

Their drafting will require GRIP legal counsel and staff involvement. The public review process for the **new Copper Mining Regulations** may begin this summer and are very likely to take a long time and spur much debate.

A 40-acre haul road, now 65 percent complete, is being built on the west side of Tyrone Mine to connect it to the long abandoned **Little Rock Mine** open pit. This is a monumental project in a very steep canyon and will allow mining to resume at Little Rock, with ore to be processed at Tyrone's existing leach piles. Mining is scheduled to resume July 1, after the haul road and all permit requirements are completed.

Persistent rumors continue to speculate that **yellow-cake uranium** is being extracted and processed at local FMI mines. Managers assure us that this is not the case. Both Tyrone and Chino Mines produce copper cathode that is 99.999% copper and melted for many uses. (These are the large, shiny plates we see transported locally on flatbed trucks.) Concentrate, about 30 percent copper, is also produced by these mines and refined through smelting. This concentrate can produce small amounts of other precious metals. FMI uses a separate concentration process for ore that contains molybdenum, used in the hardening of steel.

The **Lone Mountain/Copper One exploration permit** for drilling near Arenas Valley is approaching approval by MMD. Issues of financial assurance and reclamation vegetation monitoring are close to resolution. Drilling of as many as 176 test holes is projected to begin this summer.

The Stage 2 Abatement Plan for DP-311 — the now-demolished **Hidalgo Smelter Site** — requires a summary and selection of abatement technologies. Currently a Phase 3 Field Data Collection Work Plan and a Draft Conceptual Work Model are under review by NMED. Phase 3 Abatement involves the collection of information needed to fill any data gaps and studies needed to evaluate abatement options to remediate groundwater that exceeds water quality standards. GRIP considers the excessive use of fresh water for dilution an issue of concern at this site.

There are many other mine-related issues outstanding in our area, including five-year renewals of operational and closure permits, request for variances and waivers, alternative abatement plans, operational plans for new mining areas, and exploration permits.

rates. "That's a fortune for a small town — and it could easily be double that," he predicts, "if energy prices go up faster."

The city's timetable calls for groundbreaking at the wastewater plant around July 15, with construction completed by mid-November. The cost of electricity at this facility, combined with power consumption by the city's water pumping and delivery system, are among the highest recurring non-personnel costs for local government.

"We expect to complete an analysis by July of the technical and financial issues related to a solar-power system for Silver City's water wellfields and booster pumps," says Sussillo. "The variables are more complex and there's a possibility we will not go ahead with it. If we do proceed, the timetable would probably be about four months behind the wastewater project." One factor influencing the decision is the expected implementation of a variable electricity rate structure, whereby off-peak pumping from the wells and into storage tanks could be priced at a heavily discounted price. State regulators are expected to decide this issue by late July. As rates are currently configured, savings to the Town of Silver City could be an additional \$1.5-million for the wellfields over a 20-year period.

"Time is of the essence," Sussillo concludes, for implementation of such solar power projects. "The PNM Renewable Energy Credit incentives decrease over time," he says, and available credits are locked in on a first-come-first-served basis. "PNM expects to come back every two years for the next six years to ask for additional rate increases. This is a huge opportunity now, as fossil fuels are getting scarcer and competition for them increases." Sussillo is optimistic about regional deployment of large solar installations, noting that the City of Deming, Deming School District, and Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold earlier this year indicated their separate intentions to install solar-power systems serving at least some of their facilities.

For information about the Joint Office of Sustainability, contact Sussillo at nick.sussillo@gmail.com. An article on the Office's efforts to promote energy efficiency and conservation may be viewed at www.emnrd.state.nm.us/ecmd/documents/ECMDSuccessNewsletterSilverCityGrantCounty.pdf

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used to fund projects that restore, rehabilitate, replace, or acquire the equivalent of the injured groundwater resource.

"The multi-year assessment process for this claim was conducted under a cooperative assessment process to avoid costly litigation," noted former Natural Resource Trustee Ron Curry.

Among projects GRIP believes would be well served through settlement funding is cleanup of tailings along San Vicente Creek at the site of the old Silver City Reduction Works (see story on page 1). GRIP is also researching the appropriateness of other legacy mine sites in the local watershed for cleanup using settlement funds.

ONRT plans to facilitate a public process to determine the best way to restore groundwater resources. A draft restoration plan will be distributed prior to final selection by ONRT, which is not expected before late 2011. GRIP will remain closely involved in order to ensure that Grant County residents are fully compensated for past contamination and that funds are used for projects in areas where damage was done. (For more details, see www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swq/b/ONRW/)

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If you're already a member, you'll get a renewal notice by mail. If not, we invite you to join — and help us continue our efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of our communities, to protect the Gila River and its watershed, and to safeguard our regional water supply. With your help we can continue to improve our lives, and those of our children and grandchildren to come. You can always make a secure, tax-deductible donation on line at www.gilaresources.info.