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DAN HINTZ AT A SAN VICENTE CREEK WATER MONITORING LOCATION, BELOW THE SITE OF THE OLD SILVER CITY REDUCTION WORKS. (RICHARD MAHLER PHOTO)

DAN HINTZ IS GRIP'S NEW VISTA STAFFER KEEPING TABS ON SAN VICENTE CREEK AND OTHER WATERWAYS

by Richard Mahler, Newsletter Editor

GRIP's second-year AmeriCorps VISTA member, Dan Hintz, joined the staff in late February. He is continuing the successful efforts of first-year VISTA staffer Regina Willis to coordinate environmental monitoring efforts, support community outreach/education, and trail development/maintenance within the Silver City watershed — with the overall goal of economic development.

Willis, meanwhile, will pursue graduate study this fall in landscape ecology. Their VISTA work here is part of an ongoing project to build capacity within GRIP, its partner organizations, and the community at large for the cooperative remediation of the watershed's "legacy" mine sites, defined as those in operation prior to 1977.

"We've added a third monitoring location, downstream from the Silver City Reduction Works tailings, for water-quality monitoring by our Watershed Keepers," says Hintz, referring to the group of volunteers who've been trained in the study of San Vicente Creek, which flows past the site of an abandoned ore-processing facility where high levels of lead and arsenic have been found. "The other locations are downtown along the Big Ditch and beneath the Highway 90 bridge."

Hintz hails from Glen Ellyn, IL, and graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a major in Economics and a certificate in Environmental Studies. He's done ecological restoration work at the University of Wisconsin Arboretum and for the past year did forest and stream restoration and trail construction in Seattle for EarthCorps.

"GRIP is seeking funds to support clean-up of the Silver City Re-

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FUTURE OF GILA RIVER AT STAKE AS AWSA EVALUATION UNFOLDS

URGENT ACTION NEEDED ON GILA'S BEHALF

by Allyson Siwik, Executive Director

After years of denying that it was pushing for a Gila River water development project under the Arizona Water Settlements Act (AWSA), the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) unveiled its system for scoring proposals that gives 10 times more weight to diversion projects than non-diversion projects. It will be impossible for a non-diversion project to score on par or higher than a diversion project under this evaluation scheme. The ISC is stacking the deck against cost-effective, non-diversion projects and will predetermine the outcome of this important decision on how to meet Southwest New Mexico's future water needs without full public participation and transparency.

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FREEPORT SETTLEMENT YIELDS \$13-MILLION IN RESTORATION FUNDS COMPENSATION FOR GROUNDWATER DAMAGES

by Richard Mahler, Newsletter Editor

On the second-to-last day of 2010, the New Mexico Office of the Natural Resources Trustee (ONRT) and Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold (FMI) reached a \$13-million settlement for Grant County groundwater resource damages resulting from the release of hazardous substances at FMI's Chino, Cobre, and Tyrone mines.

The consent degree won approval by the U.S. District Court on February 11. It provides \$12,794,308 for restoration of groundwater resources and an additional \$205,692 for the reimbursement of outstanding damage assessment costs, to be paid to the ONRT. In addition to the groundwater injury settlement, the ONRT, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and FMI are negotiating a separate settlement for various wildlife and terrestrial resource injuries.

GRIP is pleased with this long awaited settlement of damages from mine contamination at the FMI mines. Since a chance inspection in 2000 found at least 100 birds had died in and around the Tyrone tailings ponds, the U.S. Department of Justice, Department of Interior, and the ONRT investigated criminal violations by Phelps Dodge (now Freeport-McMoRan) of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and civil violations of the Natural Resource Damage provisions of the Superfund law. Under the authority of the Superfund law and Clean Water Act, this financial settlement of civil violations will be

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