaresources.info](http://www.gilaresources.info) for easy-to-find information on responsible mining, aquifer and Gila River protection, climate change and sustainability, Silver City Watershed Keepers, and legacy mine sites.

General (AG) during the 2011 legislative session to inappropriately redirect \$1.5-million from the Office of the Natural Resources Trustee and Freeport-McMoRan groundwater damage settlement in order to pay high-priced attorneys in the AG's suit against the federal Bureau of Reclamation. That money should have been used on groundwater restoration projects in Grant County in order to compensate the public for the thousands of acre-feet of groundwater contaminated by Freeport's three copper mines.

Sen. Smith's request to fund the export of Gila River water to the Rio Grande Basin flies in the faces of southwestern New Mexico stakeholders who have been working for years through the AWSA planning process to determine how New Mexico should utilize funding and/or water under the AWSA. This process is not complete. There is no engineering, cost, or environmental impact assessment available yet that tells us if a diversion and storage facility from the Gila River is economically or environmentally feasible—and if end-users can even pay for it. Funding a pipeline before those questions are answered is premature at best.

A Gila pipeline capital outlay would be a small fraction of the price tag for projects that will cost much, much more. AWSA federal funds are only 40% of the estimated total capital cost of a \$300-million (or more) diversion and storage project (DB Stephens & Associates, 2012). Construction alone of a pipeline from a Gila-San Francisco Basin diversion/storage facility to Las Cruces could cost well over \$100-million, not factoring in 30% of construction costs for "construction/ installation contingencies" (e.g., rights-of-way, pumping stations, environmental mitigation, etc). Piping Gila water to the Rio Grande might also require a storage reservoir in Doña Ana County.

According to Legislative Finance Committee staff, this year's revenue projections look bleak and there may only be \$100-million available for the capital outlay requests of 112 House and Senate legislators. So what's going on here? Sen. Smith's staff indicates that he is trying to "send a message" to force stakeholders to agree on a project (or projects) that will use Gila River water. These "message bills" represent irresponsible governance and create fear and division among stakeholders who have dedicated years of their time and effort to work together to determine how best to use AWSA funds and/or water.

**Update:** Sen. Smith's \$25M capital outlay request for a pipeline from the Gila to Las Cruces had its desired effect. In secret meetings not open to the public, state and local officials have been scrambling to cut a back room deal on the AWSA to divert Gila River water for use in Silver City, the Mining District and Deming so that Sen. Smith won't fulfill his trumped up threat to send the Gila water to the Rio Grande if southwest New Mexico doesn't come up with a unified plan. At the Feb. 19 Gila-San Francisco Water Commission meeting and as documented in a draft resolution for governmental entities to sign, GRIP learned that a meeting was held on February 12 with the State Engineer's Deming Office, county commissioners, and other local government officials including Grant to "provide direction to the City of Deming in amending its [AWSA Tier 2] application.....a diversion project with one or two storage facilities capable of diverting and storing the full amount of AWSA water for future use." These meetings have not been open to the public, subverting the AWSA public process that citizens in southwestern New Mexico have participated in the last several years. The multi-stakeholder planning process resulted in a range of non-diversion projects being put forward for consideration. None of the analyses for any of the diversion or non-diversion projects has been completed, yet there is pressure being applied by state officials to communities to withdraw their local AWSA proposals and to support this new diversion project instead. It is shortsighted for local communities to support only one diversion project before enough technical, economic and environmental information is available to make a sound decision on how to meet our future water needs in a cost-effective way without damaging the unique Gila River. Please take action TODAY (see p. 5) on this important issue that has profound implications for the Gila River, our taxes and water rates!