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the parties reach consensus in the months ahead."

GRIP and its partners in the Gila Conservation Coalition (GCC) believe that the Gila-San Francisco Coordinating Committee, the entity overseeing the current planning process, has been biased toward potential water withdrawals from the Gila River. We therefore applaud the Governor's veto, which underscored the need for a new process that examines the full range of water supply alternatives that meet the water needs of the communities in southwestern New Mexico and that is not focused solely on Gila River diversion and consumption. In other words, no diversion at all must be an option considered by the coordinating committee.

In late June, the conservation community's efforts to reform the planning process bore further fruit. Governor Richardson issued a policy statement regarding water resources

planning under the AWSA, stating his desire to protect the Gila and San Francisco Rivers for future generations and to make conservation of these rivers a top priority in the state's response to the Act. In addition, the Governor's statement redirected the Gila-San Francisco Coordinating Committee process to study the range of alternatives to meet water supply needs, "with the 'no diversion' option as an essential part of the analysis."

While we recognize this positive step forward, there is still work to be done. Along with our partners around the state, GCC will continue to promote an open and transparent process and a common-sense approach that can satisfy the future water needs of the region while also maintaining the free flow of the Gila. The AWSA allows for \$66 million of the \$128 million federal subsidy to be expended for any "water utilization projects that meet a water supply demand." This funding could go to improving municipal

conservation, increasing irrigation efficiency, buying water rights, digging new wells, or to a host of other practical measures that would meet the future needs of the entire region in a cost-effective manner and conserve the Gila and San Francisco rivers.

With river systems around the globe increasingly under threat from water development, the Arizona Water Settlements Act provides New Mexico with a rare opportunity to find a balance between human and environmental needs. We believe that the \$66 million federal subsidy from the AWSA should be used to meet the region's future water demand at least cost and keep the Gila a wild, free-flowing river.

Read the Governor's policy statement at www.gilaconservation.org.

Coming soon: Gila Conservation Coalition e-newsletter. E-mail us at info@gilaconservation.org if you would like to receive Gila River updates.

Governor Richardson needs to hear from you! See ACTION ALERT on backpage for more info.

Smelter Stack Demolition continued from page 4

what to do. Should they leave town and if so, for how long? Should they seal their houses or take valuables off walls and shelves? Would there be seismic activity reminiscent of an earthquake? GRIP staff didn't know what to tell them.

With just weeks to spare, GRIP staff got busy researching procedures of other similar demolitions and watched videos of these events. The examples found included precautions that had not been discussed in the Hurley preparations, such as 1,000 foot safety zones where no one was permitted and use of water for dust suppression before, during and after the demolition.

On May 14th, GRIP filed for a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) to give the public more time to become informed. After GRIP filed its petition, PD finally met with the Air Quality Bureau (AQB) one week prior to the originally scheduled demolition to discuss air quality monitoring during the demolition event. Between PD and the AQB, particulate matter, metals and asbestos were to be monitored before, during and after the demolition event. However, two outstanding issues remained. The company confirmed that it would not use any

dust suppression, and there was no procedure in place for determining if Hurley soils needed to be re-sampled as a result of the demolition event.

Due to the GRIP petition (and perhaps due to the weather) PD canceled the May 25th demolition and rescheduled it for June 5th. GRIP executive Director Allyson Siwik and President Sally Smith were in Hurley that June day, and they reported that the local sentiment was that luck was with the people of Hurley.

That's because right after the blast, as the stacks were going down and a huge plume of dust and smoke was rising, the wind shifted for just a few minutes toward town. Just as quickly it thankfully shifted again taking the particulate south, away from town, but it was a reminder of the potential dangers of fickle winds. The days immediately after the demolition were some of the gustiest, most violent winds many could recall in 30 years.

Thanks to the persistent efforts of GRIP, NMED and EPA required that PD water down the site before and after the demolition to keep asbestos and dust down. Results of ambient air quality monitoring showed no problems with asbestos or particulate matter in the town of

Hurley that day. Given these results, it is expected that soils will not be retested.

While GRIP was not able to obtain a Temporary Restraining Order, additional time permitted GRIP staff to alert EPA about its concerns regarding the stack demolition and question the Agency and NMED on issues related to the demolition. The day prior to the June 5 demolition, PD was notified that it indeed had to implement dust suppression during the demolition event.

GRIP was very disappointed that NMED failed to effectively communicate about the stack demolition. We sent a letter to Environment Secretary Ron Curry describing our concerns and dissatisfaction with how the Department had handled communication with the community. We expect to meet with the Secretary to discuss these issues further.

GRIP staff was also extremely disappointed that while communication between PD and GRIP has in general improved, the organization was left out of the loop about this rush job demolition that could have had serious public health and safety impacts on the Grant County community. In our opinion, a disastrous result was avoided by vigilance and a bit of good luck.