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INTERSTATE STREAM COMMISSION APPROVES PROJECTS FOR AWSA ASSESSMENT

NON-DIVERSION ALTERNATIVES REMAIN FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

by Allyson Siwik, Executive Director

In February, the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) decided on the projects that will move forward for final consideration under the Arizona Water Settlements Act (AWSA), as New Mexico weighs the pros and cons of diverting up to 14,000 acre-feet of water annually from the Gila River and its tributary, the San Francisco. New Mexico has until the end of 2014 to notify the Department of Interior whether or not the state will develop Gila water. The Commission approved ISC staff recommendations to further refine and study most of the 20 Tier 2 proposals, including 16 non-diversion alternatives and three diversion projects.

Municipal conservation scored at the top of the ISC Evaluation Panel's Tier 2 ranking list. The Commission approved initiation of the Gila Conservation Coalition's proposal to set up a municipal conservation fund by providing "initial funding of \$100,000 made available as soon as possible, and include water harvesting as allowed under Office of the State Engineer Water Use and Conservation Bureau policies. The initial funding for this proposal is intended to test the utility and feasibility of the proposal and thereby provide the Commission with adequate data and information to assess the value of this proposal by 2014," according to the ISC staff recommendation.

"The Gila Conservation Coalition is very pleased that the Commissioners approved municipal conservation, including water harvesting, for further consideration under the AWSA. Municipal conservation
SEE ISC ON P. 3

GROUNDWATER RESTORATION PROJECTS MOVE AHEAD

San Vicente Creek Tailings to be disposed of at FMI's Tyrone mine

by Allyson Siwik, Executive Director

In January, the New Mexico Office of the Natural Resources Trustee (ONRT) released its final restoration plan for groundwater damages at the Freeport-McMoRan (FMI) Chino, Cobre and Tyrone mines. It includes full removal and clean up of the San Vicente Mill tailings, a priority restoration project for which GRIP has long advocated.

Because of the high cost of transportation and disposal of the material to an out-of-state disposal site, GRIP encouraged FMI and federal and state regulatory authorities to work together to develop a plan to allow for disposal of San Vicente tailings material at one of the local FMI mines, thus significantly cutting down on the total costs of the clean up. At press time, Freeport was working through the final details for accepting San Vicente material at the Tyrone mine.

"This is great news," stated GRIP Executive Director Allyson Siwik. "We're very pleased that Freeport has agreed to accept tailings
SEE GROUNDWATER ON P. 5



CLAIRE CATLETT BESIDE ABANDONED MINE. (RICHARD MAHLER PHOTO)

VISTA UPDATE: MEET CLAIRE CATLETT, GRIP'S NEWEST STAFFER

by Richard Mahler, Newsletter Editor

It didn't take long for GRIP's new VISTA staffer to discover Boston Hill, the mining district turned municipal open space that looms above Silver City.

"I'm a trail runner," explains Claire Catlett, who arrived in early March to succeed Dan Hintz upon completion of his one-year assignment. (Dan plans to pursue graduate studies in Environmental Economics during fall 2013. We thank him for his service and wish him well.)

Gazing down from the hill, Catlett can trace San Vicente Creek, an important focus of her work in coming months. "We're looking forward," she says, "to the removal of tailings from the old mill works along the creek and further upgrading of the San Vicente trail system." Funds provided under the recent ONRT-directed settlement (see related story on this page) will pay for the long-sought remediation.

During her year-long position at GRIP, Catlett expects to build on previous groundwork: promoting
SEE CATLETT ON P. 6