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shaped.

GRIP attended the final Mining and Minerals Division inspection of the recent work and supported the state's approval of release of partial bonding for areas where the regrading of the steep inclines has been completed. Additional bonding will be released if PD can establish a self-sustaining ecosystem appropriate for the life zone of the surrounding areas, which means successful seeding and long-term establishment of a selected, locally diverse plant mix.

In case you've been wondering what's happening at the corner of Highway 90 and Tyrone Thompson CMR, over 32 million tons of material from the 1C stockpile was removed from the Oak Grove drainage to prevent further contamination of the creek. The stockpile material was deposited on top of the 1A and 1B stockpiles where it will be leached. The now visible side of the 1A stockpile has been

regraded to a ridge-valley drainage design, covered and will be reseeded. A drainage channel was re-established and a PLS collection system installed at the toe of the 1A stockpile. A new public viewing kiosk has been erected by PD on highway 180 to allow safe observation of the reclamation work. The kiosk features a series of storyboards that explain the current status of the reclamation and stockpile test plots.

The fulfillment of some of the requirements for reclamation work and a change in law allowed the Mining and Minerals Division (MMD) to reduce the Tyrone financial assurance bond by over \$32 million from \$270,775,013 to \$238,317,094 -- the cost calculated for the State to reclaim the mine site if PD should fail to do so.

The best of the news is that mine reclamation results in protection of surface and groundwater and reduction of wind-blown mine waste!

Gila Diversion, continued from page 1

However, the future of the Gila River is at the mercy of these planning estimates as the NM Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) moves ahead with efforts to divert as much as 10,000 acre-feet of water per year from the Gila River for Silver City's water supply under the Arizona Water Settlements Act. The idea that's been discussed by the ISC is to divert water from the river when flows are above specified monthly diversion parameters, pipe the water to a 50,000 acre-foot impoundment on Mangas Creek (about 25 times the size of Bill Evans Lake), and then pump the water over the Continental Divide to the Silver City well fields to recharge the aquifer. Not accounting for evaporation and other water losses from the system, the 8,000 acre-feet per year yield discussed in the Southwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan seems like a drop in the bucket compared to the 15.2 million acre-feet of water held in that aquifer.

All of this assumes that 10,000 acre-feet per year can be taken from the Gila. Factoring in the drought and potential impacts to endangered species, the viability of the

project is highly questionable.

Moreover, this project is too expensive. The Gila Conservation Coalition's economic analysis, produced by economic consulting firm, ECONorthwest, shows that a Gila River diversion would cost 16 times more than acquiring additional water rights and drilling new wells and could impose an additional \$268 million in cost on the tax payer.

LET'S HAVE OUR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO

The Gila River is the last free-flowing river in New Mexico and maintaining its relatively natural flow regime is critical to its ecological values. ECONorthwest estimated that if the residents of New Mexico hold values for the Gila River's ecological attributes similar to those found in studies regarding similar natural resource amenities, the economic costs due to ecological impacts of a Gila River diversion could be as much as \$218 million. By choosing to use groundwater rather surface water, Silver City can meet future water demand at much lower cost while also allowing the Gila River to remain a riparian jewel of the southwest.

A CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITY

An anonymous donor has offered GRIP a "challenge grant" of \$1000 if we can raise an equal amount by June 30. This aggressive investor wants to double his contribution in a matter of months, so please help us out by making a tax-deductible donation to GRIP using the enclosed envelope. As you know, we run a lean operation and your investment goes a long way to funding our programs in responsible mining, Gila River conservation, community planning, and groundwater protection.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- ♦ **Earth Day at Penny Park** - April 22; 10am-3pm
- ♦ **Gila River Festival** - May 12 - 14
www.gilaconservation.org/gilariverfestival.shtml
- ♦ **Turning Water Scarcity into Water Abundance** - May 14
2 - 4pm at WNMU Global Resource Center Auditorium
Presentation with permaculture expert, Brad Lancaster,
- ♦ **Gila-San Francisco Coordinating Committee Science Forum** -
June 2006
- ♦ **Natural History of the Gila: A Southwest New Mexico Symposium**
October 6 - 7, 2006; Western New Mexico University