



BEFORE: THE SILVER CITY REDUCTION WORKS CIRCA 1900.



AFTER: THE SAME LOCATION IN 2011, WASTE REMAINS BUT IS NOW HIDDEN BY TREES.

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duction Works site," says Hintz, as well as several other old mining operations in the Silver City area that pose public health hazards. A separate project involves the mapping of potential sources of urban pollutants into San Vicente Creek and possible stenciling of storm drains by local youth to educate the general public about contamination issues." Measured physical characteristics of the stream's water include temperature, dissolved oxygen, and pH levels.

Silver City's origins as a mining community left abandoned mines and processing sites that may pose an environmental risk. In 2010, GRIP was awarded a VISTA appointment over a three-year period through the Western Hardrock Watershed Team, a coalition of community/watershed improvement groups confronting challenges that remain from historic Western mining. Partners in the project overseen by GRIP include the New Mexico Environment Department Surface Water Quality Bureau, Town of Silver City Community Development Department, Gila Conservation Education Center, Grant County Trails Committee, Bicycle Advocacy Group, Walkability Accessibility Advocacy Group, and Silver City MainStreet Project.

Hintz is eager to add more volunteer Watershed Keepers, who meet quarterly to receive instruction and to sample water quality in San Vicente Creek. The next monitoring event is scheduled for June 7. For more information, contact Dan at 538-8078 or dan@gilaresources.info.

LEGISLATIVE DEBRIEF:

NEW MEXICO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS SURVIVE 2011 LEGISLATURE INTACT

by Allyson Siwik, Executive Director

Although the outlook for the environment looked grim as the 2011 New Mexico legislature convened in January (see *Get A GRIP*, Fall 2010), we can all breathe more easily knowing that no anti-environment bills — and there were nearly 50 of them — passed during this session, according to our colleagues at Conservation Voters New Mexico. But of the eight pro-environment bills approved by the legislature, only three were signed by the governor. For a full recap on specific bills, visit www.cvmn.org. GRIP advocated on a number of priority bills and offers a few highlights:

Water Quality Control Act Revisions (HB225/SB249) would have limited public participation as well as put water quality regulations in the hands of a single political appointee rather than the Water Quality Control Commission. This would have effectively politicized water quality protections and the safety of our water supplies. Both bills died in committee.

Amend Energy Portfolio Standards (HB546) would have cut New Mexico's renewable energy portfolio standard in half, thereby limiting the incentive for PNM and other utilities to invest in renewable energy. This would have put a serious damper on our transition to a clean-energy economy and the creation of green jobs. This bill died in committee thanks to successful organizing by the New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce.

Energy Conservation Bonds (SB266) would have put in place administrative rules allowing local governments to take advantage of "Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds," of which New Mexico was allocated \$20.5-million by the Federal government. According to a fiscal impact report, this bill would have created jobs and promoted business in our state. Although this bill passed the Senate (37-0) and House (39-18), Governor Martínez failed to sign it into law before the deadline.

Creation of New Mexico Unit Fund (HB301) passed both the Senate and House unanimously and was signed into law by the Governor. Under terms of the Arizona Water Settlements Act (AWSA), beginning in 2012 New Mexico will receive \$66-million in federal subsidy — paid in annual increments of \$6.6-million each — for water projects that meet a water supply demand in southwestern New Mexico. The bill sets up the New Mexico Unit Fund to accept these monies and requires that any interest that accrues on the principal remains in that account rather than reverting to the state's General Fund. Two local legislators, Representative Rudy Martínez and Senator Howie Morales, were instrumental in ensuring that the bill language is consistent with federal law and allows for expenditure of AWSA funding on non-diversion alternatives. This is critical language that recognizes that AWSA subsidy dollars can be spent on any project that meets a water supply demand in southwestern New Mexico, including such cost-effective solutions as municipal and agricultural conservation and sustainable groundwater management.