

Gila Resources Information Project

www.gilaresources.info

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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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GRIP was founded in 1997. It is supported by foundation grants and individual donations. Special gratitude for ongoing support is owed to the McCune Charitable Foundation of Santa Fe.

To become a member and receive a copy of *Get A GRIP*, a minimum donation of \$5.00 is appreciated. GRIP is a 501(c)(3), tax-exempt organization; your contribution is tax-deductible.

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Gila River Diversion Project Would Waste Money and Harm Ecosystem, Report Concludes

continued from page 1

diversion would cost at least 16 times more than drilling new well fields or conjunctive use to meet the same demand. The diversion project would increase the costs of meeting future demand in Silver City and the mining district by at least \$268 million.

- 3) A Gila River diversion imposes substantial per capita costs on individual counties, even after federal subsidies are considered. Grant County's costs for the diversion are \$9,212 per person. Without the diversion, the county would be free to use its share of the \$66 million project subsidy in the most cost-effective manner, and the costs of meeting future supply needs would be at most \$567 per person.
- 4) A Gila River diversion project could have significant negative ecological impacts due to changes in the river's relatively natural flow regime as well as from the construction of diversion and pumping facilities, pipelines, and a large storage reservoir.
- 5) Most people value healthy ecosystems for aesthetic or recreational reasons. If the residents of New

Mexico value the Gila River ecosystem to the same extent as people in other states whose river values have been studied, the monetary value of losing a free-flowing Gila River could be as much as \$218 million.

This preliminary analysis shows that the water in the Gila River has much greater value to the region if it remains in stream rather than being used consumptively. While the federal subsidies offered by the AWSA appear quite attractive, the estimated total costs of a diversion are so large that the region would still need to bear significant costs for construction and operation of the project.

This analysis demonstrates that it makes good economic sense to protect the unique values of the Gila River and to meet the area's future water demand through cost-effective conservation measures and lower-cost supply alternatives, such as drilling new wells or conjunctive use.

To request a copy of the full report, please contact the Gila Conservation Coalition at (505) 538-8078 or info@gilaconservation.org. The full report is also available for download at the GCC website: www.gilaconservation.org.

Hurley Cleanup Gets Underway

continued from page 1

health advisory that describes the extent of copper soil contamination in the area, associated health risks, and contact information regarding health concerns. NMED reserved the right to modify the cleanup level if future information indicates that any remaining copper contamination poses a threat to human or ecological health.

On September 12, Chino Mines and the NMED hosted an Open House at the Hurley Elementary School to inform citizens about the cleanup process. Interest was high – about 150 people attended the event – but the presentation was brief, did little to explain the potential health risk of copper in the soil, and was difficult for many to hear due to a lack of a sound

system. Making matters worse, the Open House did not include a group question-and-answer session.

Chino is offering to remove contaminated soil and then restore yards to their prior condition. This means native vegetation will be replaced with natives, sod with sod, or residents may choose to replace sod with gravel.

A pilot project testing the cleanup of four properties has been conducted, and cleanup of yards tested with over 5,000 ppm of copper will begin this fall and continue in the spring. The cleanup is voluntary for property owners. Interested homeowners can contact Robert Quintanar at Chino Mine, 505-537-4228 or Phil Harrigan at NMED, 505-388-1943 to request sampling or additional information.