



Climate shift

Southwest utilities abandon coal and make major wind and solar investments even while political progress on the environment stalls



Photo: Evalyn Bemis, www.evalynbemisphotography.com
Opposing sides face off outside the New Mexico capitol at a rally calling for protection of Mexican wolves. To find out which environmental bills succeeded and which stalled at the 2017 legislative session, see Pages 8 and 9.



Photo courtesy San Juan Citizens Alliance and Eco Flight
New Mexico utility PNM announced in March that closing coal-fired San Juan Generating Station, above, in 2022 would likely benefit customers, though the company has not made a final decision yet. In February, utilities announced plans to close Navajo Generating Station, the West's largest coal plant, by 2019, also because it is becoming too expensive. See Page 3.

Kit Carson aims for 100% solar on sunny days

Kit Carson Rural Electric Cooperative announced plans for dozens of 1-megawatt solar installations around its Northern New Mexico service territory over the next six years. The co-op hopes to provide 100% of its energy from the sun during sunny days by 2022. **Page 5.**



© Jennifer Esperanza


New Mexico, Texas slated for 1.2 GW of wind

Southwest Public Service's parent company will invest \$1.6 billion in Roosevelt County, N.M., and Hale County, Texas, for wind farms that it estimates will save customers billions over the next 30 years. **Page 3.**



Gamesa

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More inside:

Drilling, legislation for Chaco

BLM goes ahead with auctioning land in greater Chaco Canyon for oil and gas drilling, but legislators have asked for the agency to consult with tribes before moving forward. **Page 13**

Hope for defending climate-saving methane rules

The U.S. House has voted to kill money-saving BLM rules that reduce methane waste from the oil and gas industry, but the Senate may not have the votes to revoke the safeguards, thanks to your activism. **Page 6**

Sierra Club intervenes in PNM rate case

The utility is asking for a 14% rate hike in New Mexico. **Page 7**

More: El Paso Group: Page 10. **Central Group:** Page 11. **Zero Waste Team** relaunches: Page 12. **Pajarito Group:** Page 13.

Hikes: Pages 15 and 16

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Volunteer opportunities
We are looking for volunteers to help with our “Action Training — If we organize we win” on April 23. Please see our volunteer form online to sign up. We’re also looking for new outings leaders. We’ll hold a first-aid training on May 6 from 9 a.m. to 3:30. Please email Margaret deLong at mardel18@aol.com.

Coal reels as wind and solar rise

Biggest coal plant in West and biggest in NM may both shut by 2023, while renewables get boost

By Mona Blaber
Chapter communications coordinator

A seismic shift for energy and the climate has hit the Southwest, and New Mexico in particular.

On March 16, Public Service Company of New Mexico announced that it would likely benefit customer bills to retire New Mexico's San Juan Generating Station in 2022, when coal and ownership contracts expire. PNM said it had not made a final decision on the plant's future.

That announcement came less than a month after owners of Arizona's Navajo Generating Station, the largest coal plant in the West, announced the plant will cease operations in 2019, 25 years ahead of schedule.

The coal plants join others around the country on the ropes as natural gas and renewable energy have become cheaper than coal. Xcel Energy says it will save customers billions by investing in 1.2 gigawatts of wind in eastern New Mexico and west Texas (see story at right). And Taos-based electric cooperative Kit Carson plans to invest in 30 MW of solar in 30 locations in northern New Mexico (see Page 5).

Studies have found that even before coal was overtaken as the lowest-price source of electricity, its economic benefits were far outweighed by its costs, including pollution cleanup and health damages. Some community members living near the plant, which neighbors the Navajo Nation, have expressed that concern.

"Coal is a dying industry and has had significant impacts on the Navajo Nation for over 50 years. Enough is enough!" said Colleen Cooley, Diné citizen and advocate for sustainable solutions. "It is imperative for our Nation to transition to a healthier, sustainable economy now."

Scientists estimate that we must reduce greenhouse emissions by 50% by 2030 to avoid the worst consequences of climate change, which could include devastating economic and human losses. Closing San Juan by 2023 would mean cleaner air, lives saved and significant progress in protecting future generations, but it would also mean ending the 286 jobs at the plant and around 355 at San Juan Mine.



Above: Workers pour a foundation at El Cabo Wind Farm, a 298-megawatt facility under construction in Torrance County. Avangrid Renewables said the project is expected to create 400 jobs at its peak this year.

Xcel Energy announced plans in March for Sagamore Wind Farm, which, at 522 megawatts, would generate enough power for about 194,000 homes yearly.

Photo courtesy Avangrid

Major coal plants likely to retire

San Juan Generating Station

Waterflow, N.M. (near Farmington)
1,683 megawatts
Possible closure in 2022; plant operator and part-owner PNM is conducting a 20-year planning process.

Navajo Generating Station

Page, Ariz.
2,250 megawatts
Slated for closure in 2019; its owners announced in February that buying gas off the spot market is cheaper than operating the plant.

\$1.6B for wind in NM, Texas

By Mona Blaber

Xcel Energy, the parent company of New Mexico utility Southwestern Public Service, announced on March 21 that it plans to spend \$1.6 billion on 1.23 gigawatts of wind energy in New Mexico and West Texas.

The Sagamore Wind Project, to be built in Roosevelt County, about 20 miles south of Portales, would be by far the largest wind facility in the state at 522 megawatts. Xcel also plans a 478-MW plant near Lubbock, Texas.

The company said the New Mexico facility would create about 300 jobs. It will lease land from private ranches and other landowners.

"The Sagamore Wind Project will be the largest wind farm in the state, resulting in hundreds of clean-energy jobs in rural New Mexico and more affordable electric bills for consumers," said Sen. Martin Heinrich. "This project and the jobs it will create in rural New Mexico are precisely why I worked so hard to pass the wind production tax credit."

"We can shave \$2.8 billion off the costs of

generating electricity with more wind, and these savings will take a bite out of future increases. Put simply, wind energy is now the best deal as we move forward in securing energy resources for the future," Xcel said in a statement.

Xcel said it wants to make wind 35% of its total energy mix by 2021. On the downside, Southwestern Public Service is proposing to charge its New Mexico solar customers a monthly backup fee, making it harder for these customers to pay off their investment and discouraging rooftop solar, which utilities often see as competition. The coalition Sierra Club belongs to is fighting that charge at the Public Regulation Commission.

Another large wind farm planned for New Mexico, the 298-MW El Cabo facility in Torrance County, recently resumed construction. Avangrid Renewables, which is building El Cabo, said it has put a number of local businesses to work and expects to make a \$1.1 million payment in lieu of taxes to Torrance County this year. El Cabo will lease from local property owners and state trust land.

"We must take this economic shift seriously and truly think about how we can support workers who have dedicated their lives to keeping our lights on and the communities that have lived in the shadow of pollution," Bill Corcoran, regional director for Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign, said. "If we don't prepare for the future, it will be their families who carry the burden."

PNM's analysis is part of a required public planning process called Integrated Resource Planning, which lays

out the utility's plans for the next 20 years. Details of public meetings on the plan, which is in process, are at www.pnm.com/irp.

"PNM's announcement is a clear sign that coal is too costly. Now is the time to focus on an economic transition for the hard-working families in Northwest New Mexico. The Four Corners holds vast solar potential and a massive transmission network that can create clean-energy jobs providing affordable, reliable energy to the region. This will require

immediate and thoughtful action from PNM, the state, local government, and other local stakeholders," said Camilla Feibelman, Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter director.

PNM had already planned to shut two of San Juan's four coal-burning units by December 2017.

PNM's replacement power for those units is mostly existing nuclear energy, natural gas and an increased share of San Juan's remaining units, plus 40 MW of solar, but the company said closing the remaining

Weigh in on San Juan Mine

By Bill Corcoran

The federal Office of Surface Mining is conducting public open houses as it develops an Environmental Impact Statement for San Juan Mine.

The hearings are a result of a failure by the federal government to provide a meaningful opportunity for public input on a plan approving below-ground mining at the San Juan Mine. The government failed to meaningfully analyze environmental-justice impacts on fenceline communities as well as impacts on water quality, air quality, climate, and wildlife.

This is the public's opportunity to ensure the government hears from us, analyzes the impacts of the mine, and addresses the new economic picture emerging for the troubled plant that burns the coal from this mine. The plant is not economic for customers after 2022, and we need to ensure that the already mined lands are properly reclaimed if the plant were to retire in 2022.

The mine has struggled for many years and the quality of the coal has declined, adding to the economic pressures on the mine and the plant.

Public sessions on San Juan Mine Environmental Impact Statement:

1. 5-8 p.m. Monday, April 10: Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, 2401 12th St. NW., Albuquerque.
2. 5-8 p.m. Wednesday, April 12, Shiprock High School, Shiprock, N.M.
3. 5-8 p.m. Thursday, April 13, Farmington City Civic Center, 200 West Arrington St., Farmington.

units would be an opportunity to add renewable energy.

These events demonstrate that even while President Donald Trump caters to coal executives while ignoring the catastrophic human and economic risks of climate change, coal's decline may be impossible to reverse.

In an analysis on the Navajo Generating Station closure, the *Los Angeles Times* said: "The environmental rules that Trump denounces as the culprit for the rapid decline of coal are not the problem in Arizona — even at this plant that releases more greenhouse gases than almost any other in the country. The problem is old-fashioned competition."

Lots to do, and we're up to the task

Your work is helping New Mexico shape a better future.

You have not stopped, especially after your work helped to ensure that New Mexico did not vote for Donald Trump and we ended the control of the New Mexico House by right-wing allies of Gov. Susana Martinez.

I am always grateful as I write this piece for our newsletter for the amazing work of our Club members and staff. Thank you all.

New Mexico and our country are worth fighting for. New Mexicans stood up to Gov. Martinez and her anti-environment policies. It has strength-

David Coss
Rio Grande
Chapter chair



Sierra Club volunteers played a big part in lobbying environmental legislation at the New Mexico Roundhouse, where advocates successfully blocked bad legislation but ran up against roadblocks to getting positive bills passed.

Photo of Land, Water and Wildlife Day participants by Dave McGahey

of bad legislation, we know we have more work to do for a Legislature that is accountable to New Mexico's environmental quality and future generations' ability to thrive. Just stopping bad legislation is no longer enough.

Our fight for public lands, for clean renewable energy, for humane, scientific wildlife policies, for clean water and air for all are fights for environmental justice.

Our fight has joined us with new allies in labor, immigrant

rights, faith and local communities. We stand with them for safe working conditions and equal rights, including the right to a clean and healthy environment.

Sierra Club members and our allies have taken on the anti-environment and anti-health policies of Gov. Martinez. She is not reacting well, but we won't stop. Now we must confront the federal gutting of the Environmental Protection Agency, the boondoggle wall on the border (just as bad as the boondoggle assault on the Gila River), assaults on the Endangered Species Act and so many more Trumpian threats to New Mexico and the Rio Grande.

We are working with our allies and broadly integrating our work into the struggle for environmental and social justice in New Mexico and the Rio Grande Valley (both sides of the border). Thank you so much for the work you do.

Volunteerism, membership skyrocket

By Mona Blaber
Chapter communications
coordinator

The election of President Donald Trump, his anti-environment Cabinet appointees and a Congress insistent on unraveling climate, water, wildlife and lands protections have been frightening, but they have unleashed a powerful citizen determination.

Membership in the Rio Grande Chapter (New Mexico and El Paso) has increased from 8,000 people to more than 9,000 just since the elections.

More importantly, member engagement has surged, as have inquiries from those who want to know how to get active to protect the environment.

Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman led post-election workshops on how to make a difference under a Trump presidency, and the chapter continues to provide a wide array of opportunities to participate.

Before the recent New Mexico legislative session, the chapter held workshops around the state to educate citizens on how to lobby at the Roundhouse. More than 300 people attended.

A core group of more than 700 signed up to take daily actions, calling or emailing key legislators and attending committee hearings during the legislative session, which ran from Jan. 17 to March 18.

Lynne Fischer, one of the most active Sierra Club volunteers during the session, said she wanted to get involved two years ago but didn't know how:

"I didn't know my way around

ened us to continue the work as we fight the disastrous policies of President Trump.

The Legislature has presented a budget that attempts to reverse the severe austerity our governor's policies have imposed on New Mexicans. I welcome their efforts to raise needed revenue, including the gas tax; I support the efforts to stand up for our

public schools and our public-school teachers; the raise in the minimum wage is long overdue. The Sierra Club urges Gov. Martinez to sign the budget, which was passed in a bipartisan fashion.

But we were disappointed in the lack of new environmental legislation. While our allies in the Legislature blocked a lot



Above: The Rio Grande Chapter Legislative Team and some volunteer lobbyists broke for lunch near the end of the session. Seated in back are Legislative Team co-chair Patricia Cardona, chapter lobbyist Dan Lorimier and Legislative co-chair Melinda Smith.

At right: Former Republican U.S. Rep. Pete McCloskey and Charles Fox wait to advocate for SB 268, a bill prohibiting coyote-killing contests.

Photos by Evalyn Bemis,
www.evalynbemisphotography.com

Above right: Desiree Allen took the Rail Runner with her daughter, Sierra, to a Roundhouse rally.

Bottom right: Sister Joan Brown of Interfaith Power and Light promotes methane reductions.



Lorimier and volunteer Legislative Team co-chairs Patricia Cardona and Melinda Smith made themselves available at the Roundhouse to walk around with volunteers and provide tips on the best time to catch your legislator, proper protocol when giving a public comment at a committee hearing and any other questions.

Whether it's doing office work on Office Wednesdays or meeting with your legislators or offering a special skill, you can join the hundreds of others who have volunteered. Contact camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org to join the fun!

the Roundhouse (I didn't even know where to park!), I didn't believe that I had enough 'expertise' to address a legislator, and I didn't know the legislative process, so didn't know where to begin," Fischer said.

"This year I was looking for some information on bills that Sierra Club would be support-

ing (for another organization) and reached out to (Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter lobbyist) Dan Lorimier. Dan shared with me a copy of his bill summary and mentioned the Monday-night Legislative Team meetings. I went to my first one and was hooked. The team was so helpful and filled in details to all

the questions I had, including where to park! Also, the email action alerts were super-informative, timely, concise — and made making phone calls easy. That information and knowing that there was support from the team gave me the confidence to attend the legislative session this time around."

Taos co-op aims high with solar



Photos by William Brown

Kit Carson Electric Co-op's community-solar canopy at Taos Charter School came online in 2012 and has an output of 98.7 kilowatts. The co-op last year withdrew from its contract with Tri-Star Generation, which limited local generation to 5%, and is now pursuing more local solar projects.

30 projects planned over six years to save money, use storage

Kit Carson aims to make north-central New Mexico service area 100% solar on sunny days

**By Bob Bresnahan
Kit Carson board,
Renewable Taos**

Taos-based Kit Carson Electric Cooperative and Guzman Renewable Energy Partners will build 30 one-megawatt solar arrays around Kit Carson's service area over the next six years.

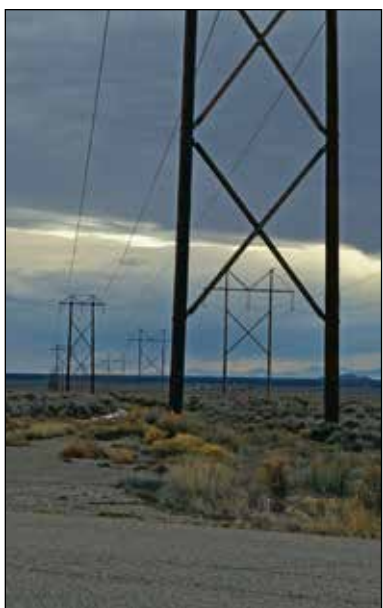
Kit Carson CEO Luis Reyes and Guzman CEO Chris Riley say that on a sunny day all electricity provided by Kit Carson will come from the sun by the fall of 2022.

Reaching the 100% daytime milestone is an impressive goal, especially since Kit Carson and Guzman's plan is to accomplish it exclusively with locally produced energy.

Guzman has been Kit Carson's wholesale electricity provider since July 2016. When solar proposals began rolling in to Kit Carson headquarters for under 5 cents a kilowatt-hour last fall, Guzman signed on as partner in the solar project. Added to Kit Carson's existing arrays, the locally



Above: A poster advertises some of the solar arrays already generating power for Kit Carson Co-op members. Planned projects will bring the solar share of the co-op's load to around 25%.



Left: Tri-State no longer provides electricity for Kit Carson but will continue to supply transmission.

generated solar share of Kit Carson's annual electricity load will be around 25%.

Guzman will provide financing for the project and manage construction of the arrays. Kit Carson will execute power-purchase agreements for the electricity produced. Kit Carson will also help site the arrays and assist with permitting, interconnection to the Kit

Carson grid and coordination with transmission companies and balancing authorities, as well as provide maintenance. Solar installers from the Kit Carson service area will participate in construction and future expansion.

A notable feature of the plan is battery storage sited at the arrays in the later stages of the project. While

hitting the summer daytime peak demand from Kit Carson, there will be periods when the arrays produce more energy than required. Excess energy will be stored in batteries and dispatched after sunset.

There will be design, permitting, construction, maintenance, management and other jobs targeted for local people throughout the six-year duration of the plan.

The Kit Carson solar project does raise questions about other New Mexico utilities. The New Mexico Renewable Portfolio Standard calls for investor-owned utilities to provide 20% of their power from renewable sources by 2020.

Electric cooperatives are excused from the 20% goal even though the regions they serve have the most to gain from local production of energy.

It's clear that the New Mexico Legislature needs to revise the Renewable Portfolio Standard with tougher requirements, support for rural cooperatives, and stricter compliance and enforcement measures.

Bob Bresnahan is a founder of Renewable Taos, Inc. He was elected to the board of Kit Carson Electric Cooperative in May 2016. You can reach him at bresnahan.bob@gmail.com or 575-776-5007.

Kit Carson contract sets precedent

**By Bob Bresnahan
Renewable Taos,
Kit Carson Co-op board member**

Important things are happening in north-central New Mexico. Kit Carson Electric Cooperative successfully withdrew from its 40-year contract with Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association last summer. A little background explains why this is such a momentous event.

The vast majority of the nation's approximately 900 rural electric cooperatives receive their electricity from transmission and generation organizations like Tri-State. The co-ops are tied to these organizations by long-term contracts that provide security for billion-dollar loans used to construct central power plants. Until recently, these plants were coal-fired and among the worst emitters of carbon dioxide and other toxic materials.

This business model has become harmful, not just to the environment and public health, but to the economic well-being of the co-ops and the rural areas they serve. The transmission and generation companies often oppose wind and solar energy, particularly distributed generation sited in local service areas. Ties to coal may saddle them with stranded assets, resulting in steadily increasing wholesale prices.

Kit Carson has been a burr in Tri-State's saddle for 16 years. It opposed all of Tri-State's frequent rate increases and began to win support from other New Mexico cooperatives in 2013. That rate increase was held up in the Public Regulation Commission hearings for two years.

Tri-State initially asked for more than \$100 million in withdrawal fees but eventually accepted an exit fee of \$37 million. That price included substantial assets.

In 2016, with the help of Guzman Renewable Energy Partners, Kit Carson broke with Tri-State. Guzman is Kit Carson's new wholesale supplier, and their contract promises to save Kit Carson customers well over \$50 million in wholesale energy costs during its 10-year lifetime.

Guzman doesn't own generation or transmission facilities. It purchases electricity using forward and spot transactions and delivers it to the Four Corners transmission hub. Kit Carson then purchases transmission from PNM and Tri-State to deliver electricity to its Los Cordovas substation. From there it is distributed to Kit Carson's members. Since Guzman is unburdened by obsolete coal plants, the bottom line is cheaper wholesale electricity.

Because of its low costs, Guzman was able to pay Kit Carson's exit fee and roll its retirement into its cost of energy. When coupled with transmission charges, the total cost to Kit Carson is the same price charged by Tri-State. After six years, Guzman will recover the exit fee, and Kit Carson's wholesale cost will drop to Guzman's normal rate, 45% less than Tri-State's. The deal is even better considering Tri-State raises its wholesale rate by 3-4% annually.

Hope for slashing methane waste

By Camilla Feibelman
Chapter director

Common-sense, climate-protecting methane rules have been targeted as the next victim of an obscure tool that President Trump and congressional Republicans have used to revoke stream protections and other air and water safeguards.

But the Sierra Club and our allies are building bipartisan opposition to this effort to appease the oil and gas industry at tragic cost.

You may already know that methane is a colorless, odorless substance that is also the main component of natural gas. It is also a potent global-warming gas that oil and gas drilling sites accidentally leak and intentionally vent and flare. The Obama administration proposed a comprehensive set of good-neighbor, job-creating, royalty-increasing rules, some of which have already taken effect.

Last year the Environmental Protection Agency finalized rules to capture methane on new and modified facilities. Later in the year, the Bureau of Land Management finalized rules for both existing and new sources on all public lands. To meet our Paris commitments, we'd hoped to see a third rule from the EPA finalized for existing sources that would not be limited to public lands. These three rules would have worked in concert not just to protect the climate but to prevent the outright waste of a publicly held natural resource. The following is an update from Lena Moffitt, native New Mexican and the Sierra Club's



Photo by Camilla Feibelman

Rep. Georgene Louis spoke at a Roundhouse press conference about the benefits to New Mexico of BLM rules reducing methane waste.

national Dirty Fuels Campaign director:

“Unfortunately, our goal of securing EPA standards to curb methane pollution from existing sources in the oil and gas industry is now off the table.

Instead, we'll now have to spend significant time and resources defending the rules we did secure from attacks in Congress and the courts.

The Congressional Review Act allows Congress to vote to revoke major regulations if the vote occurs within 60 days from when the rule was published in the federal register. That means the BLM rule could be voted on under the Congressional Review Act (as the rule was finalized in December). The BLM methane rule CRA was filed on Jan. 30, with a vote expected in the Senate any time before late May.

If a rule is revoked by Congressional Review Act, agencies are permanently banned from creating “substantially similar” regulations.

We have been preparing for these fights for the past two years, with our lobbyists and state-based organizers activating the champions we have cultivated to stand strong and defend these rules. One testament to this organizing is a letter our senators, Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, along with Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, sent to their Senate colleagues in early January urging them to defend the BLM methane rule and vote no on any CRA attack.

The vote, if it happens, will be close, but if we are able to encourage Democrats to stand together and convince at least three Republicans to vote with us, we can win, and so far it seems that the votes aren't there, so the CRA hasn't been brought to a vote. But keeping the vote from happening requires strong grassroots pressure, direct inside-the-beltway advocacy, and robust coordination with the full environmental community.

Even if we are not success-

ful in defending these rules, we must make these kinds of rollbacks as painful as possible for those seeking to undermine our country's public health and environment. We must highlight the widespread support for these safeguards that we have built up over the past two years, and overwhelming support for clean air and clean water. Simply put, we can't take this backward movement of our country lying down.

We will also defend the rules in court — we have already filed in defense of both the EPA and BLM rules against attacks from several states and industry groups. We just received a positive ruling denying the preliminary injunction that industry sought against the BLM rule, so that rule has been allowed to enter into force.

We will continue working with states, including New Mexico, to move forward with strong state-based existing-source standards.”

EPA protects us; let's protect it

By Denise Fort
Chapter Energy chair

President Donald Trump's budget represents an unprecedented attack on the agencies that protect our environment, and, perhaps more ominously, on science. We need to communicate to everyone — the media, elected officials, civic groups, friends in other states — the reasons a strong EPA is important to our health and the planet.

The facts: the proposed budget would slash spending at EPA by more than 30%. It would also slash spending at science-based organizations that provide critically important information about health risks, the effects of climate change, etc.

There are two great new groups founded by former EPA staff. Check out saveepa.wordpress.com for up-to-date information on what the cuts could mean. One example:

“1. The Trump administration has proposed to cut EPA's budget by 31%. Right now, the average taxpayer pays about \$26 per year to fund EPA.

For comparison, the average taxpayer pays about \$2,243 per year for our military (including veterans benefits).”

An attack on the EPA is also an attack on our state's capacity to protect the environment. The New Mexico Environment Department receives about 30% of its funding from EPA. In addition, EPA funding goes to pueblos, state universities, nonprofits, contractors and others who are part of the environmental-health mission.

The proposed budget is far from the only attack on EPA. More than 120 House members have signed onto legislation that would strip the EPA's authority over carbon dioxide and methane, eviscerating climate regulation and regulation of methane from oil and gas. Trump and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt have committed to withdrawing regulations that require more fuel-efficient cars and trucks and the Clean Power Plan, which was the cornerstone of Obama's Paris commitments for our CO2 reductions. Our national monuments may be delisted (no comment on whether that is legally possible).

Where do we go from here?

We need to keep in mind what we want to see in our country: a safe, healthy environment that protects us and future generations from health risks, public lands

that are open for wildlife and recreation, environmental justice, so that no group bears environmental risks disproportionately, and a decarbonization of the economy so climate change doesn't overtake a livable planet. To achieve this we need trustworthy federal agencies, where good science is valued and not mocked; we need guarantees of scientific integrity and openness in agency publications, and we need environmental laws that respond to the threats of the 21st century, such as climate change, loss of wildlife and of biodiversity, the use of harmful pesticides, and the health threats created by air and water pollution.

Much of the public takes for granted the protections that EPA provides. Pictures are circulating of New York City's skyline in the 1960s, before the Clean Air Act: smog made it hard to see most of the city. When I was a kid in DC, canoeing on the Potomac, the water smelled, and a few drops on your arm would sting. Our charge is to educate about what our environmental agencies do among a broad range of communities, enlisting new voices in the fight for environmental protection.

Training for Action: If we organize, we win

Strategy, Tactics, Issues, Solidarity

12-5 p.m. Sunday, April 23, South Valley Academy

The Training for Action is an afternoon event that will give everyone, whether newly activated or more seasoned activists — some tools we need to make real, tangible differences together on the urgent issues. This is a community-generated, volunteer-organized event, and we are seeking community help to make it powerful and worthwhile.

We'll have four learning areas:

1. Building Winning Strategies
2. Developing Tactical Skills
3. Effective Solidarity

Organizing
4. Learning to Talk about the Issues. We'll close the event with an opportunity to meet with participating groups to learn how to get more involved in specific areas of interest.

We'll offer food, childcare, and Spanish-language interpretation.

Participating groups include Sierra Club, ACLU, Result.org, SURJ, NM Story Power, Nonviolent Action New Mexico, Albuquerque Indivisible, Young Women United, Storytellers of New Mexico, Encuentro NM, N.M. Progressive Coalition, WildEarth Guardians, and Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico.

To sign up, please visit riograndesierraclub.org.

PEOPLE'S CLIMATE MARCH
April 29, 2017

Earth Month events

See riograndesierraclub.org/earthmonthevents for links to details of each event:

- April 1: Cesar Chavez March and Festival
- April 20: UNM 9th Annual Sustainability Expo
- April 22: March for Science Albuquerque and Civic Earth Day Fair
- April 22: March for Science (Santa Fe)
- April 22: March for Science (Las Cruces)
- April 22: Environmental Justice at Valle de Oro
- April 23: La Montanita Co-op Earth Day Celebration lamontanita.coop
- April 29: People's Climate March (Albuquerque)
- April 29: People's Climate March (Las Cruces)

Sierra Club intervenes in rate case



PNM has requested a 14% rate increase in New Mexico. Sierra Club attorneys will be reviewing PNM's spending on coal plants to make sure customers don't have to pay for expenditures that could have been avoided.

**By Mona Blaber
Chapter communications
coordinator**

Late last year, PNM filed a case seeking to increase electricity rates by an average of about 14% — right on the heels of another rate increase approved by the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission in August.

PNM's application included requests for spending on large capital projects at the San Juan and Four Corners coal plants. These coal plants are becoming increasingly uncompetitive compared to other available sources of generation, such as wind and solar. Indeed, in March, PNM announced that its latest planning studies show that the San Juan plant will be uneconomic to run past 2022 (see article on Page 3).

Despite these clear economic

signals, not to mention the harmful public health and environmental consequences caused by these two coal plants, PNM continues to spend tens — and sometimes hundreds — of millions of dollars on its aging coal plants.

In January, Sierra Club intervened in the rate case. The club's attorneys intend to review PNM's continued spending on San Juan and Four Corners, and, where appropriate, they will request that the Public Regulation Commission make sure that customers do not have to pay for costly coal-plant expenditures that could have been avoided.

PNM is also requesting changes to the way it charges and collects money from residential customers. Following a nationwide trend of utilities trying to limit the amount

that customers can control their own bills, PNM is requesting an increase in its monthly "fixed charge" from \$7 to \$13.77. This request follows quickly behind last year's increase from \$5 to \$7.

These charges penalize energy-efficient ratepayers and customers who invest money and effort in conservation because they push a larger portion of their bills into a "fixed" and unavoidable monthly charge. The charge structure also rewards high-use energy hogs by lowering the per-kwh cost of energy.

These are the wrong incentives, and Sierra Club plans to support our allies who are challenging these changes. Sierra Club will submit expert testimony to the PRC in May, and evidentiary hearings will likely occur this summer.

El Paso solar customers targeted for higher rates

By Robert Moss, Eco El Paso board member

In February 2017, El Paso Electric (EPE) yet again filed to increase rates in its Texas service region.

It was only in August that the company completely withdrew its proposed fees on solar in Texas. But following a couple of highly profitable quarters, it is again seeking a rate increase. Their residential customers and the citizens' advocates for living sustainably, Eco El Paso, are weary of fighting but believe we must in order to assure fairness in Texas.

El Paso Electric continues to assert that the solar residential customers receiving service under net-metering laws in both Texas and New Mexico are not paying their fair share for the use of the grid. EPE again seeks to sow division among the residents by its unsubstantiated claims that one element from among the class is being "unfairly subsidized" by the others. Studies have shown that rooftop solar actually provides a net benefit to other ratepayers and the utility, in part because they provide energy to the grid when demands are at their highest and electricity prices are too.

Consider for a moment the gorilla in the room when we speak of subsidies. The greatest subsidy is the allowance by government to permit a utility to operate with an unchallenged monopoly, proposing what suits its interests and then passing those added costs on to its captive customers.

Also consider that when a utility determines to grow its generation fleet, it does so because some select customers consume much more energy



Photo courtesy Solar Smart Living

El Paso Electric is again proposing to put residents with solar into a separate rate class to charge them more, as well as impose a higher customer charge.

than do others. Are those customers levied with a higher incremental fee sufficiently scaled to pay for the increasing fleet size? Smaller customers appear to pay for a disproportionate share of this growth due to system uses by larger customers. In effect, the utilities are subsidizing their largest customers through rate design on the backs of the smallest and most economically distressed consumers.

In the current case, EPE has proposed a rate structure that causes its residential customers to be broken into separate residential rate classes: those with solar and those without. EPE is proposing to set the customer charge for solar residents \$7.30 higher than the regular residential customers' proposed customer charge.

There is also a \$6.20-per-kW peak-demand charge. This is a multiplier affected by the most power magnitude used within a month. For instance, if you microwave a meal while also running your clothes dryer and the evaporative cooler, the 5 kW of demand in that time increment might be your largest power use of the month. That results in 5 kW multiplied by \$6.20 to result in an added non-volumetric fee of

\$31 in the month.

This charge will be assessed even if the demand doesn't occur during the system peak hours, so it is not cost-based. Last among the unique provisions is a mandatory time-of-use rate structure for solar residences, costing roughly 31 cents per kWh in the peak times of the day, while costing 3.5 cents during other hours. So if you have only a few solar panels and are forced to use on-peak energy from the grid, the mandatory time-of-use rate will cause your bill to go up faster. This seems discriminatory and unnecessary when the utility could achieve its revenue goals with a properly designed tiered rate structure.

Yet again through this new rate design, EPE is seeking to treat its customers who are conservation-minded in a manner that will discourage conservation. How are we ever going to fix our climate-change challenges if utilities like EPE are continually allowed to retain such a grip on our wallets despite customers' best efforts to be good stewards of our planet? We all must take a stand for what is right and reasonable.

Donate to Eco El Paso at www.ecoelpaso.org/donate.

Seeking student Sentinels

By Eric Patterson

Water Sentinels — Rios de Taos has been awarded a grant to encourage student participation in water-monitoring activities and the general environmental activities of Sierra Club.

We will continue to work with Taos High School students — the Tiger Salamanders — and will be contacting other high schools to initiate more student environmental programs.

Our long-term goal is to have more student environmental organizations and more young Sierra Club members. If you know of any New Mexico student



groups who might be interested in participating, please contact Eric Patterson, Water Sentinels coordinator, at ee patt@gmail.com or 575-776-2833.

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Activism, deadlock at Roundhouse

By Mona Blaber

Now that New Mexico's 2017 legislative session has come to a close, how did climate, clean water, wildlife and public lands do?

1. Some of the most significant proactive environmental bills died disappointing deaths. But none was likely to make it past Gov. Martinez's veto pen. They'll all be back in 2019.

2. Some progressive renewable-energy and wildlife bills did pass and are now on the governor's desk, and several positive memorials and resolutions that don't require action by the governor were also successful.

2. We worked with conservation allies to defeat — again — all significantly damaging legislation.

3. Easily the biggest takeaway: You. Sierra Club volunteers were an immense presence. No group or constituency had more citizens active at the Roundhouse than the Rio Grande Chapter, and your emails, calls and attendance at committee meetings changed the outcome of several bills for the better.

This was the first stab at some bold, important legislation, telling us where we need to concentrate before the next long session in 2019, when New Mexico will have a new governor.

Let's start working on 2019 now. Can you meet with your representative and senator on these issues? We'll go over issues with you and connect you with people who share your legislators to arrange group meetings. Write to riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org or fill out the form at riograndesierraclub.org to sign up.

Here's a rundown of key bills (as of this writing, none of the bills that passed have been signed by the governor):

Pro-environment legislation

Senate Bill 312 would have amended New Mexico's Renewable Energy Act to increase requirements for investor-owned utilities to 50% renewable energy by 2030 and 80% by 2040. It passed the Senate Conservation Committee but died in Senate Corporations Committee. We knew this would be a several-year effort, and SB312's support this year was promising.

Passed: SB81, Sen. Mimi Stewart's bill to thwart trafficking in endangered species or their parts or products, passed both the Senate and House and is on the governor's desk. Thanks to everyone who contacted your representative



Photo by Allyson Siwik

New Mexicans rallied to protect public lands at New Mexico's Roundhouse in February, during the 60-day legislative session that started Jan. 17.

Thank our environmental all-stars



Sen. Mimi Stewart

Stewart sponsored SB312 to boost New Mexico's renewable-energy requirement to 80% by 2040. Her bill banning wildlife trafficking passed both chambers. mimi.stewart@nmlegis.gov



Rep. Derrick Lente

The freshman legislator worked with constituents to pass a memorial asking the BLM for proper tribal consultation before it issues its amended management plan for greater Chaco Canyon. derrick.lente@nmlegis.gov



Sen. Jeff Steinborn

Steinborn sponsored the ban on coyote-killing contests and numerous other wildlife protections. His SB227, renewable energy for state buildings, passed the Legislature. jeff.steinborn@nmlegis.gov



Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero

Roybal Caballero sponsored HB338, "Solar for All." The bill would have made solar energy more accessible and affordable for everyone. pat.roybalcaballero@nmlegis.gov

about this bill!

House Bill 338, Rep. Patricia Roybal-Caballero's community-solar bill, failed by a 31-34 vote on the House floor. This important legislation would have created the framework to make solar energy available to renters and others who can't install solar on their homes. This is the farthest this legislation has ever gotten, and some of those legislators who either didn't vote or voted "no" can be persuaded by their constituents — that's you — in the two years before the next long session.

Passed: SB227, sponsored by Sen. Jeff Steinborn, would put the wheels in motion to put renewable energy on state buildings with no money down, saving everyone money. It passed both chambers and is on the governor's desk. Please ask her to sign it!

SB307, sponsored by Sen. Richard Martinez, would have restored the authority of the state Oil Conservation Division to levy fines on oil and gas operations that violate safety rules. Despite thou-

sands of violations, a flaw in state law means oil and gas facilities haven't paid a cent in fines since 2010. This bill passed the Senate Conservation Committee but was never heard in the Senate Finance Committee, chaired by Sen. John Arthur Smith.

SB268, prohibiting coyote-killing contests, got so close — see Page 9 for more details.

SB286 would have banned trapping on public lands. Read more on Page 9.

Passed: House Memorial 70, sponsored by newly elected Rep. Derrick Lente, requests that the BLM not lease any land in the greater Chaco Canyon region without prior consultation with tribes until it finishes amending its manage-

ment plan for the region.

Passed: SM102, sponsored by Sen. Benny Shendo, asks the state to make information it is collecting about venting and flaring of methane and operators' gas-capture plans available to the public. It also asks for the top 25 oil and gas companies that vent and top 25 flaring operations to be identified. This gives us the tools for future rulemaking (memorials don't require the governor's signature).

HB61, SB41: These bills would have restored job-creating tax credits for businesses and residents who installed solar on their homes. HB61 passed the House, but neither bill was heard by the Senate Corporations Committee,

chaired by Sen. Clemente Sanchez.

Passed: Senate Joint Memorial 4 expresses the Legislature's support for a statewide pollinator-friendly plant-labeling project and requests that the Department of Agriculture provide technical support in implementing the project.

Passed: SJM20, sponsored by Sens. John Pinto and Benny Shendo, declares the support of New Mexico's Native American nations, tribes and pueblos to the Standing Rock Sioux.

Negative legislation:

HB275 would have allowed private operations of virtually any public facility in the state, including water systems and other critical environmental infrastructure, for 50 years. Your calls and emails helped stop this bill in its first committee.

SB182, sponsored by Sen. Mary Kay Papen, would have allowed the state Land Office to seize federal mineral rights under New Mexico private property and lease them to oil and gas companies. Papen withdrew the bill, citing public opposition — that's you — as a major reason for pulling it.

Senate Joint Resolution 15, an unnecessary constitutional amendment to make hunting, fishing and the harvesting of wildlife a constitutional right, failed.

SB364, a bill to involve the state land commissioner, governor and attorney general in limiting the size of National Monument designations, also died, after many calls and emails from citizen activists.

SB210/HB199: These companion bills emerged from legislation pushed by PNM last year that saddled solar installers with a long list of onerous disclosure requirements. PNM pared down the 2017 bill and lobbied legislators all year, but the bills still had troublesome aspects. Hundreds of you contacting your senators and representatives, paving the way for removal of the most objectionable requirements in the bill that passed.

This is just a short list of the dozens of bills we advocated for or against this year. The Rio Grande Chapter is committed to passing bold, effective legislation to protect our climate, water, land and wildlife. You can help by meeting with your representatives — contact riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org and we'll guide you through the process. Thanks to the hundreds of you who stepped up this year. It was inspiring, and together, we can become the most powerful force at the Legislature.

How you can make a difference

Contact your state legislators, arrange to meet with them, and tell them what you care about. Sierra Club can connect you with others to meet as a group with your legislators. Contact us at riogrande@sierraclub.org to sign up and get pointers.

Join our legislative update and action list: Write to riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org to receive alerts.

Trapping, killing contests still legal

By Mary Katherine Ray
Rio Grande Chapter
Wildlife Chair

Bills to prohibit trapping on public land, end killing contests, reform the Game Commission and more did not pass the New Mexico Legislature in a session distracted by other issues and still dominated by political divides.

Here is the rundown for the successes, the incremental progress, the feedback and the disappointments.

Senate Bill 268 to end coyote-killing contests, sponsored by Sens. Jeff Steinborn (D) and Mark Moores (R), got further than it ever has before. It passed all of its committee hearings and the full Senate and was awaiting a vote on the House floor when time ran out.

Citizen advocates filled the committee hearing rooms. When the committee chairs asked to see a show of hands in support of the bill, the number of hands that flew up was heartening and powerful. This phenomenon was gratifyingly repeated over and over at hearings for other wildlife bills. The bill's opponents included the New Mexico Cattlegrowers, the New Mexico Wool-Growers and the New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides. These groups did not concern themselves with the abusive nature of contest killing specifically but instead relayed their scorn for coyotes and insistence that coyotes must be "controlled" (by which they mean killed) by any and all means possible.

This is contrary to scientific evidence that shows that coyote populations often increase after being significantly reduced because females produce more pups to compensate. Their populations reach equilibrium with stable availability of prey and do not need to be "controlled." Even so, the bill was not about coyote-hunting. It only addresses killing coyotes in conjunction with a contest. These kill fests reward participants with cash or guns for killing dozens of animals that are then often just dumped.

SB 286 would have prohibited the use of traps and poisons on public land. It had many exceptions, including allowing traps for scientific research, protection of endangered species, ecosystem management and of course to protect human health and safety. This year, for the first time, it started on the Senate side with Senator Pete Campos (D) as its sponsor. The first (and as it turned out, only) committee hearing it had was before Senate Conservation. The room again overflowed with



At left: Supporters and opponents pack the hallway outside a committee room as they wait for the Senate Conservation Committee hearing on a bill prohibiting traps and poisons on public lands.

Photo: Art Rescues

Below: A trap sculpture was placed outside the Roundhouse the day Senate Bill 286 was heard in February. The bill to ban trapping on public lands was delayed and ultimately died, but sponsors got positive feedback in preparation for the next 60-day legislative session.

Photo: www.evalynbemishphotography.com



the Woolgrowers and the Council of Outfitters and Guides.)

The Game Commission statute was written in the 1920s and is sorely in need of update to reflect modern values about wildlife and be more fair in the representation of stakeholders. This bill would have divided the seven Game Commission appointments between the governor and the Legislature. In addition to defining the seats for specific user groups such as hunters, non-hunters and ranchers, it would have included a dedicated seat for a wildlife biologist not affiliated with New Mexico Game and Fish.

The only wildlife bill to pass both chambers and make it to the governor's desk was SB 81, the Wildlife Trafficking Act sponsored by Sen. Mimi Stewart (D), which will help make it more difficult for traffickers of endangered species' body parts, such as elephant ivory and rhino horn, to slip into the country through our southern border with Mexico. As of this writing, the governor has not yet signed it.

Had any of the other wildlife bills progressed to the governor's desk, we acknowledge they may have faced a steep hurdle to get her signature. The next time these bills are introduced, in the 2019 long session, we will have a new governor; hopefully one who is more wildlife-friendly. The entire House is also facing election before then, and we could use more wildlife-friendly legislators to make passage of bills like these through committees more certain as well.

Wildlife advocates have a lot for which to be proud this past session. Thank you to everyone who got up early, traveled to Santa Fe, endured long hours waiting for the wildlife bills to come up, and who called their representatives and senators. Your actions were felt and your presence noticed! Your commitment and determination are just what we will need to bring these bills into law in coming years.



Environmental all-star Rep. Matthew McQueen

McQueen sponsored legislation that would have made the state Game Commission more reflective of the concerns of all New Mexicans, not just a few special interests. Thank him at matthew.mcqueen@nmlegis.gov.



Environmental all-star Sen. Pete Campos

Although his bill to ban trapping and poison on public lands didn't pass, Campos plans to continue working on making our public lands safer for recreational use during the interim between legislative sessions. Thank him at pete.campos@nmlegis.gov.

supporters and many stories of encounters with traps. Those in opposition included the same groups, the Cattlegrowers, the Woolgrowers and the Council of Outfitters and Guides, that supported keeping killing contests legal. The dislike of coyotes was again their focus as they expressed their desire to kill as many as possible. Bill supporters told stories of their dogs being trapped, the struggle to remove the device, the pain

the trap caused and injuries requiring veterinary treatment and expenses.

Committee members provided good feedback that focused mainly on technical aspects of the bill — primarily the penalties and enforcement. Sen. Bill Soules (D), who is himself a hunter, did express dismay that trappers can kill an unlimited number of animals not for personal use but to sell to the market. He also questioned whether any gross-

receipts taxes were being paid on these sales of the public's wildlife.

Because of the technical questions, the committee chair, Sen. Joseph Cervantes (D), said he wanted the committee to craft a substitute bill to address those issues before moving on a vote. However, no substitute bill emerged, and the time slipped by so that the bill simply faded into dormancy.

However, the sponsor, Sen. Campos, is not letting the issue fade. He is scheduled to appear before the state Game Commission to discuss the future of trapping in New Mexico at the May 11 commission meeting in Clayton, N.M. For updates on the time and place, please visit the state Game and Fish website, www.wildlife.state.nm.us/commission.

HB 254, a bill to reform the Game Commission sponsored by Rep. Matt McQueen (D), passed its first House committee but failed in the House Energy, Environment and Natural Resources committee. Both votes were along party lines. (This bill again had the same opponents; the Cattlegrowers,

Volunteer profile: Laurence Gibson

Laurence Gibson has been the Rio Grande Chapter secretary since 1999, El Paso Group chair, and beloved member of the Executive Committee. He's a Renaissance Man who was concertmaster and first violinist with the El Paso Orchestra and a music professor at University of Texas-El Paso.

1. How and when did you get involved with the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter?

I had done backpacking with the El Paso Group for 15 years or so when they elected me chapter delegate in 1999. Much to my surprise, chair Gwen Wardwell appointed me secretary at that very first meeting, a position I've held ever since.

2. What type of work do you do for the chapter?

I divide my time between El Paso Group excom duties, where I lead meetings and write the newsletter, and the



Laurence Gibson is chair of the Rio Grande Chapter's El Paso Group. His hobbies include hiking, craft beer and fixing old Citroens — guided by repair manuals written in French.

Photo by Carolina Greenfield

chapter, where I sit on the excom and personnel committees, represent the El Paso Group and take care of the minutes. Good minutes are really important for forward progress. Even with monthly meetings at the group level, busy volunteers will tend to repeat themselves without good minutes.

3. Why do you volunteer for the Rio Grande Chapter?

The work is important, but it is really about the people. Catching up with friends every few months, comparing notes, trading ideas to use at home in our groups, these are the fun things about meetings. The tough part is losing folks after years together. Norma

McCallan was a wonderful friend we lost recently. Others like Blair Brown, Ilse Bleck and Mark Jones have moved on to other places and interests. So it is important to make new friends as well.

3. What inspires you to work for the environment?

Well, nature is my church. So I want to do what I can to

preserve it. There is also the “use it or lose it” axiom. There are not nearly as many folks on the trail in the Gila as there were 20 or 30 years ago. That worries me. So we pretty much have it to ourselves now. There are those who would sell it out from under us. We need to be out there.

4. What would you tell others who are interested in doing more to help?

Follow your passion.
5. What's your favorite thing about the Sierra Club?

I like that the Sierra Club is the name brand for conservation in America. We are powerful. It is also unusual that we are basically a volunteer organization aided by national and chapter staff, when so many non-profits function with just paid staffers and perhaps a few volunteers.

Volunteer profile: Rick LoBello

By Mona Blaber

Rick LoBello has been a valued member of the El Paso Group executive committee since 2013.

LoBello is also director of education at El Paso Zoo, striving for the facility to serve education, preservation and scientific needs to conserve endangered and threatened animals.

El Paso Zoo is one of the facilities that helps to house the captive Mexican-wolf population before the wolves can be released in the wild.

“The animals that live there are conservation ambassadors for their species and habitats around the world. Their wild relatives live in the mountains and deserts around El Paso and in faraway lands in South America, Africa and Asia,” LoBello said.

“As you walk through the zoo and learn more about them, it soon becomes clear that many are endangered. Habitat loss and other factors, most often related to the activities of humans, are having a devastating toll on wildlife everywhere.”

LoBello said the zoo is encouraging visitors to round up their purchases at the gift shop, zoo restaurants and food stands to the next dollar to support wildlife field-conservation efforts.

The round-up funds — more than \$18,000 so far —go to conservation efforts to help endangered bolson tortoises in New Mexico, African lions in Kenya and Tanzania and critically endangered

Sumatran orangutans in Indonesia. The effort also supports the critically endangered Mexican wolf that used to roam across the Southwest U.S. and northern Mexico, including El Paso. The round-up funds helped the zoo send three teams of employees to help with Mexican-wolf conservation efforts in Arizona, New Mexico and Mexico. Two teams helped repair barbed-wire fences that corral cattle and keep them from wandering into wolf hunting ranges. A third team helped transport a pack of 11 wolves from Washington state to a rendezvous point in New Mexico, where they were met by Mexican officials who took the wolves to a reintroduction site in Mexico.

El Paso Group Executive Committee

elpasosierraclub.org

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PLEASE DON'T FORGET

In March, we sent out our annual appeal to all our members, asking for contributions to the Rio Grande Chapter. These contributions really do make a difference to us and are an important part of our chapter's budget.

When you contribute to the Rio Grande Chapter, you support the Sierra Club's work in your own back yard, allowing us to continue our work to stop trapping and coyote-killing contests, preserve Chaco Canyon's cultural treasures, transition from San Juan Generation Station coal to clean energy and

protect our drinking water. Please be as generous as you are able — and remember these funds directly affect our way of life in New Mexico and West Texas. Contributions to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible.
Mail your contribution to:
Rio Grande Chapter, 1807 Second St., Unit 45, Santa Fe, NM 87505 or go to:
riograndesierraclub.org/donate.
To donate to El Paso Group specifically:
PO Box 9191, El Paso TX 79995
Or go to elpasosierraclub.org.

Make a difference

Interested in starting a Sierra Student Coalition at your school? Contact Camilla Feibelman at camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org.

Help return the wolf to Texas: For the sake of wilderness and our ecosystem, the Mexican wolf should be given the chance to reclaim its role in the Chihuahuan Desert of West Texas. Visit facebook.com/returnthewolftotexas and click the Take Action link. Sign up to help students in Texas get involved: Contact Rick LoBello at ricklobello@gmail.com.

Southern New Mexico Group

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With your help we can clean up our water

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

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Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35

Contributions, gifts & dues to Sierra Club are tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen based advocacy & lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$ 7.50 for a subscription to SIERRA magazine & \$ 1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

Please mail to:
Sierra Club
Attn: Member Services
2101 Webster St #1300
Oakland, CA 94612

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1700

Volunteer profile: Heather Kline



Heather Kline has a passion for both the environment and art. So, naturally, she created our popular First Friday Art events.

This is part of a series on the many different types of skills volunteers offer the Sierra Club. We connected with Heather Kline after she answered a volunteer survey we emailed to supporters. Heather has become indispensable as an event planner and organizer for our Albuquerque-based Central New Mexico Group.

Question: How and when did you get involved with the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter?

Answer: I have been involved with the Chapter and the Central Group for over three years now. I had volunteered with the Sierra Club when I lived in Minnesota and have been a

member for many years, so I was interested in getting more involved here in New Mexico.

What type of work do you do for the chapter?

I started out tabling and working on the Wild America team. Before too long I was doing all kinds of different things (data entry, phone calls, etc.), and Camilla Feibelman asked if I'd be interested in serving on the Central Group Executive Committee. I'm still involved with that group, where my main activities are planning First Friday art events at the Albuquerque office and helping out with Sierra Club & Rootbeer events, as well as maintaining our Meetup

group web page.

Why do you volunteer for the Rio Grande Chapter?

I care very deeply about environmental issues. I believe it is our responsibility as citizens to get involved at a local level in the issues that concern us, as our schedules allow.

What inspires you to work for the environment?

Without clean air and water, everything else ceases to matter. Without wilderness, we lose our connection to our basic humanity. These are the most essential things, and unfortunately they require protection from selfish private interests.

What would you tell

others who are interested in getting involved?

There are so many different ways to get involved with the Club, and it is truly a grass-roots organization that relies on your efforts. Depending on your interests, skills, and availability, there is something rewarding you can do to help.

What's your favorite thing about the Sierra Club?

There is a real sense of inspiration and solidarity, which I think is so important during a time when many progressives feel defeated. It's a real community of like-minded people, and we do a lot of fun things.

Hikes by vets, for vets

By Terry Owen
Military Outings Program coordinator

The Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program wants you!

We're seeking active-duty military, veterans and their families, friends and supporters to join us for outdoor adventures. The mission objectives are to offer participants new experiences, learning opportunities and challenges in a safe environment.

Program leaders Terry Owen and John Link are Navy and Air Force veterans, respectively. We recently led an introductory snowshoe hike in the Sandia Mountains on a sparkling winter day in February. For several participants it was the first time they'd ever been in the mountains, and for many it was the first time they'd donned a pair of snowshoes.

Safety comes first, so we spent time with the group going over safely traversing through the forest, conserving energy, and staying warm and dry. I always try to share a couple of new skills with participants and I'm always paid back with learning new skills from someone in the group — and it helps me grow also.

The participants got an early start on the 10K Trail, which undulates along the 10,000-foot contour of the mountain. After a two-hour trek, the group was rewarded with stunning views from the top of Sandia crest all the way to conti-

mental divide.

Countless studies have shown that time spent outdoors fosters mental and physical health and aids in emotional resiliency. For many vets it has eased the transition to civilian life. Many veterans and their families miss the bonds they felt in the military, and few civilian occupations offer the same sense of mission. It's the most natural and effective form of healing that many vets have found.

"It's amazing to watch the camaraderie that naturally develops with a group in the mountains," Link noted. The Military Outdoors Program offers participants a chance to meet others who might be dealing with similar issues in a safe environment, while engaging in healthful activities.

The Military Outdoors Program has several outings coming up, including an Earth Day hike on April 22, and for those looking for a major challenge, a June 24 climb of one of Colorado's 14,000-foot peaks, where participants will have the opportunity to camp the night before. There are plans for handicap-accessible outings as well as some service opportunities such as trail maintenance and other ways to give back to the country that we proudly served.

Learn more at: sierraclub.org/outings/military. For outings in the Central Rio Grande area, which are free, contact me at teowen@q.com or 505-301-4349.



Photo courtesy Terry Owen

Military Outings Program leaders Terry Owen and John Link led an introductory snowshoe hike in the Sandia Mountains on a sparkling February day.

Central New Mexico Group events

The Central New Mexico Group's most recent Sierra Club and Beers have attracted so many people that our Albuquerque office can't fit them all, so we're now hosting "Sierra Club and Root Beer" at the Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard Drive SE, Albuquerque. The next Sierra Club and Root Beer will be from 6:30 to 8 p.m. May 5.

RSVP: Fred Houdek at fhoudek@gmail.com or 630-809-4234.

We also hold First Friday Art events every other month at our Albuquerque

office, 2215 Lead Ave. SE. The next First Friday Art events will be from 6 to 8 p.m. April 7 and June 2.

Volunteer Wednesday

We have volunteers in our Albuquerque office on Wednesdays to do data input, make calls and help with other projects. If you can join us, contact miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org. We are also looking for volunteers to keep the office open when staffers aren't present. Contact camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org.

Group Executive Committee

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Secretary: Heather Kline, heather9387@yahoo.com, 505-577-2798
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Political chair: Richard Barish, richard.barish@gmail.com

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

Senators celebrate monuments

By Tom Gorman, Northern Group Conservation Chair

On Feb. 21, at the Taos Mesa Brewery, U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich joined tribal leaders, local business owners, community members, and representatives of numerous organizations to stand in support of and celebrate the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument and our public lands.

After many years of work by the Rio Grande del Norte coalition to gain support of the stakeholders, President Obama designated it a national monument in 2013. This was a successful example of meeting the needs of the diverse local communities affected.

The speakers at the February event confirmed how beneficial this designation has been in terms of increases in economic and tourist activity. It was also evident that those gathered are ready to defend the monument against any attacks.

Sen. Heinrich emphasized that our public lands are under increased threat at the state and federal levels and that we must continue our efforts to keep public lands in public hands.

Heinrich said each of us has an obligation to fight for the protection of our shared public lands, our water, our air and our wildlife. One of the best defenses is to support strong environmental candidates whenever possible.

Sen. Tom Udall joined public-land supporters at Taos Mesa Brewing Mothership to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the monument on March 25.

President Donald Trump's administration has threatened to revoke monument status for some of President Obama's designations, but Rio Grande del Norte has strong public support in Northern New Mexico.



Photo courtesy Teresa Seamster

While rumors fly about President Trump un-designating national monuments, New Mexicans and both of our state's U.S. senators demonstrate strong support for Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, above.



Taos Pueblo Gov. Ruben A. Romero (second from right) stands with his Pueblo Council and an AmeriCorps Rocky Mountain Youth Corps volunteer outside Taos Mesa Brewery, where they spoke on March 25 along with Sen. Tom Udall in defense of public lands.

Join the relaunched Zero Waste Team

By Teresa Seamster, Northern New Mexico Group chair

After several years of hibernation, the Northern New Mexico Group's Zero Waste Committee is back in business.

At its February meeting, the Northern Group Executive Committee selected two veterans of the Santa Fe recycling scene to co-chair the Zero Waste Team.

In 2012 Joe Eigner and Karen Sweeney created Eldorado/285 Recycles, the leading group of citizen activists working to improve reuse, recycling and composting in the Santa Fe area. They now hope to work with like-minded Sierrans throughout Northern New Mexico in promoting these goals.

Nationally, the Sierra Club has been a powerful advocate for zero waste, with teams in San Francisco, New York and Washington leading the way. Karen and Joe were inspired by what these teams have



Photo courtesy Joe Eigner

Karen Sweeney and Joe Eigner created Eldorado/285 Recycles, a citizen group with a terrific record of accomplishments. Now Sweeney and Eigner are our new Zero Waste co-chairs.

accomplished.

Initially, the pair will arrange tours of local public and private solid-waste, recycling, and composting facilities so that new Zero Waste Team members can learn first-hand how the current system works.

Included will be attendance at meetings of the government

bodies with responsibilities in waste management.

They will also take a hard look at what we throw away and what altered consumption habits will be needed to make a difference.

Why is the Zero Waste Team important? We have woefully poor recycling rates

You can make a difference

Join the Rio Grande Chapter's Zero Waste Team to promote reducing, reusing, recycling and composting. To join or learn more, contact Joe Eigner at joseigner@gmail.com.

in Northern New Mexico. We rely way too much on single-use, throw-away items. We are filling up our limited landfill space with materials that consume precious energy, water, and minerals in their manufacture. The organics we discard to landfills produce climate-changing methane gas. We can and must do much better!

But for the new Zero Waste Team to be effective, it needs the active participation of both old and new members! Please contact Joe Eigner at joseigner@gmail.com if you can help!

Northern New Mexico Group Contacts

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Chaco astronomy: The power of predicting climate

By Teresa Seamster,
Northern Group Chair

House Memorial 70, Protection of Chaco Landscape, passed both the House State Government, Indian and Veterans Affairs Committee and the full New Mexico House in March after hours of public testimony and support for the historic cultural park and the Chacoan descendents still living within a 100-mile radius. Both the community members and the region are under threat of renewed oil and gas development as oil prices start to climb.

Many of us who have been working with the impacted communities of Counselor, Nageezi, Ojo Encino and Torreon wrote letters of support to the committee in case the comment time ran out before we could speak. I wanted to speak about the unique ability of ancient Chacoans to predict their climate and time its changes:

Dear Chairwoman Louis and Members of the Committee,

More than 305 million people visited our national parks in 2015. That is more than the total attendance of pro football, hockey, basketball, NASCAR races and Disney World combined.

Chaco Culture National Historical Park is one of the most unchanged ancient



Photo by Teresa Seamster

Greater Chaco Canyon community members celebrate with Rep. Derrick Lente after a House committee passed Lente's memorial asking the BLM for tribal consultation before it amends its management plan for the region. The memorial passed and doesn't require action from the governor.

landscapes in the entire world. It provides an unparalleled experience of place and scientific thought and cultural belief that this remote canyon holds the tools to measure the earth's relationship to the heavens by virtue of recording the earth's solar orbit and the lunar cycle and the exact hours of darkness and light during the spring and fall equinoxes. As such, Chaco was the "center" of the ancient pueblo world, and it unleashed

the power of predictability and knowledge of time and the seasons that governed (and still govern) human activity and its success or failure.

Much has been written and researched about Chaco's astounding astronomical architecture and political influence over a 95,000-square-mile "empire" that extended into Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico. Less is known about why the enormous quan-

tity of turquoise artifacts and offerings at Pueblo Bonito was brought by people over hundreds of miles to Chaco. Even less is known about the end of Chaco — the careful sealing up of the kivas, the removal of the roofs and the final fires that scorched the inner walls after 250 years of building 10 immense great houses.

What is known is that in 1100 AD, the Southwest entered a prolonged drought

and that Chacoans migrated away, leaving small communities behind that returned to subsistence farming.

Both Chaco and the living communities remain — and both are highly threatened by a renewed drive by the oil industry for a final "play" in Mancos Shale extraction before the lights go out on fossil-fuel generation. The gamble is a big one. The world's energy economy is rapidly shifting into renewable energy, and the rusting and highly toxic infrastructure and practices of oil and gas extraction are destroying much of the rural West.

Chaco provides us all with a look at how powerful is the knowledge of the earth's relationship to the heavens. How far people will travel for that knowledge and the belief that we can control the chaos on earth to better match the precise order of the sun's hours and the moon's phases, as well as time the seasons for travel, growing food, rainfall and reproducing.

This landscape is irreplaceable. The communities left that surround it are the keepers of that time and memory and intrinsic survival. We have a human obligation to keep it undamaged, and a human need to learn its lessons.

Sincerely yours,
Teresa Seamster
Santa Fe, New Mexico

BLM Chaco leasing goes forward, with conditions

By Miya King-Flaherty
Public Lands fellow

On Jan. 24, the Sierra Club, San Juan Citizens Alliance, WildEarth Guardians, Navajo chapter presidents and impacted residents and other participants in the Greater Chaco Coalition rallied at the Bureau of Land Management office in Santa Fe to oppose the Jan. 25 lease sale of 843 acres for oil and gas drilling in the greater Chaco area.

These parcels are only 20 miles outside Chaco Culture National Historical Park

and, in some cases, right on the doorstep of communities in the area.

Rally participants delivered more than 17,000 signatures opposing the lease sale and a letter signed by 102 organizations and resolutions passed by 15 Navajo chapter governments supporting a moratorium on leasing until the BLM finishes updating its Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement to address the impacts of fracking.

Four Navajo chapter presidents,

community leaders and impacted residents met with BLM State Director Amy Lueders for two hours, but the following day, the lease proceeded in the first-ever online auction, apparently meant to reduce in-person protests.

The four parcels sold for a total of nearly \$3 million. However, until the BLM resolves several protesters' comments, development of these parcels cannot begin.

And in an unprecedented response to public outcry, the BLM has applied

specific conditions of approval regarding noise, light pollution and traffic safety, as well as unspecified potential mitigation conditions, to the parcels up for lease. The conditions are a result of efforts and input by impacted community members and groups.

The public "scoping" period (part of a required process for amending the BLM's management plan) ended Feb. 20. The BLM will next work on the draft Environmental Impact Statement for the region.

Send us photos of your backyard wilderness!

Who are you sharing your habitat with? The Northern New Mexico Group would like photos and descriptions of the wildlife you are seeing in your backyard or out on your property from anywhere in the state!

Please email Teresa Seamster at tc.seamster@gmail.com with your selections and encounters with our wonderful New Mexico wildlife!

At right:

Mule deer across the fence at the home of Julie and Elliot Maizels



Meetings

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

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

Bandelier volunteer trail work resumes

By Jody Benson
Pajarito Group chair

As the weather warms, Bandelier Trail Boss Kevin Stillman is resuming volunteer trail work.

The many trails requiring repair/rebuild/reroute include: Frijoles Rim Trail, Frijoles Canyon Trail, Stone Lions Trail, Turkey Springs Trail (Turkey Springs requires camping as the work deploys from a far-away base camp). Stillman will be leading a youth corps in the coming weeks, but he says, “I hope to be able to get some volunteers out and get some work done, too. Feel free to hike out and visit and see what we are up to.” Check out the almost-completed Frijoles Canyon Trail that went from an impassably washed-out log jam to a well-engineered hiking trail.

The strenuousness of tasks ranges from raking trail and pruning brush to sawing logs and building big-rock-based walls. You work at your own level. Stillman will school you in not only the task, but the proper engineering of a wilderness trail. The work is appropriate for any age that can hike a few miles, work several hours, and focus on the task. Trail work is ongoing, and will continue through the year as weather permits. Please contact Kevin to get the volunteer alerts at kevin_stillman@nps.gov.

International Women’s Day

By Los Alamos County Councilor Chris Chandler

On March 8, more than 200 women and men of all generations gathered at Ashley Pond in Los Alamos for the International Women’s Day/A Day Without a Woman to celebrate the special role of women in society and to commemorate the struggle for women’s rights, as International Women’s Day has done every year for the 107 years since its inception. Year by year, the gathering celebrates progress and looks forward to maintaining momentum.

As a newly elected county councilor in Los Alamos (I previously served on the council from 1997 through 2000), I’d like to share some encouragement, and maybe even some advice.

While many of us feel anxious about so many things that are happening both in this country and internationally (you may have felt those times when you can’t bear to read or watch the news out of concern for the direction that we are heading and the deep



Photos courtesy John McHale/ladailypost.com

Los Alamos County Councilor Chris Chandler speaks at International Women’s Day on March 8 at Ashley Pond in Los Alamos. ‘Let’s celebrate International Women’s Day by committing to constructive action and working together as friends and neighbors,’ Chandler advises.

Pajarito Group Directory

Web page:
riograndesierraclub.org/pajarito

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Global Warming chair: Charles Keller, alfonso@cybermesa.com, 505-662-7915
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Caldera Issues chair: Howard Barnum, hnbarnun@aol.com
Water Issues chair: Barbara Calef, bfcalf@yahoo.com, 505/662-3825
Membership: Mark Jones, jonesmm1@comcast.net, 505/662-9443.

Join the Pajarito Group:

Our executive committee is looking for members to help us strategize, plan events and campaigns, and enjoy the camaraderie that comes from saving the world together. Contact Pajarito Group Chair Jody Benson at echidnaejb@gmail.com or 505-662-4782.

divides that exist) — although there may be the temptation to hunker down and focus inward — I’m going to encourage you to take a different path. We all can make a difference, and I believe that each of us can contribute in a way that over time will change our current trajectory.

Encouragement No. 1: As a local elected official, I know that I do my job best when I listen to my fellow residents. The call for each of us is to actively listen, then in an informed and constructive way, participate to make our community the best that it can be.

Encouragement No. 2: I call on you to volunteer locally. There are many opportunities to contribute. Let me list a few: Join a county board, volunteer for a worthwhile non-profit. Devote a weekend

to reconstructing a trail or help out at the animal shelter. Visit an older acquaintance at Sombrillo Nursing Home or become a Lunch Buddy.

Of course we are in the Sierra Club because we care about our environment and the very survival of the Earth on which we live. There are many opportunities for Sierra Club action: pay attention to the emails from the Sierra Club, and if you have any ideas on how to make the local environment better, please email Pajarito Chair Jody Benson at echidnaejb@gmail.com. The Pajarito Group (established in 1998 after local Sierrans led the fight to protect the Valles Caldera) has more than 300 members, and with your ideas and energy, it can continue to be a potent advocate for the environment.

Another wonderful organi-

How you can make a difference

Join the volunteers helping to restore Bandelier trails destroyed in the Cerro Grande Fire and subsequent flooding. The work is appropriate for any age. Contact Kevin Stillman at kevin_stillman@nps.gov to get the volunteer alerts, or Jody Benson at echidnaejb@gmail.com.

zation is the League of Women Voters. In fact, many League members are also members of the Pajarito Group. It’s a wonderful issue-oriented, nonpartisan group that has worked for nearly 100 years advocating for open government and public participation. Our local chapter, LWVLA, has been active since the time we became a town. Please consider joining and participating as an active League Member.

Encouragement No. 3: Think about what would happen if the Sierra Club was not around to look out for our environment, the ACLU to safeguard our civil liberties, or Planned Parenthood to protect women’s health. It is our voice, skills, talents, and dedication that make these organizations effective.

Donate, donate, donate whenever you can to good causes!

Let’s celebrate International Women’s Day by committing to constructive action, and working together as friends and neighbors.

Chris Chandler is a Los Alamos County councilor and a Sierra Club member. In addition to supporting a sustainable Los Alamos, she is interested in initiatives that help revitalize Los Alamos’ older neighborhoods,

the White Rock Village Center and the Los Alamos downtown.

Community climate effort

By Pete Sheehey, Los Alamos County Council

In America’s Science City, the Los Alamos County government understands the impact of anthropogenic global climate change and is working toward mitigating its causes in the county. After much community input, the Los Alamos bipartisan Environmental Sustainability Board and staff came up with a proposal to add weekly “Green Bin” pickup of green waste such as grass, leaves, weeds, and branches. The council unanimously accepted the proposal at its Feb. 14 meeting.

The Green Bin is just one more indisputable stride toward decreasing emissions and landfill waste, while saving both money and the organics that could be better reused for mulch and soil development.

As for saving money: the county saves the costs of expensive and inefficient quarterly collection, as well as transportation expenses and tipping fees for 770 tons per year at about \$50 per ton that would otherwise be sent to the Rio Rancho landfill.

The county is also looking into upgrading its composting facility to accept food waste as well as brush. That means about 1,200 tons per year of food waste will be rerouted from the landfill and into compost.

The rollout of the planned weekly pickup will be within the next 18-24 months.

When green bins are distributed, there will be no more scheduled quarterly brush/bulk-item pickup, but residents can schedule bulk-item pickups for \$25 each. The initial investment for bins and a truck will be paid off in 6 years.

How will you get a bin after the rollout? Simply request a Green Bin and place it on the curb on scheduled weekly pickup day. It will be so little effort for such a big impact toward a cleaner, more environmentally sustainable community.

Annual highway cleanup

Saturday, May 21: Spring Highway Clean-Up: Bring working gloves; we have a large supply of bags. The meeting place as well as car-pooling will be arranged with responders. It is a good time to work and watch the elk. Please RSVP to Mark Jones, Jonesmm1@comcast.net, 505-662-9443.

Saturday, April 22 (Earth Day): Hermit Peak near Las Vegas (see Day Hikes 2016, Page 163). Moderate hike, 8 miles and 2,760 foot. A chance to see the east side of the Sangres. Meet at Christ Lutheran Church at 7:30 a.m. Mark Dunham: medunham2@msn.com, (505) 795-0199.

Saturday, April 22: Celebrate Earth Day in the Sandias, sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program; everyone is welcome. Moderate hike of the Tree Spring Trail in the Sandia Mountains. We will proceed to the crest, where we can admire views of the city and enjoy the serenity of the Cibola Wilderness Area. Four miles round trip, 1,000-foot elevation gain. Dogs on leash OK. To register, contact Terry Owen at: teowen@q.com, 505-301-4349 by April 20.

Saturday, April 22 at 10:30 a.m.: Attend the Children's Seed Festival at the Botanic Gardens. Learn about how seeds work, make seed balls, and more. Festival sponsored by the Rotary Club of Albuquerque. This is a Bosquitos event geared toward elementary kids, but all are welcome. The Bosquitos mission is to learn about Albuquerque's Bosque, the animals and plants that live there, and ways to take care of the Bosque. Meet at the entrance to the Biopark. There is an entrance fee to the BioPark. Call Sarita Streng 505-288-8713 for more information.

Sunday, April 23: Easy to moderate hike above Tent Rocks, about 4 miles round trip, little elevation gain. Meet 10:30 a.m. at the Veterans Memorial Overlook, which is on the dirt road past the parking lots for Tent Rocks. Two dogs on leash OK. Contact Odile (odile@pitot.org, 505-433 4692) by April 21 to register and obtain information for where to meet. End with optional potluck at Odile's house.

Saturday, April 29: Strenuous loop hike to Frijoles Canyon, about 13 miles and 1,500 feet of elevation gain. Scenic loop along Frijoles Canyon Rim and then down to the Upper Crossing, followed by a return to the visitor center on the newly renovated Frijoles Canyon trail. Aku: (505) 577-2594.

May

Saturday, May 6: Easy to moderate hike on the upper Rio En Medio near Santa Fe Ski Basin, up to 5 miles and 1,300 feet of elevation gain. One to two dogs OK. Marcia Skillman, (505) 699-3008, marciaskillman@hotmail.com.

Saturday, May 6, 8:30 a.m.: Easy walk to the South Diversion Channel outfall, a little-visited section of the Bosque in the South Valley that has been restored by the Army Corps of Engineers. Admire successful wetlands, native

April/May/June 2017



Annette Burgess and hike leader Mark Dunham enjoy the summit view during an outing to Tetilla Peak in January.

Photo by David Layne

You can make a difference

We are seeking up to 10 volunteers to join Santa Fe National Forest in fall work sessions on the Rio Medio trail, near Cundiyo. Clearing downed trees in a series of day-long work sessions is the plan, so please contact Mark Dunham at medunham2@msn.com.

For weekly updates on our outings, send an email to Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS.

And if you're interested in training to be a Sierra Club hike leader, contact odile@pitot.org.

plants, birds, and other wild-life. If the river is in flood, see how the overflow system to the restored area works. Meet at the end of Valley High SW, on the east side of the river. Bring kids. Mark Rudd: mark@mark-rudd.com, 505-270-5449.

Sunday, May 7: Easy out and back Cañada Bonita overlook from the Pajarito Ski area above Los Alamos, 3.5 miles, 650 feet. Alan Shapiro: (505) 424-9242, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Saturday, May 13: Strenuous hike to Brazos Cabin. About 13 miles, 2,500 feet of elevation gain. Hike up the Rio Medio Canyon through varied forest to a high meadow with the faint remnants of an historic cabin situated between the Dome and the Pecos Baldies. Aku: (505) 577-2594.

Saturday, May 13: Fourth of July trail in the Manzanos. Moderate 6.4-mile loop. Meet at 10:30 a.m. at the trailhead parking lot. Two dogs OK. Contact Odile (odile@pitot.org, 505-433 4692) by May 11 to register and obtain information about where to meet. End with optional potluck at Odile's house.

Saturday, May 20: TWA crash site. Sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program; everyone is welcome. Difficult hike: 7.5 miles round trip and 2,500 foot of elevation gain. Rugged hike starts from the Elena Gallegos Picnic area, goes under the tram's route

and ends amid the rock spires two-thirds of the way up the Sandia Mountain. Dogs not recommended. Contact Terry Owen no later than May 18 to register and obtain directions (505-301-4349, teowen@q.com).

Saturday, May 20: Strenuous hike to the Painted Cave in Bandelier. Starting from the Dome trailhead we will hike down to Capulin Canyon and then follow the canyon to the Painted Cave. About 13.5 miles and 2,500 feet of elevation gain. Larry: lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, (505) 983-8296.

Sunday, May 21: Easy out-and-back to Alamo Vista from Aspen Vista. 2.5 miles and 1,200 feet. Alan Shapiro: (505) 424-9242, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Saturday, May 27: Strenuous hike to Glorieta Baldy from Apache Canyon, (see Day Hikes 2016, Page 15) We take high-clearance vehicles to near the bottom of Apache Canyon, cutting this great hike down a bit to 10 miles and 2,500 foot of loss/gain to the look-out. Meet at Christ Lutheran Church, Santa Fe, at 8 a.m. ... Mark Dunham: medunham2@msn.com, (505) 795-0199.

Saturday, May 27-Monday May 29: Strenuous loop backpack to the Pecos Wilderness. Starting at Iron Gate, we will hike along Hamilton Mesa, up to the Santa Barbara Divide, back down to Pecos Falls, then to Beatty's Flats before crossing

back over to Hamilton Mesa and returning to Iron Gate. About 30 miles 3 days. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, (505) 983-8296.

June

Saturday, June 3: Hike to Jicarita Peak from FR161 past Tres Ritos (see Day Hikes 2016, Page 170). Strenuous: 11 miles and 2,500-foot gain. The Santa Barbara Divide is a very large area of tundra behind the Truchas Peaks. We will roam it and probably ascend Jicarita Peak (12,835), unless we decide to go south toward Chimayosos instead. See Sierra Santa Fe Meetup for more details. Meet at DeVargas Mall at 7 a.m.. Leader Mark Dunham: medunham2@msn.com, (505) 795-0199.

Saturday, June 10: Moderate/strenuous hike to Pederal. About 8 miles and 1,900-foot elevation gain. There is a 15-foot, fourth-class scramble to the top. Larry: lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, (505) 983-8296.

Saturday, June 10: Pino and Crest trails. Difficult hike: elevation gain 4,500 feet, total length 15 miles. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Elena Gallegos Parking lot (the one that is the highest and farthest to the east). Hike up Pino Trail, follow the Crest trail to the top of the Tram, and return by taking the Tram. No dogs. Note: We hope to provide much-reduced tram tickets to those who register by May 20. End with optional potluck at Odile's house. Contact Odile: odile@pitot.org, 505-433-4692 by June 8.

Sunday, June 11: Moderate hike to lovely La Vega from Santa Fe Ski Basin, 8 miles 1,500-foot gain. Alan Shapiro: (505) 424-9242, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Saturday, June 17: Strenuous hike to Trampas Peak (elevation: 12,170) from the Trampas

Lakes Trailhead. Extraordinary view of the northern end of the Pecos Wilderness, about 9 miles and 3,600 feet of elevation gain. Aku: (505) 577-2594.

Sunday, June 18: Strenuous hike to Deception and Lake Peaks above Santa Fe Ski Basin, 7 miles and 3,200-foot gain. Limit 8. Meet at the Santa Fe Sierra Club office. Dag Ryen: dryen@heliconwest.com, (505) 466-4063.

Saturday, June 24: Take Your Anatomy up Grays Peak. Sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program; everyone is welcome. Always wanted to tackle a Colorado "Fourteener" and never had the chance? Tallest mountain on the Continental Divide. Although rated as moderate, participants must be in excellent physical condition and tolerate altitude. 3,000-foot elevation gain and 8 miles roundtrip. Leaders will be camping at the trailhead the day/night before. Contact Terry Owen no later than June 20 to register and obtain directions: 505-301-4349, teowen@q.com.

Saturday, June 24-Sunday June 25: Strenuous backpack up a "fourteener." Ascend the Elk Range's highest peak from the Crested Butte side via Cumberland Basin. Castle Peak is the highest, but probably the least risky, of this famous group that includes the Maroon Bells. Our target date is exactly the point in the season when there are still snow fields to kick-step up, instead of unstable scree fields. We will drive up Saturday a.m., hike in 4 miles, set a light overnight camp, and then on Sunday climb the 2,500 feet to the peak, and return to our cars. Some may wish to stay in Crested Butte that night, while others will drive back to Santa Fe. Mark Dunham: medunham2@msn.com, (505) 795-0199.



Photo by Ken Krasity

After descending into White Rock Canyon, Sierra Club outing participants stopped for lunch along the Rio Grande before the ascent up the Red Dot Trail in February.

April-May-June hikes & events

April

Saturday, April 1: Easy hike from spectacular Diablo Canyon to the Rio Grande River and back, 6 miles and 400 foot of elevation gain, walking in sand. One to two dogs OK. Marcia Skillman, (505) 699-3008, marciaskillman@hotmail.com.

Saturday, April 1: Bosque trail hike to look at the recent fire area and discuss vegetation rehabilitation. Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot on the north side of Alameda, just west of the bridge. Easy walk; bring kids. Leashed dogs OK. Brian Hanson: bhanson5@comcast.net, 856-1386.

Sunday, April 2: Easy hike up Sun Mountain from the Old Pecos Trail. About 2 miles, 700-foot elevation gain. Alan Shapiro: (505) 424-9242, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Saturday, April 8: Strenuous hike to Yapashi and Stone Lions in Bandelier. Starting at the Visitors Center, we will go to Yapashi and Stone Lions then continue to the Upper Frijoles Crossing, ending at the Ponderosa Campground. This route requires a car shuttle. About 14 miles and 3,000 feet of elevation gain. Larry: lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, (505) 983-8296.

Saturday, April 8: Walk and slideshow to learn about bats, 5:30 p.m. with Justin of the Fight White Nose Bat Syndrome/Help Bats Hang On group. This is a Bosquitos event geared toward elementary kids, but all are welcome. The Bosquitos mission is to learn about Albuquerque's Bosque, the animals and plants that live there, and ways to take care of the Bosque. Meet at Sarita Streng's home. Call/text 505-288-8713 for directions.

Saturday, April 8: Easy hike, about 2.5 miles, "Poetry and Owls in the Bosque," 5 to 6:30 p.m. Meet owls at their nest. Leader will read nature poems along the way about owls, porcupines, spring, and the wind, but others are welcome to read some of their favorite poems relating to nature. Note that we might have to reschedule if there are strong winds this day. M.J. Zimmermann: mjzim@hotmail.



Photo by Daisy Levine

Tom Chymbor makes his way through the slot at Tapia Canyon, southwest of Cuba.

com.

Sunday, April 9: Moderate to strenuous hike to Shaggy Peak near Glorieta. About 10 miles, 2,000-foot gain. Limit eight; one to two dogs OK. Meet in Eldorado. Dag Ryen: dryen@heliconwest.com, (505) 466-4063.

Thursday, April 13 and every Thursday thereafter, unless otherwise posted on Sierra Santa Fe Meetup. Weekly Series. **Trekking Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin.** This is intended as a weekly burst of 90 to 110 minutes ascending 2,000 feet, with a variety of scenic rewards at the top. Some weeks we will just go to Deception Peak, sometimes to Lake Peak, and when time permits we may descend Ravens Ridge or to Puerto Nambe and return via the Winsor trail. This is by far the quickest route to alpine tundra in our area, passing by rushing water for almost the entire hike. It looks like the Northern Rockies, but in our back yard. In April we will leave at 9:30 a.m. from De Vargas Mall, but by May we will leave at 8:30. Meet behind

Albertsons. Most times we will be back in time for a late lunch. To confirm contact Mark Dunham: medunham2@msn.com, (505) 795-0199 near event time.

Saturday, April 15: Moderate hike up the lower Rio en Medio near Tesuque past many waterfalls and cascades, about 7 miles and 1,800 feet of elevation gain, a few steep/loose spots and water crossings, two to three dogs OK. Tobin Oruch: (505) 690-6253 or tobin.oruch@yahoo.com.

Saturday, April 15: Easy walk in the Bosque, 1.5 to 2 hours. Meet at 10:30 a.m. at the Pueblo Montañero Open Space parking lot (a block east of Coors on the south side of Montañero, entrance to the Bosque School). Leader will read selected passages from Aldo Leopold's "Sand County Almanac." Peter Kelling: cloud-sandwater@juno.com.

Sunday, April 16: Hyde Park Circle and waterfall. Easy loop hike: 4 miles 1,200 foot. Alan Shapiro: (505) 424-9242, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Continued on Page 15

About our 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 for up-to-date information and new hikes.

Our Northern New Mexico Group's **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 with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS.