

# Rio Grande Sierran

Volume 56, Issue 4

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

October/November/December 2018



U.S. Rep. Michelle Lujan

## Remake History

Women make up a record number of local candidates, and our endorsements, in 2018. We've identified a dynamic slate of champions for our climate, drinking water and a safe future for our families. Learn more about them — and how you can make a difference. **Election and volunteer guide: pages 6-9.**



Maggie Toulouse Oliver



Deborah Haaland



Xochitl Torres Small



Stephanie Garcia Richard



Photo by David McGahey

Rio Grande Sierra Club volunteers Eleanor Eisenmenger and Tom Gorman talk to voter Joan Aker. Our volunteers have been canvassing every weekend for our endorsed candidates. To learn how you can help, write to [camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org](mailto:camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org).



Kim Olson

Our endorsed candidates in key races: Top: **U.S. Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham** for New Mexico governor. Clockwise from upper left: **Maggie Toulouse Oliver** for N.M. secretary of state; **Deb Haaland** for U.S. Congress NM-1; **Xochitl Torres Small** for U.S. Congress NM-2; **Stephanie Garcia Richard** for New Mexico land commissioner; **Kim Olson** for Texas agriculture commissioner.

### EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET



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Sierra Club  
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Santa Fe, NM 87505

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### More inside:

#### Victory on solar energy

New Mexico's Public Regulation Commission removed a monthly fee that had a chilling effect on Eastern N.M. solar installations. **Page 3.**

#### Chaco-area air testing: Results are in

A Health Impact Assessment committee installed air monitors on homes in Navajo Nation Counselor Chapter. **Page 12.**

#### Time to renew recycling efforts

With recycling companies cracking down, our Zero Waste teams are ramping up efforts to educate on new rules. **Page 11**

**More: Methane safeguards:** Page 3. **Central New Mexico Group:** Page 10-. **Northern New Mexico:** Pages 12-13. **Hikes:** Pages 15-16

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

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**Cover banner photo by Mary Katherine Ray**

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 in New Mexico and West Texas. The opinions expressed in signed articles in the *Sierran* are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club.

# Vote on your chapter and group executive committees

Voting in the Chapter election is for Sierra Club members only. Please use this ballot so your member number appears on the mailing label on the other side. Two-member households can each vote, using both boxes. Each member can vote in the chapterwide Executive Committee election and for your local group. Candidate statements for the chapter Executive Committee will be available at [www.riograndesierraclub.org](http://www.riograndesierraclub.org). El Paso Group ballots will be mailed separately (but El Paso Group members may vote for Chapter Executive Committee with this ballot). Mail completed ballot to: 2014 Otowi Drive, Santa Fe, NM, 87505. Ballots must be postmarked by Dec. 1, 2018. **Electronic ballots will be emailed to members in November if you wish to vote online.**

## Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee

Please vote for three

- Karl Braithwaite
- John Buchser
- Laurence Gibson

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

- Howard Barnum
- Jody Benson
- Nona Girardi
- Michael Di Rosa

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

- Sandrine Gaillard
- Tom Gorman
- Paul Paryski
- Teresa Seamster
- 

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

- Carol Chamberland
- Odile de la Beaujardiere
- Fred Houdek
- Peter Kelling

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

- Howie Dash
- Mary Hotvedt
- Mary Katherine Ray
-

# Victory for rooftop solar in N.M.

By Mona Blaber

**Chapter communications director**  
Installing solar at your home got a lot more affordable for Eastern New Mexico residents after a September ruling by the Public Regulation Commission.

In 2011, Southwestern Public Service imposed a monthly fee on homes and businesses that invested in solar. The fee averaged \$28 a month, wiping out many residents' savings from investing in solar.

Solar fees are a tactic that many utilities nationwide have floated to kill competition from customers generating their own electricity. And it works: While rooftop solar in New Mexico has exploded in those years, topping 15,000 installations, only about 110 of those were in Southwestern Public Service's

service territory in Eastern New Mexico.

The company argued the fees were to avoid other customers paying for transmission and hookup of solar ratepayers while solar ratepayers basked in the free sun. But almost every independent study conducted in states across the nation has shown that solar customers actually tend to lower costs for other ratepayers.

New Mexico has conducted no such study, so when SPS applied to raise the monthly fee, gouging solar customers even more, our allies at the Coalition for Clean, Affordable Energy and Vote Solar opposed the increase and asked the Public Regulation Commission to eliminate the fee altogether.

Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter supporters joined in, calling commissioners and sending hundreds of emails opposing the solar penalty.

After months of evidentiary hearings and testimony, the commission's hearing examiner agreed, saying that Southwestern Public Service hadn't justified the fee and that it was using the fee to recoup costs in a way not allowed by law. She pointed out that evidence showed that solar customers do pay their fair share, and that SPS's study that supposedly justified the fee was "riddled with errors."

But the final decision belonged to the five PRC commissioners, and they spent weeks on the case, which involved several contentious issues. There was confusion around the costs and benefits of solar rooftops to the grid.

After several weeks of debate, commissioners did vote to revoke SPS's solar penalty, which was a big step forward for SPS current and future solar customers. Nonetheless, the Commission seems

to have relied on an incorrect interpretation of state law on the subject, leaving the door open for SPS to provide more evidence next time to support these fees and for PNM and El Paso Electric to adopt similar fees. An appeal is expected, and the Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy will likely participate to urge reversal of the incorrect legal interpretation.

The commission also ordered a study to determine the costs of solar rooftops to utilities and other customers. A study could guide the way for improved policies for boosting solar integration in New Mexico's grid, but our chapter and Coalition for Clean, Affordable Energy will participate to make sure the benefits, not just costs, of solar are included. Thank you to everyone who contacted their commissioner and helped defeat this solar-stifling policy.

## Holtec nuclear problems: Is list of 25 enough?

By John Buchser

**Chapter Water Chair**

The Sierra Club in September filed an intervention with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, legally challenging the NRC to answer a lot of questions about Holtec International's proposal to store all the nation's used nuclear-reactor fuel rods in a "temporary" location near Hobbs for up to 120 years.

There is no legal basis to establish the facility that Holtec is proposing. The Holtec proposal calls this "consolidated interim storage" proposal safer than storing the waste at the site of production but provides no evidence.

Transportation is not considered in the proposal, and even worse, if a shipment arrives that is leaking radioactivity, it is shipped back to where it started! The list goes on...

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club has approved pursuing an intervention with the NRC on the Waste Control Systems site that sits on our border with Texas. The proposed site sits on top of a low ridge, with the potential of contamination flowing into the Pecos River.

If you'd like to contribute to the legal and expert-witness fees, please go to [riograndesierraclub.org/holtec](http://riograndesierraclub.org/holtec). We could use your financial help!

**Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board meets** in Albuquerque Oct. 24: If you want to learn what Sandia National Laboratory is doing to help us understand technical issues associated with the nuclear waste problem, there is an all-day meeting in Albuquerque at the Marriott. Contact me at [jbuchser@comcast.net](mailto:jbuchser@comcast.net) for details, or go the the [nwtarb.gov](http://nwtarb.gov) website. The meeting will be webcast and recorded.

### Uranium video contest

"Uranium Capital of the World"

The Grants Mineral Belt, My Family, and Me Create a video short (5 minutes max) showing how living in a former uranium-mining area has affected you and/or your family.

Deadline: Oct. 31. Questions: Contact Candace at 505-401-4349.

**\$1,800 in prizes will be awarded.**

Categories: Intermediate (ages 14 and below); Advanced (ages 15-18); Independent (19-30)

Participation is open to all. Rules can be found at [www.swuraniumimpacts.org](http://www.swuraniumimpacts.org).

October/November/December 2018



Participants in September's Rise for Climate, Jobs and Justice rally warned of one of the many dangers of leaking and venting methane from oil and gas wells. Federal standards that would have reduced leaks and pollution were reversed by the Trump administration in September.

Photo by Derrick Toledo

## Climate safeguards axed

By Camilla Feibelman  
**Chapter director**

In the space of just eight days, the Trump Administration gutted two key pieces of U.S. commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement. You may remember that Trump announced the U.S. would leave the agreement. And though we never formally did, the administration's actions in September gut two of the key ways we'd drastically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

On Sept. 11, Environmental Protection Agency acting Administrator Andrew Wheeler proposed weakening the EPA's Methane Rules, which have been in force for almost a year, for the oil and gas industry. When first proposed under the Obama Administration, more than 27,000 New Mexicans commented in favor of these rules meant to require companies to regularly do leak detection and repair and use technology to prevent the leaks from happening.

These common-sense safeguards limit the release of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, from oil and gas infrastructure, and also protect communities from harmful pollutants released alongside methane,

such as benzene and volatile organic compounds. Residents throughout New Mexico are impacted by this pollution and in many cases live within sight of working wells or with wells on their property.

"I want to ask acting Administrator Wheeler, man-to-man, why he is proposing to come on to my ranch and harm my grandchildren. EPA has the studies that show how kids suffer the most from methane pollution and the toxic chemicals that go with it," said Don Schreiber, a rancher in the Four Corners Area with 122 natural gas wells on his ranch and thousands nearby. "Landowners and their families all across America will suffer when the New Source Performance Standards are weakened, and I think he needs to answer each one of us. It is morally outrageous that a former Washington energy lobbyist is about to put the health of our children at risk, exactly the opposite of what EPA is supposed to do."

Things got even worse on Sept. 18, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) reversed its Methane Waste Rule. The agency's own analysis has found that rolling back the standards will cost Americans more than \$1 billion in wasted natural gas

and pollution. Methane is the main component of natural gas, and the methane wasted by industry could heat every home in New Mexico.

Secretary Ryan Zinke's repeal of the BLM methane-waste standards fails to meet the BLM's legal obligation to protect the American taxpayer and western communities, despite bipartisan opposition in Congress and a half-million Americans submitting comments in opposition to the rollback. A legal challenge to Sec. Zinke's repeal of the BLM methane waste rule is almost certain. The EPA rules will be subject to a 60-day comment period when they hit the Federal Register and there will be a hearing in Denver, though the date has not yet been announced.

"Navajo communities are already overburdened with over 40,000 existing oil and gas wells that surround their communities in northwest New Mexico, and new industrialized fracking now threatens more than 55,000 acres slated for sacrifice this December," said Carol Davis, Diné Citizens Against Ruining our Environment, Coordinator. "We already suffer from exposure to noxious odors, and these rollbacks for the oil and gas industry will only make our communities unlivable."

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# Fracking endangers basin water

By Mike Neas

Central New Mexico Groundwater Issues chair

As companies have set their sights on fracking in the southeast region of Sandoval County, and Bernalillo County might not be far behind. Fracking in this part of the state is especially risky and dangerous.

Large parts of Bernalillo and Sandoval counties are underlain by what geologists call the Albuquerque Basin, which is within the Rio Grande Rift. The geology of the Albuquerque Basin is filled with fractures and faults in the rock. These fractures provide easy conduits for polluted fracking chemicals to enter the groundwater.

The rock is offset along the fault lines, so the Mancos shale, which stores oil and gas, may abut other layers, including the aquifer. “Unconventional” fracking, which combines horizontal drilling with hydraulic fracturing, allows for drill depths of a mile or more. The horizontal drilling may go directly from the Mancos shale into the aquifer, polluting the aquifer in that way.

The geology of the Albuquerque Basin is very different than the geology of the San Juan Basin, in the northwest part of the state, or the Permian Basin, in the southeastern New Mexico, where most of the state’s oil and gas extraction now occurs. Drilling in the Albuquerque Basin is much, much riskier. Retired oil-company geologist and executive Don Phillips has concluded that pollution of the Albuquerque Basin aquifer, a drinking-water source for nearly 800,000 people in central New Mexico, is all but inevitable if drilling is permitted in the Albuquerque Basin.

This is a critical issue, not just for residents of Sandoval County but also for Bernalillo County. Water flows downhill. Pollution in Sandoval County may also pollute groundwater in

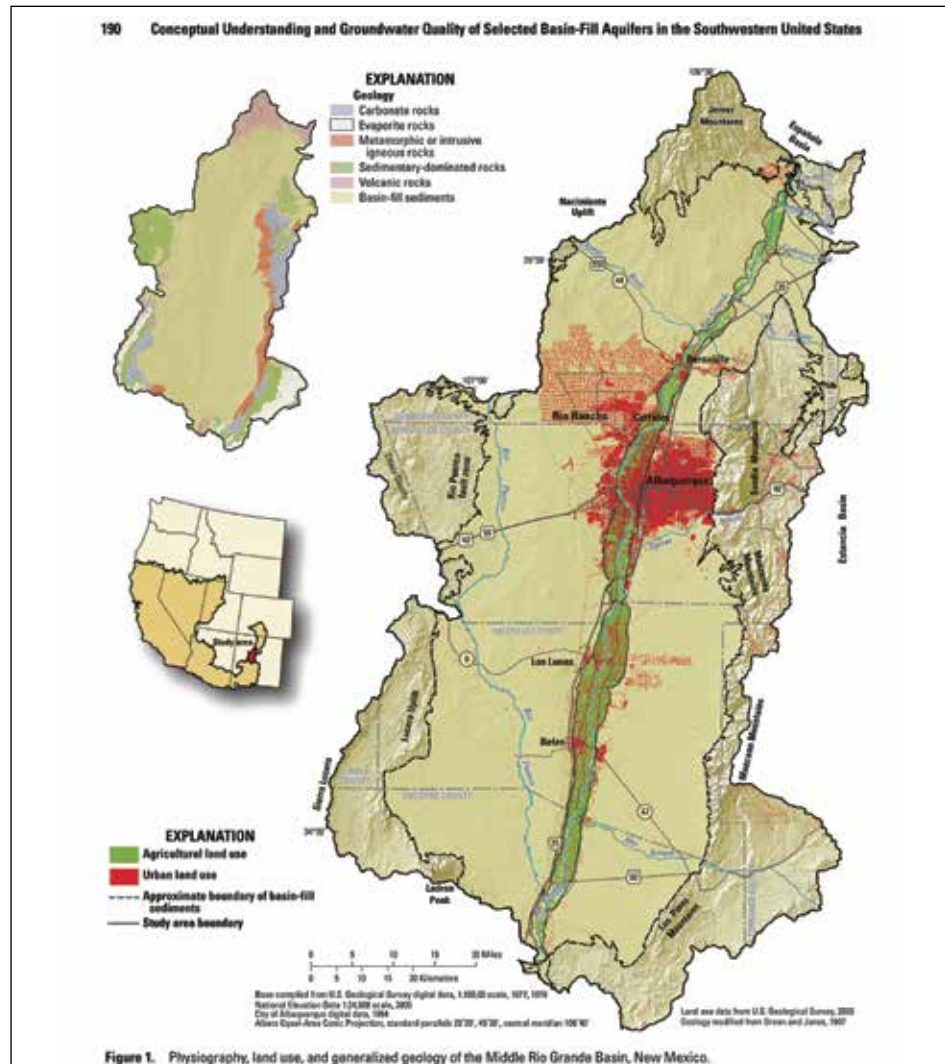


Figure 1. Physiography, land use, and generalized geology of the Middle Rio Grande Basin, New Mexico. The geology of the Albuquerque Basin is very different than that of the San Juan Basin in Northwest New Mexico or the Permian Basin in Southeast New Mexico, where most of the state’s oil and gas extraction now occurs.

Albuquerque and Bernalillo County.

Earlier this year, as reported in the Jan/Feb/March 2018 Sierran, an industry-backed ordinance that would have permitted drilling in the Albuquerque Basin was defeated. This ordinance was only defeated because citizens like you turned out in large numbers to express their outrage. That ordinance is now back for reconsideration.

We all need to be Water Protectors! We all should contact our local elected

officials and candidates regarding the creation of oil and gas ordinances that will ensure protection of water in the Albuquerque Basin.

NOW is the time to speak up. See the accompanying article by Miya King-Flaherty for updates and for actions you can take to protect our water!

For more information on how to protect your water in the Albuquerque Basin contact Miya King-Flaherty, miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org, or Mike

# Ask state not to issue copper

BY Max Yeh

New Mexico Copper wants a permit to dump 8 billion gallons of contaminated waste every year that could threaten Southern New Mexico’s water supply.

The New Mexico Environment Department held a public hearing on the proposed permit Sept. 24-28 in Truth or Consequences, where Sierra Club members and other concerned citizens voiced their opposition to the permit.

The permit for Copper Flat Mine outside Hillsboro would allow New Mexico Copper Corp. to discharge 24 million gallons per day of contaminated wastewater that “may move directly or indirectly into the groundwater” and “may contain water contaminants or toxic pollutants elevated above the standards” of New Mexico’s Clean Water Act.

The discharge will be contained in a 600-acre tailing pond behind a sand dam. Even a minor break in the retaining dam or its synthetic liner can cause catastrophic damage to surface and groundwater east and south of the mine, endangering Caballo Reservoir and the Rio Grande and therefore all Mesilla Valley municipal and agricultural water users. This threat to people and the economy will exist until two decades past closure, when the 24 billion gallons of wastewater (that once was drinking water) is evaporated and the tailing pond buried.

You can submit comments opposing the permit to Hearing Clerk John Baca, john.baca2@state.nm.us, with the subject line “In the Matter of Copper Flat Mine’s Discharge Permit 1840, Docket No. 8WB-18-06(P).”

# Sandoval drama resumes

By Miya King-Flaherty  
Our Wild New Mexico

Sandoval County is again at risk of passing an oil and gas ordinance that threatens a water source that nearly 800,000 people depend on.

In March, Sandoval County commissioners voted for a citizens working group to develop an ordinance to ensure the protection of aquifers, groundwater and surface water, and prioritize citizen input and meaningful tribal consultation.

However, things quickly changed. There are now two citizen groups drafting ordinances. One, called “the Science Team,” is co-led by Planning and Zoning Commissioner Peter Adang and former Planning and Zoning chair John Arango. The other, called the “Ordinance Team,” is co-led by Mary Feldblum of Earthworks’ Oil and Gas Accountability Project.

Complicating matters more, other ordinances have been developed, including one by County Commissioner Jay Block. This has resulted in discouraging developments at recent Planning and Zoning meetings.

On Aug. 28, Planning and Zoning commissioners voted 4-2 on a motion to recommend three oil and gas ordinances to the County Commission by the next

meeting. The recommended ordinances were the Science Team’s, the Ordinance Team’s, and Block’s ordinance. However, at the Sept. 25 meeting, commissioners did not follow through on their motion to recommend these three ordinances, instead recommending only the Science Team’s ordinance and a completely new measure called the Baseline Ordinance. The ordinance developed by the other citizens group was not even considered.

The Baseline Ordinance, a revamped version of the Stoddard Ordinance that was rejected last year, does not offer adequate aquifer protections or health safeguards, nor does it include tribal input. It divides the county with different approval processes and allows the Planning and Zoning director to approve drilling permits without public hearing or input in the western part of the county. The Baseline Ordinance also lacks requirements for hazardous-waste disposal and allows drilling within 1,000 feet of sacred and cultural sites.

Let’s not repeat last year’s flawed process. Urge county commissioners to consider only the ordinances developed by the citizens groups. Send comments to: PublicComment@sandovalcountynm.gov, and attend the Oct. 18 County Commission meeting.

**FRACKING!!!**  
... in our Albuquerque Basin???

*Protect our water!*  *Learn what's at stake!*

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# Chapter's Barish wins national award

By Mona Blaber

## Chapter communications

On Sept. 29, our own Richard Barish won the national Sierra Club's 2018 Special Service Award.

The award honors a Sierra Club member for strong and consistent commitment to conservation or the Club over an extended period of time.

That's Richard: In his 31 years volunteering, Richard has put in countless hours as the Rio Grande Chapter's brilliant compliance officer, but he's also the Bosque Action Team chair and the Central New Mexico Group political chair.

"Richard has served the Rio Grande Chapter for years, but this year his persistence and commit-

ment was exemplified in his leadership of guiding us through our endorsement process," said Chapter Chair David Coss. "He led dozens of endorsements, helping craft thoughtful questionnaires, coordinating candidate interviews, navigating the complex politics of primary endorsements, tracking each moving part of the final votes and coordinating volunteers and fundraisers to get us over the finish line for candidates who can help us protect New Mexico's environment."

"Richard is the kind of volunteer that makes running a Chapter possible," said Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman. "He seems to put more hours into his volunteer work than into a full-time job. His work inspires that of other volunteers, and

his leadership has created space for new leaders. Richard has vision and details persistence which together make him incredibly effective. I regularly think to myself, 'thank goodness for Richard.'"

"Richard has been a persistent, dedicated, and strategic leader with the Sierra Club's effort to help the Bosque. He has brought both a deep love of nature and a background in law to share with the group," said Sarita Streng, Bosque Action Team member and Bosquitos leader.

On top of it all, he's kind and a true pleasure to work with. Thank you, Richard! And congratulations!

The club's top award for public officials, the Edgar Wayburn Award, went to another New Mexican, Sen.



Sierra Club President Loren Blackford, left, and director Ramón Cruz, right, present Richard Barish with the Special Service Award. Susan Martin, who nominated Barish, also attended the Denver ceremony.

## Lifetime member: Madeline Aron

On our 55th anniversary as a chapter, we've asked our lifetime members to share their stories of why they belong to the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter. In this issue, we celebrate Madeline Aron of Albuquerque.

The first 10 years of my life were spent in the Berkshire Hills in Lenox, Massachusetts. My parents were 1st-generation Eastern European Jewish-Americans. They established a culturally and racially inclusive hotel and arts center that helped change the discriminatory practices of the area.

My love of nature, the arts and social justice were inextricably entwined in my being. I joined the Sierra Club because of its dedication to Nature, and its willingness to support environmental justice causes and the need for diversity in grassroots environmental activism.



Madeline Aron and friends at the Festival House, built by J.P. Morgan in 1893, which her parents purchased and ran.

## Sierra Club and Root Beer to focus on immigration discussion

By Cecilia Chávez Beltrán  
Excursiones coordinator  
6-8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 2,  
Sierra Club & Root Beer series  
at Albuquerque Center for  
Peace and Justice.

Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico invites you to take a walk through the mosaic that the topic of immigration is and hear a bit about the local efforts being worked on in Albuquerque. It is indeed a controversial theme nowadays, but is a very real and present part of life for many people.

In December last year, Excursiones visited Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and appreciated the beautiful view of birds enjoying their migration. Flying

freely, moving from one sky to another according to their seasonal needs ... oh, the freedom! Then, I contrast that with what I feel and experience when volunteering with a group providing legal information to migrants at the Cibola Detention Center just 70 minutes west of Albuquerque. If it was not for those volunteers, the imprisoned migrants would have no way to understand how to navigate the immigration system.

Myriad reasons makes us human beings migrate: to leave the well-known surroundings, the loved people, the comfort of our language, idiosyncrasies, culture and the understanding of how things work. Facing intense change ahead, people

move forward in life for political reasons, economic reasons, social reasons, religious reasons.

Local volunteers, including grassroots leaders, an attorney (or two), activists and others in the community — either on their own or as part of not-for-profit organizations — will give us a glimpse of their work at the local level, to counteract the unjust, inhumane and unpredictable immigration system.

Can you do something about it? Yes. You can find out how you can get involved at the next Sierra Club and Root Beer on Friday on Nov. 2. And then you choose.

Any question, idea or comment can be directed to Cecilia.Chavez.Beltran@sierraclub.org

### Donate to the Rio Grande Chapter; 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 climate, land, water and wildlife. You can donate at [riograndesierrclub.org/donate](http://riograndesierrclub.org/donate), or send your check to:

Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter  
October/November/December 2018

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

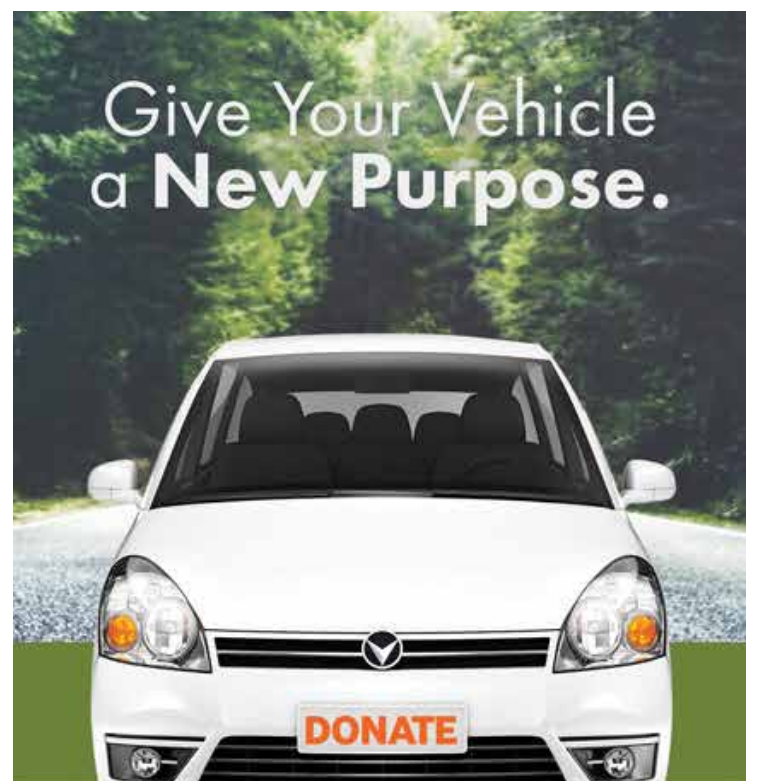
Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible.

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.

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Contributions are welcome. Send to [riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org). Submissions by Rio Grande Chapter members will take precedence. Articles chosen to be published are subject to editing.



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## Election 2018: Remake history

# A note about Sierra Club endorsements

By Susan Martin

### Chapter political chair

The most powerful way to protect our water, wildlife, land and climate is through good environmental policy, and the most powerful way to ensure good policy is to elect pro-environment candidates.

The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter sends questionnaires to and interviews eligible candidates, and two chapter committees must approve every endorsement by a two-thirds vote in order for a candidate to be endorsed. (Incumbents can be judged by their public record rather than a questionnaire).

**These pages list only our endorsed**

**candidates who have opposition in the Nov. 6 general election.** The chapter may add endorsements after press time.

Our chapter political action committee runs a grassroots, volunteer-based effort to elect environmental champions. We recruit volunteers for key swing races, canvass, inform our membership and run ads to promote great candi-

dates. Helping these candidates win is the best way to impact your local government, and you'll have fun and meet some great people.

Get in on the action! **To learn how to volunteer or donate to our winning efforts, please write to Camilla Feibelman at [camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org](mailto:camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org) or [riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org).**

## Volunteer profile: Tom Gorman

By Mona Blaber

**T**om Gorman is Rio Grande Chapter Public Lands chair, an Air Force veteran, and an election canvasser who has been going door to door every weekend since September began.

**Question:** How did you get involved in the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter?

**Answer:** I became involved with the Sierra Club in 2005, soon after attending a monthly public program held by the Northern NM Group. John Buchser was the first person I talked to, and he invited me to attend the next Executive Committee meeting, and that led me to becoming active.

**How did you get involved in Sierra Club electoral work?**

I became involved with politics during the 2008 campaign, when I volunteered to work for the Obama campaign. When I realized our Northern Group was also involved, I started to work on consolidated campaign work for all our endorsed candidates.

**What do you do as an election volunteer?**

Since I am on both the group and chapter political committees, I am involved in most of the tasks we do,



Photo by David McGahey

**Eleanor Eisenmenger and Tom Gorman, two stalwart Rio Grande Chapter volunteers, canvassed for Matt McQueen on Sept. 30.**

including interviewing candidates to determine who we will endorse, and then making calls and canvassing during election years. I also participate in fundraisers and rallies.

**Can you share a rewarding experience you've had volunteering or doing election work?**

I've had many rewarding experiences through the years, many during canvassing. This primary season, volunteers called all our members and supporters in the Española-area legislative district for our endorsed candidate, Susan Herrera, who was running against a powerful longtime incumbent. Susan won, and I do think the effort of our volunteers played a key role in her victory. That convinced me that when we work hard on campaigns, we really do make a difference. I think our Sierra Club canvassing and calling is very impactful on election outcomes. I know we have helped numerous candidates win in tough races, and it makes it worth it to see strong environmental candidates elected.

**What would you tell people who want to get involved but aren't sure about going door to door or talking on the phone?**

Regarding canvassing, I say give it a try, you might decide it's not as difficult as you think. Go out with an experienced canvasser. Calling is also really important and can provide the information and motivation to turn out voters. Try it!



Lupe Valdez



Mike Collier



Justin Nelson



Kim Olson



Roman McAllen



Joe Moody

## West Texas

Our Rio Grande Chapter includes not just New Mexico but also Hudspeth, Culberson and El Paso County in Texas. Our El Paso Group and the Lone Star Chapter have vetted some great candidates for El Paso members to support Nov. 6:

### U.S. Senate: Beto O'Rourke



Beto O'Rourke

We know Beto O'Rourke well from his great work as El Paso's Congressional representative. He managed to pass protections for Castner Range in the Franklin Mountains in 2017 even under an anti-environment administration. O'Rourke has heart and dedication, and Texas would benefit greatly with him as our U.S. senator.

### Governor: Lupe Valdez

Texas can't afford having climate-change denier Greg Abbott leading the state. Texas produces more wind energy than any other state and is rapidly increasing solar. Valdez wants to invest in this future and make Texas a clean-energy superpower.

### Lieutenant governor: Mike Collier

Collier wants to hold Texas businesses to a high standard of environmental safety and believes Texas should be the leader in technological innovation and commercialization of clean energy.

### Agriculture commissioner: Kim Olson

Olson has a natural-organic certification from the Texas Organic Research Center. She is a Master Gardener who provides "beyond organics" food and is committed to sustainable eco-agriculture.

### Railroad commissioner: Roman McAllen

The Railroad Commission regulates oil and gas, and McAllen wants to bring science-based decisionmaking back to the commission.

### Attorney General: Justin Nelson

Nelson would be a breath of fresh and ethical air as opposed to indicted Ken Paxton, who's never seen an EPA safeguard he didn't want to kill.

**State Rep. Joe Moody, in District 78,** is a lawyer and incumbent who authored a bill increasing the penalty for offenses involving cruelty to animals.

State legislative environmental champions Mary Gonzalez, in District 75, Poncho Nevarez, District 74, and Lina Ortega, District 77, are unopposed.

## County Commissions

### Bernalillo

#### Charlene Pyskoty

Charlene Pyskoty is running for an open seat in the northeast heights and east mountains that was vacated by Wayne Johnson.



Pyskoty, who's been a Sierra Club volunteer, displayed excellent knowledge of environmental

issues and said she would prioritize renewable energy, sustainable development and water conservation on the commission.

### Santa Fe

#### Rudy Garcia

Long-time land-use manager Rudy Garcia is a dedicated local professional familiar with all aspects of county planning and the need to carefully weigh all impacts of new developments on water, infrastructure and quality of life in Santa Fe County.



He also helped draft the county's strong oil and gas drilling ordinance, a model for other counties.

### Sandoval

#### Katherine Bruch

Katherine Bruch has been active in opposing legislation that would fast track fracking in the Albuquerque Basin in Sandoval County, where there is an extremely high risk of pollution of groundwater due to the highly fractured geology.



As the commission goes through the process of crafting an ordinance again, Katherine will give residents a voice in county decisions.

### Doña Ana County: Lynn Ellins, Shannon Reynolds and Karen Trujillo

**Lynn Ellins (District 1)** proved to be a champion for voting rights during his tenure as county clerk from 2008 to 2016.

Ellins was the first clerk in the state to grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples and ran an efficient, transparent elections office.

Ellins also committed to protecting Doña Ana County's natural resources as commissioner. He said among his top concerns were funding for law enforcement, affordable housing, flood mitiga-

tion and humane treatment of animals.

**Shannon Reynolds (District 3)** is an Air Force veteran who had good ideas for water conservation and protecting lands and wildlife as a commissioner.

**Karen Trujillo (District 5)** is director of a teachers' learning alliance at New Mexico State University and an educator with more than 20 years' experience. Trujillo showed a depth of knowledge on local water issues and supports public lands and policy that protects our natural resources for future generations.



**Clockwise from top left: Ellins, Reynolds and Trujillo**

## Election 2018: Remake history



# Torres Small: Building consensus

It's pretty clear when you meet Xochitl Torres Small that she is a special candidate: She's deeply knowledgeable about a wide range of issues, she's energetic, she listens to everyone, but most of all it's clear that she truly cares about people.

The daughter of a teacher and a social worker, Torres Small grew up in Las Cruces, where she lives now. She worked her way through college and graduated cum laude from Georgetown University in just three years.

Growing up in the desert, Torres Small knows that our future depends on protecting our drinking water. She emphasizes the importance of working together

## U.S. House District 1

to find community-driven solutions, and as a water-rights attorney, she works with local governments, farmers, developers, and conservationists to best use our shared resource.

Torres Small is running to replace Steve Pearce, who took every opportunity to gut climate and water safeguards and diminish New Mexico's national monuments. If Torres Small can win this newly competitive Southern New Mexico district, a true turnaround for the better is in store.

## New Mexico Governor



With Michelle Lujan Grisham as governor, New Mexico can boost investment in renewable energy, hold polluters accountable and restore protections that were slashed in the last eight years.

# Lujan Grisham's track record speaks for itself

This is it, folks. The Rio Grande Chapter and all progressives are putting in the calls, knocking on doors, making donations, working with allies and making sure their friends and family vote.

Our Chapter's all-volunteer political team has endorsed a great set of strong candidates who can lead New Mexico forward. After eight years of stagnation and attacks on our land, water and communities by our current governor, we are even more determined to vote.

I am especially excited that Michelle Lujan Grisham will be our next governor. Michelle is experienced, tough, energetic and committed to a progressive future for our state.

Michelle is traveling the state, listening to New Mexicans and making the commitments

to move us forward. She has endorsed a renewable portfolio standard for electricity in New Mexico of 80% by 2040. Imagine having a governor who understands the importance of renewable energy to our planet and economy instead of a governor committed to climate denial and the profits of polluters.

This election is one of the best chances we may ever get to stop the extremism represented by Michelle's opponent, whose reckless actions we can see the tragic effects of here in New Mexico.

Michelle will be this governor if we work hard to elect her. She will stand up for our wildlife and for protection of our air and water. Sweetheart deals for polluters can be ended. Abuse of our environment and our communities can be curtailed.

We can have a state government that cares about us, instead of an administration interested only in implementing the Koch brothers' agenda. Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham will fight to protect New Mexicans — women, Latinos, immigrants, workers, children — from the Trump administration. Her opponent has been a cheerleader and remains another silent enabler of a morally corrupt and dangerous administration

Michelle is working hard, and so are we in the Sierra Club. If we get her elected, we can move on to a resilient, sustainable future for ourselves and for our communities. Make sure you vote, and please contact us to volunteer if you can spare any time at all. This is it, folks!

— David Coss, Rio Grande Chapter chair

## Balderas fought for climate-saving rules

Attorney General Hector Balderas last year joined forces with California AG Xavier Becerra to file suit against the Trump administration over its suspension of a common-sense rule to limit methane pollution from oil and gas drilling.

The Attorney General's Office also appealed the implementation of New

Mexico's "Copper Rule," which expressly allows pollution under copper mines and was passed after the Environment Department's Ryan Flynn disregarded his own technical staff and replaced a draft written by a technical committee with a rule implementing every change requested by copper giant FreePort McMoRan.



Attorney General

## Heinrich an ally on Chaco, methane

Sen. Martin Heinrich championed the creation of the Rio Grande Del Norte and Organ Mountains Desert Peaks national monuments and stood up to the Trump administration's attempted land-grab. He helped pass legislation expanding public access to the Valles Caldera National Preserve and putting the National Park Service in charge of its management.



U.S. Senate

A former Rio Grande Chapter leader,

Heinrich also led the fight to keep a rule limiting natural gas waste to protect the climate and reduce the waste of taxpayer-owned natural gas.

## Haaland devoted to preserving resources

Deborah Haaland speaks sincerely and passionately about environmental justice and protecting people by protecting their access to clean water and a safe climate. She advocates for bold action to prevent climate disaster and boost our economy.



U.S. Congress District 1

for New Mexicans."

"We need to act fast to counteract climate change and keep fossil fuels in the ground," Haaland has said. "I pledge to vote against all new fossil-fuel infrastructure and to fight instead for 100% clean energy — including tens of thousands of solar-energy jobs

If she wins, Haaland would become the first Native American woman in Congress. This Albuquerque-area seat is being vacated by U.S. Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham (see left). Haaland will make an excellent successor to an excellent people's representative.

## Luján does N.M. proud



In District 3 (Northern and Eastern New Mexico), Ben R. Luján has been a climate champion since his tenure at the Public Regulation Commission, requiring utilities to expand and diversify their renewable-energy portfolio and implement efficiency programs.

U.S. Congress District 3

In addition to his excellent voting record and seat on the House Natural Resources Committee, he has emerged as a leader in Congress and would be a prominent voice for climate protection if Democrats take control of the House in November.

## Colón promises to fight waste

As chair of the New Mexico Democratic Party, Colón oversaw adoption of a platform with a key focus on the environment and energy.

As auditor, Colón promises to fight waste and abuse while utilizing the available tools to protect the environment, public lands, and wildlife within the State of New Mexico.



Auditor

To learn which district you're in for any office, check your registration or to register, go to [voterview.state.nm.us](http://voterview.state.nm.us). Join us every weekend on canvasses near you or learn other ways to help: 505-243-7767, [camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org](mailto:camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org),

# Election 2018: Remake history

## N.M. House of Representatives



**District 8:  
Mary Jo  
Jaramillo**

Mary Jo Jaramillo believes that our environment supports life. She supports state laws to protect resources and prevent pollution to make up for the federal EPA's failures and she firmly opposes fracking and the use of millions of gallons of our precious water in the process.



**District  
15: Dayan  
Hochman**

Making New Mexico a leader in renewable energy is a top priority for Hochman, who wants to work with state and local agencies to minimize human-caused climate destruction. She is particularly concerned about fracking on tribal lands and the massive amount of water use by extractive industries.



**District 17:  
Debbie  
Armstrong**

Armstrong has been a steadfast protector of air, water, land and wildlife as a legislator. As a public-health advocate, she says, "Clean water and clean energy have a direct impact on the health of communities and residents. I will continue to support all initiatives that clean up the environment."



**District 20:  
Abbas Akhil**

Akhil is an engineer who retired from Sandia National Laboratory before forming his own energy consulting business. He has spent his entire career in clean-energy storage and innovation. His expertise would be invaluable in the Roundhouse to craft a sustainable-energy future for New Mexico.



**District 22:  
Jessica  
Velasquez**

A Sierra Club member, Velasquez lives in the East Mountains and has been involved with the North 14 Deep Well Protest Group of homeowners to fight the assignment of new water rights to a company for the development of 4,000 homes and two golf courses in the area.



**District 23:  
Daymon Ely**

Rep. Ely has been a strong environmental vote in House committees and on the floor in his first term. He spoke up against irresponsible fracking permits in Sandoval County and is a strong proponent of reinstating the state's tax credit for residents and small businesses installing solar.



**District 24:  
Elizabeth  
Thomson**

As a state legislator, Thomson was proud to support the acquisition of Valle de Oro. She has also been an advocate for New Mexico becoming a leader in solar and wind production and manufacturing. Rep. Thomson is proud to have never taken a dime from oil and gas in any of her campaigns.



**District 25:  
Christine  
Trujillo**

Rep. Trujillo is a labor and teachers advocate. She says her excellent environmental record is a result of her heritage and love of New Mexico. "Water, air and our general natural environment must be pristine and sustained for our kids and their kids."



**District 28:  
Melanie  
Stansbury**

Melanie is a native New Mexican who is a policy consultant working on water and natural-resource issues. She is a senior advisor to the Utton Transboundary Resources Center at the UNM School of Law and has a thorough knowledge of complex water and resource issues.



**District 29:  
Joy Garratt**

As a longtime K-12 educator, Joy has strived to integrate environmental and conservation education in her language-arts and social-studies assignments. She cares deeply about preserving our state's natural beauty and resources for future generations, and she stresses that education is a vital component in ensuring that this happens.



**District 30:  
Natalie  
Figueroa**

As a high-school teacher, Figueroa helps students explore issues that help them understand our shared responsibility to make our communities healthier and more sustainable. Figueroa ran a smart and organized race in 2016 against an incumbent who is now retiring. She has a great chance to capture this seat for the environment.



**District 33:  
Micaela  
Cadena**

Cadena is the research director at Young Women United, a New Mexico nonprofit, leading statewide policy initiatives and culture shift strategies. She has also worked as an advocate for women in correctional facilities.



**District 35:  
Angelica  
Rubio**

Rubio has a deeply ingrained understanding and passion for the issues, particularly those issues relating to environmental justice and environmental racism. In her first term she proved her dedication and leadership.



**District 36:  
Nathan Small**

A former Las Cruces city councilor, Small was a strong advocate for Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. He is an avid outdoorsman and is past board chair for the Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley.



**District 37:  
Joanne  
Ferrary**

Ferrary's first term in the Legislature proved she is a true ally for protecting our climate and people, and she emerged as a leader on the Energy and Environment Committee. Her election is critical to keeping a pro-environment majority.



**District 38:  
Karen  
Whitlock**

Whitlock brings not only critical knowledge and expertise as a former compliance officer for a copper company, but also her dedication to clean drinking water and clean air. She would be an outstanding advocate in the Legislature.



**District 39:  
Rudy  
Martinez**

Martinez, an incumbent with a strong environmental voting record, supports keeping the Gila River free-flowing. He is defending a tough swing seat in Southwest New Mexico that he lost in 2014 and regained in 2016.



**District 43:  
Chris  
Chandler**

Chandler has a proven track record in Los Alamos of supporting environmental policies. The longtime Sierra Club member pledges to strengthen methane and water-use standards while supporting public lands and wildlife conservation.



**District 44:  
Benton  
Howell**

Howell, a former physicist, is a committed volunteer for the Rio Grande Sierra Club and 350.org. Howell worked hard among a large coalition of volunteers to help defeat an ordinance that would have paved the way for fracking in Sandoval County.



# Election 2018: Remake history

## N.M. House of Representatives



### District 50: Matthew McQueen

Rep. McQueen has become one of the Legislature's most informed and passionate champions for a safe climate and protecting people. As chair of the House Environment Committee, he has taken the lead to improve and vet important legislation.



### District 52: Doreen Gallegos

Rep. Gallegos, executive director of Mesilla Valley CASA, has earned a reputation for standing up to big-money CAFOs and other industries and standing up for her constituents' best interests. She has a strong record on environmental issues and a stellar rating from Animal Protection Voters New Mexico.



### District 53: Willie Madrid

Madrid knows our natural environment is critical to our region's future and a commitment to protecting public lands and resources for ourselves and for future generations. His district includes White Sands National Monument and much of Organ Mountains Desert Peak National Monument. "I will fight to protect our natural legacy for all of us."



### District 57: Billie Helean

A teacher, Helean educates her students on issues such as climate that critically impact their lives. She helped in the effort to defeat the polluter-friendly Sandoval County oil and gas measure. "Families are the cornerstone of my campaign, and families deserve clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, and clean land to enjoy for generations."



### District 60: Alexis Jimenez

"It's never been a question for me that we need to do more to care for our earth," Jimenez said.

Jimenez is a grandmother, retired educator, community organizer, advocate for preventing gun violence, and a champion for New Mexico labor. She has been a leader in the Rio Rancho area for 30 years.



### District 68: Karen Bash

Bash, a former board member and president of New Mexico's Interfaith Power and Light, has spent hours talking with legislators about methane standards and other environmental issues. She attended the 2017 Climate March in Washington, DC, and met with New Mexico's congressional delegation about climate issues facing our state.

## Secretary of state Maggie Toulouse Oliver

Perhaps the greatest threat to our democracy is the steady assault on voting rights. In many states,



legislators have made it increasingly difficult for young adults, people of color and the elderly to vote.

In North Carolina in

2016, county elections commissions severely reduced the number of early-voting sites only in heavily African American counties, in one case from 13 to 2. In Wisconsin, not only did lawmakers pass a voter-ID law based on debunked fears of voter fraud, but it barred college students from using their student IDs, often their only IDs, to vote.

In New Mexico, we are lucky to have an advocate for voter rights, not voter suppression, as our secretary of state. Maggie Toulouse Oliver was a two-term Bernalillo county clerk, increasing efficiency and transparency. After taking office in a 2016 special election, she developed the Native American Voting Taskforce, charged with identifying ways to boost voter registration, education and election participation in tribal communities.

New Mexico has numerous opportunities to increase civic engagement, and Maggie Toulouse Oliver is the experienced, dedicated public servant who will lead us there.



## Land commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard

Stephanie Garcia Richard has a plan, a thorough plan, she wants to carry out as our Land Commissioner. It involves active work for better protection of our aquifers, promulgating smarter efficient grazing practices, and promoting wind and solar installations on public lands.

It would be refreshing to have the Office of the Land Commissioner have a forward-looking, data-based approach on climate change and its impact on our state. Garcia Richard's election would ensure that decisions were made that worked for all stakeholders. She has already demonstrated her commitment to the best use of our resources in her three terms as a state representative, in which she sponsored legislation on solar energy storage and support for businesses committed to smaller carbon footprints.

Garcia Richard will prohibit the use of cruel traps and poisons on all 9 million acres of New Mexico State Trust Lands because they kill indiscriminately. This means that wild animals like bobcats, foxes, badgers and even cougars, all important species for the balance of nature, will be safer on our state trust lands but so will inadvertent victims

like the endangered Mexican wolf. While in the Legislature she consistently voted to outlaw coyote killing contests and as land commissioner will prohibit State lands from being used for this heinous purpose as well.

I have known Stephanie since her first run for the Roundhouse. She's well-known and greatly appreciated here in Grant County, where her mother was a teacher and Stephanie went to school. Like her mother, she is also an educator. She understands the need for public lands to produce the revenue for our education system, and she knows we need to fund early childhood education as well as K-12.

Stephanie is proud, I know, of her Sierra Club endorsement in this race. And I, as a Sierra volunteer, am most proud to support her.

— Mary Hotvedt

To attend a fundraiser for Stephanie on Oct. 14 in Santa Fe, email [richard.barish@sierraclub.org](mailto:richard.barish@sierraclub.org) for details. It's a great opportunity to meet Stephanie. You can also donate to Stephanie's campaign here: [https://secure.actblue.com/donate/land\\_water\\_wildlife](https://secure.actblue.com/donate/land_water_wildlife)

## Public Regulation Commission 5 Stephen Fischmann

Steve Fischmann has been a consistent environmental champion since serving on the state Senate Conservation Committee and on the boards of Conservation Voters New Mexico and Southwest Environmental Center.



He also co-founded the Southwest Energy Alliance, which championed renewables and energy efficiency.

The Public Regulation Commission has more power over New Mexico's energy mix than any other body. It's critical to elect a clean-energy and consumer advocate like Fischmann.

Fischmann has an extensive corporate finance background that will be valuable in assessing the \$8 billion in plant and power-line investments that New Mexico's major utilities plan over the next five years. He believes electric bills can be reduced over time with well-designed increases in the renewable portfolio.

## Treasurer Tim Eichenberg

Tim Eichenberg sees oil and gas waste in the form of methane pollution as a state Treasury issue. He has signed on time and again to protect important methane safeguards. He is also working to promote environmentally friendly investment and works with CERES promoting green bonds.



**Brittany Fallon, right, on her research assignment in Uganda, joins the Rio Grande Chapter as conservation and legislation organizer. Derrick Toledo, below, is our new Clean Energy Fellow.**



## Volunteer focus: Lauren Komnick

### What do you do for the Rio Grande Chapter?

I work with Fred Houdek to help get the logistics and volunteers together for community events that the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter supports. These events are important because we gather signatures on important petitions that address specific climate challenges. We also gather donations from the surrounding community that help support the chapter and our continuous fight against the climate crises.

### How did you get involved with the Sierra Club?

I've been working in the renewable energy industry in New Mexico for 5 years now so I'm sure I probably met someone, through someone. I got involved with the Sierra Club because I love our environment and I hope to raise awareness about our need to protect it.

### Why Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter?

Gosh, after moving from New York, I saw that the Southwest lacked many of the abundant natural resources that are found in the East. Once I got involved in the solar industry, I realized that it was so important to protect the beautiful, albeit limited, resources we have here in New Mexico. The Rio Grande Chapter really focuses on what is necessary to protect the unique ecosystems that we have in the Southwest.

### What's your favorite memory of getting involved to protect the environment?

My FAVORITE environmental memory had to be Earth Day when I was 8 years old. I begged my parents to walk around my hometown collecting litter. They obliged their budding environmentalist and drove with me while I collected 5 big bags of trash. I couldn't tell if they were proud or mortified.

### What do you like about volunteering?

My favorite part about volunteering for the Rio Grande Chapter is the community that I work within. It is so great to see so many people who care about the environment, and I love being able to help people get more involved with things that help our planet.

### What do you tell someone who wants to get involved but doesn't know how?

Contact me! I'd be happy to get you connected and volunteering with the Sierra Club RGC. My e-mail is [SierraClubRioGrande@gmail.com](mailto:SierraClubRioGrande@gmail.com) and we always need help! I'll answer any questions that you have or I will point you in the direction of some other awesome person who knows better. You won't regret it.



## Chapter welcomes new staff

By Camilla Feibelman

The beauty of the Sierra Club is its people. We benefit from strong partnerships with staff supporting our incredible volunteers. This fall brings us two new staff people.

Brittany Fallon started with us as a volunteer and called when she saw we were hiring a lobbyist. "But aren't you a researcher?" I asked. "Yeah, and I love that, but I really want to be an advocate," she replied. And within a month Brittany has already hosted a dinner for legislators at an interim committee meeting, helping us get to know both Democrats and Republicans and sharing information about our most urgent issues.

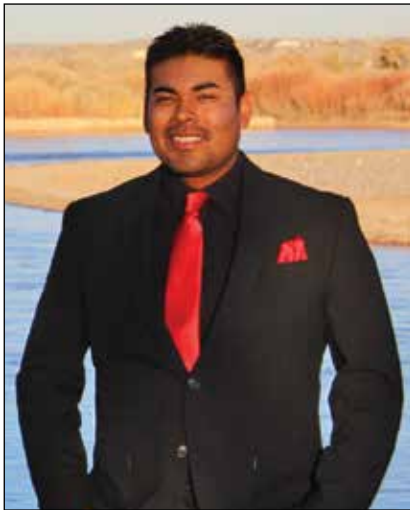
Derrick Toledo is our new Clean Energy Fellow and will be with us for six months for his practicum after a year with the Institute for Policy Studies.

"I'm at every rally," he said in his interview. "I want to be on the inside and see how the Sierra Club does its work." Derrick started just two weeks before the Albuquerque Climate March and helped to lead this excellent event.

### Brittany Fallon

Dr. Brittany Fallon is our new conservation and legislative organizer.

It may seem odd that Brittany's previous job was as a research professor in linguistics at the University of New Mexico, where she focused on wild-chimpanzee communication



and language evolution. Brittany has always felt a pull to politics and a desire to put science into action. Toward that goal, she took a short leave from her academic job to work the 2018 legislative session as an aide to state Sen. Bill Tallman.

Brittany served as assistant director of the Budongo Conservation Field Station in Uganda, where, in addition to doing research, she helped lead community-based conservation efforts, such as a project to provide farmers with a sustainable alternative to twine made from an endangered tree in the forest. She also taught conservation education in schools bordering the forest. Before we hired her, Brittany brought her knowledge of forest conservation as a volunteer with our Bosque Action Team, where she helped develop our [savethebosque.org](http://savethebosque.org) website. She is leading an upcoming outing to the Albuquerque Zoo to teach the Bosquitos how the Bosque compares to forests where the

zoo's primates live.

Brittany grew up in Rhode Island and Florida but has made her home here in Albuquerque with her partner Seth.

### Derrick Toledo

Derrick Toledo is doing a six-month Clean Energy Fellowship with our chapter sponsored by the Institute of Policy Studies. After a year in DC with the Institute, Derrick is now a little closer to his home of Jemez Pueblo. Derrick graduated from UNM with a degree in multimedia journalism and marketing management. He put his skills to work as an audio engineer for the award-winning Native America Calling and National Native News. He's also written and produced for the Daily Lobo, the Rio Rancho Observer, Generation Justice, KUNM and KSFR. In 2017 he won the the New Mexico Broadcasters Association's Large Market Radio Excellence in Journalism award for a segment of the four-part series "Vulnerable Adults" that he produced with Ellen Berkovitch. Derrick is currently co-producing a documentary with UNM students and professors about the Native American drum group Black Eagle, from his home village, Jemez Pueblo.

Derrick is working on campaigns to protect the greater Chaco landscape from expanded oil and gas extraction and to defend safeguards meant to reduce oil and gas waste and pollution.

## Global Warming Express takes off

By Genie Stevens, Global Warming Express

The Global Warming Express, based in the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, is taking off on its biggest journey yet, bringing after-school programs to 15 schools in Los Alamos, Santa Fe and Albuquerque.

In August, new mentors were trained and joined the volunteer teaching staff in New Mexico.

The program will bring science, climate science and sustainable solutions to 8- to 12-year-old students through the fall term, followed by speech-making, letter-writing, arts and advocacy training in the spring. Already Global Warming Expressers from last year's programs have agendas to pick up on, as they meet with their mayors to push for change in their cities.

GWE founder Marina Weber attended the Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco Sept. 13-14 as one of 100 youth delegates from around the world. The Summit was filled with reports from businesses, NGOs, cities, states and countries, with strong representation from women and indigenous community organizations, on the state of climate commitments since the Paris

Agreement and the urgency to to implement the agreement around the world.

One of our young GWEers helped to kick off the People's Climate March in Albuquerque in September. Nine-year-old Emily gave a wonderful speech about her involvement in the Global Warming Express.

Some excerpts from Emily's speech:

"Our group's goal was that we wanted to get solar panels at our school. Then we found out that there were already solar panels on the school. That was exciting! But then we found out that they were only making 10-15% of our school's energy ..."

"I think that we need to make a bigger change because it is an emergency! It's an emergency for the earth because we are destroying the planet and it is the only planet that we can survive on.

"I care about me and other kids' futures, so we need to do something now. 10-15% is not enough! My friends and I are working to get more solar panels. What are you doing?"

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Rick LoBello

### Texans ask state to bring the wolf back

In late August the El Paso Group delivered six boxes containing 10,372 letters plus a list of 4,628 names of people to Carter Smith, Texas Parks and Wildlife executive director, to support a plan to return wolves to the wilds of Texas.

El Paso Group Chair Laurence Gibson

urged Texas Parks and Wildlife to launch an effort to bring back the gray wolf to the wilderness and protected areas of Texas and to develop and implement a scientifically reviewed plan of action.

Junior Master Naturalists and their families (above) helped deliver the letters.

## El Paso: Contamination in recycling is costing us

By Laurence Gibson  
El Paso Group Chair

**Did you know?** Friedman Recycling Companies washes cans and plastics three times before they are loaded for shipment to China: once locally, once in Phoenix and once in Los Angeles? Just a quick rinse at home is enough. Friedman handles recycled materials for several cities in New Mexico as well as Arizona and West Texas at plants in El Paso, Tucson and Phoenix.

**Did you know?** El Paso has a 33% contamination rate of recyclables, 10 times more than Las Cruces! This is calculated at a quarterly “audit,” where materials are first weighed, then spread out onto a warehouse floor, then separated into bins of useful stuff and trash for the landfill, which is then weighed. Friedman’s fees are adjusted after each audit. Garden hoses and diapers (all kinds of diapers!) are among the most frequent contaminants in El Paso. Even dead animals show up.

**Did you know?** Complaints

to City Council representatives from households having their blue recycling bins confiscated (for contaminating) put a halt to El Paso’s Environmental Services Department using this tool to reduce the contamination rate. Now offenders get an “Oops” tag.

**Did you know?** When El Paso began recycling a few years ago, Friedman was paying the city. Now the city is paying Friedman \$800,000, and Friedman is demanding to renegotiate the rate several times a year.

**El Pasoans: Did you know we are no longer allowed to recycle plastic bags?** We were the only place I know of allowed to collect individual bags into one large bag and throw it into the blue bin for vacuuming up on the single-stream conveyor. And Environmental Services no longer wants any paper smaller than a half-page. This is a real heartbreaker: seems smaller pieces of paper, even a grocery receipt, fall out of the bails, blowing around and cluttering up the landscape.

Most of these changes are

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driven by China, which for several decades has bought a third of the world’s recyclables. Their recent ban on mixed paper and mixed plastic has created a glut of paper worldwide. This, coupled with their June 2018 .05% contamination standard, has increased the quality requirements for recyclables everywhere. They don’t want “just any old trash” anymore. Until new markets develop, local recycling programs will need even more help — including yours!

## Northern N.M. Zero Waste Team zeroes in on plastic

By Joseph Eigner, Zero Waste Team

The efforts of the Zero Waste Committee to persuade Santa Fe County staff and commissioners to increase recycling at county drop-off facilities have not been successful. While the county has had an ordinance since 2005 that requires all users at the drop-off sites to

recycle, it has been unwilling to enforce it. Our proposal to develop an implementation plan and a means to fund it were rejected. Solarization and transportation are the county’s sustainability priorities for the coming year.

Our goal for 2019 will instead focus on educating the public on the diffi-

culty of recycling single-use plastic items and packaging and the dangers they cause to the environment when they are not sent to the landfill.

Our team continues to work with Sierra Club, Eldorado/285 Recycles, Vista Grande Public Library, Eldorado Fire & Rescue, and the Eldorado

Community Improvement Association to make all events at which food and drink are served true “zero-waste.” Crucial to success has been the cooperation of local commercial composter Reunity Resources in composting the food waste and compostable plastic serving items that we collect at these events.

## Central Group starts Zero Waste Team

By Carol Chamberland  
Central NM Zero Waste

The Central Group has recently initiated a new action team dedicated to reducing waste in the Albuquerque area. We aim to divert trash from the local landfill by increasing general usage of the existing city recycling program and by promoting city-wide communal composting.

We plan to research and encourage post-collection processing of recyclables and compostables into useful, marketable products. We’ll look at banning plastic bags and straws, and generating energy from our trash. We’ll advocate for responsible corporate and

commercial recycling programs. A variety of creative solutions are needed for our high-desert environment.

Other American municipalities have made great strides in this direction. We see no reason why Albuquerque cannot become a forward-thinking community as well.

We are a small group of concerned citizens from varied backgrounds. Those who have expertise and/or creative ideas along these lines are invited to join the effort. Email Carol at pictografix@comcast.net with the subject line Zero Waste. We’ll need all the help we can get.

## Reducing comes first; let’s start with straws

I’m Amelia Babic. I’m in fifth grade at Montessori of the Rio Grande Charter School. Last year, I studied plastic pollution and global warming with my friends Larkin Hanley, Ella Viramontes and Lila Eaton. I studied what happens to trash and recycling.

One thing that really struck my mind was that the average American family throws out four tons of trash every year! I realized that this is partly because many things can’t be recycled at all. One example is juice boxes. Juice boxes are made out of plastic, paper, and metal smashed together. That is called a composite material, and you cannot recycle composite materials.

My research showed that one of the biggest littering problems is single-use plastic straws. Single-use plastic straws are one of the main kinds of trash found on beach cleanups. One of the reasons they are found all over is because people like the feeling of sucking — it is an addictive habit. There are some solutions to this problem, such as corn-based straws and reusable straws.

I don’t want to completely ban straws because for some people they can be very useful or necessary. A corn straw is made out of cornstarch and can be composted. I personally think that paper straws are not a good solution because it means chopping down more trees, and



Amelia Babic is a Global Warming Express participant; her mom, Sarita Streng, runs our

youth **Bosquitos** program.

once they are wet, they can’t be recycled. I realized that even though a person might think using one plastic object like a straw is a small thing, it can create a big problem. I realized how important it is to spread awareness, so people can help solve the problem.

Last year, I was also in an after-school group called Global Warming Express. The main goal was to learn what global warming is and how to spread awareness about it. We talked to Mayor Tim Keller about banning single-use plastic straws in Albuquerque, and we also gave some speeches at school and at meetings about how people can help to reduce pollution. Most important, I found out that almost every problem we studied could have a solution.

I hope you can help by encouraging restaurants to use biodegradable straws; only using a plastic straw if you need it; and spreading awareness about this issue by talking with friends and other people.

# Chaco air-quality results are in

By Teresa Seamster, Northern New Mexico Group

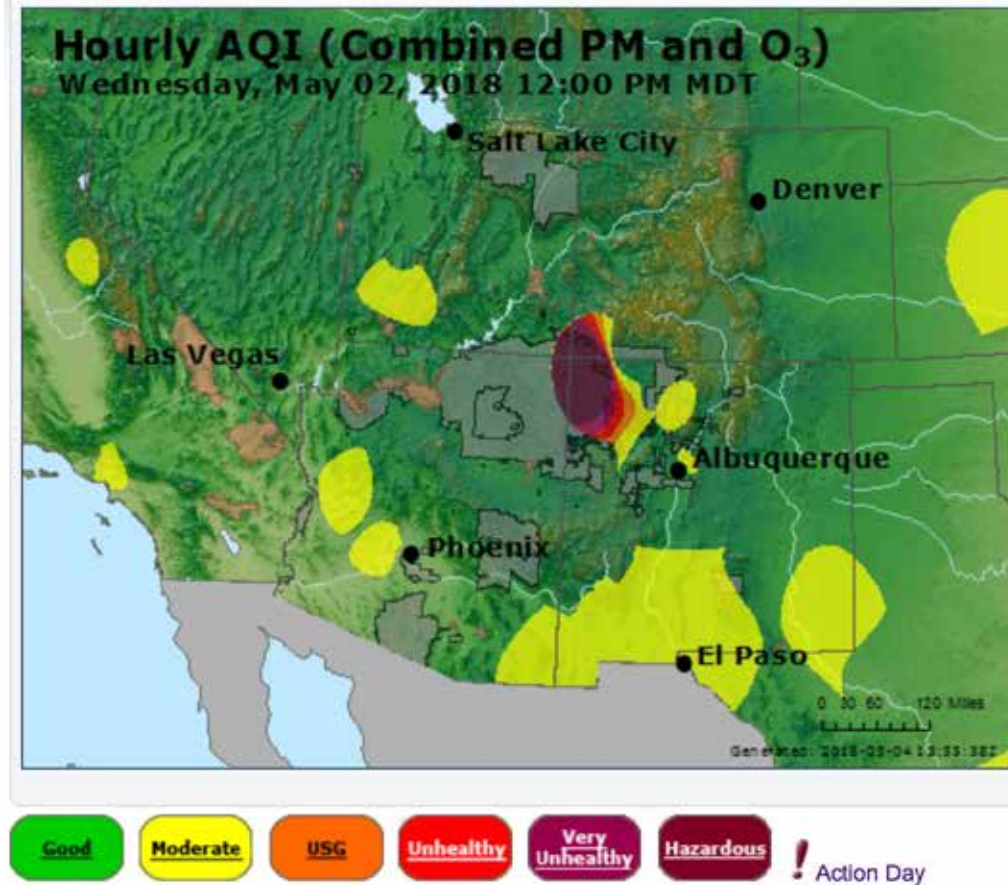
Counselor, NM — In New Mexico's San Juan Basin, more than 150 active oil and gas wells operate daily within the boundaries of the small community of Counselor.

More than 90% of residents live within 2 miles of a well, and most live a few hundred feet from one or more wells. Ever since hundreds of new "exploratory" wells were permitted in 2014, the residents have suffered from new and debilitating symptoms ranging from sudden severe headaches, dizziness and nausea to sore throats, sinus symptoms and difficulty breathing.

In April, eight families and organizations, including a church and the chapter house, volunteered to have indoor and outdoor air monitors placed at their residences for a 32-day period. The results validated what the community had been saying for years: The open air is widely contaminated with chemical-laden particulate matter and formaldehyde, a known carcinogen.

The monitors collected continuous data on fine particulates that can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream (PM 2.5). Residents were alerted when levels became elevated or hazardous. While indoor levels stayed at or below elevated levels of PM 2.5, outdoor levels soared into the unhealthy and hazardous levels on 10 of the 32 days.

Concerns over air quality and sickness in the community reached a level in 2016 that led to the formation of the Counselor HIA-HNDA Committee to collect data on air pollution, health symptoms and decision making based on traditional knowledge. The committee consists of



This map of the Air-Quality Index for May 2, 2018. It shows hazardous levels of particulate matter and ozone in Counselor and throughout the San Juan Basin.

community leaders, traditional medicine men, health professionals and researchers who are conducting meetings and individual health surveys to identify the level of exposure that could lead to chronic health problems and severe social disruption.

The air quality data has been analyzed and the health data is currently being collected for an end-of-year report to the Navajo Nation Human Health Research Board. For residents in Counselor, the results already support what they see, smell and feel – there are already too many wells

situated too close to homes and emitting too much pollution for them to be able to breathe freely and feel they live in a healthy environment.

“Once our community was a healthy and happy place to be. But now, we see all that they have destroyed, (and) what we have here. They have taken part of us with them. They have torn families apart and all they worry about is their money, you know? Things are never, ever going to be the same again.” — Marlene, community resident.

## Restoring a dying river: Rio Fernando de Taos

By Shannon Romeling  
Rio Grande Chapter/  
Amigos Bravos

Dry sections, E. coli bacteria, fire risk, sedimentation, polluted runoff, worn-down acequia systems, limited in-town access and bank impacts/modification are just a few of the issues plaguing the Rio Fernando de Taos.

The Rio Fernando is the major drainage running through Taos and plays a key part in sustaining wildlife, recreation, and agriculture in the area. It has become an important flyway for bird migration and habitat for river otters, coyotes, and beavers. For generations, Taos Valley community members have recreated in its upper watershed of Taos Canyon. Its waters are as critical today to supporting irrigated agriculture and human communities in Taos Valley as they were 300 years ago.

Despite its importance to Taosños, the health of the Rio Fernando has deteriorated. Fortunately, we are working diligently to combat these threats.

Formed in 2017, the Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Collaborative is a dynamic group with a long-term plan to restore the river.

The group includes Amigos Bravos, Taos County, Taos Land Trust, Taos Valley Acequia Association, the Nature Conservancy, Town of Taos, US Forest Service, the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District, and Trout Unlimited.

Projects under way include:

**Water-quality sampling** in partnership with Water Sentinels: Amigos Bravos and Water Sentinels have been sampling the Rio Fernando since 2007. Our sampling has shown numerous exceedances for E. coli, dissolved oxygen, and specific conductance. You can volunteer for this program! Contact me at sromeling@amigosbravos.org.

**Repairs to the main Rio Fernando Acequia Headgate:** The Taos Valley Acequia Association has identified priorities for repairing the aging acequia systems of the Rio Fernando. The first project involves upgrading the presa (the small impoundment used to divert the acequia at the headgate).

**The Vigil y Romo Acequia and Education:** The Taos Valley Acequia Association is also working to restore the work on the Vigil Y Romo Acequia and

organizing education efforts on acequias and the importance of their use for the water table.

**Watershed-based planning:** Amigos Bravos has been working on water-quality issues on the Rio Fernando de Taos for more than 12 years. In 2016 Amigos Bravos received funding from the New Mexico Environment Department to do extensive monitoring of E. coli, source identification, and watershed-based planning in the Rio Fernando watershed. It will be completed in 2019.

**Microbial Source Tracking of the Rio Fernando:** This project will analyze species of E. coli contributing to the river and improve the quality of the Watershed Based Plan to be completed in Summer 2019. This is a project of the Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Collaborative and while there are three goals of the Collaborative, members agreed that bacteria contamination is a public health issue that should be dealt with immediately.

**Rio Fernando Park Planning:** The new, 20-acre Taos Land Trust Park on the Rio Fernando is starting year two of their master planning process. The new park borders Fred Baca

Park and includes 7 acres of wetlands plagued with invasive species. Restoration on these wetlands is part of the Park Plan. Sign up at [www.taoslandtrust.org](http://www.taoslandtrust.org) to attend their events, provide your input on the Park Planning process, and volunteer at the park.

**Rio Grande Water Fund La Jara Wetland Restoration:** La Jara was identified as one of 10 Wetland Jewels in the Carson. In November, Amigos Bravos received a grant from the Rio Grande Water Fund for restoration.

### How you can help:

- Inspect your septic tank every 3-5 years.
  - If you rely on a domestic well for water, conserve.
  - If you have surface-water rights, consider irrigation.
  - Recycle.
  - Dispose of trash properly.
  - Minimize off-road vehicle crossing.
  - Clean up your pet waste.
- Contact Judy Torres, Taos Valley Acequia Association (575) 758-9461 [taosacequias@gmail.com](mailto:taosacequias@gmail.com), or Rachel Conn, Amigos Bravos, (575) 758-3874 [rconn@amigosbravos.com](mailto:rconn@amigosbravos.com) to volunteer or learn more.

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## Northern New Mexico Group

# Wildfire protection, wood for the winter in Counselor

By Teresa Seamster,  
Northern New Mexico  
Group chair

Wildfires in our state have two major ignition sources: lightning strikes and human-caused fires. Part of the human ignition comes from downed power lines that spark in often remote mountain forest locations and burn unnoticed for hours before the alarm is sounded.

Proactively, many power-line corridors have been cleared so falling trees due to storms and high winds no longer pose a threat. One such corridor runs for a few miles through the Chaparral Girl Scouts camp outside Cuba in the Jemez Mountains.

Every fall, Pastor James Therrien of Lybrook Ministries in Counselor Chapter locates public or private forested lands that permit woodcutting by his volunteer crew of sawyers.

This team of experienced cutters comes to the Navajo chapter every year to cut firewood for elderly residents. The goal is eight trailer loads a day for three days, or about 24 cords (5,000 pounds per cord).

This year, Pastor Therrien contacted the Northern Group, which called State Forester



Teresa Seamster

**A volunteer sawyer cuts firewood for elders in Navajo Nation's Counselor Chapter from a power-line corridor in the Jemez Mountains that needed to be cleared to prevent wildfires.**

Todd Haines, who decided the closest place to Counselor was the year-old power-line corridor project at Chaparral. Girl Scouts of New Mexico Trails CEO Peggy Sanchez Mills gave permission to cut and haul as much free wood as the church could take over the following

week.

More than 25 residents showed up to cut some 50 cords of firewood that will heat rural homes this winter for elderly residents in Counselor. And the Girl Scouts have a cleaned-up, "fire-proof" corridor.

## It's time to replenish Strategic Water Reserve

By Kristina G. Fisher  
Think New Mexico

Thirteen years ago, following several years of severe drought, Think New Mexico led a successful effort to enact a law creating a Strategic Water Reserve for New Mexico.

The Strategic Water Reserve consists of a pool of publicly held instream water rights, acquired by lease, purchase, and donation. This water is used to enhance flows in New Mexico's rivers, helping the state proactively resolve conflicts over interstate river compacts and endangered species. To date, over 4,500 acre-feet of water on the Pecos River and just over 1,000 acre-feet in the middle Rio Grande have been placed into the Strategic Water Reserve.

The need for a Strategic Water Reserve was clear from New Mexico's history of expensive litigation over its rivers. This included a decade-long fight over the endangered Rio Grande Silvery Minnow in the early 2000s, and a lawsuit filed by Texas against New Mexico over the Pecos River Compact in the 1970s. This latter case resulted in New Mexico having to pay \$14 million in damages and spend another \$100 million buying water rights to prevent

future compact violations.

Now the drought and the lawsuits have returned. Texas is once again suing New Mexico, this time over the lower Rio Grande. New Mexico taxpayers have already spent about \$15 million fighting the lawsuit, and if the state loses, the cost could be astronomical.

Unfortunately, since its creation the Strategic Water Reserve has been chronically underfunded, which has prevented it from acquiring enough water rights to make a decisive difference in situations like the one we now face on the lower Rio Grande.

Moreover, the reserve's fund has twice been emptied to meet other financial needs of the state, forcing water managers to cut off negotiations to acquire water rights in critical stretches of the middle Rio Grande. The Reserve's fund is currently empty.

During the next legislative session, Think New Mexico will be asking the legislature to replenish the reserve fund. To learn more about this effort and ask your legislators and the candidates for governor to support it, visit [www.thinknewmexico.org](http://www.thinknewmexico.org).

## What goes into making snow?

By Teresa Seamster,  
Northern NM Group

Look at snowflakes on a dark window and you will see a million crystal patterns, all different tiny starbursts of beauty. The formation of ice crystals only requires two conditions: abundant water and freezing temperatures. Unfortunately, the high mountain peaks and snow basins of New Mexico are running out of both.

Some scientists are concerned that artificial snowmaking threatens drinking-water supplies and ecosystems in fragile areas, such as high-altitude basins.

They are concerned that, as temperatures rise at high altitudes, ski resorts will fabricate more and more snow in a losing battle against global warming.

Snowmaking begins with a large water supply such as a river or reservoir. Water is pushed up a pipeline on the mountain using large electric pumps. This water is distributed through a



maze of valves and pipes to trails that require snowmaking.

Artificial snowmaking consumes up to 4,700 square meters of water per hectare (a hectare is about 2.5 acres), according to Carmen de Jong, research director of the Mountain Institute of the University of Savoy, France. Water supplies can no longer keep pace with this demand.

The belief that all water extracted for snow production returns to the environment is wrong, argues de Jong. Her measurements in the Alps and the High Atlas mountains indicate that about 30% of the water transformed into artificial snow is permanently lost to the area. Evaporated water,

**Measurements in the Alps and High Atlas mountains indicate that about 30% of the water transformed into artificial snow is permanently lost to the area.**

depending on atmospheric conditions, may be carried long distances, and extensive evaporation occurs when making artificial snow as water is blown into the air.

Although natural snow also evaporates and sublimates, artificial snow originates partially from groundwater. As de Jong sums up: "The process of making artificial snow is not comparable to natural snowfall; it is more like irrigation, yet nearly three times more water-intensive."

Can Northern New Mexico towns accept demands from ever expanding ski resorts and snowmaking on their dwindling water supplies?

**Celebrate a Year of Enjoying, Exploring and Protecting — the Environment!**



**Northern New Mexico Group Holiday Get-Together**

**December 1st, 2018  
Museum Hill Café  
On Museum Hill in Santa Fe  
5 to 7 p.m.**

**Come join in the food & fun and a brief but gorgeous photographic journey to the Okavango Wildlife Preserve with the Northern NM Group of Sierra Club**

*Come early and do some unique season's shopping at the Museum of International Folk Art bookstore and handmade-gift shop as well as the Museum of Indian Arts shop of renowned artists jewelry, fetishes, books and prints.*

**RSVP: Alice Cox 505-780-5122  
Email: [auntiealice@cybermesa.com](mailto:auntiealice@cybermesa.com)**

**Reservations Required. \$15/person  
Cash Bar  
Space limited to 85**

# Discovering the secret lives of trees

By Jody Benson  
Pajarito Group chair

What is a tree thinking when you're not around? What is life like for a tree? You might think that because a ponderosa pine just stands there, it's not doing anything. But if you pay attention to that pine — or any other tree — you'll see that although it just stands there with roots in the ground and branches in the air, it is actually holding up the world.

The Pajarito Group introduced kids to this idea during the group's activity at the Pajarito Environmental Education Center's Bear Festival. On the Kinnikinnick Trail, group members led gaggles of children out to meet trees, to compare a spruce needle to a limber pine's and a Russian olive leaf to a Siberian elm's. They identified many of the life-supporting assets trees share with ambulatory species, from providing fruit and shade to making oxygen and offering shelter for every kind of animal. They figured out that without trees, "We would have to live in tents," and "We would need to use scuba-diving tanks for air."

They stopped to feel the bark and hold onto the trunk of the biggest ponderosa as they looked straight up into the crown. On the rim of Acid Canyon, this "mother tree" takes care of the younger ponderosas rooted around her.

They learned mother trees have a mycorrhizal (fungal) network that connects their roots to neighboring trees, and through which the mother can detect distress signals in smaller neighbors. When "she" detects distress, she will increase the flow of nutrients through "her" roots into the mycorrhizal network connection, thereby sharing the excess sugar the bigger mothers can produce.

In the tangle of elms and apricots the kids felt the ground where the elder trees were able to differentiate their own seedlings from those of other species. Just like people-parents feed their own kids first, elder trees direct more of their nutrients to their own offspring. However, elders, just like many people-adults in a community, support multiple seedlings until they are tall enough to reach up to the sun and deep into the earth so they can nourish themselves.

And of course, the kids hugged a ponderosa to debate if the scent was vanilla or butterscotch.

Us kids, they realized, and trees are the same. We both need bigger relatives to protect us where we're rooted so we can grow. And when we're grown big, we — like the trees — will give homes and food and everything to our own kids. "And trees give everything, like even oxygen." In the meantime, kids and the young trees both just need a chance to grow and thrive in the natural world we're all an essential part of.

To read a report on tree intelligence, please see: [www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-whispering-trees-180968084/](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-whispering-trees-180968084/).

## Stewart Udall's Life and Legacy

Scott Einberger, an environmental historian, discussed his new book "With Distance in His Eyes, The



Cheryl Bell

From left, Andrew Delorey talks trees with Carene Larmat as Nona Girardi and Los Alamos High EcoClub chairs Zoe Hemez and Paulina Burnside discuss plastic bags.

**Right: Two tree-huggers use their senses to experience this ponderosa's color, bark and needles. They learned that this is one of the "mother" trees along Acid Canyon — one of the biggest, oldest trees that play a nurturing role. Their roots collect water and make it available to shallow-rooted seedlings.**

Environmental Life and Legacy of Stewart Udall," at Fuller Lodge on Sept. 5, during the first major rain of the season. Just as the rain renewed the town, this book can reinvigorate our spirits by reminding us of the era of literature, altruistic leaders creating a government that served its current citizens while protecting the lives yet to be born.

A major figure in American conservation, Udall was a descendent of Mormon pioneers, a decorated World War II pilot, outdoorsman, presidential confidant, prolific writer, and poet. Perhaps no other public official has ever had as much success in environmental protection, natural-resource conservation, and outdoor-recreation creation as Udall. As U.S. Secretary of the Interior under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, he helped create the Wilderness Act, Endangered Species Preservation Act, and Wild and Scenic Rivers System, along with establishing dozens of new national parks and wildlife refuges. Udall also spent significant time in the 1980s and 90s defending Navajo uranium miners. Some of you older Sierrans may have worked with him on conservation issues after he moved to Northern New Mexico. He has a connection with Los Alamos in that he was interested in LANL's Hot Dry Rock geothermal initiative.

Too much of what today's youth learn about current government and so-called leadership persuades them that everything is broken and their only future is dystopian annihilation. "With Distance in His Eyes," however, is a primer on how to work together for the greater good that includes not only the human species, but the entire ecosystem. It is the perfect gift for inspiring both environmentalist and nihilistic gamer. I enthusiastically recommend "With Distance in His Eyes." We, by Udall's example, can learn to save the world.



Michelle Christenson

## Students progress on the bag

With school back in session, the LAHS EcoClub has reinvigorated its efforts to reduce the use of the single-use-plastic shopping bag in Los Alamos. The EcoClub:

- Presented at the Environmental Sustainability Board, received positive feedback and support;
- Were interviewed by the *Daily Post*, were on the front page of the newspaper, received both support and backlash on various social media sites;
- Received signatures from both voters and voters-to-be on our petition for a plastic-bag fee at the PEEC Bear Festival;
- Received many signatures for the petition from many high school students at the school's Club Day.

As of right now, we are continuing to do research to gain more knowledge about our opposition and we are coming up with more ideas about how to get the word out about our petition and about how harmful plastic bags are to the environment

— By Risa Bridge

## Meetings and events

The Pajarito Group is partnering with PEEC, 2600 Canyon Road, for our Sierra Club Presentations. Please watch your emails for announcements on future talks. In addition, are you interested in giving a presentation? Have you taken a journey, photographed flowers, collared elk, recorded whales, lobbied Congress? The Pajarito Group has many talented people doing remarkable things. If you are interested in giving a presentation, contact Jody Benson, [echidnaejb@gmail.com](mailto:echidnaejb@gmail.com).

Next presentation:

### Black Bears, Wildfire, and Forest Restoration Treatments in the Southwest Jemez Mountains

7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 19.

Dr. James Cain USGS, New Mexico Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Ecology, New Mexico State University

Decades of fire suppression, logging, and overgrazing have altered the conditions of Southwestern forests, resulting in degraded habitat conditions for wildlife and more frequent and severe wildfires. These changes have resulted in an increased need for forest-restoration treatments to restore historic forest structure, plant species composition and fire regimes. Cain will present his research

The talk is hosted by the Northern New Mexico and Pajarito Groups of Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter.

## Pajarito Group Directory

<http://pajarito.riograndesierraclub.org/node/13>

### Executive Committee

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Photo courtesy Cecilia Chavez Beltrán

**Bosquitos is a youth-oriented group learning about Albuquerque's Bosque and the animals and plants that live there. Everyone is welcome to join Bosquitos events, including two this fall.**

## Bosquitos are busy bees

By Sarita Streng

The Bosquitos are the youth-centered group of the Bosque Action Team with a mission to learn about Albuquerque's Bosque, the animals and plants that live there, and ways to take care of the Bosque and our earth as a precious natural space.

During the spring and early summer we held three outings. In March we visited Valle del Oro for the "Birding and Breakfast" program. We had a wonderful time eating a breakfast catered by students from Atrisco Heritage Academy. Then we went out to the refuge with guides Teresa Skiba and bird guide Becky. We saw a wonderful variety of wildlife and birds including starlings, red-tail hawks, killdeer, grackles, meadowlarks, Canada geese, sandhill cranes, kestrels, bald eagles, junkos, crows, ravens, and a coyote. We observed skunk tracks and looked at crayfish habitat. We learned a bit about the different types of calls that birds make including alarm calls, location calls, and territory calls. Teresa and Becky

also helped us learn how to use binoculars.

In April we visited the Rio Grande in Albuquerque with civil engineer Aubrey Harris. Aubrey's walk and talk focused on learning what features of the Bosque are human-made, "natural," or a combination. She also helped us identify basic features of the Bosque that engineers consider when dealing with river management issues.

Aubrey helped us learn how to define what a watershed is through observation, question, and answer. We learned about the history of jetty jacks and how before the jetty jacks the river moved around a lot more. We learned about how levees are built. We discussed the complicated interactions between people wanting water rights for different uses and also how river management issues and human use affect other species. At the end of the walk, younger Bosquitos did water and sediment experiments and watched water flow.

In June we had an outing to Albuquerque's Westside Open Space, where we met with Open Space staff and

Anita Amstutz, who represented the group Think Like a Bee. We learned about bee behavior, bee social structure, and interesting facts about bees such as that they have five eyes and that there are about 1,000 types of native bees. We sampled different types of honey. Kids participated in a scavenger hunt to identify pollinator friendly plants. We watched "Silence of the Bees" and discussed ways to help bees, including planting without pesticides, asking our city councilors to not use bee-killing pesticides in our parks and city areas, and planting bee-friendly plants and trees.

This fall we have two outings scheduled. We will visit the Albuquerque Biopark Zoo on Oct. 6 and learn about primates and forest ecology with new Sierra Club staff member Brittany Fallon. At 6 p.m. Nov. 24 we will watch the film "The Right to be Wild" about Mexican wolves with an introduction and Q&A with Dave Parsons. For more information about our group, please contact Sarita Streng at saritastreng@yahoo.com.

## Military outings program still serving

By Terry Owen  
Military Outings program

The Sierra Club Military Outdoors program is here to serve our brothers and sisters who served our nation.

It is led by military veterans Terry Owen and John Link, who know and respect the extraordinary wild lands in the Land of Enchantment. Our goal is to ensure that service members, veterans and their families have the skills, exposure, knowledge and confidence to access the great outdoors. They understand that time spent outdoors in nature can help quiet the mind and heal the spirit. Moreover, in our accelerating society where we're plugged in 24 hours a day, spending time in the outdoors has been found to be beneficial to everyone.

The Military Outdoors program conducts outings of various lengths and difficulties monthly, and everyone is

welcome to join. Terry notes, "on average just over one-third of our outings participants are associated with the military. The remaining two-thirds are people who just want to get a healing dose of nature. John and I guide them into the wilderness and we can quickly see the transformation in their demeanor, and their stress level as it melts away. Soon everyone is talking, laughing and enjoying one another's company on the trail."

If you're interested in getting a dose of nature, you're invited to join us on a Military Outdoors program outing. This quarter, several easy outings are planned that are also handicap-accessible. You'll find them on Meetup and at [www.riograndesierraclub.org](http://www.riograndesierraclub.org). Contact Terry Owen, [teowen@q.com](mailto:teowen@q.com) or 505-301-4349, for more information, or if you're a military veteran interested in becoming a Sierra Club outings leader.

## Hikes and Events

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trip. Learn about how nature has left its fingerprints on the city. Meet at the Albuquerque Museum Lobby. \$4 for seniors and \$5 for all others. Children over 10 accompanied by parent or legal guardian OK. Certified service animals only. Contact by Nov. 8 to RSVP and obtain additional information Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, [teowen@q.com](mailto:teowen@q.com).

**Saturday, Nov. 10: Cabezon Peak:** moderate hike around the base of the almost vertical volcanic plug. Will first walk up to the basalt plug, then walk around it (one part is on big boulders). Great hike, gorgeous views. Additional information: Odile, 505-433-4692, [odile@pitot.org](mailto:odile@pitot.org).

**Saturday, Nov. 24: Showing of "The Right to Be Wild"** about Mexican wolves and Q&A with wildlife biologist Dave Parsons. Doors open at 6 p.m. with slices of pizza for sale and the film will start at 6:30. From 1990-99 Parsons led the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's effort to restore Mexican gray wolves to the wild. The evening will also include kids' activities along with the film, which is about 40 minutes long. Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard Drive SE.

### December

**Saturday Dec. 1: Petroglyphs at Piedras Marcadas Canyon Trail:** off Golf Course Road at Jill Patricia Street. Easy to moderate in volcanic rocky areas. 9 to noon Children OK. \$2 parking fee. Contact Facebook page: Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico, Paulina, 505-967-2477.

**Saturday, Dec. 22: Solstice petroglyph hike** along Rinconada Canyon Loop Trail in Petroglyph National Monument, where there are about 300 petroglyphs to be viewed. Easy hike: 2.2 miles and 250-foot altitude change. The outing will start at 9:30 a.m., last about 2 hours and include information on the petroglyphs as well as some gentle yoga. OK to bring dogs on leash and children over the age of 10 if accompanied by a legal guardian or parent. To RSVP and obtain additional information, contact NLT Dec. 20: June Parsons, 832-723-4533, [comicsilver@gmail.com](mailto:comicsilver@gmail.com), or Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, [teowen@q.com](mailto:teowen@q.com).

**Cross-country ski and snowshoe outings** will be scheduled for December. See Meetup ([www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings](http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings)), Trail Mix emails or [riograndesierraclub.org](http://riograndesierraclub.org)/outings for updates.

## Training for outings leaders

If you love the outdoors and you want to share that love with others, or if it's approaching four or more years since you completed Outings Leader Training, we want you! The Rio Grande Chapter will be offering **Outings Leader Training (OLT-101) from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 3**, at the Albuquerque office.

This training is required for those wishing to begin leading outings, and is also required for existing outings leaders if they're approaching four years since they last attended. This refresher is required to retain their certification.

The requirements to become a certified outings leader are:

- Be a current member of the Sierra Club and at least 18 years old.
- Complete the Sierra Club Outings Leader Application, available online.
- Complete first-aid and CPR certification classes.

- Complete the Basic Sierra Club Outing Leader Training, OLT 101.

- Complete a provisional hike with a certified outings leader.

This training opportunity will provide you with the tools and information you need to lead a safe, inspiring and fun outing.

Attendees will receive a resource packet that includes the Outing Leader Handbook, updated forms and ideas for planning your own outings. It's also a great opportunity to meet others that share your passion for preserving our natural world.

Upon completion of the Outings Leader requirements, attendees will have the opportunity to plan and lead at least two outings within 12 months.

For further information, contact Terry Owen at 505-301-4349, [teowen@q.com](mailto:teowen@q.com).

### Outings updates

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

**Know before you go:** For status of fire restrictions and burn bans across New Mexico, visit [firerestrictions.us/nm](http://firerestrictions.us/nm). Updates are also in our weekly email — 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.

# October-December outings

## October

**Saturday, Oct. 6: 9 a.m., at White Mesa Bike/Hiking Trails parking area.** White Mesa is a bizarre, lovely and fun place to hike, due to rocky outcrops and exotic colors. Here the geology of the land is on full display! Moderate hike. The 3.5-mile trail is in full sun, so be prepared with sunscreen and water. Contact Carrie Ann at [drinville@hotmail.com](mailto:drinville@hotmail.com).

**Saturday, Oct. 6: Outing to the Albuquerque BioPark Zoo** with Dr. Brittany Fallon, 2 p.m. We will visit the zoo with Rio Grande Chapter's Brittany Fallon to learn about primate behavior. Fallon is a primatologist and UNM research assistant professor who has researched chimpanzees, both in captivity and the wild, for 11 years. She will lead the Bosquitos through the primate exhibits in the Albuquerque Zoo, and discuss the different types of forest each species lives in and how they compare to the forests of New Mexico. We will visit orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees, siamangs, and lemurs on the trip. Please meet at the entrance to the zoo. We are asking that participants pay their entrance fee. However, if that is a hardship for you, please contact Sarita Streng and 505-288-8713 and we may be able to provide some financial assistance.

**Saturday, Oct. 6: Moderate hike along part of the Chama River Trail:** this hike is just over the Colorado border above Chama. It is a 10-mile round-trip, out-and-back with 900 feet of elevation gain. Hiking is both on and off trail. This is some of the most beautiful country in the area with fall colors and waterfalls. With stream crossings, bring a pair of water shoes. Also, for the stream crossings, hiking poles are helpful. This will be a long day with the nearly 120-mile drive to the trailhead. Please see the Northern New Mexico Group's Meetup pages for sign-up and more details: [www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/](http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/) Alan Shapiro, [nm5s@yahoo.com](mailto:nm5s@yahoo.com).

**Saturday, Oct. 13: Moderate hike in the Sandias:** up 3 Guns and down Embudo Trails. Car left at bottom of Embudo Trail. Round trip about 5 miles and elevation change 5,300 feet. Gorgeous views. Additional information: Odile, 505-433-4692, [odile@pitot.org](mailto:odile@pitot.org).

**Saturday, Oct. 13: Moderate/strenuous hike to Nambé Lake:** this 6.8-mile out-and-back hike climbs about 1,900 feet starting at 10,250 feet. This is the closest alpine lake to Santa Fe and has stunning scenery. The steep climb is worth it. Details on [www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/](http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/) Call Robert Reifel at 505-690-6169 to sign up.

**Saturday, Oct. 20: Easy/moderate hike along the Alamo Vista trail** from the Aspen Vista Picnic Ground above Santa Fe. This is a short but steep 2.5-mile round-trip hike through aspen trees up to the top of the Santa Fe Ski Basin's quad chairlift, offering views and colors. Please see the Northern Group's Meetup pages for sign-up and more details. [www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/](http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/) Alan Shapiro, [nm5s@yahoo.com](mailto:nm5s@yahoo.com)

**Saturday, Oct. 20: Docent-led tour of the Art Museum Sculpture Garden** at 9:45 a.m. Sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome. Easy, handicap-accessible outing: less than a half-mile round-trip.



Top photo by Cecilia Chavez-Beltran; bottom photo by Laurence Gibson.

**Top: Participants enjoy a Spanish-language Excursiones outing at Valle del Oro National Wildlife Refuge on Sept 15. Above: A Sierra Club participant on a five-day hike in the Middle Fork of the Gila in September. See the listings for more outings like these!**

Enjoy the aesthetic integration of art with the Sandia mountains as the backdrop. Meet at the Albuquerque Museum Lobby. \$4 for seniors and \$5 for all others. Children over 10 accompanied by parent or legal guardian are OK. Certified service animals only. Contact NLT by Oct. 18 to RSVP and obtain additional information. Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, [teowen@q.com](mailto:teowen@q.com).

**Saturday, Oct. 20: Strenuous hike to Deception Peak.** This 6-mile hike climbs about 2,500 feet starting at 10,250 feet to reach our shortest route from Santa Fe to get above tree line and super views. Details on [www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/](http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/). Call Robert Reifel at 505-690-6169 to sign up.

**Saturday, Oct. 27: Petroglyphs at Boca Negra Canyon Trail** (off Unser Boulevard, one-fourth mile north of Montaña

Road NW). Easy walk in volcanic rocky areas. 9-11 a.m. We will see petroglyphs, flowers and animals that live in the area. Children OK. \$2 parking fee. Contact FB: Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico, Paulina 505-967-2477.

## November

**Saturday, Nov. 3: Moderate loop hike at Canjilon Lakes:** this 8-mile hike follows the Continental Divide Trail part of the way. About 800 feet of elevation gain. All hiking on trail with beautiful meadows and super views as we hike along the edge of this escarpment and summit Canjilon Mountain. This is a 90-mile drive to the trailhead, so a long day. Please see the Northern Group's Meetup pages for sign-up and more details. [www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/](http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/) Alan Shapiro, [nm5s@yahoo.com](mailto:nm5s@yahoo.com)

## 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. You can also visit the Northern New Mexico Group Meetup page for updated outings: [www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/](http://www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/).

**Saturday, Nov. 10: Petroglyphs at Rinconada Canyon Trail.** Meet at trailhead parking lot (intersection of Unser Boulevard NW at St. Joseph Ave). Easy to moderate but in volcanic rocky areas. Children OK. \$2 parking fee. 9 a.m. to noon. Contact Facebook page: Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico, Paulina, 505-967-2477.

**Saturday, Nov. 10: 10:45 a.m. Docent tour of Albuquerque Old Town.** Sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome. Handicap-accessible outing rated as easy: less than one mile round-

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