

# Rio Grande Sierran

Volume 55, Issue 4

News of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter: New Mexico & West Texas

October/November/December 2017

## Right under their noses

Sandoval County considers a measure that fast-tracks approval for all oil and gas drilling — without public notice or input



Miya King-Flaherty

These people weren't allowed to speak at the Sept. 21 Sandoval County Commission meeting because they didn't fit in the packed meeting room.

### N.M. proposes anti-science science curriculum

New Mexico's Public Education Department finally moves to update the science curriculum for public schools, but it wants to remove mentions of climate change and references to the earth's age, and to add assignments promoting oil and gas. Please see [Page 3](#).



### Endorsed candidates advance in Albuquerque

The Rio Grande Chapter endorsed three candidates in Albuquerque's municipal election. Mayoral candidate Tim Keller and City Council candidate Cynthia Borrego advanced to runoffs, and City Councilor Diane Gibson won outright. See [Page 11](#).



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Sierra Club  
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Santa Fe, NM 87505

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### More inside:

#### Puerto Rico hurricane recovery

Rio Grande Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman is part of a Sierra Club team supporting local hurricane-relief efforts. [Page 4](#)

#### Monumental decisions

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's leaked report advises exposing New Mexico's newest national monuments to extractive industries. [Page 6](#)

#### Dairy coalition to hold training

Industry watchdog will hold a training in Anthony for those affected by nearby dairy operations. [Page 7](#)

**More:** [NM approves federal wolf plan:](#) [Page 5.](#) [Bears:](#) [Page 5.](#)

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# Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter Contacts

riograndesierraclub.org

facebook.com/nmsierraclub

Twitter: @riograndesierra

instagram.com/riograndesierraclub

## Executive Committee

**David Coss**, chair, dcoss1@yahoo.com

**Shane Woolbright**, vice chair, 405-323-2569, mesoinc@hotmail.com

**Laurence Gibson**, secretary, 915-309-5419, lgibson@utep.edu

**Ray Shortridge**, treasurer, 505-604-3908, rshortridge@gmail.com

**Susan Martin**, 505-988-5206, smartin31@comcast.net

**John Buchser**, jbuchser@comcast.net, 505-820-0201

**Eric Patterson**, 575-776-2833, eepatt@gmail.com

**Karl Braithwaite**, 505-850-3369, karl@braith.net

**Patrick Madden**, patrickxaviermadden@gmail.com

**Fred Houdek**, Central New Mexico Group representative: fjhoudek@gmail.com, 630-809-4234

**Tom Gorman**, Northern New Mexico Group representative: 505-438-3932, gormantd@gmail.com

**Jody Benson**, Pajarito Group representative, echidnaejb@gmail.com, 505-662-4782

**Kurt Anderson**, Southern New Mexico Group representative, kurt@nmsu.edu

El Paso Group representative: Open

## Offices and Staff

### Albuquerque office

2215 Lead Ave SE, Albuquerque, 87106, 505-243-7767

**Camilla Feibelman**, Rio Grande Chapter director, 505-715-8388 or camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org

**Miya King-Flaherty**, Chapter public-lands fellow, (505) 243-7767, miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org

**Cecilia Chávez-Beltrán**, Spanish-language outings, cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org

### Southern New Mexico

**Dan Lorimier**, conservation coordinator (Southern and El Paso Groups), Chapter lobbyist, 575-740-2927, daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org

### Northern New Mexico Office

1807 Second Street, Unit 45 Santa Fe, NM 87505 • 505-983-2703

**Mona Blaber**, chapter communications coordinator, 505-660-5905,

monablaber@gmail.com

**Claire McKnight**, PAC treasurer, (646) 864-0209, claire.mcknight@gmail.com

**Brintha Nathan**, bookkeeper 505-310-0595, brintha2709@yahoo.com

### Western New Mexico

**Robert Tohe**, Our Wild America senior organizing representative, (928) 774-6103, robert.tohe@sierraclub.org

### Sierra Club National

2101 Webster St., Suite 1300. Oakland, CA, 94612. 415-977-5500

**Roger Singer**, senior field organizing manager, (NM, CO, UT), mobile: 303-884-0064, office: 303-449-5595 x103, roger.singer@sierraclub.org

## Local Groups

**Central New Mexico Group**, 2215 Lead Ave. SE, Albuquerque, 87106  
Chair: Fred Houdek, fjhoudek@gmail.com, 630-809-4234.

**El Paso Group**, P.O. Box 9191, El Paso, TX 79995, Chair: Laurence Gibson, lgibson@utep.edu, 915-309-5419.

**Northern New Mexico Group**, 1807 Second St., Unit 45, Santa Fe, NM 87505, 505-983-2703, Chair: Teresa Seamster, tc.seamster@gmail.com, 505-466-8964.

**Pajarito Group**, P.O. Box 945, Los Alamos, NM, 87544, Chair: Jody Benson, echidnaejb@gmail.com.

**Southern New Mexico Group**, P.O. Box 735, Mesilla, NM, 88046; Howie Dash, howiedash@aol.com.

## Outings

**Outings:** Odile de La Beaujardiere, odile@pitot.org, 505-433-4692

**Central New Mexico:** Odile de La Beaujardiere, odile@pitot.org, 505-433-4692

**El Paso:** John Walton, walton@utep.edu, 915-539-5797

**Northern New Mexico:** Tobin Oruch, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com, and Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com

**Southern New Mexico:** Howie Dash, howiedash@aol.com

**Inspiring Connections Outdoors:** New Mexico: Raymond Greenwell, matrng@hofstra.edu, 516-312-5751  
El Paso: Ted Mertig, 915-852-3011, tcmertig@sbcglobal.net

## Military Outdoors Program:

Terry Owen, teown@q.com (505) 301-4349

**Spanish-language outings:** Cecilia Chávez-Beltrán, cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org

## Action Teams

**Bosque Action Team:** Richard Barish, richard.barish@gmail.com, 505-232-3013.

**Otero Mesa Action Team:** Dan Lorimier, daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org, 575-740-2927.

**Bag-Free Team:** Jody Benson, Pajarito Group representative, 505-662-4782

**Organ Mountains Desert Peaks:** Howie Dash, howiedash@aol.com.

## Conservation Issues

**Conservation:** Chair: Karl Braithwaite, 505-850-3369, karl@braith.net

**Energy/Climate Change:** Chair: Denise Fort, denisefort@msn.com

**Water:** Chair: John Buchser, 505-820-0201, jbuchser@comcast.net

**Dairy:** Dan Lorimier, 575-740-2927, daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org

**Public Lands Team:** Tom Gorman, Teresa Seamster, Mary Katherine Ray, Ken Newton

**Wildlife:** Chair: Mary Katherine Ray, 575-772-5655, mkrscrim@gmail.com

**Four Corners:** Robert Tohe, 928-774-6103, robert.tohe@sierraclub.org

**Methane:** Camilla Feibelman, camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org

**Mining, Sand & Gravel:** Allyson Siwik, allysonsiwik@gmail.com

**Zero Waste:** Joe Eigner, 505-570-0583, joseigner@gmail.com, and Karen Sweeney, 505-466-9797, ksweeney99@comcast.net.

## Activism Teams

**Communications Team:** Chair: Open. Members: Jim Klukkert, Laurence Gibson, David Coss, Benton Howell, John Buchser

**Rio Grande Sierran Editorial Board:** Laurence Gibson, Ken Hughes, Mary Katherine Ray, Jody Benson, David Coss

**Sierran Editor:** Mona Blaber, 505-660-5905, monablaber@gmail.com

**Web Editor:** Ellen Loehman, loehman@msn.com, 505-328-2954

**Elections:** Fred Houdek, 630-809-

4234

**Finance:** Ray Shortridge, chair, 505-604-3908; Members: Brintha Nathan, Jim Baker, Claire McKnight

**Fundraising:** John Buchser  
Members: David Coss, Jim Baker

**Legal:** Richard Barish, 505-232-3013, richard.barish@gmail.com

**Legislative:** Co-chairs: Melinda Smith, Patricia Cardona.

**Membership:** Open

**Nominating:** Ken Hughes, John Buchser, Allyson Siwik,

**Personnel:** Chair: John Buchser.  
Members: David Coss, Laurence Gibson, Ken Hughes, Fred Houdek

**Political Team:** Susan Martin, 505-988-5206, smartin31@comcast.net

**Political Compliance Officer:** Richard Barish, 505-232-3013, richard.barish@gmail.com

**Sierra Student Coalition:** Neysa Hardin, nrhardin@yahoo.com

## Coalitions/Working Groups

**America Votes:** Susan Martin

**Chaco Coalition:** Miya King-Flaherty, Robert Tohe, Teresa Seamster

**Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy:** Camilla Feibelman

**Doña Ana County:** Ken Newton, Dan Lorimier

**Environmental Alliance of New Mexico:** Dan Lorimier, Patricia Cardona, Melinda Smith

**Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte:** Eric Patterson

**Valles Caldera:** Teresa Seamster

**Rio Puerco Management Committee:** Tom Gorman

**Turquoise Trail Regional Alliance:** Denise Fort

## National Representatives

**Council of Club Leaders** Delegate: Susan Martin, 505-988-5206, smartin31@comcast.net

**Sierra Club Board of Directors** member: Liz Walsh, 915-342-7630

**Building Healthy Communities Team Facilitator:** Ken Hughes

**BLM Subcommittee of the Wildlands Committee:** Tom Gorman

**Rio Grande Water Fund:** Teresa Seamster

**Banner photo by Robert Reifels**

# Vote for Rio Grande Chapter executive committees

Four candidates are running for three open spots on the Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee. Candidate statements are available online at riograndesierraclub.org. Voting in the Chapter election is for Sierra Club members only. Please send this ballot with the member information intact on the label on the reverse side, or vote online. Online voting will be available in November at www.riograndesierraclub.org. To vote on paper, mail this completed ballot to: Sierra Club Election Committee, 9671 De Vargas Loop NE, Albuquerque NM 87109. Ballots must be postmarked by Nov. 27, 2017. Two-member households can each vote, using both boxes. Please also vote for candidates for the group executive committee where you live. **Note: El Paso Group ballots and candidate statements will be mailed separately.**

## Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee

There are three positions open. **Please do not vote for more than three candidates**

- Mary Hotvedt  
  Susan Martin

- Ray Shortridge  
  Shane Woolbright

### Pajarito Group Executive Committee (3 open seats)

- Howard Barnum  
  Iris Chung

### Northern Group Executive Committee (4 open seats)

- Alice Cox  
  Patricia Cardona  
  Jim Klukkert  
  Shane Woolbright

### Central Group Executive Committee (5 open seats)

- Heather Kline  
  Michael Marquez  
  Mark Rudd  
  Ray Shortridge  
  David Ther

### Southern Group Executive Committee (4 open seats)

- Cheryll Blevins  
  Kurt Anderson  
  Amanda Munro  
  Nate Cote

**Under a New Mexico Public Education Department curriculum proposal, kids wouldn't learn about climate change in science class but would be doing assignments that promote the oil and gas industry.**

Photo courtesy Eric Patterson



## Kids' climate program, chapter hit funding goal

By Mike Hopkins

Global Warming Express board

July fundraiser with The Global Warming Express results in 250% expansion of GWE Program!

As you may know, The Global Warming Express (GWE) and the Rio Grande Chapter hosted a joint fundraising event on July 21 at the Hotel Santa Fe. Attended by more than 150 Sierra Club members and GWE supporters, the event helped push fundraising over the \$30,000 threshold for the chapter and GWE to continue working together. Through the generosity of the attendees and other donors, the GWE after-school program has expanded from two schools in the 2016-2017 year to seven for the fall 2017 term, including schools in Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Las Cruces.

At the event, former Santa Fe Mayor David Coss and current Mayor Javier Gonzales explained why they support GWE. GWE founder Marina Weber read an excerpt from *The Global Warming Express*, the newly published book that she co-authored with co-founder Joanna Whysner. GWE kids Asha and Ruby spoke about the urgency of dealing with climate change and the need to support programs like GWE.

And GWE Executive Director Genie Stevens recruited seven highly qualified mentors from the Rio Grande Chapter membership to lead the program in this year's schools. At an anticipated participation of approximately 15 students per school, this year's GWE program will be reaching more than 100 students — a big step forward for the program.

Our ambitions are much bigger, though. We are looking ahead to further expansion of the GWE program to all of New Mexico. You can help make this a lasting program with the Sierra Club by making a donation that will go specifically to supporting GWE at [sc.org/GlobalWarmingExpress](http://sc.org/GlobalWarmingExpress).

# No climate in Science

N.M. Education Department proposal nixes climate from science curriculum

By Ellen Loehman  
New Mexico Science Teachers Association

**O**n Sept. 13, the New Mexico Public Education Department quietly released a draft version of new science standards. For non-educators, standards determine what is taught and what is tested in New Mexico public schools (including charter schools). They have widespread importance — from textbooks and curriculum to standardized testing to teacher evaluation.

The current science standards date from 2003 and were developed by teams of New Mexico teachers and community members, including a few scientists and members of the intelligent-design community. They are not bad, as standards go, but they are

outdated and problematic for a variety of reasons.

Since 2013, professional, educational and other organizations have been urging Gov. Susana Martinez and PED to adopt the Next Generation Science Standards. There are many reasons these standards are superior, most importantly that they were developed under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences. They explicitly include the best consensus of scientific understanding, including Earth's history, evolution and climate change.

In its draft release, the PED made subtle changes to the Next Generation standards that smack of political interference. The PED will not say who developed the altered standards, and they did not give reasons for the changes (and, in fact, they are not required to justify the changes).

As expected in this administration, the changes are

within the topics of evolution, Earth's history and climate change. "Climate change" was renamed "climate fluctuation." A reference to Earth's "4.6 billion-year-old history" was changed to "geologic history." "Minimizing" human impact became "managing" impact.

The standards that were added pay particular homage to oil and gas developers. One such example is "Describe the benefits associated with technologies related to the local industries and energy production." The omission of associated risks is glaring.

Scientific organizations, educational institutions, environmental groups, professional organizations, and even newspapers have been quick to denounce this outrage. You can, too. The Public Education Department is holding a required public hearing from

### Take action

Attend the rally and hearing on the proposed science curriculum at 9 a.m. Oct. 16 at the Jerry Apodaca Education Building, 300 Don Gaspar Ave., Santa Fe. To comment, go to [riograndesierraclub.org/science](http://riograndesierraclub.org/science) or [nmsta.org](http://nmsta.org).

9 a.m. to noon Monday, Oct. 16 in Santa Fe. This, of course, ensures that neither teachers nor students will be able to participate in the public hearing. You can also submit written comments electronically or by mail until Oct. 16. Send comments to [rule.feedback@state.nm.us](mailto:rule.feedback@state.nm.us). Please urge the department to adopt the unedited Next Generation Standards. For more information, please visit [nmsta.org](http://nmsta.org).

## Chapter Executive Committee candidate statements

### Mary Hotvedt

I live in Pinos Altos, on the edge of the Gila. I am both a cultural anthropologist and licensed marriage and family therapist. I teach part time at WNMU and am active in New Mexico politics and several local organizations.

I have been President of the American Association for Family Therapy and led a 20-year strategic vision for that organization.

My strongest environmental interests are in the interplay of human systems, politics, and water planning.

### Susan Martin

As a former Rio Grande Chapter chair and current Political chair, I absolutely believe that the chapter is a positive force against threats to our environment and democracy.

Our endorsements have resulted in the election of environmental champions at the local, state, and federal level, and the creation of new activists to sustain this progress.

I request your vote to continue as a member of the Chapter Executive Committee. The Trump and Martinez administrations seek to roll back safeguards. We must redouble our efforts to fight these actions at every level.

### Ray Shortridge

I am currently the volunteer treasurer of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter and serve on the Water Committee.

I'm a retired information technology executive and operations project manager.

As a grandfather, I am deeply concerned about the state of the environment which the next generations of my family will be experiencing and believe that the Sierra Club is one of many organizations that, particularly in New Mexico, is making a difference.

### Shane Woolbright

I received an MPA from the University of Arkansas, served in city management for seven years before becoming executive for trade associations of electric and natural gas transmission utilities, and was appointed to various industry boards including that of a major electric utility.

On the side, I'm an avid bird-watcher, former president of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society, and writer of editorial opinion.

# A morale boost in a troubling time

I recently received a needed morale boost when our national Sierra Club sent me a certificate of recognition for five years of membership. As we approach the 55th anniversary of our Rio Grande Chapter, I know many of you have been members of the Sierra Club far longer. Your work and support are more important now than ever.

In 1961\*, two years before our visionary predecessors started the Rio Grande Chapter, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. observed "...the labor-hater and labor-baiter is virtually always a twin-headed creature, spewing anti-Negro epithets from one mouth and anti-labor propaganda from the other mouth." I think we now realize that the right-wing creature described by Dr. King is running our



**David Coss,**  
**Rio Grande**  
**Chapter chair**

Congress, our presidency and many of our state and local governments. The creature has grown even more heads, including one that seeks to tear up the environmental progress our nation, you and I, have always fought for. Our Sierra Club is now a leading part of the resistance.

In Las Cruces, our members stood up with allies to oppose the Trump administration's threat to our monuments. On the border, we are opposing the wall and all the harm it can do to commu-

nities, wildlife and watersheds. In the Four Corners, our members are working with local allies to protect greater Chaco Canyon from rapidly expanding oil and gas facilities. Our members are standing up in Sandoval County, demanding land-use regulation and public process that protects the community from the impacts of oil and gas development.

We are standing up with friends and allies in rural communities, demanding worker and community rights as well as protection of critical water supplies by the dairy industry.

In Taos our water team trains teens to monitor local streams for contaminants. In Santa Fe, we are partnering to help expand the kids after-school program called Global Warming Express that is

creating a new generation of educated and activated citizens. In Albuquerque, our volunteers flooded the editorial pages to show public opposition to the awful proposal to remove climate change and evolution from our public schools' science curriculum.

Finally, the Sierra Club, including our own director Camilla Feibelman, is working to help our friends and fellow Americans in Puerto Rico suffering from not only the effects of the hurricane, but the animus and neglect of our president.

Next year we celebrate 55 years of work and commitment. I just want you to know, it is an honor to serve with you in the resistance.

*\*MLK speech to AFL-CIO convention, 1961*

## Stepping into the breach for Puerto Rico

During what is an incredibly difficult few weeks for our country, I want to take the opportunity to highlight a ray of hope and some positive work the Sierra Club and our local allies are doing in response to Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.



**Michael Brune,**  
**Sierra Club**  
**executive**  
**director**

The scope of the devastation and disaster in Puerto Rico is all too clear: Entire communities are destroyed, electricity is out, clean, fresh water is

scarce, and flooding is devastating.

But, following the example of our colleagues in the Gulf Coast and Florida who raised funds for community groups in response to Harvey and Irma, Sierra Club volunteers and staff have gone to work on the long path toward a just and equitable recovery. Thanks to your donations, we're already seeing results.

As you know, the Sierra Club has an active and productive chapter in Puerto Rico, with a



**Some of the devastation in Puerto Rico, where people who live in mountainous areas in particular have been cut off from sources of clean water and food and still don't have power.**

deep network of local partners and a track record of achieving environmental victories and demanding justice for Puerto Ricans.

You might not have known that your Rio Grande Chapter director, Camilla Feibelman, was the founding director of

the Puerto Rico chapter. Soon after I started at the Sierra Club, Camilla asked me to visit Puerto Rico and support the chapter's ultimately successful campaign to protect the Northeast Ecological Corridor.

Today, we are so fortunate to have Camilla leading our

### Puerto Rico hurricane relief

More than 19,000 Sierra Club members have contributed a record \$1.2 million for local organizations to carry out hurricane relief in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. If you would like to help, please go to [bit.ly/mariarecovery](http://bit.ly/mariarecovery) to contribute.

team in New Mexico, but she's working overtime to help our response in her former home of Puerto Rico as well.

She's been an integral leader in helping the Sierra Club get thousands of solar lanterns for partner organization Casa Pueblo in Puerto Rico to distribute to communities still without power.

We are also sending water filters, as well as thousands of lights with phone chargers from a company in Haiti to both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The contributions of Sierra Club members and supporters to Maria relief and recovery broke the online one-day fundraising record for this organization. More than 19,000 Sierra

Club members have donated over \$1.2 million.

In an effort to ensure all of the money raised goes directly to support a just and equitable recovery in Puerto Rico, 100% of the funding will be allocated to support organizations in Puerto Rico working on relief and long-term recovery, with the Sierra Club paying for all administrative and transaction costs.

These funds are being distributed directly to our partner organizations doing first response — distributing lunches, making roof repairs, etc. Other funds will help partner environmental groups get back on their feet and develop an integrated, holistic, sustainable response and rebuild from Hurricane Maria.

While we have been shaken by the devastation in Las Vegas, Houston, Florida and across the Caribbean, it's important to take note of the positive work you are doing, even and especially in the aftermath of the most challenging circumstances. I could not be prouder of representing the Sierra Club as we come together with unprecedented strength and unity of purpose in the aftermath of Maria.

## Rio Grande Sierran publication information

The *Rio Grande Sierran* is published four times a year, in January, April, July and October, by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club as a benefit for members living in New Mexico and West Texas.

Rio Grande Chapter offices are at 2215 Lead Ave. SE in Albuquerque.

For extra copies, e-mail [riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org).

**The opinions expressed in signed articles in the Rio Grande Sierran are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club.**

Articles may be reprinted for nonprofit purposes, provided that credit is given to the author and the *Rio Grande Sierran*.

(Please let us know if you reprint.)

Products and services advertised in the *Rio Grande Sierran* are not necessarily endorsed by the Sierra Club.

Contributions — articles, photos, artwork, poems, letters to the editor, paid advertisements — are welcome. Send to the editor (see Page 2). Submissions by Rio Grande Chapter members will take precedence over others.

Articles chosen to be published are subject to editing. Letters to the editor may be up to 500 words, are also subject to editing and are printed at the discretion of the editorial board.

The contributor's name and email address will be printed as a source of

more information, unless the contributor specifies otherwise. Submissions must be received by the 10th of the month prior to publication.

Editorial practices as developed and adopted by the Rio Grande Chapter will be used in production of the *Rio Grande Sierran*.

Contents of the Group pages are the responsibility of the editor for that Group and any policies that are in place from that Group.

**If you wish to opt out of the mailed copy of this newsletter and read it online:** Contact Mona Blaber at [monablaber@gmail.com](mailto:monablaber@gmail.com). and tell her you want to be on the opt-out list.

### Volunteer

#### opportunities

We're looking for outings leaders and other volunteers for our new Inspiring Connections Outdoors program that fosters appreciation of the outdoors in children.

Please contact Ray Greenwell at [matrng@hofstra.edu](mailto:matrng@hofstra.edu) if you're interested in helping out.

**Membership questions?** Call 415-977-5653 or e-mail [membership.services@sierraclub.org](mailto:membership.services@sierraclub.org)

# NM backs weak federal wolf plan

By Mary Katherine Ray  
Chapter Wildlife chair

At its August meeting, the New Mexico Game Commission considered the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's new Mexican Wolf Draft Recovery Plan.

The plan was the result of a court order to replace the old recovery plan, which is decades out of date. Despite the plan's questionable ability to actually recover wolves, both the Farm and Livestock Bureau and the New Mexico Cattlegrowers, staunch wolf detractors, testified at the commission meeting that it is too generous to wolves.

Wolf biologists and conservation organizations (including Sierra Club) also oppose the plan, for the opposite reason: It is woefully inadequate and will not result in wolf recovery.

Game Commissioner Robert Ricklefs berated the plan by saying, "If there's ever any reason to believe that the Endangered Species Act needs to be repealed or replaced or reformed, this is Exhibit One."

Game Commission Chair Paul Kienzle added, "This problem started December 28, 1973, when Richard Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act. So you can blame him and the 93rd Congress for the Endangered Species Act." (Consider for a moment that these derogatory state-



Photo courtesy David Ellis

**The Fish and Wildlife Service's draft plan for wolf recovery is likely to be disastrous for Mexican wolves. The New Mexico Game Commission approved it despite commenting that it was too kind to wolves.**

ments about our nation's most important wildlife-protection law come from members of a commission tasked with protecting wildlife.)

The Fish and Wildlife wolf-recovery plan would:

- Require Mexico, a sovereign nation not subject to following the U.S. Endangered Species Act, to create and maintain one subpopulation of wolves for resiliency and redundancy in the case of catastrophic loss of the U.S. population. Scientists previously recommended that three subpopulations are needed for this purpose and that there is

suitable habitat in the U.S. for two more encompassing the Grand Canyon region and the Southern Rockies of Northern New Mexico. Most of the wolf habitat that remains in Mexico is privately held, so the need for private landowners' cooperation is unenforceable. Moreover, this Mexican subpopulation will be as geographically isolated from the wild wolf population in the U.S. as is the captive population, offering very little chance for recolonization of one from the other, defeating the purpose of having subpopulations in the first place.

**Game Commission Chair Paul Kienzle said, "This problem started December 28, 1973, when Richard Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act."**

■ Concede to the states of New Mexico and Arizona the power over the timing, circumstance and location of future wolf releases in each state, releases that are critically and quickly needed to bolster the genetics of wild wolves. These states' Game Commissions have been hostile to wolf reintroduction. New Mexico especially in the Gov. Martinez era has thwarted such releases by requiring and then denying permits. Yet in order to assure that the wild population has as much needed genetic diversity as the captive one, around 70 wolves will have to be released within the next few years.

Notwithstanding the negative comments about wolves, the commission did vote to support the plan, not because it limits where and how many wolves there can be, or because it gives so much decision-making authority to the commission or because the commission would like to see successful wolf recovery, but because the Fish and Wildlife Service is under court order to produce a plan by the last day of November.

Cynically, as the Commission chair said, "If we do not as a Commission comment on this plan, the way federal law is structured, we are essentially boxed out from effectively participating in litigation over this plan."

In other words, by supporting the plan with all its concessions to wolf detractors, the New Mexico Game Commission is reserving its standing to sign onto lawsuits over whatever small part of the pie is still left to wolves.

It remains to be seen if the Fish and Wildlife Service will modify the draft plan for the November deadline. Will any consideration be given to the wolf biologists and wildlife organizations that commented on the plan's inadequacy, or to more than 100,000 comments from the public, most of which voiced similar dismay? If your comment is among them, thank you! Will reason or political contrivance prevail?

Check your email for news from our chapter at the end of November.

## Preventive action reduces bear encounters

By Cheryl Bell

Pajarito Group Wildlife chair

It's that time of year when bears are trying to pack on the pounds; spending up to 20 hours a day looking for 20,000 calories to prepare for their winter sleep. Most of us live in an urban-wildland interface so it's no longer possible for bears to have their own habitat and humans to have ours. We have to take the right steps to reduce human/bear interactions.

Bears are incredibly smart and can smell seven times better than dogs. So, do the math, if a bear could spend 20 hours eating one acorn at a time in the forest or just two hours knocking over a few trashcans and slurping down a hummingbird feeder or two to reach her calorie goal, which do you think she'll choose?

For example, last month I took a drive up to Los Alamos the night before trash pickup. I counted 33 out of 55 houses next to the open space that had left their trash bins unsecured on the street. That is 60% of houses in an area with a great deal of bear activity leaving their trash out for our nocturnal friends to rummage through.

On the bright side, some counties are tackling this issue. In Los Alamos, bear-resistant trash locks are currently available and the county is developing an

ordinance requiring trash to be put out the morning of pickup. Grizzly-proof cans will be available next summer for purchase for those who have particularly challenging bear/trash issues.

Also bird feeders never attract just birds. The good news is that people who feed the birds have already developed an appreciation for local wildlife. The bad news is that many continue to feed the birds even after they catch a bear emptying their feeders. Caring for one type of wildlife while creating a problem of another does not a wildlife steward make. Save the seed for winter when bears are hibernating and birds actually need it.

As for beehives, chicken coops and compost piles: electrify. Period.

Got fruit trees? Pick up fallen fruit on a regular basis. If you have an overwhelming amount, invite friends and neighbors to share in your bounty.

Why not just relocate "problem" bears to that Bear Nirvana in the bountiful wilderness far from our stinky trash and feeders?

First, the wilderness surrounding many of our communities is their home. Second, relocation is rarely successful. A successful relocation depends on the age and gender of the bear, as well as how far away they are taken and their proximity to humans in the new location. An adult female is



Photo by Mary Katherine Ray

**Many Los Alamos houses next to the open space left trash cans unsecured on the street all night, an invitation to hungry black bears.**

more likely to try to return to her home territory than a juvenile male with no established territory. The farther a bear is taken, the less likely he is to return but proximity to humans will have an impact if bears are attracted to a new town that offers the same delicious smells.

When bears are relocated, they may be put in the territory of a male bear,

who will kill them immediately. Of those that try to return to their home territory, many are killed by cars. New Mexico Game and Fish does not put tracking collars on relocated bears, just ear tags. The outcome for New Mexico bears is only known if one of these animals is later killed by car or hunter. However, research data from other states indicates relocation success is minimal at best.

When Game and Fish is called to deal with nuisance behavior, they will either relocate or euthanize the bear. In autumn when bears are desperate to put on weight, game officers are busy with hunting season and sometimes do not have the time or resources to relocate bears, so they opt for euthanasia. So far this year, New Mexico Game and Fish has killed 58 bears and relocated 19.

When that bear comes over the mountain, and wanders through our towns, smelling for food, *if everyone* works together to make sure they are not rewarded, we will see a reduction in their food-seeking activities. In addition to eliminating sources of food, please remember to employ some common sense, respect and tolerance when you see a bear walking down your street or sitting in your apple tree. If they are causing no harm, enjoy the fact that you are lucky enough to live in bear country.

# Changes threaten NM monuments

By Mona Blaber

Communications coordinator

**O**n Sept. 18, a leaked report revealed Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's recommendations on national monuments, including two that were under review in New Mexico.

The document's vague recommendations call for rolling back protections from New Mexico's Organ Mountains Desert Peaks and Rio Grande del Norte National Monuments by allowing "traditional" uses such as mining.

The leaked report revealed recommendations for shrinking four monuments, showing disregard for more than 2.8 million public comments, 98% of which urged the administration to maintain current and future protections, according to a comment analysis by Key-Log Economics.

While Zinke didn't recommend shrinking either New Mexico monument — a surprise to many because of U.S. Rep. Steve Pearce's advocacy for downsizing Organ Mountains Desert Peaks — the report's changes could reduce protected areas by opening the sites to fossil-fuel extraction and development.

"These monuments were created as a result of community-led coalitions working together for years. They included local business owners, tribes and pueblos



Patrick J. Alexander

**Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke didn't recommend shrinking the boundaries of Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument, above, but he advised opening it to harmful uses such as mining.**

and faith groups. Local governments at every level expressed support for these monuments during the review, and they have added millions of dollars to local economies," said Rio Grande Chapter Conservation Coordinator Daniel Lorimier.

Those wide-ranging coalitions came together to defend the monuments when President Trump issued the executive order that prompted Zinke's review. Local communities hosted events the day the news came out to oppose the recom-

mendations.

U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich called on Zinke to "get his facts straight," noting that Zinke's claims of road closures and some grazing permittees not renewing permits in Organ Mountains Desert Peaks were not true.

"While this review never should have been ordered, the fact that the recommendations do not include boundary reductions as anticipated must be seen as a result of the overwhelming public outcry," said Mark Allison of New

## Southern N.M. Group

P.O. Box 735, Mesilla, NM 88046  
**Chair: Howie Dash**, Outings, howiedash@aol.com, 575-652-7550

**Glenn Landers**, 575-525-0491, glenn.landerson@gmail.com

**Cheryll Blevis**, Treasurer, 575-524-4861, spotblev@earthlink.net

**Mary Katherine Ray**, Secretary, Wildlife, 575-772-5655, mkrscrim@gmail.com

**Kurt Anderson**, kurt@nmsu.edu, 575-646-1032

Mexico Wilderness Alliance.

Trump has not indicated whether he will accept the recommendations in the report. Legal action would likely follow if the changes recommended in the report were made.

"An unprecedented number of New Mexicans responded to this process, and 98 percent of them asked Zinke to keep our monuments' current protections," said Howie Dash, chair of Sierra Club's Southern New Mexico Group. "Zinke has disrespected the communities he has sworn to serve. We will continue to defend these places for this and future generations."

# Sentinels test Santa Fe River for hormones

By Irina Goldstein,  
Water Specialist &  
Teresa Seamster

**S**ierra Club's Water Sentinel program is one of several grassroots initiatives that help to supplement federal and state efforts to monitor national surface-water resources.

As part of this initiative, the Sierra Club Northern New Mexico Group conducted water-quality testing for presence of hormones, PCBs and heavy metals in the Santa Fe River downstream from the City of Santa Fe's wastewater treatment plant.

The water samples were analyzed for 17 hormones. The results detected presence of two hormones in water samples: 1) Androstenedion is an androgenic steroid hormone that regulates sexual characteristics and is used to enhance athletic and sexual performance. 2) Androsteron is a metabolite of androstenedion and testosterone and is mostly used as a supplement by bodybuilders to boost strength and muscle mass. Some companies use these hormones in pheromone perfumes. Steroid androgens are also administered to humans for medical reasons.

Although reported test results indicate only two

hormones at concentrations greater than reporting levels, we cannot state with certainty that water in the Santa Fe River at the sampling point is free from other hormones. For example, the indicated reporting level for highly estrogenic 17a-ethinylestradiol (EE2) is 5.0 ng/L, which means that concentrations lower than reporting level could not be detected by the lab used for this analysis. The potential threat of EE2 in an aquatic environment is reflected in the decision of the European Commission to list it in the Water Framework Directive proposed regulatory standard for EE2 at 0.035 ng/L.

**Aspects of hormone contamination:** There are many ways hormones can enter the environment. Until recently, it has been widely believed that hormones enter the environment mostly through human excretion and the disposal of unused medications into toilets, sink, and landfills. Adeel et al. (2017) suggest that "the possible release of estrogens to the environment from livestock is much higher." It was reported that "in the United States and European Union, the annual estrogen discharge by livestock, at 83,000 kg a year, is more than twice the rate of human

discharge (Shrestha et al. 2012)."

EE2 and MeEE2 are synthetic estrogens used in contraceptives, in treatment of various reproductive system disorders and in hormone replacement therapy. They are also referred to as endocrine active compounds, because of their disruptive effect on endocrine function. Some studies have linked EE2 harmful effects on aquatic life at levels as low as 0.1 ng/L. These negative impacts include feminization of male population, fertility and loss of fish. Clearly, potential impact of hormones and other pharmaceuticals on the environment remains an area in need of greater research.

**Contaminants of emerging concern:** Hormones, among other pharmaceuticals and chemical compounds, are often referred to as Contaminants of Emerging Concern. This term is used to encompass unregulated substances that were recently discovered in water sources and can potentially be harmful to ecosystems and human health.

Improved analytical methods, coupled with persistent environmental awareness may help move CECs to becoming included in routine monitoring programs.

## Call for volunteers

The Northern New Mexico Group needs you to help the current volunteers with distribution of the *Sierran* to coffee shops, libraries, etc., in the Santa Fe area.

**If you have a few hours to spare once every three months and would like to help, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Pat Carlton at 505-988-1596 or carlton505@comcast.net. Thank you!**

We also need volunteers to hold down the fort in the Albuquerque office while staffers are not present during the week. Contact Camilla Feibelman at camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org.

Are you good at cataloguing photos? Social media? We have lots of photos that need to be categorized and shown off on Instagram. Contact Mona Blaber at monablaber@gmail.com.

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Northern NM Group  
Sandrine Gaillard, Ph.D.  
contact@gosolarnownm.info

SIERRA CLUB

# Dairy group is industry watchdog

By Dan Lorimier  
Chapter Conservation  
Coordinator

The New Mexico Citizens Dairy Coalition has been busy monitoring not only the dairy industry, but its regulators.

In addition to the Rio Grande Sierra Club, the dairy coalition includes clean-water and workers-rights organizations as well as animal-advocacy groups and community members living near dairies. It was convened in 2009 to help craft water quality and permitting rules for the dairy industry.

With a comprehensive set of regulations tailored to the dairy industry now in place, the Citizens Dairy Coalition now serves as New Mexico's dairy-industry watchdog organization.

The New Mexico Environment Department is proposing changes to the water-quality regulations that contain the dairy rule. While we agree with some of the proposed changes, especially those changes that bring New Mexico into compliance with federal water-quality standards, there are some changes to the protocols the agency uses to administer the rule that

**The coalition is holding a training in Anthony, N.M., an epicenter of drinking-water pollution.**

are very troubling and relate directly to the dairies.

To strengthen our presence and impact on this process, the coalition is holding a training in Anthony, N.M., an epicenter of drinking-water pollution caused by a concentration of dairies upgradient from the town. We will update residents

on the status of the plan that was put in place several years ago to attempt a groundwater cleanup in the area. We will also explain the proposed changes to the state's water-quality rule and point out those areas of concern for local residents.

Then, in November, the coalition will supply transportation and lodging in Santa Fe for those Southern Doña Ana County residents who want to give public testimony to the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) at its hearing on the proposed changes.

The WQCC is the state

panel that rules on whether to adopt the changes to the water-quality rule. They commission is scheduled to consider these changes at a hearing on Nov. 14-16 in Santa Fe.

If you are interested in testifying at the Water Quality Control Commission hearing or if you would like to attend the Anthony training, please contact Dan Lorimier at [daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org](mailto:daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org).

We would also very much appreciate any and all donations to the Coalition's transportation and lodging fund. To donate, please contact Dan at the above email address.

## Lots of water issues on tap in NM

By John Buchser  
Chapter Water chair

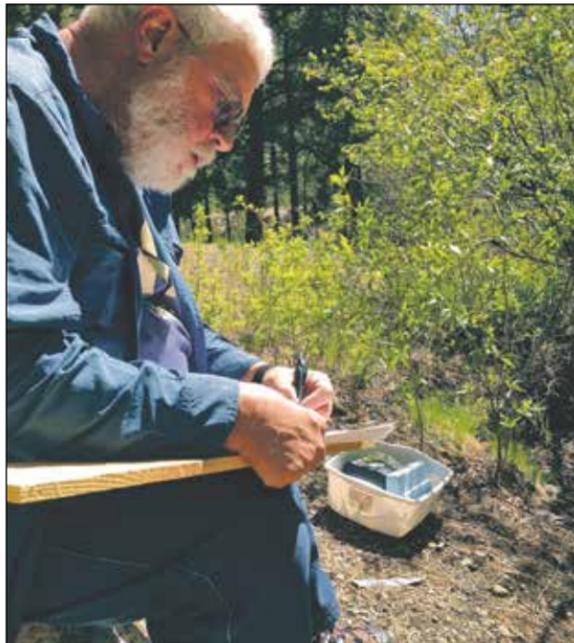
The Rio Grande Chapter water committee met in Valdez in late August, overlooking Eric and Nora Patterson's acequia-irrigated garden. Acequias are the finest example of water-sharing in New Mexico. Examples abound that more "modern" water-management strategies have challenges in abundance.

Here are some of the issues our water team is working on:

**San Augustin Plains Ranch Water Grab:** The third iteration of a request to transfer huge quantities of water (about half of Albuquerque's water use) from the San Augustin Plains into the Rio Grande Valley is making its way through the water rights transfer process at the state engineer's office. The technical hang-up on the first two requests was that there was no clear destination for the water, but that appears to be changing — investors in the Santolina project west of Albuquerque are probably banking on that water. Not good news for the residents in Socorro and Catron counties, whose wells are likely to go dry.

**WCS Mixed-Waste (radioactive) Dump at Eunice:** Waste Control Systems has applied for a New Mexico groundwater permit near Eunice. The temporary storage at near ground level of mixed waste — which means a hodge-podge of chemicals and radioactive waste — is not very temporary, as no permanent solution exists for these waste products. Uranco already operates a storage facility for used fuel rods at this location, so Waste Control is looking at this far-from-civilization location as a promising solution. But if waste is buried in 10-foot holes with 3-foot berms, and we get the remnants of a big hurricane, a 20-inch rainfall may spread this stuff all over the place, gradually soaking into our aquifer (not to mention creating a big wasteland).

The WIPP project near Carlsbad is looking like a long-term disposal site for mixed industrial waste, despite this not being how it was sold to the public. This is attracting more waste-disposal companies to the area. We will be facing another long regulatory process starting in 2018 for another



**Eric Patterson of the Rio Grande Chapter's Water Sentinels team, left, is joining with fellow Sentinel Ray Shortridge to test the Pecos River for contaminants. Volunteers are needed. Please contact Eric at [eepatt@gmail.com](mailto:eepatt@gmail.com) if you'd like to help with testing.**

ground-level storage project near WIPP proposed by Holtec.

**State Groundwater Rules Changes:** The first significant change to New Mexico's groundwater rules is underway. Club volunteers and allied organizations attended Environment Department hearings last year, and the department accommodated some of our concerns before the proposed changes were submitted to the Water Quality Control Commission.

The proposed changes set out allowed limits of pollutants in our groundwater. Many are not being changed, but for some pollutants the limits are being weakened, and some harmful pollutants regulated by EPA and California have been left off the list altogether.

The Environment Department also proposes to enact standards that could expose 10 times as many people to cancer risk than the EPA and some other states do.

Another change would allow lifetime variances from water quality regulations that would allow industry to pollute for the life of a facility, rather than review variances every five years in a public process, as is currently required.

Other changes would allow "amendments" to permits to change requirements for reporting, sampling, monitoring and other important aspects of regulations.

Our thanks to Amigos Bravos, New Mexico Environmental Law Center

and the Gila Resources Information Project for providing testimony as these changes are considered. Technical written testimony from regulated industries and environmental groups can be viewed at [www.env.nm.gov](http://www.env.nm.gov).

You will have an opportunity to speak at the Water Quality Control Commission's hearing on the proposal Nov. 14, 15 and 16 (see dairy story above for details).

**Water Sentinels:** Eric Patterson is continuing his excellent work educating young folks about how to test for water quality. He has extended his testing to Santa Fe, working with the Teresa Seamster and the Santa Fe Girls School (see story, Page 6), where samples were examined for personal-care products, pharmaceuticals and endocrine disruptors — rather expensive testing (\$1,200/sample). To donate to the Rio Grande Chapter's efforts, please go to [riograndesierraclub.org/donate](http://riograndesierraclub.org/donate).

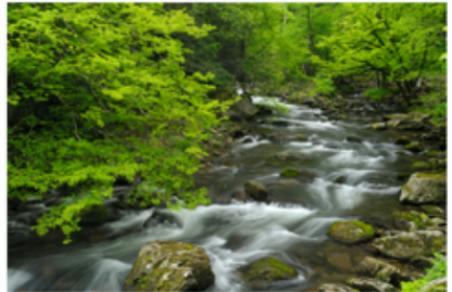
Thanks to Amigos Bravos, where Shannon Romeling has been working to identify the high E. coli levels on the Rio Fernando in the Taos area (cows, leaky septic tanks, but where?).

We need your help in identifying students in the Roswell area, who could expand their interest in science by extending the baseline data that Eric and Ray Shortridge obtained this year.

Contact Eric Patterson at [eepatt@gmail.com](mailto:eepatt@gmail.com) to volunteer or find out how you can help.



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Sierra Club Water Sentinels are the first line of defense of America's waters. We live on the water planet. However, water is a finite resource with only about 1 % of the world's water actually being available for human consumption. Water pollution & over-use are threatening both the quality & quantity of our water resources at an alarming rate.

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# BLM ready to auction more of Chaco

By Miya King-Flahery

## Chapter Public Lands Fellow

The lands surrounding Chaco Culture National Historical Park encompass an intricate network of ancient roads, great houses, and kivas that spread across the Greater Chaco landscape. These lands have profound meaning to modern-day tribes and are home to Navajo communities that are increasingly inundated with fracking wells.

Nearly 92% of public lands in Greater Chaco are already leased to oil and gas. Now the government wants to destroy 4,500 more acres.

In August, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Farmington Field Office notified Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye that it intends to auction off 25 more parcels in Greater Chaco for fracking. These parcels are unnervingly close to the 10-mile buffer that protects Chaco Culture National

## Take Action

**The BLM is accepting comments until Oct. 21** regarding its intent to auction off 4,500 acres in the greater Chaco region to oil and gas drilling. Go to [riograndesierraclub.org/chaco](http://riograndesierraclub.org/chaco) for more information on submitting written comments.

Historical Park. In September, 10 acres — now removed — breached the buffer, making it patently clear that this administration is intent on ignoring tribal sovereignty and public input, and views nothing as sacred.

The Navajo Nation, All Pueblo Council of Governors, New Mexico Congressional delegation, New Mexico Legislature, and many more have called for a moratorium on all new leasing until the BLM and Bureau of Indian Affairs finish amending the outdated Resource Management Plan for the area.

More fracking means more commu-

nity health impacts, venting and flaring of methane, and air and water damages. Communities living in Greater Chaco already expressed their concerns about fracking impacts at public meetings and through a series of meetings intended to update the 2003 Resource Management Plan, which didn't address fracking because the technology wasn't feasible in the region when it was written.

But the BLM seems to prioritize oil and gas development over all other uses.

The BLM will accept comments through Oct. 21 regarding the March 2018 lease sale. Please speak out against the BLM's brazen move to lease more lands that will harm more communities and destroy more sacred landscapes. For more information and actions, please visit [riograndesierraclub.org/chaco](http://riograndesierraclub.org/chaco).

## Health Impact Assessment

The chapter is part of the Counselor

Health Impact Assessment Committee, which is now applying for permission from the Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board to administer a self-evaluation health survey to community residents in Greater Chaco.

We have partnered with the Environmental Health Project to develop the survey. Data from the survey will be incorporated into an interactive web-based map that enables the public, researchers and health professionals to look at compelling evidence related to air quality and health.

Other coalition efforts are focussing on solarizing the Chapter Houses of the Tri-Chapter Alliance--Counselor, Torreon/Starlake, and Ojo Encino Chapter. This clean-energy initiative comes at a time when last month, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye issued an executive order that promotes energy security while safeguarding the health of the Navajo people.



Screenshot courtesy fractracker.org

Drone footage taken by River Healers on [fractracker.org](http://fractracker.org) shows how close Lybrook Elementary School is to five fracking well heads.

## Drones record Chaco fracking sites

The River Healers have sent drones to multiple fracking sites in the Greater Chaco Area impacted by explosions, fires, spills and methane. Their drone videos of the area are now available at [fractracker.org](http://fractracker.org). Below is River Healer Tom Burkett's account of visiting sites.

By Tom Burkett  
River Healers, New Mexico Watchdog

The Greater Chaco region is known to the Diné (Navajo) as Dinétah, the land of their ancestors. It contains countless sacred sites that date to the Anasazi and is home of the Bisti Badlands and Chaco Culture National Historical Park, a World Heritage Site.

Currently WPX Energy has rights to lease about 100,000 acres of federal, state, and Navajo allottee lands in the

oil-rich San Juan Basin, which includes Greater Chaco. WPX, along with other fracking companies, plans to continue establishing fracking wells on these sacred lands, although the Greater Chaco community has spoken out against fracking and continues to call for more safety and oversight from New Mexico state regulatory bodies such as the Energy Mining and Natural Resources Department and Oil Conservation Division.

The River Healers pulled EMNRD records that show more than 8,300 spills in New Mexico had been reported by the fracking industry to EMNRD between 2011 and 2016, thousands more than reported by the Environmental Protection Agency. The records also showed how quickly reports of spills, fires and explosions were processed by

EMNRD as "non-emergency" and accepted industry reports that no groundwater had been contaminated.

Daniel Tso, member of the Navajo Nation and elder of the Counselor Chapter, led River Healers to fracking sites in Greater Chaco that had reported spills and fires. Tso is one of many Navajo Nation members working on the frontlines to protect Greater Chaco, their ancestral land, and their pastoral ways of life from the expanding fracking industry.

Traveling in white trucks and cars, we blended in with the oil and gas trucks that dot indigenous community roads and group around fracking pads on squares of federally owned land. Years of watchdogging the fracking destruction on their sacred land was communicated through Tso's

eyes looking over the landscape for new fracking disruption and his calm voice.

Arroyos sweep around the fracking pads and display how quickly the area can flash-flood from rain that gathers on the striated volcanic ash hills of the badlands.

New Mexico's Oil Conservation Division has only 12 inspectors in charge of overseeing more than 50,000 wells scattered across 121,598 square miles of New Mexico's terrain. Even more problematic is that Ken McQueen, EMNRD cabinet secretary, formerly served as a WPX Energy vice president. New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez's appointment of McQueen compromises the state's ability to impartially oversee WPX Energy and regulate the fracking industry.

Go to [fractracker.org](http://fractracker.org) to learn more and see drone footage.

## Unearthed debuts in November

Unearthed is an educational initiative designed to bridge the gap between ideological extremes, linking climate, economy and health and empowering viewers to think critically when solving environmental issues. To date, we've interviewed more than 50 people across New Mexico and the West.

The initiative will launch this November, releasing monthly online videos and conducting free public webinars.

The webinars and videos aim to bring together disparate views to promote dialogue and deepen understanding of the issues surrounding oil and gas extraction in New Mexico while working toward actionable, community-driven solutions. We believe it is critical that all parties have a voice in shaping the policies and priorities that will affect the future of our public health, environment, education, and economy.

Join the conversation at [unearthednm.org](http://unearthednm.org)!

— Brandon Basino, CAVU

## Donate; it's easy!

When you contribute to the Rio Grande Chapter, your entire donation stays here in New Mexico and West Texas to protect our air, land, water and wildlife. You can donate at [riograndesierraclub.org/donate](http://riograndesierraclub.org/donate), or send your check to:

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1807 Second Street, Unit 45  
Santa Fe, NM 87505.

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible.

To stay updated on issues you read about in *The Sierran*, go to [riograndesierraclub.org](http://riograndesierraclub.org) and subscribe to the chapter e-mail list.

If you're not a member but like what you see, **join now for only \$15!** [riograndesierraclub.org/join](http://riograndesierraclub.org/join) or fill out the form on Page 7.

# Climate-saving rules need you, again

By **Camilla Feibelman**  
Chapter director

If it weren't so effective the first five times you commented on EPA and BLM methane safeguards, I wouldn't ask you to do it again.

And I definitely wouldn't ask you if it weren't so very important. Methane that is leaked, vented or flared from oil and gas operations is a potent global-warming gas and is accompanied by compounds that are extremely dangerous to our health.

As you may know by now, rules to cut methane waste from oil and gas facilities were implemented by the Obama Administration thanks to you, and they played a key part in our compliance with the Paris Climate Agreement.

Then, despite support from a large majority of Americans from both parties and the participation of industry, experts and thousands of citizens, Trump's EPA and BLM unilaterally delayed implementation of these rules.

In June, a federal court ordered the EPA to implement its rule, and in October a court ordered the BLM to do the same.

This happened, though, on the very same day in October that the BLM initiated a formal administrative process to delay the rule for 18 months. The EPA had already done something similar, and we are waiting for them to formalize a two-year stay of that rule.

What's with all the stays? The agencies stalled with short-term stays (found

illegal) while they worked on the formal process for longer-term stays.

So here we go again. Even though the Senate's failure to permanently revoke the BLM safeguards failed in May — one of the first legislative victories over the Trump administration — and even though the courts have said that the rules are legitimate, the agencies are plowing ahead, doing the bidding of the oil and gas industry and allowing companies to waste a natural resource that belongs to all of us.

Here's where your latest action comes in. The BLM is taking comments on its proposed 18-month stay of its methane rule. The agency is not holding a single public hearing, even though five were held in the original rulemaking process,

and is allowing the public only 30 days to submit comments. The deadline is Nov. 6. Go to [riograndesierraclub.org](http://riograndesierraclub.org) to submit your comment.

Finally, to understand how serious the impact is for communities and especially kids, please check out the Oil and Gas Threat Map, which not only shows every well in our state, but schools within a half-mile radius of these operations.

In New Mexico, that includes 32,009 students going to 99 schools & day cares, 138,399 residents, and 12 medical facilities in San Juan County alone 98,727 people, 28,161 of whom are school-aged children.

To see it, go to [oilandgasthreatmap.com](http://oilandgasthreatmap.com).

## Will Sandoval choose oil and gas over people?

By **Miya King-Flaherty**  
Chapter Public-Lands Fellow

On Sept. 21, the Sandoval County Commission voted 4-1 to consider an oil and gas ordinance that would shut out public input and endanger drinking water. But there's still time to stop it.

Planning and Zoning Commissioner Dan Stoddard's ordinance would give one county staffer sole authority to approve or deny drilling applications — with no public notice or input, no hearings, and no commission vote.

All an oil or gas company has to do is to fill out an application. The staff is only required to make sure it is complete — then within 10 days the department director must grant a permit.

This means a well could be drilled anywhere in the county that is zoned for it, and the public or property owner would not be notified or have any recourse to dispute it.

The ordinance also wouldn't require baseline groundwater testing or post-drilling monitoring. That puts the Albuquerque and Rio Rancho aquifers, used by Sandoval County, Rio Rancho and Albuquerque, at risk of contamination from chemicals used in drilling, fracking and production.

The commission's vote was to post the ordinance for consideration, and it is scheduled for a second publish-and-post vote at the Oct. 19 commission meeting. The commission may make changes to the ordinance. If that occurs, a final vote can come as early as November.



Miya King-Flaherty

**Despite 200 residents speaking up against a proposed ordinance that would offer oil and gas companies a 10-day turnaround on drilling applications, the Sandoval County Commission voted 4-1 to post the ordinance, and several commissioners spoke in favor of it.**

### Take Action

**You can help stop this ordinance that offers oil and gas companies a free ride in Sandoval County.** Please write to [miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org](mailto:miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org) to join our action listserv and get information on how you can help. And please attend the Oct. 19 County Commission meeting and rally at 4:15 p.m. at the County Administration Building, 1500 Idalia Road, Bernalillo.

Representatives of the oil and gas industry were given reserved seating at the Sept. 21 meeting, but more than 200 residents showed up to oppose the Stoddard ordinance. When the room filled, about 75 people were shuttled to an overflow room and not allowed to sign up to speak. Still, comments opposing the ordinance dwarfed the few oil and gas and non-county residents supporting it.

Stoddard has claimed the state already protects groundwater at drill sites. That is not

true. The state neither requires monitoring wells nor does monitoring itself. In fact, while oil and gas companies have been cited for thousands of violations since 2010, the state Oil Conservation Division has not levied a single fine.

The Stoddard ordinance requires only a \$300 fine for a violation. Counties can and must go further than the state to ensure that oil and gas operators are acting responsibly and not endangering Sandoval families' drinking water and health.

At a Planning and Zoning

Commission meeting earlier in September, Sandoval resident Mary Feldblum presented the "Citizens Ordinance," which lays out strong, common-sense protections, based on proven components from other successful ordinances, as well as elements from various Sandoval County drafts.

"Hundreds of residents have attended county meetings asking for strong safeguards against oil and gas damages. We have even presented the Citizens' Ordinance as a responsible alternative," Sandoval County resident Randy Erickson said. "Somehow the commissioners seem to listen to the few, not the many."

"If the Stoddard ordinance is passed, it will mean multiple SandRidges — and you remember SandRidge

— except we won't have the chance to object," Erickson said.

Please attend the Oct. 19 meeting and write to your commissioners to tell them to reject the Stoddard ordinance and adopt the Citizens Ordinance. Write to [miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org](mailto:miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org) for more information.

"I hope county commissioners listen to their constituents, listen to the facts and adopt the Citizens Ordinance rather than weak regulations that give residents no say," said Placitas resident Connie Falk. "The people of Sandoval County have spoken: We want clean, safe drinking water, clean air, peace of mind, stable property values. The Citizens' Ordinance can give us that, not the industry giveaway they are currently considering."

# N.M. volunteers visit Capitol Hill

By Mona Blaber  
Chapter communications  
coordinator

A delegation of Rio Grande Chapter volunteers visited New Mexico's congressional delegation in Washington D.C. in late September to share stories about living near the border and growing up in the Four Corners oil, gas and coal extraction economy.

During the visit, part of the Sierra Club's Lobby Day, which brings volunteers from around the nation, we met with Rep. Ben Ray Lujan and staffers for Sen. Tom Udall, Sen. Martin Heinrich and Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham.

Each of these lawmakers has been a staunch ally in votes and sponsorship of legislation protecting our climate, water, air, land and wildlife. But all lawmakers want to hear from their constituents — and they need to know that we have their backs when they do the right thing.

Michael Marquez, a University of New Mexico student from Kirtland, in San Juan County, told the congressional delegation about growing up in a community dependent on oil, gas and coal employment.

"Growing up, we thought it was normal that our parents told us not to play at the pump jack next to our elementary school, or that we could swim in Morgan Lake in November. We didn't realize it was warm because it cooled the generators at San Juan coal plant," Marquez said.

"I assumed I'd eventually get



**Above: Rio Grande Chapter volunteers visited four of New Mexico's Washington D.C. congressional offices during Sierra Club Lobby Day on Sept. 28.**

**Left: Volunteers Karl Braithwaite, Kendall Anderson and Michael Marquez met with Maya Hermann (second from left), a staffer for Sen. Martin Heinrich.**

an oil and gas job, but when I grew up, the jobs had dried up."

Marquez told the policymakers that he wants more sustainable, healthy industries to invest in the Four Corners. He encouraged the senators to back the Reclaim Act, which

commits \$1 billion from a fund that coal-mining companies paid into in the '60s and '70s for economic development and diversification in communities with older abandoned coal mines. Reps. Lujan and Lujan Grisham are already

sponsors of the House version of the bill, which has picked up bipartisan support.

We also expressed thanks to Rep. Lujan Grisham for standing up on the House floor recently to speak out against a budget amendment that would

prevent implementation of climate-protecting methane rules. The amendment passed the House, but the Senate has not agreed on a budget yet. The deal President Trump and Democrats agreed to continues current funding levels through Dec. 8, when a new budget must be passed.

Kendall Anderson, a New Mexico State volunteer and intern, shared her experiences of living near the border and the near-constant awareness and fear of the border patrol even for citizens. She expressed the Sierra Club's commitment to keeping funding for a border wall out of congressional budgets.

Marquez and Anderson are also student interns for a Rio Grande Chapter project to promote the life-saving mission of the Environmental Protection Agency on their campuses. Conservation chair Karl Braithwaite, who helped pass the Clean Air Act when he worked for Sen. Ed Muskie in 1970, urged our delegation to defend funding for the EPA.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, who was a vocal opponent of the agency before he was named to head it, has asked for a 30% reduction in funding. The current House budget includes a 10% cut to a budget that was already bare-bones from cuts in recent years. Each of our senators and both representatives we visited promised to do everything in their power to defend the EPA's current funding and defeat border-wall funding, but their power is limited with an anti-environment majority in both chambers.

## Students share EPA's importance on campus

By Michael Marquez  
Rio Grande Chapter intern

For the fall semester, Kendall Anderson and I have been leading campaigns to raise awareness at New Mexico State University and University of New Mexico, of the importance of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and how its programs impact on our state and campuses.

While most people know about the regulations and cleanups the EPA spearheads, many are not aware of how much research the EPA sponsors at universities around the country, including those in our state.

One example is the UNM College of Pharmacies Native American Health Equity Research Center, or Healthy Voices, to which the EPA has promised \$1.5 million in funding. This program would, with the help of Montana State and Washington Universities, research the health and environmental impacts of uranium mining on the indigenous lands and people of the Navajo Nation, Crow

Tribe and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

That's just one example. In fiscal year 2016, UNM received \$565,596 in EPA funding that went to a long list of programs around campus.

But not only are we trying to spread the word on the EPA's contributions, we are also talking about some of the myths about the agency.

Part of the challenge is that the EPA is being discussed as a partisan issue. We are reminding students about the environmental disasters that led to the agency's creation and the bipartisan response to resolve them. My favorite quote to drive this point home comes from Ronald Reagan's 1984 State of the Union address:

"Protecting the environment is not a liberal or conservative challenge, but a common-sense one." This was a little more than a decade after the agency was signed into existence by another Republican, Richard Nixon.

We are petitioning our student governments, ASUNM and ASNMSU, to make a statement of support to show

**At UNM, I am organizing an Alleycat — a scavenger-hunt-style bike race that would tour Albuquerque Superfund and brownfield sites.**

our delegation in Washington D.C. where UNM stands when it comes to the EPA's funding, and by extension the important research at our universities.

At UNM, I am organizing an Alleycat — a scavenger-hunt-style bike race that would tour Albuquerque Superfund and brownfield sites. We are working with a local cycling club called Gatos Calleros that organizes these kind of rides throughout the year.

The event would involve activities at each stop that act as a way to show students how to make political action, such as writing or calling their senators and representative. We also want to use the activity to drive home what the EPA

does for our city by physically visiting toxic-waste sites, as well as buildings refurbished through the brownstone program, and why it's worth defending.

If you'd like more information on the ride, go to <http://bit.ly/EPAAlleyCat>. For more info on EPA defense at UNM, please visit our facebook page at [fb.me/UNMSierraStudentCoalition](http://fb.me/UNMSierraStudentCoalition).

At NMSU, Kendall is working to increase the presence of the Sierra Club and encourage activism by engaging students on social-media platforms and through outdoor activities.

These activities include a hike through the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument and outdoor mindfulness sessions around campus!

We're hoping to build lasting relationships with students, equip them with the tools to make their voices heard, and foster appreciation for our outdoor spaces and community. For more information about NMSU's campaign and upcoming events check out our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/nmsusierraclub/](http://www.facebook.com/nmsusierraclub/).

# Endorsed city candidates advance

By Mona Blaber

All three of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter's endorsed candidates in the Oct. 3 Albuquerque municipal election either won outright or advanced to a runoff.

Thanks to all our volunteers who made hundreds of calls and turned out the vote for these candidates. Now there's more work to do for two of them!

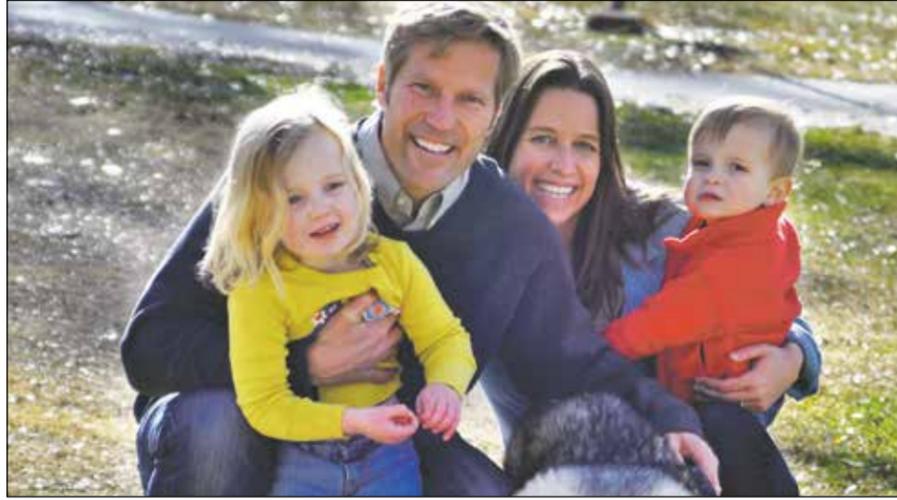
An enthusiastic ground game, including by Sierra Club volunteers, helped lift Tim Keller to a first-place finish in the Albuquerque mayoral election with nearly 40 percent of the vote in an eight-person field.

Keller will face City Councilor Dan Lewis in a runoff on Nov. 14 because no candidate reached 50 percent of the vote.

Cynthia Borrego, whom the chapter endorsed for City Council District 5, also advanced to the runoff on Nov. 14. Her opponent is Robert Aragon, who says he wants to dismantle regulations.

Diane Gibson, an environmental champion and the incumbent in City Council District 7, won with 67.5 percent of the vote, avoiding a runoff.

The chapter picked Keller because of his strong environmental record in the New Mexico Senate and as state auditor.



Rio Grande Chapter-endorsed candidate Tim Keller, above with his family, advanced to a Nov. 14 runoff in the Albuquerque mayoral election. The chapter also endorsed Cynthia Borrego, who advanced to the District 5 City Council runoff, and City Councilor Diane Gibson, who won outright in the Oct. 3 election.

He was the most committed and knowledgeable candidate of all those interviewed when it came to clean energy, water conservation and protecting the bosque. Keller was the subject of relentless — and discredited — attack ads. The ads were later revealed to be funded by a developer behind Santolina, a proposed westside megasprawl project that wants to secure the rights for huge amounts of water.

Borrego has expressed enthusiastic support for preserving the bosque in its original state and for the Green Building Code. She would replace Lewis, giving the environment an additional vote on the City Council.

**Let's get out the vote for Nov. 14! Please contact Camilla Feibelman at [camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org](mailto:camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org) or 505-715-8388** to join our efforts to get two environmental advocates elected.

## PNM proposes 50MW of new solar facilities

By Chuck Noble,  
Coalition for Clean,  
Affordable Energy

In the renewable-energy plan PNM is required to produce every year, New Mexico's largest electric utility has proposed to build 50 megawatts of solar, upgrade and add energy output to the New Mexico Wind Energy Center contract and upgrade and add energy to the geothermal facility near Deming to meet its 2020 legal requirement for 20% renewable energy.

The Sierra Club belongs to the Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy. CCAE is supporting the renewables proposals in PNM's plan and is also arguing for changes that would increase renewable growth and make large customers pay their fair share of costs.

Public Regulation Commission staff opposes the 50MW solar project, saying it's not needed for 2018 or 2019 and so is premature. CCAE has argued that it is important to move ahead so that it is in place by 2020.

PRC staff also opposed the extended contract with the Wind Energy Center. They argue that PNM might be

better off keeping the old contract, and not upgrade the facilities. Then when the contract expires in 2028, the latest technology at the time can be added. CCAE supports PNM's plan to have the Wind Energy Center upgraded and extend the contract. The center supplies very inexpensive wind power (2.7 cents per kWh).

CCAIE also supports refurbishment of the Dale Burgett geothermal facility near Deming. PNM would enter into a contract with the facility that keeps all risks on the provider.

While New Mexico's Renewable Energy Act required the three major utilities to provide 15% renewable energy by 2015, only Southwestern Public Service actually provides 15% (actually 21%).

That's because utilities don't have to comply if renewable costs exceed certain caps — for residential ratepayers, 3% of monthly bills, and for large industrial customers, 2% or \$100,000, whichever is less.

But the PRC's required method for calculating costs unfairly inflates renewable energy's price by excluding some savings it provides.

### NM utilities and renewable energy

New Mexico's Renewable Energy Act requires investor-owned utilities to provide 15% of their electricity from renewables. That number rises to 20% in 2020 (electric co-ops have lower requirements). Every year, utilities must present a plan for compliance.

A cost threshold allows utilities to provide less renewable energy if the cost would exceed 3% of ratepayers' bills. Large customers' cost cap is lower and therefore restricts renewables production more.

**PNM** (Albuquerque, Santa Fe, elsewhere in NM)

Total generation in 2016: 8,142,852 MWh  
Total obligation after large-customer adjustment: 1,078,430 MWh (13.3%)  
PNM's actual renewable generation: 1,065,303 MWh (13.1%)  
PNM met the 13.3% requirement by purchasing 13,127 renewable-energy certificates in 2016.  
PNM's renewable costs are lower than the threshold of 3%.

**Southwestern Public Service** (southeastern N.M.)

Total generation in 2016: 5,279,147 MWh  
Total renewables obligation after large-customer adjustment: 594,842 MWh (11%)  
Actual renewable generation: 846,943 MWh (21%)  
SPS exceeds the 3% threshold.

**El Paso Electric** (Las Cruces, southern N.M.)

Total generation in NM in 2016: 1,653,465 MWh  
Obligation after large-customer adjustment: 241,434 MWh (14.6%)  
Actual renewable generation: 228,533 MWh (13.8%)  
EPE exceeds its 3% threshold and is not required to acquire additional renewable energy or certificates.

CCAIE proposes to adjust the method for calculating costs to reflect those savings. Two of New Mexico's three large utilities exceed the cost cap, so they won't be adding renewables any time soon. While PNM's costs are under the cap, the PRC could use this case to set precedent for all utilities' calculations.

Another damper on renewable growth in New Mexico is that, while large customers have a lower cost cap than residents, suppressing

the amount of renewable energy a utility is required to provide, a loophole allows those large customers to receive a windfall in fuel savings from renewables.

Adjusting that loophole would make large customers pay their fair share.

We got a partial victory on this issue in the 2015-16 rate case, but there are still remaining issues that can further close this loophole that favors large customers over residential ratepayers.

### Central New Mexico Executive Committee

Chair: Fred Houdek, [fhoudek@gmail.com](mailto:fhoudek@gmail.com), 630-809-4234.

Treasurer: David Ther, treasurer, [grelibik@gmail.com](mailto:grelibik@gmail.com), 505-867-6283

Secretary: Heather Kline, [heather9387@yahoo.com](mailto:heather9387@yahoo.com), 505-577-2798

Outings: Odile de La Beaujardiere, [odile@pitot.org](mailto:odile@pitot.org), 505.433.4692

Political chair: Richard Barish, [richard.barish@gmail.com](mailto:richard.barish@gmail.com)

Ray Shortridge, [rshortridge@gmail.com](mailto:rshortridge@gmail.com)

### Central New Mexico Group events

The Central New Mexico Group is now hosting "Sierra Club and Root Beer" at the Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard Drive SE, Albuquerque. The next Sierra Club and Root Beer will be from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 1. RSVP: Fred Houdek at [fhoudek@gmail.com](mailto:fhoudek@gmail.com) or 630-809-4234.

We also hold First Friday Art events every other month at our Albuquerque office, 2215 Lead Ave. SE. 30% of sales support the Rio Grande Chapter's work.

### Volunteer Wednesday

We have volunteers in our Albuquerque office on Wednesdays to do data input, make calls and help with other projects. If you can join us, contact [miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org](mailto:miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org).

### El Paso Group update

The El Paso Group once again has its own website, thanks to Executive Committee member Rick LoBello — check it out at [elpasosierraclub.org](http://elpasosierraclub.org).

Sierra Student Coalition leader Neysa Hardin took the active group from Americas High School to see the solar eclipse on Aug. 21 at Hueco Tanks State Park.

The city is not providing proper support for its glass-recycling program. We are working to keep the program going.

If you'd like to volunteer to promote glass-recycling or to become more active with the El Paso Group, please contact Laurence Gibson at [laurence-agibson@gmail.com](mailto:laurence-agibson@gmail.com).

### Executive Committee

[elpasosierraclub.org](http://elpasosierraclub.org)

*The Rio Grande Chapter is one of only a few Sierra Club chapters with groups in more than one state. While most of Texas belongs to the Lone Star Chapter, the El Paso Group belongs to us!*

Laurence Gibson, Chair, 309-5419 [laurenceagibson@gmail.com](mailto:laurenceagibson@gmail.com)

Ann Falknor, Secretary, 833-9162 [afalknor@sbcglobal.net](mailto:afalknor@sbcglobal.net)

Kathy Sunday, Treasurer, 584-9301 [sundayt@zianet.com](mailto:sundayt@zianet.com)

Rick LoBello, 474-1456, [ricklobello@gmail.com](mailto:ricklobello@gmail.com)

Liz Walsh, 342-7630 [ewalsh@utep.edu](mailto:ewalsh@utep.edu)

John Walton, 539-5797, [walton@utep.edu](mailto:walton@utep.edu)

# Zero Waste compost tour

By Joseph Eigner  
Zero Waste co-chair

**O**n Sept. 14 the Northern New Mexico Group's Zero Waste Committee led a tour of five large composting sites in Santa Fe County.

A dozen veteran backyard composters visited the commercial-scale facilities and talked to the owners and operators about their processes and the organic materials they use.

The addition of new private-sector sites to existing government operations provides the opportunity to compost a much wider range of organic wastes and on a larger scale.

Among the wastes we saw being used were food scraps, compostable cups and utensils, wood chips, livestock manure, brewery waste, crop residues and wastewater treatment biosolids.

The composts produced are used in flower and vegetable gardens, orchards, landscaping, along highways, and in general for soil improvement. Our hosts were more than generous with their time and in sharing their deep knowledge and love of composting.

All the composting systems we visited operate at the high temperatures and timeframes needed to convert "compostable" plates, cups, etc. into a usable compost.

Backyard composting cannot break down these items satisfactorily. The availability of these systems locally now makes zero-waste public events possible.

We were all inspired by the



Photo by Joseph Eigner

**Meade Martin (left), Compost Santo owner and Sierra Club member, looks on as Nina Folch-Torrez (right) shows a handful of finished compost to tour leader Karen Sweeney. Windrows of composting material can be seen in the background.**

growth of large-scale composting in Santa Fe County, and we see that expansion of composting is the best way to reduce the large volume of organic wastes going to landfills..

Residents who want to compost now must do it at their homes or back yards or at community gardens. The Santa Fe Master Gardeners Association has a SCAT (Santa Fe Compost Action Team) group that promotes composting.

Eldorado/285 Recycles has installed 133 backyard straw-bale worm composting systems in our area (part of Santa Fe County 12 miles southeast of the city off of Interstate 25).

One of the commercial sites we visited on the tour, Reunity

Resources, collects food waste from about a dozen restaurants and two dozen local schools.

One of the other tour sites (Payne's Nursery) collects all of the food waste from our Whole Foods grocery store.

Reunity Resources accepts food waste (including compostable serving items) at no charge from groups like ours that put on zero-waste events as long as we deliver the wastes to its compost site. If they have to provide carts and pick them up, they of course have to charge for the service.

Santa Fe County does not provide any curbside collection, but recently mandated that private haulers who do provide weekly curbside trash service must also provide biweekly

## You can join the team

Join the Rio Grande Chapter's Zero Waste Team to promote reducing, reusing, recycling and composting.

To join or learn more, contact Joe Eigner at [joseigner@gmail.com](mailto:joseigner@gmail.com).

curbside recycling to customers living in the urbanizing area around the city. Rates for the combined service range from \$26 to \$54 a month depending on the hauler and location. Curbside compost is a long way down the road.

## Collaborating on Caja del Rio public use



Photos by Teresa Seamster

**Visitors reported that chemicals were dumped in Caja del Rio (above). The site was cleaned up the next week by the Taos BLM office (above right).**

**12 Rio Grande Sierran**



**F**ive federal, state and local groups of New Mexico Wildlife Federation and Northern New Mexico Group of Sierra Club have collaborated on a public-use brochure for Caja del Rio, the huge 107,000-acre stretch of mesa land west of Santa Fe.

The brochure invites all members of the public to come and recreate safely on this natural treasure rich in both history and opportunities to hike, camp, bike, watch wildlife, trail ride, hunt and target-shoot. The message of the brochure is simple: Always respect the land and the laws that protect it as you enjoy your time visiting.

Due to increased public awareness and more law enforcement presence from BLM, Santa Fe National Forest and Department of Game and Fish officers, illegal activities such as chemical dumping and disturbance of wildlife habitat have been reported by visitors and swiftly been mitigated.

## Northern New Mexico Group Contacts

### Executive Committee

Chair: **Teresa Seamster**, 505-466-8964, [tc.seamster@gmail.com](mailto:tc.seamster@gmail.com)  
Vice chair: **Tom Gorman**, 505-438-3932, [gormantd@gmail.com](mailto:gormantd@gmail.com)  
Treasurer: **Jim Baker**, 505-473-0457, [bakerjim.sw@gmail.com](mailto:bakerjim.sw@gmail.com)  
**Patricia Cardona**, [patriaciardona24@yahoo.com](mailto:patriaciardona24@yahoo.com), 505-515-5141  
**Alice Cox**: 505-780-5122, [auntialice@cybermesa.com](mailto:auntialice@cybermesa.com)  
**Paul Paryski**, [pparyski@aol.com](mailto:pparyski@aol.com)  
**Sandrine Gaillard**, [sandrine.gaillard@gmail.com](mailto:sandrine.gaillard@gmail.com)  
**Shane Woolbright**, 405-323-2569, [mesoinc@hotmail.com](mailto:mesoinc@hotmail.com)  
**Jim Klukkert**, 505-577-2483, [jimklukkert@yahoo.com](mailto:jimklukkert@yahoo.com)

### Conservation

Chair: Tom Gorman  
Public lands: Tom Gorman, Teresa Seamster  
Water: John Buchser, 505-231-6645, [jbuchser@comcast.net](mailto:jbuchser@comcast.net)  
Wildlife: Teresa Seamster  
Solarize Santa Fe: Sandrine Gaillard, [sandrine.gaillard@gmail.com](mailto:sandrine.gaillard@gmail.com)  
Energy Team: Shane Woolbright, 505-474-2870, [mesoinc@hotmail.com](mailto:mesoinc@hotmail.com); Elliot Stern, 505-989-9486, [sternwcs@comcast.net](mailto:sternwcs@comcast.net)  
Zero Waste: Joe Eigner, 505-570-0583, [joseigner@gmail.com](mailto:joseigner@gmail.com); Karen Sweeney, 505-466-9797, [ksweeney99@comcast.net](mailto:ksweeney99@comcast.net)

### Other responsibilities

Chapter Representative: Tom Gorman  
Membership: Alice Cox  
Volunteers: Open  
Office: Jerry Knapczyk  
Outings co-chairs: Tobin Oruch, 505-820-2844, [tobin.oruch@yahoo.com](mailto:tobin.oruch@yahoo.com), and Alan Shapiro, 505-424-9242, [nm5s@yahoo.com](mailto:nm5s@yahoo.com)  
Phone Support: Jerry Knapczyk  
Political: Susan Martin, 505-988-5206, [smartin31@comcast.net](mailto:smartin31@comcast.net)  
Publicity: Open  
Book Sales: Janet Peacock 505-988-8929, [sfdydhikes@gmail.com](mailto:sfdydhikes@gmail.com).  
Sales backup: Ann Anthony, [anrascal@gmail.com](mailto:anrascal@gmail.com), 795-7472. Hiking book: Aku Oppenheimer  
Book mailings: Gail Bryant, 505-757-6654.

### Regional Contacts

Las Vegas: Joann Sprenger, 505-454-0551, [gisprengr@cybermesa.com](mailto:gisprengr@cybermesa.com)  
Taos: Eric Patterson, 575-776-2833, [eepatt@gmail.com](mailto:eepatt@gmail.com)

# Beaver-treated water in Santa Fe River

By Teresa Seamster  
Northern New Mexico  
Group chair

When beavers are allowed to build dams across the braided streams and channels of New Mexico's rivers, a transformation of water storage and abundance of vegetation and wildlife rapidly occurs.

Photographs of the Santa Fe River from the 1930s show a wide, meandering river with many side channels — created by beavers — flowing down a rural valley with the little city of Santa Fe in the distance.

Today, the river is severely contained through the city with concrete banks, unable to meander and water the wetlands and lush vegetation that once defined the river corridor and surrounding farmlands. The four dams that impound the water reduce the river to a dusty arroyo many months out of the year, and diversions at Cochiti Dam prevent the river from flowing into the Rio Grande.

However, in the stretches of river between the dams, in areas where there are public

lands bordering the river, as in La Cieneguilla, beavers have returned to restore some of the river's natural functions.

When beavers hear running water, their instinct is to place a check dam and reduce the water until a pond forms. As aquatic animals that depend on bark for food, and with many predators ready to pounce when this ungainly animal comes on land to cut trees, the beaver prefers the water level to reach as close to its food source as possible.

Creating beaver ponds and connecting them with water channels helps the beaver stay safely in the water and creates perfect wetlands next to the river. These wetlands attract ducks, large mammals and multiple bird and amphibian species along with rich low vegetation that allows sunlight to break down contaminants and bacteria in the water and put down roots to filter the sediments. The wetlands act as flood control during the monsoon and spring runoff seasons, absorbing the high flows and preventing erosion and silting up of the river. The resulting rich soil and sparkling water are the natural products the beaver wetlands provide.



Photo courtesy Teresa Seamster

Beaver wetlands on the grounds of Santa Fe Girls School filter Santa Fe River water.

## Call for volunteers

The Northern New Mexico Group needs you to help the current volunteers with distribution of the Sierran to coffee shops, libraries, etc., in the area. **If you have a few hours to spare once every three months and would like to help, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Pat Carlton at 505-988-1596 or carlton505@comcast.net. Thank you!**

## Meetings

**Northern New Mexico Group Executive Committee meetings** are the first Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m., at our office at 1807 Second St., Suite 45, in Santa Fe.

**The Northern New Mexico Group Conservation Committee** resumes its monthly meetings at 7 p.m. every third Tuesday of the month. Conservation Committee meetings are also held at the Sierra Club Santa Fe office, 1807 Second St., Suite 45.

## Fall Talks

You are invited to the last in a series of presentations and discussions related to the Northern New Mexico Group's priority issues — our "Fall Talks."

The last of our Fall Talks is an Energy Talk from 6 to 8 p.m. on Oct. 11 at Unitarian Universalist Church, 107 W. Barcelona Road in Santa Fe.

The speakers will address the complexities of utility regulation, energy conservation and solar energy's great potential in New Mexico.

Our speakers are Shane Woolbright, former general manager of Oklahoma's municipal electrical systems and a private energy consultant, and Sandrine Gaillard, a plasma physicist and scientific consultant formerly at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Both speakers are also members of the Sierra Club Northern New Mexico Group!

## Holiday party

All Northern New Mexico Group members and families are invited to our annual Northern New Mexico Sierra Club Holiday Party.

Where: Santa Fe Women's Club, 1616 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe.

When: 5-8 p.m. Sunday, December 10.

Who: You!

Reservations required. RSVP by Nov. 30 to: Alice Cox, 505-780-5122.

auntialice@cybermesa.com. See you there!

# Valles Caldera hosts Wildlife Workshop

By Teresa Seamster

Northern New Mexico Group chair

The Valles Caldera National Preserve in the Jemez Mountains was the location for our Wildlife Workshop in late September, sponsored by the Sierra Club Northern New Mexico Group and Audubon New Mexico.

The workshop filled up quickly, with 30 biologists from around the country coming to the Wildlife Society Conference in Albuquerque and to visit several unique habitat and restoration sites throughout northern and central New Mexico.

Science and Resource Stewardship Division Chief Dr. Robert Parmenter, and Dr. James Cain of the U.S. Geological Survey, New Mexico Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Unit, conducted outdoor presentations at the History Grove, Jaramillo Creek, Rio San Antonio, Valle San Antonio, and Valle Seco/Sulphur Canyon during their daylong workshop, "Valles Caldera National Preserve as a Natural Laboratory on habitat management, restoration, and wildlife reintroduction."

The Northern group and Audubon NM



Teresa Seamster

Some of the 30 biologists from the U.S. and Canada who attended the Wildlife Workshop in September in the Valles Caldera.

provided the workshop transportation and food, and the wonderful presenters: Dr. Parmenter and Dr. Cain, along with Valles Caldera National Preserve biologist Mark Peyton and Game and Fish biologist Dr. Ginny Seamster volunteered their time.

The topics covered everything from the geological history of the Caldera formation 1.3 million years ago to the unique forests and wildlife that have evolved and been re-introduced into the preserve and the efforts to preserve them today.

# Solutions for meeting Santa Fe's future water needs

By Mona Blaber

Chapter communications coordinator

Last winter, the city of Santa Fe released a study of how to meet the projected demand of water in the Santa Fe city/county area through 2055.

The preferred alternative was to send about 70% of the city's treated wastewater to the Rio Grande via a pipeline, and draw an equal amount from the Rio Grande just upstream

of the wastewater release. The city recently made a request to the Bureau of Reclamation for \$5 million to do a full engineering design of the wastewater pipeline.

The River Commission, chaired by Rio Grande Chapter Water Chair John Buchser, has said it believes that more study should be done before exporting our water out of the Santa Fe basin.

In particular, aquifer storage and recov-

ery may be the most valuable "savings account" for the community.

The big unknown is how impacted all of the region's wells will be from Los Alamos radioactive groundwater pollution, as a chromium plume has started spreading to deep groundwater and is now threatening nearby San Ildefonso Pueblo water.

Please ask your city councilors for more study before committing to a solution.

# Setting up a National Park from scratch

By Jody Benson

Pajarito Group Chair

When we visit National Parks, America's irreplaceable natural and cultural resources, we expect to show up, learn about the park's core mission and themes, tour the museum, use the restroom, fill our water bottles before we cruise the paths or hike the trails into the wilderness, hear a ranger talk, maybe camp in a designated spot near a water spigot.... Our visit is supported from interpretation to toilet.

But how did all that infrastructure get there? What has to happen to transform the nothing-but-a-location into buildings, water, restrooms, roads, trails, staff, programs? Somebody had to figure out how to build the infrastructure to tell the story of the park for the human visitor while preserving the natural and culture resources for everything else.

In 2015, Los Alamos got two brand-new neighborhood National Parks that need to be transfigured from no-infrastructure to full visitor support: the Manhattan Project National Historical Park and the Valles Caldera National Preserve. The Manhattan Project Los Alamos Unit is run jointly by the National Park Service and the Department of Energy.

The Valles Caldera infrastructure, on the other hand, with its 89,216 acres of valleys and mountains, has few areas established for visitors. This article addresses the multiple complex challenges for infrastructure development in the vast landscape that has become Valles Caldera National Preserve.

Valles Caldera land had remained intact as a single 100,000-acre ranch in private hands from 1860 until July 25, 2000, when We the People used \$101 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to purchase the Baca Ranch from the Dunigan family of Texas.

But rather than putting the land into the National Park Service, the U.S. government created a new kind of public lands-management paradigm—a Trust that combined private-sector, for-profit practices with federal land-management protocols. This Trust was meant to make the land self-sustaining by 2015 by charging fees for various limited activities including restricted tours, hiking, skiing, grazing, fishing, and hunting. It also conducted extensive scientific studies of its natural and archaeological resources. Many who had worked to purchase and protect the land were frustrated with the Trust's seeming inability to make improvements or create a public-access plan.

## Pajarito Group Directory

riograndesierraclub.org/  
pajarito

Mailing Address: 520 Navajo Road, Los Alamos, NM, 87544

### Executive Committee

Chair:/Secretary: Jody Benson, echidanaejb@gmail.com, 505/662-4782

Howard Barnum, hnbar-num@aol.com

Cheryl Bell, bellrancho@gmail.com, 505/672-9655.

Iris Chung, itlchung@hotmail.com

Michael DiRosa, mddbbm@gmail.com

Nona Girardi, nonamg@aol.com

Carene Larmat, carenelarmat@gmail.com, 505/920-5675

### Committee Chairs

BBag Ban; Treasurer: Mark Jones, Jonesmm1@comcast.net, 505/662-9443

Conservation: Michael DiRosa, mddbbm@gmail.com

Global Warming: Charles Keller, alfanso@cybermesa.com, 505/662-7915

Mining: David Torney, dtorney@valornet.com, 575/829-3433

Newsletter Editor, Publicity, Sprawl, Transportation, Endangered Species/

Wildlife: Jody Benson, echidnaejb@gmail.com, 505/662-4782

Open Spaces, Caldera Issues: Howard Barnum, hnbar-num@aol.com

Political, Cool Cities, Membership: Mark Jones, jonesmm1@comcast.net, 505/662-9443

Water Issues: Barbara Calef, bcaleg@yahoo.com, 505/662-3825

Address: 520 Navajo Road, Los Alamos, NM, 87544

### Join the Pajarito Group:

Contact Jody Benson at echidnaejb@gmail.com or 505-662-4782.

Finally, in 2015, Congress, led by Sen. Bingaman and assisted by Jorge Silva-Bañuelos, transferred the Trust into NPS management as a Preserve.

Now Silva-Bañuelos is the VCNP superintendent, and it's up to him and Preserve staff to figure out how to develop the infrastructure and trails necessary to turn this spectacular scenery into a national treasure accessible to whoever wants to visit. It takes focused, visionary, comprehensive planning, and the budget to actualize it.

Just a few of the issues needing to be repaired, augmented, or built are: siting then creating the Entrance Station and Visitor Center; restoring and augmenting utilities water; developing a roads-and-trails system with backcountry access bounded by a control gate; ecorestoration including thinning trees from 2,000 per acre to a healthy 40 to 60; assessing hunting and fishing options; developing displays and programs; finding on-site employee housing ... just to start. The long-sought Caldera Rim Trail is a goal, along with resiting the old Jemez Electric Coop utility line still susceptible to fire-starting tree falls, and fixing the miles of border fence cut by trespassers or torn down by falling trees.

First tasks? The roads, trails, and Visitor Center.

**Roads:** There are 1,000 miles of roads in the Caldera; some are ranch roads, but most are old logging roads from 1963 to '72, and again from 1980 to 2000, when the area suffered rampant forest clearcutting. The road plan must determine which roads to erase and which

to maintain and improve for backcountry access while limiting vehicle impacts.

Roads are funded through NPS base and repair funds. At present, road costs represent a significant chunk of the deferred maintenance throughout the park system. For example, it costs \$250,000 for two miles of gravel road. The VCNP Road Plan cannot just build a bunch of roads; it must mitigate for adverse impacts of those roads on the visitor's sensory experience — noise, dust, degraded viewsapes — that most of us don't think about until they intrude on our experience.

The plan will use existing technologies. These include surfaces that don't rut out and special noise- and dust-reducing materials to abate both the far-ranging sound of vehicles as well as the viewscape-spoiling streaming dust. This dust not only diminishes the spectacular view but smothers plant photosynthesis. Materials colored to blend in with landscapes will preserve viewsapes.

The road plan also must address backcountry vehicle access and parking. Currently, the Preserve allows 35 cars per day. Backcountry parking is restricted to designated parking spots to preserve archeological sites throughout the valles. These are primarily obsidian scatters; the archeological value of each must be assessed before allowing more parking.

The most-used road will be to and within the Cabin District, where it is critically important to reduce traffic impacts on the visitor experience. The plan is to relocate the road that runs in

## Meetings and Events

**Pueblo Canyon Geology Walk**, 12:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 8, Los Alamos East Park Dog Park. Geologist Elaine Jacobs will lead us along the south rim Pueblo Canyon trail from East Park to learn about volcanism and landscape evolution in the Jemez Volcanic Field. For more detail, see entry in Hikes and Events on Page 15.

**Sierra Club Open Meeting**, Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2018, at PEEC. Bats. One of the most marvelous of mammals. Justin Stevenson and Holly Smith will talk about bat behavior and protection. Please mark your calendars for the Pajarito Group's first presentation of 2018.

front of the Cabin District to behind the cabins into an area with trees reduced by beetle-kill, and then transform the former road location into a walking trail through the Cabin District to the History Grove. Parking will also be behind the Cabin District and set among the surviving trees.

**The Visitor Center:** Most visitors spend one to three hours in the park, and most of that time is around the Visitor Center. As the focal point of a National Park, the Visitor Center's location is critical to defining the Park experience and telling the story of why this particular place deserves preservation. Buildings and infrastructure represent, as Silva-Bañuelos states, "the right balance between access and preservation." Developing this balance from scratch requires both knowledge of the existing resources and careful deliberation of what will be required into the next decades.

The only visitor infrastructure built by the Trust is the staging area built about 1.5 miles into the Valles Grande. The current building is run off a solar panel with only enough juice for two computers and a TV. There are no overhead lights, and in the winter, the solar energy needs propane backup. With two outhouses and no running water, visitors, not to mention staff, must be fairly self-sufficient. In addition, this location isn't what a visitor would consider an obvious destination. An obvious destination is those ranch houses over there by the forest.

That area, the Cabin District, is Silva-Bañuelos' choice for the Visitor Center location. This is the place where private-landowner structures, and even early tribal camps, were located, and where the ranch installed its initial infrastructure. This Cabin District will be the visitor's primary destination with the old bunkhouse serving as the Contact Station.

The ranch buildings and utilities were built between 1915 and 1960. Although this is an evident visitor destination, the Trust allowed only limited

visitation. In addition, the Trust never had resources to sustain these buildings. The Trust did create a plan for repair. The good news is that NPS has a standardized fund for maintaining its resources, and has allocated \$3.3 million base funding for both improving the visitor infrastructure and for the approximately 30 VCNP staff. The Preserve continues to apply for grants for repair and rehabilitation.

**What needs to be done now is:** Develop new power sources for increased electricity to support staff and thousands of visitors. Current technology, of course, and the power required to run it wasn't even imagined by ranch residents 20 years ago. Silva-Bañuelos' plans to upgrade the energy system with self-sustaining renewables.

Create a new water system to replace and upgrade the one destroyed by flooding after the Thomson Ridge Fire.

Repair and upgrade buildings for visitors (including ADA accessibility, restrooms, water), and locate and upgrade structures for suitable housing for (especially seasonal) staff in the Caldera.

Reroute the current vehicle road and redesign it as a walking trail interpreting the fundamental purpose of the park as visitors circulate through the Cabin District and to the History Grove of old growth ponderosa pines just beyond the ranch structures.

After decades of limited access, the Valles Caldera opened to the public it belongs to, and all the complex infrastructure will be developed to focus on why our Caldera deserves protection. Silva-Bañuelos envisions visitors standing on the deck of the bunkhouse and looking across the vast expanse of Valle Grande bounded by the mountains of the east rim of the Caldera. This, he says, is the essence of thousands of years of human experience, from the first people to us, awed by the geology, vistas, fragrance, vegetation, and wildlife. When we leave the VCNP, if we leave with nothing else, we have the memory of this, the story-telling view.

# 'Excursiones' program taking off

By Cecilia Chávez Beltrán  
Spanish-language outings

**E**xcursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico (Spanish-Language Outings — literally, Excursions into Nature in New Mexico) is four months old!

We are having a delightful time connecting with not-for-profit organizations and groups working with Spanish-speakers who respond enthusiastically to Excursiones' invitation to *caminatas* (walks) in the Bosque.

At the start, some participants might be wary of the overgrown vegetation on

the path or the mud after an unusually heavy rain, or the quiet surroundings without urban noises.

After a short time, however, we are checking out the snails on the ground or the critters that hang acrobatically from reeds above our heads. We start sharing information on the alfalfa infusions Grandma used to prepare and admiring birds on the sandy banks of the river with the two sets of binoculars donated by Sierra Club member Connie. (Thanks Connie!)

Excursiones is walking with a diversity of groups working on an array of issues that are a reality in our community:

social justice, immigrant's rights and women's rights to name a few. The walks allow us to relax and enjoy sharing *en convivio*, learning about our diverse knowledge and actively doing something positive with our minds and hearts.

Here are some comments from participants:

"It is good to take the time to disconnect from the world and the routine."

"It gave me peace and made me remember when as a child I would walk in the fields."

See more at our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/ExcursionesNaturalezaNM/](http://www.facebook.com/ExcursionesNaturalezaNM/).

\* *Convivio*: beautiful word meaning "to coexist"



Photo by Cecilia Chávez Beltrán

Children exploring on a trip to Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge.

## Hikes and Events, continued from Page 16

Barbara Divide, 1,600 feet elevation gain, 9 or 14 miles; Mark Dunham, [medunham2@msn.com](mailto:medunham2@msn.com) or 505-795-0199.

**Thursday, Oct. 26: Recurring Thursday hike**, see Oct 5 description.

### November

**Thursday, Nov. 2: Recurring Thursday hike**, see Oct. 5 description.

**Saturday, Nov. 4: Bosquitos presentation** by Wildlife Rescue including meeting rehabilitated wildlife; 10 a.m. or 11:15 a.m. session at the Sierra Club: 2215 Lead Ave. SE, Albuquerque, interesting and heart-warming presentation *requires* an RSVP. Only 20 attendees are allowed per session. If more than 40 RSVP, we will try to set up an additional session. RSVP Julie Hudson, [jth@cybermesa.com](mailto:jth@cybermesa.com). See Oct. 7 for a Bosquitos description.

**Saturday, Nov. 4: Easy outing out of Kingston.** Meet at the Forest Service office in Truth or Consequences at 8 a.m. We will have breakfast in Hillsboro. I am a slow walker these days. Interested? Call Margot at 575-744-5860. Bring snacks and lunch.

**Sunday, Nov. 5: Cibola National Forest.** Easy 5 miles hike. Meet at 9 a.m. in the Smiths parking lot close to the intersection of Tramway and Central, (on the West side parallel to the store entry façade) or at 09:45 at the Tijeras Sandia Ranger station on Rd 337. End with optional potluck at Odile and Jim's house. Contact Odile by Nov 3, h: 505-433-4692, or c: 505-933-1630, [Odile@pitot.org](mailto:Odile@pitot.org). Please specify: (1) cell-phone number; (2) if coming to the potluck; and (3) where you can meet the group.

**Wednesday, Nov. 8: Pueblo Canyon Geology Walk.** 12:30 p.m., Los Alamos East Park Dog Park. Geologist Elaine Jacobs will lead us along the south rim Pueblo Canyon trail from East Park to learn about volcanism and landscape evolution in the Jemez Volcanic Field. This geologic landscape provides a window into what was happening on the Pajarito Plateau between two catastrophic supervolcano eruptions. On this roughly one-hour excursion, we will walk on the paved trail on the canyon rim before joining the unpaved portion of the trail to the Los Alamos



Photo by Mark Dunham

Hikers enjoyed the gorgeous fall colors on a Chama Headwaters Exploration hike led by Mark Dunham.

Airport Terminal. The first two-thirds is wheelchair/stroller accessible. All ages and abilities are welcome. Jody Benson, [echidnaejb@gmail.com](mailto:echidnaejb@gmail.com)

**Thursday, Nov. 9: Recurring Thursday hike**, see Oct 5 description.

**Friday, Nov. 10: Advanced-moderate hike:** 2,400 feet elevation and 11 miles. Glorieta Baldy from Apache Canyon (see Day Hikes Page 14). A modification that shortens this hike is to leave from the lower trailhead by the Apache Canyon inholding, (removes 500 feet of elevation and 4 miles from the description). If snow, will shift the destination to the Watershed rim, still leaving from FR79 in Canada Los Alamos. Mark Dunham [medunham2@msn.com](mailto:medunham2@msn.com) or 505-795-0199.

**Saturday, Nov. 11 (Veterans Day), Outing for wheelchair users and others with impaired mobility.** 9 a.m. to noon. We will explore the Bosque on the recently built crusher-fines trails east of the Rio Grande and south of I40. Song birds, rabbits, road runners, ducks, and geese are usually in residence. Hawks, cormorants, herons, egrets, owls, eagles, and porcupines may be observed. Trail and access to it were designed with wheelchairs in mind. Contact Colston Chandler, [ccent@swcp.com](mailto:ccent@swcp.com), (505)

343-9498 to register and obtain directions to the meeting place.

Thursday, Nov. 16 and following Thursdays through Dec. 21 **moderate program for Thursdays in winter** but still seeking aerobic hikes, we switch from the Santa Fe Ski Basin to afternoon hikes in the area, with a noon start. Drives of up to an hour will be considered, and we often go near the rivers, either in White Rock Canyon or along the Rio Chama near Abiquiú. Up to 2,000 feet of elevation and 10 miles. Each outing is proposed separately. See what is planned each time, up to a month in advance. Mark Dunham [medunham2@msn.com](mailto:medunham2@msn.com) or 505-795-0199.

**Saturday, Nov. 25, (Thanksgiving Burn-off!):** Sandia Crest Tunnel Spring Trail (see Day Hikes Page 348). Guided by our Albuquerque hikers, we will attempt to see as much of the awesome granite exposed under the Sandia Crest as possible. Route may change as we get closer, but the trailhead near Placitas will remain the same. Strenuous: 3,000 feet of elevation and 12 miles. Mark Dunham [medunham2@msn.com](mailto:medunham2@msn.com) or 505-795-0199.

**Thursday, Nov. 30, program for Thursdays in winter** (see Nov. 16 description).

### For the latest

To find out about new hikes or updates to existing events:

Northern New Mexico outings Meetup site: [www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/](http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/).

Albuquerque Meetup site: [www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Rio-Grande-Chapter/](http://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Rio-Grande-Chapter/).

To get weekly emails, send an email to [Listserv@lists.sierra-club.org](mailto:Listserv@lists.sierra-club.org) with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS.

Or go to [riograndesierraclub.org](http://riograndesierraclub.org)!

### December

**Saturday, Dec. 2: 9 a.m.: Carlito Springs Loop Trail;** easy hike near Tijeras sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome. 350-foot elevation gain, 2 miles round trip, in under 1.5 hours. Dogs on leash, OK. Carpooling strongly encouraged due to limited parking. To register contact Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, [teowen@q.com](mailto:teowen@q.com) by Nov. 30.

**Saturday, Dec. 2, easy hike around White Rock,** 6.5 miles to petroglyphs, lava tube, views, Alan Shapiro [nm5s@yahoo.com](mailto:nm5s@yahoo.com) 505-424-9242.

**Thursday, Dec. 7, program for Thursdays in winter** (see Nov. 16 description).

**Saturday, Dec. 9, hike or snowshoe,** depending on weather. Visit [www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/](http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/) for details or contact Aku, 505-577-2594.

**Thursday, Dec. 14, program for Thursdays in winter** (see November 16 description).

**Saturday, Dec. 16, hike or snowshoe,** depending on weather. Visit [www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/](http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/) for details or contact Aku, 505-577-2594.

**Thursday, Dec. 21, program for Thursdays in winter** (see Nov. 16 description)

**Saturday, Dec. 23, strenuous snowshoe** or hike depending on conditions; Larry Hughes, 505-983-8296, [lorenz.hughes@gmail.com](mailto:lorenz.hughes@gmail.com).



Photo by Cecilia Chávez Beltrán

Hike participants at Valle del Oro National Refuge. Cecilia Chávez Beltrán runs the chapter's Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico program. See story, Page 15.

# October-December hikes & events

## October

**Thursday, Oct. 5: Trekking Alpine Meadows** above the Ski Basin: (recurring hike) this is a weekly burst of 90 minutes ascending 2,000 vertical feet, with a variety of scenic rewards at the top. Some weeks we will just go to Deception Peak, sometimes to Lake Peak, and when time permits we may descend Ravens Ridge or go to Puerto Nambé and return via the Winsor Trail. This is by far the quickest route above timberline in our area, passing by rushing water for almost the entire hike. 8:30 a.m. departure. Most times we will be back in time for a late lunch. Contact Mark Dunham, medunham2@msn.com, 505-795-0199 near event time.

**Friday, Oct. 6, strenuous four-day backpack in Pecos Wilderness.** About 32 miles and 5,000 feet elevation gain; Larry Hughes lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, 505-983-8296.

**Saturday, Oct. 7, advanced-moderate hike to the Chama Headwaters;** 2,500 feet elevation gain, 8-12 miles; Mark Dunham medunham2@msn.com or 505-795-0199

**Saturday, Oct. 7: Easy hike to learn about Albuquerque history.** The Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program and the Albuquerque Historical Society are teaming to offer an exclusive history tour of downtown Albuquerque. Wheelchair-accessible outing. Meet at 10 a.m. at the Alvarado Transportation Center, 100 1st St. SW, at the clock tower. We'll proceed down Central

Avenue from 1st Street to 8th Street and learn about the history, architecture and personalities that have made Albuquerque unique. Two-hour outing, 1 mile round trip. Service dogs only. Contact Terry Owen by Oct. 1, 505-301-4349, teowen@q.com.

**Saturday, Oct. 7: Bosquitos outing** at 6500 Coors NW, 1-3 p.m. West Side Open Space Visitor. Come explore the Open Space Visitor Center grounds and discover all it offers our smallest and busiest friends. Tour the pollinator garden full of flowers that humming birds, bees, and beetles like. The Bosquitos are the youth-centered group of the Bosque Action Team. Our mission is to learn about Albuquerque's Bosque, the animals and plants that live there, and ways to take care of the Bosque and our earth. Sarita Streng, 505-288-8713 for more information. If you need special assistance, please let us know ahead and we will do our best to help. If you'd like to organize an event for our group or have suggestions for other outings/events, we would love ideas and more volunteers. Please contact Sarita Streng at 505-288-8713 or Julie Hudson at jth@cybermesa.com.

**Sunday, Oct. 8: Easy loop hike** on top of Sandia Mountain, about 3 miles. Great views and fall colors. Meet 8:45 a.m. at intersection of Tramway and Central, in the Smiths parking lot west side, or at 9:45 a.m. at the antennas (at the south end of the lower parking lot). Hike starts below the crest on the Albuquerque

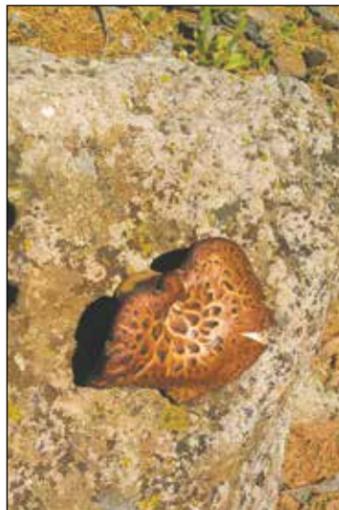


Photo by Mark Dunham

**Mycologist James Werbel identified this hawk's-wing mushroom during a September Mushroom Mania outing.**

side and returns by the crest trail. If snow or ice, we will hike on the north side of the antennas. End with optional potluck at Odile and Jim's house. Contact Odile by Oct 7, 505-433-4692 or 505-933-1630, Odile@pitot.org. Please specify: cell-phone number, if coming to the potluck and where you can meet the group.

**Sunday, Oct. 8, strenuous Frijoles Rim/Canyon loop:** 13.6 miles and 1,500 feet elevation gain, a scenic tour of Frijoles Canyon in Bandelier National Monument at a time when we might see some beautiful fall colors in addition to the exquisite landscape of Frijoles Canyon. We will start at the visitor center, take the Frijoles Rim Trail to the Upper Crossing and then descend Frijoles Canyon, to return to the visitor center. Contact Aku, 505-577-2594.

**Thursday, Oct. 12, Rio Quemado Trail clearing** to Quemado Falls (Santa Fe National Forest joint outing); up to 10 miles and 1,500 feet elevation gain. Mark Dunham medunham2@msn.com or 505-795-0199.

**Saturday, Oct. 14: Santa Fe River cleanup,** 10 a.m. to noon. Meet at Closson Street footbridge; bring work gloves. 12:30 picnic in Alto Park. In conjunction with Santa Fe Watershed Association "Hunt for the Red Rocktober." John Buchser, 820-0201, jbuchser@comcast.net.

**Saturday, Oct. 14, fall outing at a gentle pace in the Bosque intended for wheelchair users** and others with impaired mobility; 9 a.m. to noon. We will begin at Valle del Bosque — a hybrid park, Little League facility, and Bernalillo County Open Space property in one of the oldest neighborhoods (Atrisco) of Albuquerque. A trail, built with wheelchairs in mind, leads to a platform on the banks of the Rio Grande. Adjacent dirt trails in the Bosque are also passable by wheelchair for the adventure-some. Porcupines live in the neighborhood, and geese, ducks, egrets, cormorants, and various kinds of hawks are often seen. Eagles have also been seen, though rarely. Contact Colston Chandler, ccent@swcp.com, 505-343-9498 to register and obtain meeting details.

**Sunday, Oct. 15, moderate hike up Hermit Peak,** 2,750 feet elevation gain, 8 miles; Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com, 505-424-9242.

## About these hikes

**Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter outings are free and open to the public.** Level of difficulty is listed in hike descriptions. All mileages are round-trip. Participants must sign a liability waiver. Bring water, lunch, sturdy hiking boots or shoes and clothing suitable for the weather. Leader reserves right to turn away anyone whose experience or equipment appears unsuitable. Leader may alter destination or cancel trip due to weather, conditions, or insufficient number of participants. Unaccompanied minors need written permission from a parent or guardian. Ask leader for form. Dogs permitted only if noted in write-up.

**Always contact leader before the outing to confirm participation and details.** Please see [riograndesierraclub.org/outings](http://riograndesierraclub.org/outings) for up-to-date hike information.

Our **weekly outings e-mail**, Sierra Trail Mix, provides outings updates plus useful outdoor information such as trail conditions. Send an email to [Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org](mailto:Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org) with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS.

**Thursday, Oct. 19, recurring Thursday hike,** see Oct 5 description.

**Saturday, Oct. 21, advanced moderate hike,** South on the Alpine Meadows of the Santa

Continued on Page 15