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## ARIZONA WATER SETTLEMENTS ACT UPDATE: LACK OF TRANSPARENCY CONTINUES TO THREATEN INTEGRITY OF PLANNING PROCESS

by Allyson Siwik, Executive Director

At its December meeting, the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission approved modifications to proposals to divert water from the Gila River without any public input or commission oversight. Seven of fifteen projects being evaluated under the Arizona Water Settlements Act (AWSA) were modified. Only three had received public review and comment prior to the December 2 ISC meeting. Three of the remaining projects are large-scale water diversion projects on the Gila River and were approved for modification by the ISC without any public review or comment on preliminary engineering analyses. (The seventh evaluation was not a diversion project.)

"This is nothing new for ISC staff," said Allyson Siwik, Executive Director of the Gila Conservation Coalition. "Throughout the ten-year planning process ISC staff has consistently tried to limit public participation under the Arizona Water Settlements Act."

The ISC staff also requested that commissioners grant them authority to modify 15 Arizona Water Settlements Act projects as "staff sees fit" and without review and approval by the ISC. Worried about "public perception" and that the requested authority would constitute "pre-approval of AWSA projects," commissioners denied the request as written and approved a motion to allow staff to investigate and recommend further optimization of projects "subject to review and approval by the ISC."

"We commend ISC commissioners for recognizing that ISC staff

SEE AWSA UPDATE ON P. 3

## AFTER 15 YEARS, SALLY SMITH STEPS DOWN AS GRIP'S DIRECTOR OF RESPONSIBLE MINING

by Richard Mahler, Newsletter Editor



SALLY SMITH (GRIP PHOTO)

A small stream runs beside the modest adobe house Sally Smith built some 33 years ago in the Mimbres Valley. This humble creek, on the western slope of the Black Range, was the catalyst for her two decades of public advocacy within the daunting maze of Grant County's mining industry.

"We didn't know what may have been leaking from tailings and waste piles into our watershed," says GRIP's retiring Director of Responsible Mining, whose first mine contamination work involved the defunct Royal John Mine, several miles upstream.

Seated at her dining table, the long-time area resident recalls how she and other neighbors formed an association that received grant money to assess the 26-square-mile drainage. They soon learned that lead concentrations in soil near the Royal John were the highest in New Mexico.

SEE SALLY SMITH ON P. 4

## CONSERVATION GROUPS APPEAL MARTÍNEZ ADMINISTRATION COPPER RULE

**Hearing on motion for stay delayed until  
2014 as AG refuses to represent WQCC**

by Allyson Siwik, Executive Director

In October, conservation groups appealed the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission's (WQCC) adoption of new copper mining groundwater regulations. The Gila Resources Information Project (GRIP) and Turner Ranch Properties, L.P.—represented by New Mexico Environmental Law Center (NMELC)—and Amigos Bravos—

represented by High Desert Energy + Environment Law Partners—challenged the new rule because they allow water pollution rather than prevent it.



TYRONE MINE (GRIP PHOTO)

Citing irreparable harm if the rule is implemented while the appeal is pending, the groups also filed a motion to stay until the appeal is decided. However, the hearing on the stay was postponed given that New Mexico Attorney General Gary King refused to represent the WQCC in the forthcoming hearing, given his support for the stay.

Proposed in September 2012 by the New Mexico Environment Department and the global copper mining company, Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold, and adopted by the WQCC in September 2013, the rules mark the first time in 36 years that the Commission has set aside its mandate to protect the quality of the state's scarce groundwater resources.

"At the request of Freeport-McMoRan, the Commission adopted a regulation that allows extensive and permanent groundwater pollution at all copper mines," says Bruce Frederick, NMELC Staff Attorney. "We are appealing the rule because we think it's unconstitutional and diametrically opposed to the Commission's express statutory mandate, which is to prevent water pollution."

The WQCC adopted the rules in September with little deliberation. New Mexico Tech geologist Doug Bland, who cast the only dissenting vote, resigned from the WQCC and Mining Commission in October after

SEE COPPER RULE ON P. 2



## 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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adoption of the rule.

"We need to reverse this illegal rule before other industries request the same ability to pollute at will," says Rachel Conn, Amigos Bravos Projects Director. "It is a shame that Doug Bland, who as the former Mining and Minerals State Director was the commissioner that had the most knowledge about mining in New Mexico and was the lone dissenting vote against the copper rule, is now gone from the WQCC. Decision-making bodies under this administration are now stacked almost 100% with political ideologues who disregard science and law in the decision making process."

"These copper rules are a violation of the State Water Quality Act and give international mining giant Freeport-McMoRan a free ride at the expense of the public's groundwater quality and environmental health," says Allyson Siwik, GRIP Executive Director. "As communities throughout the state discuss ways to deal with future water needs against the specter of long-term drought, it is irresponsible to allow mining companies to pollute thousands of acre-feet of groundwater that could be used in the future by municipalities, industry or agriculture."

In filing their motion to stay the implementation of the copper rule until appeal of the rule is decided by New Mexico courts, GRIP and its colleagues argued that the copper rule would likely be set aside on appeal, that citizens and the public will suffer irreparable harm if the copper rule is implemented while the appeal is decided, that no substantial harm would result to other interested parties (i.e., Freeport-McMoRan) in granting the stay, and that no harm would result to the public if the stay is granted.

The copper rule appeal could take two to three years to resolve.

## COPPER RULE TIMELINE

- **2009** - The New Mexico Legislature mandates the Water Quality Control Commission to specify water discharge regulations for the dairy and copper mining industries that would prevent water pollution and protect water quality.
- **January 2012** - The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) puts together an advisory committee that includes members from the copper mining company Freeport-McMoRan, environmental groups, and technical experts to craft a new copper rule to present to the WQCC. The advisory committee meets for eight months and in mid-August a draft rule is sent to NMED.
- **September 2012** - At Freeport's request, the NMED's upper management overrules the recommendations of the advisory committee, including recommendations of its own technical staff, and incorporates language that would allow Freeport (and other copper mine operators) to routinely pollute groundwater with acid rock drainage, metals, and other contaminants in the course of mining operations.
- **April 2013** - The NMED presents its draft water quality rules for copper mines before the WQCC. The NMED and its clients oppose the rules on grounds that they are illegal under the Water Quality Act. NMED's own technical staff involved in the copper rules development process does not testify at the hearing to support the draft rules.
- **September 2013** - Following little deliberation, members of the WQCC vote 9-1 to approve the draft copper rules. In making its decision, the commission adopts, with one small non-substantive change, the Proposed Statement of Reasons submitted by NMED with substantial help from Freeport-McMoRan.
- **October 2013** - Conservation groups file appeal of WQCC-approved copper rule with the New Mexico Court of Appeals.
- **October 2013** - Conservation groups file a motion to stay the copper rule until the appeal process is completed in New Mexico courts.
- **December 2013** - WQCC vacates hearing for copper ruling stay, as the state attorney general refuses to represent the commission in such a hearing.

## SAN VICENTE CREEK MILL SITE *GRIP spurs successful cleanup*

by Andrew Lindlof, AmeriCorps OSM/VISTA Staffer

The San Vicente Creek Mill Site is located alongside San Vicente Creek, about one-half mile down the trail from the Hudson Street highway bridge in Silver City. The site was first used in the 1880s for milling and processing lead and silver ores. It expanded in 1898 into production of copper ores through smelting, with operations continuing until 1913. Operations resumed for short periods in the 1920s to further process new and on-site



SAN VICENTE MILL SITE BEFORE REMEDIATION, INCLUDING REMOVAL OF SOIL AND WASTE PILES CONTAMINATED WITH HEAVY METALS. (GRIP PHOTO)

tailings for gold and silver, and again during World War II for concentrating fluorspar as a strategic mineral.

When processing activities ceased, remnant slag and tailings piles were left to age under the influence of the atmosphere and precipitation. As a result, with each seasonal monsoon rain and snow-melt, heavy-metal-laden tailings could be transported via runoff into the adjacent creek, a public use area.

Due to successful advocacy from GRIP, the Grant County Trails Group, and others, approximately \$4-million in groundwater restoration funds from the New Mexico Office of Natural Resource Trustee (ONRT) were originally allocated for cleanup. These funds came from a \$13-million settlement between Freeport-McMoRan and ONRT regarding thousands of acre-feet in groundwater damages, the result of contamination with acid and heavy metals during years of operations at the Chino, Cobre, and Tyrone mines. Remediation efforts began at the San Vicente site in March 2013.

The Superfund Oversight Section of the New Mexico Environment Department's Ground Water Quality Bureau (NMED-GWQB) took charge of the project and contracted with INTERA Inc. to facilitate cleanup. On-site inspection by INTERA began in April 2013, focusing on lead and arsenic as primary concerns. After site characterization was done and soil contamination assessed, large excavators and haul trucks went to work.

Contaminated waste removed from the site was transported to Freeport-McMoRan's Tyrone Mine and incorporated into an existing waste pile. In order to reduce the cost of cleanup along the creek, GRIP encouraged Freeport-McMoRan and regulatory agencies to permit the tailings to be disposed of at the mine. This successful effort ultimately saved approximately \$2-million, making funds available for the Bayard Waste Water Treatment Plant Reuse Project that otherwise wouldn't have been funded. After contaminated soil removal, clean fill material was brought in, the

surface was graded, and multiple erosion-control features installed. Remediated areas were seeded and re-vegetation is monitored by the NMED-GWQB.

This project culminated in the removal of approximately 22,500 cubic yards of heavy-metal-contaminated soil, site remediation, and confirmation that the riparian zone, upstream and downstream from the site along San Vicente Creek meets the NMED residential standards for heavy-metal contaminants. The final project report will become available to the public in early 2014. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact me via [andrew@gilaresources.info](mailto:andrew@gilaresources.info) or 575.538.8078.



SAN VICENTE MILL SITE AFTER REMEDIATION. (GRIP PHOTO)

CONTINUED FROM AWSA UPDATE ON P. 1

can't be given *carte blanche* to do whatever they want and that checks and balances are needed to ensure the integrity of the AWSA planning process," said Siwik. "At the same time, however, we are very concerned that the ISC approved changes to three diversion projects without any public input. Engineering information was available to allow staff to make these recommended changes, but yet the information has not been shared with stakeholders. This lack of transparency is unacceptable and contributes to the ongoing perception that the ISC disregards its own process as it pursues a Gila River diversion project. The ISC needs to immediately make this information publicly available."

The ISC and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) are assessing the costs, technical feasibility and cost-benefit of the 15 AWSA proposals submitted by a range of stakeholders in southwestern New Mexico. Preliminary results of these analyses will be presented during the upcoming state legislative session that begins in January. The BOR has completed analyses of engineering costs of diversion alternatives, yet these results have not been provided to stakeholders. The Gila Conservation Coalition is advocating for release of this information in advance of the legislative session so that stakeholders can review and comment on the assessments.

The Arizona Water Settlements Act of 2004 gave our state the option of diverting water from the Gila River, New Mexico's last free-flowing river, if the state agreed to pay for water from Arizona to replace what is diverted. The AWSA provided \$66-million for community water projects to meet local water needs and up to \$62-million more if New Mexico elects to divert the river. Stakeholders have been engaged in a planning process to determine the best way to cost-effectively meet southwestern New Mexico's future water needs under the AWSA. The next AWSA quarterly public meeting is at 6 pm, Jan. 13, 2014, in the 3rd floor Seminar Room of the WNMU Student Memorial Building in Silver City.



SALLY SMITH (L.) AND GRIP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALLYSON SIWIK AT NOV. 15 PARTY HONORING SMITH (GRIP PHOTO)

"I had no prior background in science or mining," shrugs Sally, a self-described concerned citizen who immersed herself in the machinations of a technically complex and politically powerful business. "You should see the piles of big fat documents I get to read through."

Born and raised in the wetlands of East Texas, Sally spent time as a mother, farmer, and shopkeeper there and in Kentucky before relocating to New Mexico. "Before I built my house," she laughs, "I'd lived in a tipi and an old school bus in Grant County."

Ensclosed in her new home, the efforts of this life-long nature lover paid off. Through joint cooperation of the New Mexico Environment Department and U.S. Forest Service, polluted tailings at Royal John were covered, a sediment pond created, and vegetation re-established. Watershed contamination was minimized.

Then Sally turned her attention to the much larger Tyrone, Cobre, and Chino Mines. The latter's Santa Rita pit was among the largest open-pit mines in the U.S. For ten years she'd passed it while driving along Highway 152 between the Mimbres Valley and Silver City. One day she took a hard look at the pit, then owned by Phelps Dodge, and asked herself: "Who is holding these guys responsible and accountable? No one considered what the downside of the mines might be. State and city officials, Grant County commissioners—they all just gave [operators] what they wanted." Many local politicians, she concluded, "were part of a good ol' boy elite: buddies with those running the mines. The prevailing attitude was, 'Let 'em have whatever they want and don't ask any questions.'"

For decades—probably since industrial-scale mining began in the area during the early 1900s—precious little independent research was done on how large mines such as Santa Rita (also known as Chino), Tyrone, and Cobre impacted the communities whose interests elected officials and government regulators purportedly represented.

But this status quo was about to change.

Sally became aware of the New Mexico Mining Act, which became state law in June 1993 and provided stronger oversight of mining, which had been lightly regulated since U.S. control of the region began in 1846. Her interest piqued, Sally began attending meetings held in order to develop the regulations for the Act. She met and aligned herself with two lawyers at the Santa Fe-based New Mexico Environmental Law Center: executive director Doug Meiklejohn and then-staff attorney Doug Wolf. Her close association with the Law Center

has continued uninterrupted ever since then.

"I wanted to further educate myself about how our mines and water quality was regulated, what reclamation was possible and protective," explains Sally, glancing out a window at the tree-shaded creek. (A cleaner stream due to efforts she spearheaded.) Before long Sally helped hammer out policies supporting the Mining Act and was later asked to serve the Director's Advisory Committee for the Mining Commission of the state's Energy, Mining, and Natural Resources Department.

"I developed a working relationship with the people in the state Environment Department as well as at the Law Center," she continues. "I went to conferences in places like Montana and met my cohorts working on mining issues around the West. I begged people to come to meetings, to write letters, and to testify. I became more visible, spoke publicly at permit hearings, wrote letters to editors, and got interviewed by the media."

Sally met fellow activist Harry Browne at a mining-related meeting and together, in 1997, they incorporated GRIP as a nonprofit committed to the wise use and conservation of natural resources in southwestern New Mexico. Sally has been president of the board of directors ever since.

"From the start," she says, "we wanted GRIP to work on sustainability and quality-of-life issues, but mining has been more of the primary focus." From the outset, not everyone was happy

***"No one considered what the downside of the mines might be. State and city officials, Grant County commissioners—they all just gave [mine operators] what they wanted."***

***— Sally Smith***

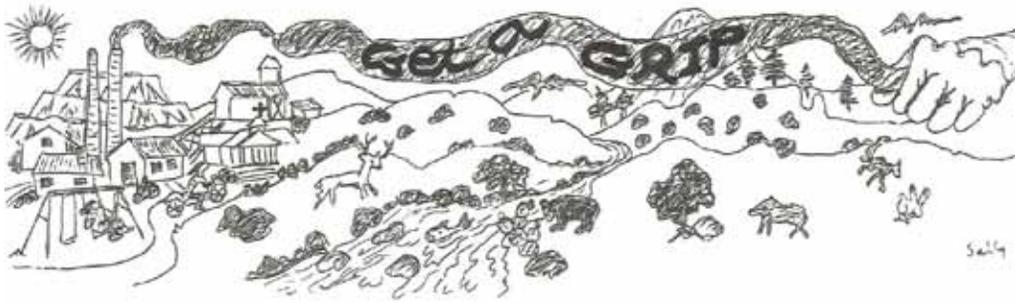
with the group's activities: "We got threats, nasty letters, and angry phone calls from some people. In New Mexico, this industry was not used to push-back at all."

Over time—and in the face of several successful legal and legislative challenges—mining officials began to take GRIP more seriously. It became clear that Sally, Harry, and other concerned residents were determined to translate mining jargon into layman's terms and to follow permit processes as long as necessary to make sure the public interest was well served.

"By my way of thinking," says Sally, "somebody [representing the public] should sit at the table and work with the mines on various issues." One way this determination has paid off is "we now have quarterly meetings with Freeport-McMoRan [successor to Phelps Dodge in operating Grant County mines and the world's largest publicly traded copper company] in order to update GRIP on what is going on that may impact our communities. It was started at their initiative as way to keep us informed."

Better public relations and a willingness to listen are a step forward. Fifteen years ago, Sally remembers, mining executives tended to play hardball in response to the push for greater accountability, claiming costs were too high to implement earth-friendly changes and insisting that precious jobs would be lost.

SEE SALLY SMITH ON P. 5



SALLY SMITH'S DRAWING, AT LEFT, WAS CREATED AS AN EARLY MASTHEAD FOR THE "GET A GRIP" NEWSLETTER

CONTINUED FROM SALLY SMITH ON P. 4

Yet while opposition to oversight may have softened in corporate meeting rooms, Sally is troubled by Freeport-McMoRan's influential role in the rewrite of a draft state rule governing open-pit copper mining. Coinciding with the election of conservative Republican governor Susana Martínez, Freeport and its allies are trying to roll back regulations that currently protect New Mexico's precious groundwater from mine-related pollution and direct the industry to restore thousands of acres it has already contaminated. (See *COPPER RULE* on Pg. 1.)

"Even I was surprised and shocked," Sally declares, "at just how blatant they were in getting the proposed copper rules changed in their favor."

Attorney General Gary King, elected to his office rather than appointed, thinks the groundwater regulations adopted in September by the Water Quality Control Commission violate state water quality law. The rules, proposed by the state's Environment Department in consultation with Freeport-McMoRan, which is already under orders to restore heavily contaminated groundwater, allow copper mines to discharge water that does not meet groundwater standards. (About 90 percent of New Mexico's drinking water is pumped from the ground.) The matter is currently under appeal.

Asked to predict whether the adversarial relationship between mining companies and public-interest entities is improving, Sally is sanguine. "In the short term," she believes, "it's not going to get any better. We need to keep the permitting processes in place. Staff at the state Environment Department are vulnerable...What happens on the personnel level there could really change everything."

Rest assured, Sally is not abandoning the ongoing fight to keep the area's biggest industry accountable. "I don't like to think of myself as being retired from all of this," she says, noting that she is continuing as president of GRIP's board of directors. "I also am available for consultation and communication."

A part of her legacy, Sally believes, is that "people do respect GRIP. People do show up when we ask for their help. But it's still true that not many want to get into these mining issues and a lot more could be done."

In coming months Sally plans to spend more time with her family as well as caregiving, traveling, and doing the landscaping and gardening that has occupied her spare time for many years. "Long ago," she adds, "I decided that I'm not going to do this [type of advocacy] if I'm angry all the time."

Sally points out that she never made a deliberate decision to immerse herself in mine-related work. "I never thought about the pros and cons of doing it," she insists. "I simply felt called. All I did was be persistent."



GRIP PROGRAM ASSOCIATE CLAIRE CATLETT (L.) AND DONNA STEVENS, OUTREACH AND GILA RIVER FESTIVAL COORDINATOR FOR THE GILA CONSERVATION COALITION, WERE HONORED WITH A DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD FROM THE NEW MEXICO OUTDOORS COALITION AT A DEC. 9 CEREMONY IN ALBUQUERQUE. THE AWARD MADE SPECIAL MENTION OF THE "ENDURING IMPACT AND SCOPE" OF THEIR WORK IN COORDINATING THE ANNUAL GILA RIVER FESTIVAL. (JEFF HOWARD PHOTO)

STAY IN TOUCH  
DURING THE 2014  
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## GRANT COUNTY TRAILS GROUP UPDATE: TRAIL GUIDE AND VIDEO AVAILABLE ON LINE

by Andrew Lindlof, AmeriCorps OSM/VISTA Staffer

For several years now, GRIP has partnered with the Grant County Trails Group (GCTG) to improve health and quality of life in our community. This year the GCTG also formed close ties with the Town of Silver City's Community Development Department, Gila Conservation Education Center, Silver City Main-Street Project, the Gila National Forest, and various other local environmental, public health, and community development groups as well as small businesses. All involved have a common interest in improving and expanding awareness and quality of Grant County trails, public lands, and open spaces.

This year the GCTG hosted and participated in a number of area activities. On June 1, for example, the group presented Grant County's first annual National Trails Day event. This included a lecture by Dr. Richard Kozoll, guided bike rides and hikes along the Gila National Forest's Dragonfly Trail, the debut of the *Trails of Grant County* promotional video, and publication of *Trails of Grant County: A Walking/Hiking Guide*. The latter features trails and walking areas in Silver City, Santa Clara, Bayard, and the Gila National Forest. Go to <http://www.gilaresources.info> to access the trails guide and to see the video.

Thanks to an enthusiastic reaction to the promotional video and *Trails of Grant County Walking/Hiking Guide*, a *Prescription Trails* (or *Rx Trails*) program was established this year in Grant County. Fitness and Nutrition in the Community (FANC) has been playing a critical role as a primary partner with the GCTG in promoting *Rx Trails* to health-care professionals. It's designed to increase walking and the use of wheelchairs along suggested routes, thus promoting healthy lifestyles.

The Wellness Coalition (TWC), in partnership with the GCTG, was recently awarded a grant to host National Trails Month in April, 2014. Local activities will include trail-building workshops, hikes, and various fun, family-oriented activities.

Meetings of the Grant County Trails Group are usually held on the second Friday of each month from noon to 1 p.m. in the Grant County Community Health Council building on Black Street. For information on ongoing projects, please contact Andrew Lindlof at [andrew@gilaresources.info](mailto:andrew@gilaresources.info) or 575.538.8078.



MEMBERS OF THE SAN VICENTE WATERSHED KEEPERS GROUP CONDUCTING QUARTERLY MONITORING OF WATER QUALITY IN SAN VICENTE CREEK. SEE STORY ON FACING PAGE DETAILING NEW PLANS FOR 2014. (GRIP PHOTO)

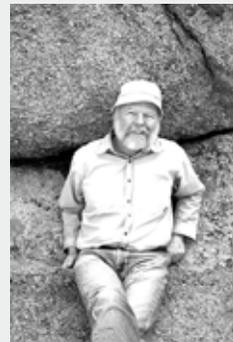


## TENTH ANNUAL GILA RIVER FESTIVAL SET FOR SEPT 18-21

by Claire Catlett, Program Associate

Thanks to all who helped make the Ninth Annual Gila River Festival the biggest yet, with over 1,500 participants from southwestern New Mexico and other parts of the Southwest. As a partner in the Gila Conservation Coalition (GCC), GRIP helps organize the festival annually, providing staff time and energy to what has become one of the region's premier nature festivals.

The Ninth Annual Gila River Festival offered a variety of field trips, workshops, lectures, first-ever *Gala for the Gila*, a local foods brunch, and Gila River raft trip. GCC also premiered two films at this year's festival. *Free Flow: Saving the Gila River in New Mexico*, by filmmaker Nat Stone, celebrates author and outdoorsman Dutch Salmon, a long-time Gila River advocate. GCC's own production, *The Gila River is in Our*



AUTHOR/ACTIVIST DAVE FOREMAN WILL GIVE THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE 2014 GILA RIVER FESTIVAL (COURTESY PHOTO)

*Hands*, explores the value of this wild river, how it is currently threatened by powerful interests intent on diverting its waters, and how we can meet our future water needs while also protecting its free flow. Both films are available on the GCC website at <http://www.gilaconservation.org/wp/?cat=35>

Please save the date(s) for next year's 10th Annual Gila River Festival, "Celebrating America's First Wilderness River," September 18-21. Next year marks the 50th anniversary of passage of the federal Wilderness Act and the 90th anniversary of the establishment of the Gila Wilderness. Join GCC for what promises to be the biggest and most exciting celebration so far, as we welcome back Gila Wilderness photography by Michael Berman and author/wilderness hero Dave Foreman as the 2014 keynote speaker. Other events organized to date include a special exhibit by Signal Fire Gila expedition artists. Volunteers and sponsors are needed. Contact: 575.538.8078 or [info@gilaconservation.org](mailto:info@gilaconservation.org).

## BOSTON HILL PROJECT PROGRESSING

by Andrew Lindlof, AmeriCorps OSM/VISTA Staffer

The Town of Silver City's Boston Hill Open Space is familiar as a place for hiking, biking, observing nature, dog-walking, and jogging. Much of Boston Hill was purchased by the Town in 1999 through the generous bequest of Linnie Merle Forward. The current 10-mile trail network was developed in 2001.

Prior to becoming a public resource, Boston Hill mining began with the extraction of silver in the 1870s and continued with removal of iron and manganese ore from the 1890s to the 1970s. Visitors still see evidence of great feats of engineering.

The New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land (NMAML) Program also has a long history on the hill. A unit of the state's Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, the program was charged during the mid-1980s with the task of making historic mining features safe and/or functional for recreational use. By 1989 it had safeguarded 37 openings and identified over 300 other mine-related features on Boston Hill. Further remediation yielded construction of chain-link fences and mesh netting. Examples are found near the Spring Street trailhead and High Desert Humane Society building. Later, researchers from Western New Mexico University found evidence that some old mines provided important habitat for wildlife, including bats.

NMAML is involved in a new effort to promote a safe and enjoyable environment on the hill while protecting historic mining features and wildlife habitat. Contractors Kleinfelder Inc., Golder Associates, and Dekker/Perich/Sabatini, are working with NMAML and community members to plan, design, and implement safeguarding strategies. The project has four phases: Assessment, Planning, Design, and Construction.

Community engagement meetings were held in Silver City on March 21-23, August 8-10, and October 5-8 in order to address the Assessment, Planning, and Design Phases. These meetings incorporated site visits, review/recap sessions, and lectures from an expert on bat habitats that incorporate abandoned mines.

During site planning and design visits to Boston Hill, the AML team and community members examined such hazards as open stopes, shafts, tunnels, pits, and collapse-prone ground. Each was addressed through optimal safeguarding measures for both humans and wildlife. Key areas of focus were the northern sections of Boston Hill near the Spring Street trailhead and those within previously fenced off-areas. Other hazards addressed were predominantly open stopes and shafts with potentially deadly fall hazards near east and southeast borders of the open space.

The Boston Hill project team is currently working on finishing its Phase I and II assessment reports. Phase III work is expected to begin in late January. For more information, please contact either NMAML Program Manager John Kretzmann at 505.476.3423 or John.Kretzmann@state.nm.us; or Dekker/Perich/Sabatini ASLA Associate Ken Romig at 505.761.9700 or kenr@dpsdesign.org.

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO RENEW  
YOUR GRIP MEMBERSHIP...**

***You can use the envelope with  
this newsletter— or go to [www.gilaresources.info](http://www.gilaresources.info)***

## Silver City Watershed Keepers celebrates success, enters new phase

by Andrew Lindlof, AmeriCorps OSM/VISTA Staffer

The volunteer environmental quality monitoring group, Silver City Watershed Keepers (SCWK), has provided valuable information and science education to our community since its establishment by GRIP's OSM/VISTA Program in 2011. The group is comprised of community volunteers of all ages and experience levels who work to protect the San Vicente Creek watershed through monitoring, education, and outreach. As GRIP's OSM/VISTA program comes to a close, after four years of successful capacity building in our community, the SCWK has been engaged in a planning process to ensure continuation of the program.

Currently, the SCWK collects water quality data at four sites along the San Vicente's perennial (year-round flow) channel. Members and volunteers actively monitor and record critical water quality parameters. These include temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, salinity, total dissolved solids, transparency, turbidity, nitrates, and total phosphates. By observing the quality of water, the SCWK can interpret the health of the creek, which may be impacted by legacy mines or mill sites as well as non-point source pollution. The SCWK meets and observes at least every quarter to collect water quality data and observe the condition of the channel and flood plain. Recently, the SCWK made great strides in education, outreach, and expanding the scope of the program as a whole. With much dedication and enthusiasm from Aldo Leopold Charter School (ALCS)—through its science curriculum and Youth Conservation Corps grants—monitoring along the creek will occur at least once every month during the school year.

Promoting scientific literacy and an understanding of the watershed is a major goal. This year SCWK partnered with the New Mexico Environment Department Surface Water Quality Bureau (NMED-SWQB), Gila Conservation Education Center (GCEC), Aldo Leopold Charter School, The Wellness Coalition (TWC), Silver Consolidated Schools, and Silver City MainStreet Project to promote water education in the community. With the help of GCEC and MainStreet, on July 20 we hosted the Third Annual Big Ditch Day, a celebration of community, education, and San Vicente Creek.

GCEC, ALCS, Silver Schools, and TWC, have held many water-based learning sessions in the field. With such experiential events, we were able to reach out directly to schools and after-school programs and convey the importance of water quality, monitoring techniques/theory, and even a bit of fluvial geomorphology (how rivers affect landforms). As the responsible regulatory agency, he NMED-SWQB has been a major partner since the creation of the SCWK program, providing insight, advice, training, equipment, and experience to volunteers and staff alike. As the agency of authority, he NMED-SWQB serves a critical role in the program. When the SCWK identifies possible sources of concern about the health of the Silver City Watershed, the NMED-SWQB is there to investigate and remediate as needed.

Although GRIP's VISTA program comes to a close in early 2014, the program will continue its successful efforts under the guidance of a Technical Advisory Committee that includes GRIP and the state Environment Department as core members of the committee. Aldo Leopold Charter School students through science classes and the Youth Conservation Corps program will conduct regular monitoring and participate in other SCWK projects. If you wish to become involved or would like more information, please contact me at [andrew@gilaresources.info](mailto:andrew@gilaresources.info) or 575.538-8078.



## Gila Resources Information Project

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### IN THIS ISSUE:

- **NEW COPPER RULE APPEALED**
- **AWSA PLANNING THREATENED**
- **SALLY SMITH RETIRES**
- **MILL SITE CLEANED UP**
- **BOSTON HILL PROTECTIONS**
- **NEW LOCAL TRAIL RESOURCES**
- **10TH GILA RIVER FESTIVAL**

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### CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**JAN. 13 - AWSA Quarterly Public Meeting** - 6 m, 3rd Flr. Seminar Room, WNMU Student Memorial Bldg.. Hear AWSA updates from the Interstate Stream Commission, voice your concerns on proposed Gila River diversion projects, and support non-diversion alternatives to achieve water security for southwestern New Mexico. Info: [www.gilaconservation.org](http://www.gilaconservation.org).

**JAN. 16 - Public Lands: The Breathing Space of the Nation** - 6pm, WNMU's Miller Library. Panelists will discuss legislative efforts in New Mexico and other western states demanding that the federal government turn over certain national public lands to the states. Hosted by Miller Library, Grant County Democratic Party, WNMU Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), WNMU Native American Club, Gila Resources Information Project (GRIP) and Upper Gila Watershed Alliance (UGWA).

**JAN. 21-FEB. 20 - 2014 New Mexico State Legislature 30-Day Session** - State Capitol, Santa Fe. Sign up for e-mail legislative updates from GRIP at [www.gilaresources.info](http://www.gilaresources.info) and the Gila Conservation Coalition [www.gilaconservation.org](http://www.gilaconservation.org), on Facebook (GRIP and GCC) and Twitter (@GilaResources).

**APR. 19 - Earth Day 2014** - 9am-3 pm, Silver City's Gough Park, Pope and 12th Sts. Join our community for a day of celebration for Mother Earth. Information from local non-profits and businesses, family-friendly activities, native plants, herb and vegetable starts, food, drink, live music, local crafts and art, and much, much more. The Town of Silver City's Office of Sustainability hosts its annual e-waste recycling event. Bring unwanted computers and electronic items to the parking lot across from Gough. Other recyclables will be accepted. Info: [terrytimme@gmail.com](mailto:terrytimme@gmail.com) or 575.519.8987.

**APRIL - National Trails Month** - Events and activities to be announced.

**SEPT. 18-21 - 10th Annual Gila River Festival: Celebrating America's First Wilderness River** - Various locations, including the Gila River and Silver City. Info: [www.gilaconservation.org](http://www.gilaconservation.org) or 575.538.8078. Volunteers and sponsors are needed and welcomed!



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