

\$1.3 million agreement to protect groundwater through sewer service expansion

Office of the Natural Resources Trustee



SILVER CITY — Today, the Town of Silver City and the New Mexico Office of the Natural Resources Trustee (ONRT) announced an agreement that provides \$1.3 million to extend municipal sewer service to Silver City neighborhoods currently served by individual septic systems. The Silver City Indian Hills Sewer Line Extension Project will be ONRT’s eighth restoration project implemented with funding from a \$13 million settlement with the Freeport McMoRan Mining Company. That 2011 consent decree compensates area residents for groundwater injuries caused by mining operations near Silver City.

Silver City Town Manager Alex C. Brown highlighted the ongoing collaboration between ONRT and Silver City. “This is the third Silver City project funded by ONRT with the Freeport McMoRan settlement dollars,” he said. “Our partnership with ONRT has provided \$5 million for groundwater protection for Silver City alone and brought sewer service to more than 218 homes. Those investments will have a meaningful impact on this community for years to come.”

“This project builds on ongoing efforts to protect the Silver City region’s precious groundwater resources for current users and for future generations,” said Natural Resources Trustee Maggie Hart Stebbins. “Once complete, the new infrastructure will reduce contamination and provide immediate and long-lasting benefits to area residents.”

The Indian Hills Sewer Line Extension Project will protect groundwater by extending municipal sewer lines to a neighborhood located in the northern part of Silver City. Specifically, the project will: 1) extend municipal sewer collection lines to approximately 27 residences in the Indian

Hills neighborhood that currently use on-site septic systems for wastewater treatment, 2) extend individual sewer service stub-outs to the property lines of those residences, 3) properly decommission existing septic systems, and 4) construct a sewer lift station and other necessary infrastructure.

By connecting to the municipal sewer service, the project will eliminate the potential threat of groundwater contamination from those homes with faulty on-site septic systems. Per the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), liquid waste enforcement actions have been taken in this area dating back to early 1990s and residents have regularly requested municipal sewer connections and expressed willingness to connect to a sewer system if available.

The Town of Silver City Utilities Department lead this project with ONRT and NMED providing administrative and technical oversight.

For more information on the Freeport McMoRan settlement, visit <https://onrt.env.nm.gov/chino-cobre-and-tyrone-mines/>.

About Office of the Natural Resources Trustee (ONRT): *The ONRT is a state agency created by statute to ensure that New Mexico's natural resources that have been injured by the release of hazardous substances are restored for the full benefit of New Mexicans. The ONRT assesses injury to natural resources caused by the contamination and then seeks compensation from the responsible parties for restoration of those injured resources. The funds through settlements are used to restore, replace, or acquire the equivalent of injured, destroyed or lost natural resources and the services they provide. For more information about the ONRT, visit www.onrt.state.nm.us.*