



Save our monuments

New Mexico's Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains Desert Peaks are on Trump's chopping block. Read Pages 8 and 9 by July 10 to defend them.



Eliza Kretzmann

Doña Ana County's Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument, above, has increased visitorship by more than 100 percent and infused millions of tourism dollars into the local economy since its 2014 designation.

Fish & Wildlife releases wolf-management plan

After 35 years and a court order, the federal agency has issued its recovery plan for endangered wolves, and it's ... not so heavy on the recovery part. To find out what you can do to protect our Mexican gray wolf, please see **Page 5**.




Let's give kids the chance to lead on climate

The terrific kids of Global Warming Express are teaming up with the Sierra Club to expand their award-winning after-school science and civics program. Chip in to help every kid who wants to jump on board. **Page 4**.



EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET



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More inside:

No boreholes for Otero Mesa ... for now

The Department of Energy withdrew its grant offer for a three-mile-deep hole as a test for storage of radioactive waste. **Page 3**

Wildlife photography: Just do it

With the dawn of the "delete" button, just getting outside with your camera can lead to some magnificent shots. **Page 5**

Spanish-language hikes

Cecilia Chávez Beltrán joins the Rio Grande Chapter to coordinate Spanish-language outings. **Page 11**

More: Victories for climate-saving rules: Page 6. **El Paso Group:** Page 10. **Central Group:** Page 11. **Zero Waste Team:** Page 12. **Pajarito Group:** Page 14. **Hikes:** Pages 15 and 16

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Volunteer opportunities

We're looking for outings leaders as well as other volunteers for our new Inspiring Connections Outdoors program. Please contact Ray Greenwell at matrng@hofstra.edu if you're interested. Contact Odile de la Beaujardiere at odile@pitot.org to volunteer for our regular outings program.

July/August/September 2017

Sandoval splits county oil and gas rules

By Miya King-Flaherty
Chapter Public Lands fellow

Sandoval County has finally published a draft oil and gas ordinance, and it lays out different requirements for different parts of the county, with public input given short shrift no matter where you live.

The county has been eyeing an oil and gas ordinance since an application by SandRidge Energy Inc. to drill for oil near Rio Rancho city limits in late 2015 raised residents' awareness of the threat of drilling.

Sandridge eventually withdrew its application, but citizen groups exposed Sandoval County's lack of ordinances addressing oil and gas operations in the county — meaning there are no safeguards in place to protect county water, roads, cultural resources, property values or health should a company want to drill in Sandoval.

Protect Sandoval from fracking

Please attend the Sandoval County Planning and Zoning meeting at 6 p.m. July 11 at the County Administration Building. County and P and Z commissioners need to hear from residents that any oil and gas ordinance should include air, water and health protections and should require adequate public notice and input. To join our Sandoval action listserv or for more information, write to riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org.

The County Planning and Zoning Commission had been developing a draft ordinance written by staff with very little expertise, knowledge or experience with the oil and gas industry,

technology or impacts. Citizens have spoken up at recent Planning and Zoning and County Commission meetings about the draft, which had not been made public (it was released through a Freedom of Information Act request). At the June 15 County Commission meeting, tribal partners expressed their concerns about the lack of consultation with pueblos and recommended that commissioners meet with the All-Pueblo Council of Governors. Chairman Chapman and Commissioner Block agreed to a meeting with the Council. The county finally made public a draft ordinance on its website in late June. According to the draft, applications for oil and gas exploration and drilling in Northwest Sandoval would go through only an administrative review — meaning the director of Planning and Zoning

has the authority to approve all permits. If the draft is adopted, those in northwest Sandoval would not be notified of any potential oil and gas activity and would have no opportunity to comment about proposed permits. The draft does require permit requests for oil production in southeast Sandoval to be approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission, requiring public notice and a hearing. However, requests for exploration permits would go through only the administrative process. The draft also omits any requirement for companies to conduct environmental impact assessments before drilling. Now is the time to meet with commissioners, speak up at public meetings and act. Contact riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org if you'd like to get involved. There is still time to ensure resource protections and public health safeguards for Sandoval County.



Photo courtesy San Juan Citizens Alliance

Public Service Company of New Mexico and Tucson Electric Power both have announced they would exit their stakes in Northern New Mexico's Four Corners Power Plant in 2031.

Otero Mesa bore hole defunded

By Dan Lorimier, Chapter conservation coordinator

Many Otero County residents breathed a sigh of relief in May when the U.S. Department of Energy withdrew its proposal to drill a 3-mile borehole in Otero Mesa to research the storage of radioactive waste.

The DOE had identified five potential sites for its test site, one in Otero County. The other possible locations were in Quay County, New Mexico, Pecos County, Texas, and two South Dakota counties.

The test would require drilling a 8.5-inch-diameter hole down 16,000 feet. If that were successful, they would attempt an 18-inch hole — also 3 miles deep. The object of drilling the larger borehole would be to determine if the hole is straight enough to accept nuclear waste canisters all the way down.

While the promoters of the project (TerranearPMC, the developers of the drilling technique) said it was only a test, would be fully remediated and would never be used for the storage of actual radioactive waste, their assertions were widely questioned. The location in southeast Otero County is privately owned.

Activists, believing the environmental and cultural impacts on Otero Mesa and concerned that despite promises, the "test" site would end up being a nuclear-waste disposal site, filled the Otero County Commission Chambers for the April and May meetings to voice their concerns.

Then, on May 23, the U.S. Department of Energy announced that it will no longer support the Deep Borehole Field Test nationwide due to constraints in President Trump's 2018 budget proposal.

This is not likely to spell the permanent end to the borehole test in Otero County. Peter Gram of TerranearPMC, quoted in the Alamogordo Daily News, said "I believe it will happen. It's just a matter of the timing of it."

PNM plans 2031 coal exit

By Mona Blaber Rio Grande Chapter communications director

On the heels of announcements that coal-fired Navajo Generating Station and San Juan Generating Station would likely close by 2022, Public Service Company of New Mexico has now announced it plans to exit its stake in Four Corners Power Plant in 2031, 10 years early.

"PNM's announcement that exiting San Juan and Four Corners coal plants will save customers money is a clear demonstration that coal is no longer economically sustainable," said Rio Grande Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman.

The announcement came as part of PNM's release of its long-term Integrated Resource Plan. The company stressed that the economic conditions that were driving the decision could change.

Several Sierra Club Rio Grande

Chapter volunteer leaders have been attending PNM's Integrated Resource Plan meetings — a process that allows the public to comment on the utility's plans for its resource mix. And a team of Sierra Club volunteers has been working on a model that shows San Juan's coal power can be replaced almost entirely with renewable energy. The team presented their model to the Public Regulation Commission in May.

Earlier this spring, owners of Arizona's Navajo Generating Station coal plant announced that the plant was uneconomical and that they would shutter it this year — but a new lease with the Navajo Nation has extended the plant's life to 2019, when owners still plan to retire it.

Soon after, PNM, which operates San Juan coal plant, announced that it would likely retire San Juan's remaining two units in 2022, when coal and ownership contracts expire.

Then in late April, PNM released its draft Integrated Resource Plan and

announced its plan to be coal-free by 2031. The company said the economics of coal no longer make sense, with cheaper natural gas and plunging renewable-energy prices.

However, PNM stressed that neither decision is final, and 2031 is a long way away.

The Sierra Club agreed to a settlement in PNM's current rate case in part because PNM agreed to analyze a 2024 and 2028 exit from Four Corners in its next Integrated Resource Planning process. PNM also agreed to structure Four Corners' depreciation to make it easier to retire the plant by 2031.

"The Four Corners' vast solar potential and massive transmission network can create clean-energy jobs and provide affordable, reliable energy to the region," Feibelman said. "That will require immediate and thoughtful action from PNM, the state and other local stakeholders."

For more information, contact riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org.

Children show how to lead: with joy

When you are one year old, the world makes you happy. Blades of grass are fascinating. Soil is mesmerizing. Mulch is tasty. People are



Camilla Feibelman,
Rio Grande
Chapter director

good and make you smile. Crawling gets you pretty much everywhere you want to be. Empathy emerges. My little guy tried to feed me for the first-time last week. I'd offer him some cut up blueberry and then he'd offer me some. His first word, besides mamamamama and papapapapapa, is agua. He loves to splash, drink, and try to catch a flow in his hand. The small people of this earth have a tendency toward cheer and optimism.

Take for example Marina Weber and her good friend Joanna Whysner. At 10 years old, Marina, now 14, and Joanna founded the Global Warming Express,

an afterschool program in Santa Fe and Albuquerque that provides kids with the science and civics foundations to take real action to curb global climate change.

The Sierra Club and Global Warming Express are joining forces to help expand the after-school program this fall (and we need your help — please see Marina's note below). The two girls have also written a book about a magic train powered by positive thinking that takes animals impacted by global warming (and the two girls) to Washington DC to act (to receive a signed copy of the book, make your \$150 donation at <http://sc.org/GlobalWarmingExpress>).

And yet there are those who act not in the interest of children and future generations but in the interest of their own profit. They seem not to know (or care) that each second of a child's life is precious. And each risk to a child's health is magnified in the tiny cells of their little bodies. In its public notice delaying the rule that would capture methane and other toxic chemicals from oil and gas wells, the EPA wrote,

“the environmental health or safety risk addressed by this action may have a disproportionate effect on children.” They continued, “Any impacts on children's health caused by the delay in the rule will be limited, because the length of the proposed stay is limited (two years).” But of course, the object of the two-year stay is to dismantle the rule that would protect the air kids breathe.

It is hard to read such cynical words. The idea that any agency or administrator whose job is to protect the public and the environment would choose private companies' profits from extraction of a publicly owned resource over the health of our kids is too much to bear. In a bit of good news, an appeals court ruled on July 3rd that an EPA effort to stay the methane rules for 90 days while working on the two-year stay was arbitrary and capricious and that the agency must implement the rule even as it works to dismantle it (see Page 6).

In another piece of good news, two Sierra Club interns Cherry Dzur, 17, and Sierra Tyrell, 14, are part of

a group of 28 young people filing a petition for rule-making with the New Mexico Environment Department. The petition follows a court ruling in a case in which Our Children's Trust sought to require New Mexico to limit greenhouse-gas emissions because of the damages caused by climate change. The court's ruling required Our Children's Trust to start with the Environment Department, and so again the youth are leading the way.

As a new mom, I find my heart softened, even with all the bad news, and my mind yearning for action, even when the remedies aren't clear. Sometimes I want to make the bad news stop, to turn it all off, but then I think about my little Rafael, and Marina, and Joanna and Cherry and Sierra and all the other kids out there who aren't quitting, who are just starting the long road of doing good for future generations.

They do it with joy, wonder, empathy and cheer, and I know that if we join them in that, we'll overcome the odds.



Global Warming Express participants take a break at the Roundhouse, where they regularly testify, lobby legislators and speak about policies to fight climate disruption.

Activism by kids, for kids

By Marina Weber
Global Warming Express

My best friend Joanna and I started The Global Warming Express five years ago, when we were in fourth grade at Acequia Madre Elementary School in Santa Fe.

I was lucky enough to meet with Dr. James Hansen, the famous climate scientist, that spring, and talking with him inspired me to continue to make The Global Warming Express a by-kids/for-kids movement. Dr. Hansen said, “Marina, tell all the kids NOT to be afraid of global warming.”

We have grown from one after-school group with 10 kids to after-school groups all over Santa Fe and Albuquerque and outreach programs in other parts of the country. We have spoken at EPA hearings in Denver, gotten our old elementary school solarized, testified multiple times at City Hall and the Legislature, and even marched in the New York City

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Help more kids hop on board

Award-winning New Mexico kids program Global Warming Express is teaming up with the Sierra Club to bring the GWE after-school science and civics program to all schools on the waiting list. We need to raise \$35,000 by July 21. Contact camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org to attend the fundraiser at Hotel Santa Fe, or donate at sc.org/GlobalWarmingExpress.

climate march. With our sister group Go Green, we helped pass Santa Fe's plastic-bag ban.

We kids are not afraid. We are mad and sad and determined to do whatever we can, but we are NOT afraid.

Our world is in such a worse state than it was five years ago, and time is passing fast. We need to work harder now to slow down global warming for generations to come. I want MY children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to have a liveable future without having to worry as much as I do about the planet.

Now we have an opportunity to partner with Sierra Club to keep building our organization and inspiring people with more after-school groups and more

and more kids!

Do you know that oil companies are putting books into public schools to convince children that fossil fuels are good, and the Koch brothers are sending out fake news to science teachers? When I heard this, I was so surprised and shocked... and these are just some of the terrible things that are happening.

This is why it is so important for our organizations to work together and not separately. I am asking you to please help us to collaborate, to provide children with the proper climate and sustainability education and help them have their voices be heard. Please see the box for details on how to help.

Chapter executive committee

From overextended activists to those on the first few rungs up the activist ladder, the Rio Grande Chapter seeks members interested in serving on the chapter board.

The executive committee, which meets four times a year, usually at Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge facility, weighs in on the chapter's priorities and helps deliver results in each priority.

If you are a current Sierra Club member and are interested in running for a position on the executive committee, contact Ken Hughes at b1family@comcast.net.

Our favorite views

We're starting a new feature for the Sierran: "My Favorite View."

The Sierra Club was founded on enjoyment and exploration of the outdoors, so throughout this issue and others, you'll find some of our volunteer leaders' favorite outdoor experiences. Most will feature photos, but this one, from Central New

Mexico Chair Fred Houdek, features a memory:

"When thinking of my favorite sight, I couldn't help but think of all the great sights my wife and I shared with our children while on road trips across the country. We found the joy of what they experienced as memorable as the sights themselves."

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Wolf plan a path to extinction

By Mary Katherine Ray
Rio Grande Chapter
Wildlife chair

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was required last year by court order to produce a new wolf-recovery plan to update the one that has been in place since 1982.

The new draft was released to the public on June 29. Now that the agency is under the Trump Administration, it appears be bowing to pressure from wolf opponents and detractors.

The new draft concedes authority to the states of New Mexico, Arizona and the country of Mexico to "determine the timing, location and circumstances of releasing wolves into the wild within their respective states."

The Fish and Wildlife Service gave the states just such control for several years, and the result was a steep downward trajectory for the wild wolf population. Genetically valuable wolves were shot, and wolves were removed from the wild, swamping the captive population and resulting in irretrievable harm.

In 2002, the population was on schedule to meet the goal of 100 wolves in the wild by 2006. But in 2003, the Fish and Wildlife Service formed the Adaptive Management Oversight Committee, or AMOC, that included the state game agencies of New Mexico and Arizona and gave them veto power



Photo courtesy Fish and Wildlife Service

The Fish and Wildlife Service's draft plan for wolf recovery puts management authority in the hands of the states, a policy that produced disastrous results a few years ago.

over measures necessary for wolf recovery. Four years later, there were only 52 wolves in the wild. Fish and Wildlife dissolved the committee in 2009, by which time there were only 42 wolves in the wild. After that, the population rose again, finally reaching 100 in 2015.

A team consisting of scientists and other stakeholders was assembled to draft a recovery plan in 2011, but the process was abruptly abandoned because of political interference. The scientists leaked their recommendations that for success there should be a minimum population of 750 wolves in three

separate but connected subpopulations with no subpopulation having less than 200 wolves. The new draft document allows for only 320 wolves in the U.S. and 170 in Mexico (how the U.S. can direct a foreign government to restore or restrict wolves is not clear).

The states have repeatedly acted to thwart wolf recovery. Their governors have insisted that it take place mainly in Mexico and that no wolves be allowed in the Grand Canyon ecosystem or north of I-40. New Mexico denied the release of captive wolves into the wild until overruled by the courts.

Defend wolves

Fish and Wildlife Service public

meetings: 6-9 p.m. July 20, Ralph Edwards Auditorium, Civic Center, 400 W. Fourth, Truth or Consequences.

2-5 p.m. July 22, Crowne Plaza Albuquerque, 1901 University Blvd, NE, Albuquerque.

Submit a comment: Go to www.regulations.gov and enter FWS-R2-ES-2017-0036.

Comments must be submitted by Aug. 30.

For more information and a link to the plan, please go to riograndesierraclub.org/wolf-plan.

The draft plan also fails to consider the best available science — as is mandated — when it comes to how many wolves are needed to adequately function in their role in the ecosystem. And it forbids allowing wolves into the Grand Canyon or Big Bend eco-regions, where there is ample habitat and they have historically been present.

The 60-day comment period includes public meetings. Two of the public meetings will be in New Mexico on July 20 and 22. Please mark your calendars now to attend. See box for details. Or submit a comment online. See details in the box above. For more information, please go to riograndesierraclub.org.

Wildlife photography: Cherish what we have

By Mary Katherine Ray
Chapter Wildlife chair

What to do outside this summer? Take pictures!

With the advent of "super-zoom" cameras, which are small enough to take everywhere, easy to hold and have an astonishing capacity to zoom in on faraway subjects, wildlife photography is within reach of anyone.

Being in nature with a camera enriches the experience. You will find yourself looking for the bird making that noise, and once you take his picture, you'll have a record to help find out just what bird it was, then you'll want to know more about him.

Here are some tips for taking wildlife pictures:

1. Take a lot of pictures. In the digital age, pressing the shutter button costs nothing! Even if you think they are all alike, some will be in focus and some won't. Some will have a better pose, all in the space of a few seconds. It's easy to delete the ones that are less than stellar.
2. Move quietly and patiently. Be respectful of wildlife and don't get too close. Let the telephoto do that for you.
3. If your subject will hold still, try a lot of different compositions. Be sure not to put your subject in the very center of the frame. It makes



Top left: A red-faced warbler foils the photographer. **Bottom left:** Be patient and keep trying. That red-faced warbler might just decide to cooperate. **Right:** You never know what you might see, so you'll be glad you had your camera! This cougar was on the tour loop at the Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge. (Photos by Mary Katherine Ray)



the picture more visually interesting if he is off center and above or below the midline. You can also use a photo-editing program to crop the picture afterwards so the subject is not in the very middle of the frame. If you are close enough to fill the frame, you can think of the eyes as the focal point. Make sure they are not in that bull's eye center.

4. Once you get used to using the camera, get off of the automatic settings. You can set the camera manually to better capture extreme light conditions — such as a bright subject against a dark background — that the camera will otherwise overexpose, or for low light or for motion. The faster the shutter speed, the crisper the picture of a moving object.

5. Learn to use a photo-editing program to adjust the exposure later. Digital photography is very forgiving, and you can make changes back at home! Plus, by editing pictures, you can relive the pleasure of your outing all over again. You might be surprised to see things you didn't notice while in the field. Just what is that flycatcher eating? Is that kestrel

- missing a toe?
5. If you want wildlife pictures, you have to be where wildlife is! Get outside. Early in the day is best, especially when it's hot later. Open your senses and see what treasures you can find. It might be a charismatic large mammal or it might be a lizard, a bird, a beetle or a butterfly. Let nature surprise you with her gifts.

Big victory for climate standards

By Camilla Feibelman
Rio Grande Chapter director

Seems like capturing leaked or vented natural gas from oil and gas wells would be pretty straightforward.

This is the same gas that private companies drill for and are trying to sell, but when it comes in the form of a regulation, the answer from industry is "no."

The day after a letter from industry asking EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to revoke his agency's methane-reduction safeguards from the last administration, he announced that he would put a stay on the rules and reconsider them.

But on July 3, in a win for children's health and climate protection, a federal appeals court in Washington D.C. blocked Pruitt, allowing EPA standards to go forward.

The court ruled that the agency illegally implemented a 90-day stay of the rule while opening a comment period on a two-year stay, intending to essen-

tially remove the rule.

The order means that oil and gas companies must comply with Clean Air Act protections issued last year to monitor their facilities for leaks of methane and other dangerous pollutants, and to fix leaks they find within 30 days. The court rejected the Trump EPA's attempt to suspend the June 2 compliance date. The industry will now have to comply.

Methane is the main component of natural gas and is a potent greenhouse gas that traps 80 times more heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide.

A 2016 poll by Colorado College's State of the Rockies Project found that 76 percent of Republicans in Western states — and nearly 80 percent of all registered voters in Western states— support common-sense rules that cut natural-gas waste on public lands.

EPA has admitted that staying these requirements would have disproportionately negative impacts on children's health. In its public notice delaying the rule, the EPA wrote, "the environmental

A federal appeals court and the U.S. Senate have both upheld Obama-era efforts to reduce methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

health or safety risk addressed by this action may have a disproportionate effect on children."

The agency claimed that "any impacts on children's health caused by the delay in the rule will be limited, because the length of the proposed stay is limited."

New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas joined 14 other attorneys general around the country to defend the EPA methane rule by threatening to sue if the rule was not implemented. Balderas has also defended a second rule implemented by the Bureau

of Land Management that would apply to both existing and new wells on public lands, while the EPA rule applies only to new and modified wells (though on both public and private lands).

The BLM also announced in June that it would suspend key parts of its rule, on the heels of a failed attempt in the U.S. Senate to eliminate it. All Democrats were joined by three Republicans in defeating a Congressional Review Act resolution that would have eliminated the methane-waste rule *and* prevented similar rules from ever being issued. This vote was a victory for grassroots activism and Trump's first major legislative loss.

After this loss for industry lobbyists, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke had the nerve to tell Congress he would implement the rule while reevaluating it at almost the same moment his lawyers filed in a Wyoming court to stay the central pieces of the rule. As the administration keeps attacking these common-sense safeguards, we'll keep defending them.

BLM releases Chaco report

By Miya King-Flaherty
Chapter Public Lands fellow

As oil and gas development continue to encroach on the Greater Chaco landscape, progress is happening to mitigate the impacts of fracking.

On June 5, the Bureau of Land Management's Farmington Field Office and Bureau of Indian Affairs released their final "Scoping" report outlining their plans for evaluating alternatives to address fracking impacts not analyzed in the 2003 Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impacts Statement.

During the five-month "scoping" period, which started in October 2016 and ended in February, the agencies received more than 15,000 comments opposing fracking in Northern New Mexico's culturally rich and sacred greater Chaco region, including thousands from Sierra Club activists.

Most of the comments demanded protections related to air, soil and water, cultural resources, climate change, recreation, night-sky quality, tribal interests and trust responsibilities, public health and safety, and geology and seismic activity.

The next phase of the process is for the BLM and BIA to incorporate the identified issues into preferred alternatives in the Resource Management Plan amendment and draft Environmental Impact Statement. The agencies anticipate a draft Environmental Impact Statement in the fall of 2018, followed by a public-comment period. This will be another opportunity to weigh in on the management and development of resources for communities in Greater Chaco.

The Counselor Health Impact Assessment Committee continues to make progress on the Community Health Impact Report that so far includes air monitoring, water-sampling analysis, and testimonies collected from impacted community



Rebecca Sobel/WildEarth Guardians

The Indigenous Youth Council held an awareness run in June to call attention to the health effects of fracking and call on the BLM to discontinue approval of new wells until its planning process for the region is completed.

members. The report will go to the BLM and BIA ahead of the draft Environmental Impact Statement release and offer recommendations for minimizing health impacts and addressing key negative findings spurred by fracking.

The BLM's Farmington Field Office has said it will consider findings from the community health impact report, and we are hopeful that they keep their promise. However, the Department of Interior in late June announced that Farmington Field Office Director Amy Leuders was one of dozens of Interior officials being reassigned. The Chaco Coalition, of which the Rio Grande Chapter is a member, will continue to communicate our message loud and clear to any new officials at the office.

In April, Kendra Pinto, Twin Pines resident and Counselor Health Impact Assessment Committee member, collected three air samples, including one near Lybrook Elementary School, along U.S. 550. The well-site near the school is on state land. Analysis from this site revealed levels of hydrogen sulfide that are above the EPA reference concentration level for preventing health risks. Hydrogen sulfide is commonly emitted by natural-gas wells and possesses a potent odor of rotten eggs. Studies have found that long-term exposure is associated with elevated incidences of respiratory infections, irritation of the eyes and nose, cough, breathlessness, nausea, headache, and mental symptoms.

The committee notified state Land Commissioner Aubrey Dunn of the elevated levels of hydrogen sulfide and potential health hazards. The committee also asked for the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division to schedule an inspection. To date, nothing has happened to remediate the reported levels of hydrogen sulfide.

Pinto also testified before a U.S. House Natural Resources subcommittee on the importance of methane regulations (see article above).

Go to www.facebook.com/FrackOffChaco/ to watch her testimony.



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

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EPA move endangers drinking water

By Rachel Conn, Amigos Bravos projects director

On June 27, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt started the process to repeal the Clean Water Rule, putting the sources of drinking water for more than 117 million Americans at risk and increasing threats to streams and wetlands that filter pollution and provide habitat for wildlife.

The Trump Administration has once again proved it only cares about one thing — putting polluters first. Repealing the Clean Water Rule puts the drinking water for hundreds of thousands of New Mexicans at risk.

The Clean Water Rule is a common-sense safeguard for the streams that

New Mexico communities rely on to irrigate our fields, provide clean water to drink, and create vital wildlife habitat.

The federal Clean Water Act, passed in 1972, has guided the transition from rivers that literally caught on fire to healthy watersheds where species like the bald eagle once again thrive. This is the legislation that requires wastewater and industrial facilities to clean water before discharging into rivers.

Supreme Court decisions in 2001 and 2006 made Clean Water Act protections for some waters that historically had been covered, such as those that flow intermittently, uncertain. Because more than 90% of rivers and streams in New Mexico are classified as ephemeral or intermittent, many New Mexico water-

EPA estimates that at least 280,000 people in New Mexico receive drinking water from sources protected by the rule that the Trump EPA wants to repeal.

ways lost protection. The Clean Water Rule, finalized by EPA in 2015, clarifies that some of the rivers, streams, and wetlands that fell through the cracks in the post-2001 confusion are indeed protected. On June 27, the Trump Administration started the process to repeal those protections, putting these smaller waters once again at risk.

This rulemaking is especially harmful

to New Mexico because, unlike other states, New Mexico does not have a state regulatory structure in place to control discharges into our rivers and streams, so when federal protections are removed, New Mexico's waters are left high and dry.

Twenty percent of animal species in New Mexico utilize ephemeral and/or intermittent waters, including 24 species that have been identified by the state as "Species of Greatest Conservation Need."

EPA estimates that at least 280,000 people in the state receive drinking water from ephemeral and/or intermittent sources.



Photo by John Buchser

Water from the Gold King Mine is treated at a remediation site. EPA research has found that water in the area is safe except for after large summer storms. Sierra Club-funded research shows high E-coli levels in the Animas River.

Animas levels, two years later

By John Buchser
Chapter Water chair

An unplanned release of 3 million gallons of water from the Gold King Mine over its mine tailings in August 2015 caused a pulse of pollutants that turned the Animas River yellow.

After mining in the last of the 5,500 mines in the Silverton area ceased in 1991, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency compiled a full-time team of scientists to evaluate the situation. A federal \$3 million fund helped fund researchers from major universities in the area. In 2012, the Sierra Club used \$8 million from a successful coal-ash lawsuit to reduce coal ash in the San Juan River and study pollution in the San Juan.

Last summer and again this summer, researchers presented their results at a two-day conference in Farmington, followed by a tour of the Animas River up to the headwaters.

The news was mostly good for downstream farmers: The only time the water is not safe to use (following the initial spring runoff) is when large storms wash

sediments in the Animas River downstream into the San Juan River and subsequently into Lake Powell.

So by closing headgates on ditch systems when the water is extremely murky from storms, these pollutants (mainly lead exceeds safe levels, and not by much) can largely be avoided. That's also good news for consumers: The produce from the region will not be contaminated.

The safety of the water is also heavily impacted by septic systems within the shallow aquifer along the Animas between Durango and Farmington.

Testing for E-coli, an indicator of micro-organism pollution that will cause problems in humans, was in extreme excess on the Animas. The beginnings of the solution have started, with improved regulation of septic pumping companies by New Mexico's San Juan County (only two of 18 were licensed). Tying regional houses into Farmington's septic system is also underway. But no progress on the biggest e-coli contributor: cows. Big storms cause runoff from fields into the river. Each storm's murk-

iness hides a huge health risk.

The pulse of water from the Gold King Mine had an upside. The EPA had not declared any of the mines in the Silverton area as Superfund sites, about the only opportunity to really address the problem. This was due mainly to concern from Silverton citizens, who had built an economy based on tourism after the mining bust. The EPA has in its preliminary evaluation 47 mines that qualify for Superfund attention.

It's a huge problem without a solution: The EPA is spending \$1 million a year to treat the water continuing to exit Level 7 of the 18-level Gold King Mine. The Gold King pulse represents just four days' worth of polluted water coming year-round into the Animas River. So we, the public, pay for the profits reaped by the mining companies. Attempts over the years to reform the lack of royalty money by finally updating the 1872 Mining Act have failed.

In the meantime, it looks like the public will be spending on the order of \$100 million a year forever — assuming it keeps raining and snowing on those beautiful mountains.

States will suffer from EPA cuts

By Phil Carter
For years, federal agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have relied on independent advisory councils to guide policy-making. These advisory councils, made up of professional scientists, are entrusted with ensuring policy is scientifically valid.

However, federal scientific integrity and independence was dealt a major blow in May. Early in the month, the Environmental Protection Agency dismissed at least half of its Board of Scientific Counselors with the intent of replacing the scientist board members with industry representatives.

An EPA spokesman said the council shakeup is intended to give voice to regulated industry, confirming the agency's new approach in undermining independent scientific oversight.

"This is completely part of a multifaceted effort to get science out of the way of a deregulation agenda," said Ken Kimmell, president of the Union of Concerned Scientists, to the *New York Times*.

The dismissal of scientists from the EPA coincides with major financial and staff cuts proposed by the White House executive budget. Released in March, the Trump budget includes \$2.4 billion in cuts to the EPA, a 31% reduction in funding, and cuts to more than 3,200 staff. While Congress passed a continuing resolution in May to fund the federal government at current levels through September, these

To learn more about keeping a strong EPA budget, go to www.facebook.com/friendsofEPA.

proposed budget cuts are still on the table for the new budget cycle beginning Oct. 1.

Roughly half of the EPA's budget is routed through state governments. According to the New Mexico Auditor, New Mexico Environment Department received more than \$21.5 million from the EPA in 2016.

Of that, more than half was used to support New Mexico's Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund, Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund, and supervision of state public water systems. Additional Environment Department initiatives threatened by EPA budget cuts include air-pollution control. The EPA also heavily funds hazardous-waste management, including toxic chemical spills and leaking underground storage tanks.

This is likely just the beginning of the attacks on scientific oversight of federal environmental policy. Now the environmental community and our allies must argue to maintain independent science and robust funding as part of environmental policy-making.

You can fight back against these assaults on the health of you and your community. Contact your representative and senators and ask him or her to oppose the EPA budget cuts in the federal funding bill.

New N.M. monuments threatened

By **Mona Blaber**
Communications
coordinator

When President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing the Interior Department to "review," and quite possibly reduce or eliminate, 27 national monuments that were designated in the past 20 years, the same diverse and wide-ranging coalition that advocated for the monument sprang to action to defend it.

The establishment of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument was the culmination of years of public outreach and community participation, and overwhelming support from the Taos community, including ranchers and sportsmen, land grant heirs and acequia associations, local outfitters and guides, as well as local and tribal governments.

Rio Grande del Norte is also supported by the congressional representative, Ben Ray Luján, who represents the district that holds the monument. That gives it an advantage over Organ Mountains Desert Peaks, which U.S. Rep. Steve Pearce has been trying to undermine since before its designation.

But despite all that local support, Rio Grande del Norte still landed on the chopping block of the Western Congressional Caucus, a group of Republican congressional representatives, 17 of whom signed a letter recommending that both of New Mexico's recently designated national monuments be reduced in size.



Photos courtesy Bureau of Land Management

Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, above and below, enjoys strong community support in part because it offers such a large array of recreational activities and wildlife.

In Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, hundreds of species of migratory birds fly over the land, and the rivers are filled with bass and indigenous fish. These lands are also home to hundreds of years of cultural sites.

U.S. Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich and U.S. Reps. Luján and Michelle Lujan Grisham sent a letter to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who will make final recommendations about the 27 monuments under review.

The lawmakers' letter expressed their strong support for Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains Desert Peaks national monuments:

"The Rio Grande del Norte National Monument is at



the heart of one of the oldest continually inhabited landscapes in North America. For over 10,000 years this extraordinary landscape of deep gorges, wild rivers, hot springs, and volcanic cones shaped the diverse ecological systems and human cultures that remain present today," the

lawmakers said. "Rescinding or shrinking to New Mexico's national monuments will cause irrevocable harm to our treasured places, would jeopardize the objects and special values that are protected through the Antiquities Act, and impact positive economic growth in local

Comment by July 10

Go to sc.org/NMmonuments to submit a personalized comment, or **mail your comment** to Monument Review, MS-1530, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC, 20240.

Comments MUST be postmarked or submitted online by 11:59 p.m. July 10. For more information, search DOI-2017-0002 on [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).

communities," the letter said.

The delegation also asked Zinke to extend the 120-day review period the Interior secretary imposed, saying "The comment period, which relies heavily on Internet access, puts Tribes and rural communities at a disadvantage because up to 80% of New Mexicans who live in Indian Country and rural areas do not have consistent access to broadband Internet."

The action by the Trump administration is deeply unpopular; the public overwhelmingly opposes attacks on national parks, public lands and waters.

In a 2017 poll conducted by Colorado College, 80% of western voters supported keeping protections for existing monuments in place.

Make sure your voice is heard. Please see the box on this page for details on how to comment by July 10. For more information, please go to riograndesierraclub.org.

Rio Grande Chapter submits letter to Secretary Zinke

On June 28, Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter Chair David Coss submitted a letter in support of preserving New Mexico's national monuments to Department of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. Below are some excerpts:

Dear Sir,

The Rio Grande Chapter has been representing close to 10,000 Sierra Club members from throughout New Mexico for the past 55 years. For 40 of those years, we have had the pleasure of collaborating with hundreds of businesses, organizations, local governments, tribal leaders and landowners to bring forward the designations of New Mexico's two most recent National Monuments: Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks in Doña Ana County and Rio Grande del Norte in Taos County.

The lands contained in these two stunning monuments are representative of much of New Mexico's stark landscape — arid, rugged, mountainous and timeless. They depict the natural history, wildlife, and cultures of the indigenous peoples, followed by the first Spanish colonists, and, finally American traders

and settlers. The success of these places is their landscape-level conservation, which will allow generations of Americans to witness a true Southwestern horizon of unchanged mountains and landmarks, wild river gorges and prehistoric petroglyphs, marking the thousands of years of human habitation against the backdrop of millions of years of geological time.

In a recent letter, State Land Commissioner Aubrey Dunn made several erroneous statements that should be examined.

1. State Land Office Commissioner letter excerpt:
- "As the State of New Mexico official entrusted with custody, control and management of 41,155 acres of state trust lands landlocked within the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument and 67,547 acres of state trust lands landlocked within the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National monument, I am writing to urge the Department of the Interior expedite completion of land exchanges allowing the state to trade out of those areas...."
- The small individual state land parcels

in the national monuments are not "landlocked" and have exactly the same access they had prior to monument designation. ...

Further, there has never been opposition by any groups to the exchange of "in-holdings" of state lands to better solidify monument boundaries. In fact, community and conservation groups strongly advocate for the exchange of state trust lands out of national monuments to preserve the integrity of the monument AND to allow the state Land Office to secure lands outside the monument with higher revenue potential. Also, monument consultations with Mr. Dunn's predecessor, Commissioner Ray Powell resulted in state Land Office holdings being reduced from 108,015 acres to the current 67,547. Any further exchanges are the responsibility of Commissioner Dunn and the Land Office to initiate. ...

2. SLO Commissioner Letter Excerpt:

"With regard to the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument and the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, the designations have adversely affected the State of New

Mexico's use and enjoyment of tens of thousands of acres of state trust lands and essential associated revenues."

Livestock grazing permits were the sole use of the small state land parcels prior to designation for both monuments. The State Land Office reports that there were 33 grazing leases on state trust land within the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks Monument, prior to 2014, and all 33 leases remain with the exception of one lease, which has been expanded. By way of contrast to Mr. Dunn's claims of adverse impacts, the Rio Grande del Norte Summary of Economic Performance in the Surrounding Communities prepared by Headwaters Economics for the city of Taos shows a robust financial stimulus for the local economy with a significant real personal income growth of 38%, increase in service jobs of 11% and non-service jobs of 7% peaking at the time of the monument designation.

Taos Pueblo leaders summed it up at a recent rally for the Rio Grande del Norte: "This land is not a resource, it is the source."

Community rallies around OMDP

By Dan Lorimier
Chapter conservation coordinator

One of President Donald Trump's many executive orders threatens hundreds of thousands of acres of beauty and cultural heritage that New Mexicans have worked hard to protect. In response to Trump's April 26 executive order to review more than 20 years of national-monument designations, the Department of Interior is conducting a rushed public-comment period on whether 27 of our monuments should remain protected.

Comments are due by July 10. Please see the box on Page 8 to comment.

In New Mexico, Rio Grande del Norte in Northern New Mexico and Organ Mountains Desert Peaks in Southern New Mexico are threatened.

Both of these monuments are stunning landscapes, rich with culture and history, that are creating jobs by driving visitors to New Mexico from around the world.

The steep-sided crevices, canyons and spires of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks host breathtaking views, great recreation opportunities, archaeological sites and native plants and animals found nowhere else in the world.

President Obama's declaration of Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument in 2014 culminated a two-decade local effort by a wide range of Doña Ana County businesses, organizations and citizens, including the Sierra Club Southern New Mexico Group's action team.

The Las Cruces Sun-News estimated that the monument has generated between \$8 million and \$34 million for the local economy in just the three years since its designation.

Trump's executive order is part of an attempt by some lawmakers and the oil and gas industry to seize lands protected for public use and sell them off to private interests.

U.S. Rep. Steve Pearce and his benefactors in the ranching, developer and oil industries oppose the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks monument at its current size. Pearce sponsored wolf-in-sheep's-clothing legislation that would create a monument that is 80% smaller than the current monument.

These monuments are rare and unique public lands that have been



Lucas Herndon



Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument has generated between \$8 million and \$34 million for the Doña Ana County economy since 2014.

At left: The Las Cruces Sun-News front page after monument supporters packed a County Commission meeting in June.

protected for our children and grandchildren and all Americans to use and enjoy forever.

Department of Interior process

Secretary Zinke is required to give an interim report 45 days after the sign-

ing and a final report in 120 days (i.e. mid-August) with recommendations. The DOI put up a web-page for public comments on the various Monuments as part of the review. Public comments are open until July 10 and so far are overwhelmingly supportive of leaving our monuments alone.

Dramatic response

Within days of the executive order, there was a rally supporting the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks and Rio Grande del Norte intact. And after overflow crowds of citizens packed public meetings to speak up for monument protection, Doña Ana County Commission and Las Cruces City Council both passed resolutions in support of the current monument size for Organ Mountains Desert Peaks.

A strong coalition of local, regional and national organizations advocated tirelessly for the creation of New Mexico's national monuments and now for defending them. With strong participation by local Sierra Club activists, we are sending action alerts, tabling at many events and printing and distributing door hangers in an effort to educate the public about the comment process.

More than a million comments have been posted to the Interior Department website, and that number may double by the July 10 deadline. Please see the box on Page 8 for details on how to submit a comment. The Interior Department has said that every single comment will be read by a team of 20 staffers, and it said each comment will have an impact, as well as sheer numbers in favor or opposed.

Make no mistake — this comment period is just the first step in an attempt to dismantle America's national parks, public lands, and oceans. As we work together to resist the Trump administration's assault on our environment, we cannot allow a 120-day review to undermine our nation's long history of protecting the places that celebrate our historical, cultural, and natural heritage.

Our public lands belong in public hands, not private interests that want to mine, frack or drill away our special places. Take action today to make sure these natural and cultural wonders are protected for generations to come.

Washington State University agricultural extension agent and former coordinator of Keep Las Cruces Beautiful, beat his opponent 1,812 to 841. Fenske wants to address the problems climate change will foster with both flooding and intense drought. He also wants to educate the public about the best practices for sustainable farming and habitat restoration.

Volunteer leaders in the Rio Grande Chapter's Southern New Mexico Group worked hard to support these candidates and bring conservation voices back to a government body that is supposed to be focused on conservation.

Conservationists elected to soil and water board

Southern New Mexico Group

P.O. Box 735, Mesilla, NM 88046

Chair: Open

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

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

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

Howie Dash, Outings, howiedash@aol.com, 575-652-7550

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

The two candidates endorsed by the Sierra Club Southern New Mexico Group, Kevin Bixby and Craig Fenske, won their races for Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District by wide margins on May 2. The victories for Bixby and Fenske are also victories for conservation and common sense. Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District board members have been using their seats to promote a right-wing ideology that far exceeds the district's scope. The board has passed meaningless anti-conservation resolutions, including opposition to the Organ Mountain

Desert Peaks National Monument designation, wolf reintroduction (which is not even occurring in Doña Ana County) and the United Nations. But in the May elections, two candidates ran with the district's responsibility for managing and preserving soil and water in mind. In District 3, Bixby, an experienced conservationist who founded and directs the Southwest Environmental Center, beat Joe Delk by 521 votes to 285. Bixby plans to focus on implementing measures like harvesting rainwater and planting trees to conserve water and enhance the sustainability of Las Cruces. In District 4, Craig Fenske, a retired

Washington State University agricultural extension agent and former coordinator of Keep Las Cruces Beautiful, beat his opponent 1,812 to 841. Fenske wants to address the problems climate change will foster with both flooding and intense drought. He also wants to educate the public about the best practices for sustainable farming and habitat restoration. Volunteer leaders in the Rio Grande Chapter's Southern New Mexico Group worked hard to support these candidates and bring conservation voices back to a government body that is supposed to be focused on conservation.

Study boosts El Paso-Las Cruces rail

By Laurence Gibson
El Paso Group chair

Every few years we get our hopes up for commuter rail service between El Paso and Las Cruces. The latest discussion, supported by a very extensive study published in June, gives new impetus to regional light rail.

A 31-page study by the Chicago-based Center for Neighborhood Technology was funded through Las Cruces' South Central Regional Transit District with state funding from New Mexico Rep. Jeff Steinborn and other legislators.

Ngage New Mexico and the Empowerment Congress of Doña Ana County sponsored meetings in Anthony and Las Cruces, N.M., where folks were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the benefits of being able to commute via rail as opposed to driving.

One commuter estimated his savings could be \$13,000 a year. Another stressed the need to expand the El Paso end of the line eastward out of downtown El Paso to Horizon City. Still, most of the ridership would be from workers and students who currently use I-10. The numbers currently commuting are astounding and will only increase.



Photo courtesy South Central Regional Transit District

A commuter rail line between Las Cruces and El Paso would use existing tracks owned by Burlington Northern Santa Fe, which uses them only a few times a day.

The big question is, will we be proactive with light rail or simply keep adding lanes to I-10? The lure of personal transportation and Texas Department of Transportation's institutional momentum will be difficult to stop.

The South Central Regional Transit District currently runs bus service to area communities, connecting with local transit in El Paso and Las Cruces. Bus ridership is low, but the Center for Neighborhood Technology study estimates that rail would have between 5,500 and 9,200 passengers on an average work day. Operating costs typically range from \$15 to \$18 a day

for a one-way ride. Subsidies can be justified by economic development. Existing dual-rail systems are San Francisco to Seattle, Austin to San Antonio, and Albuquerque to Santa Fe.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe owns the track but uses it only a few times a day. The commuter rail service would require as many as four locomotive/car "sets." Used equipment would save quite a lot of upfront cost.

So Steinborn and the South Central Regional Transit District have done us a great service in commissioning this excellent new study from the Center for Neighborhood Technology. Let's see if we

El Paso Group Executive Committee

elpasosierraclub.org

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

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can get a step farther toward commuter rail for the El Paso-Las Cruces corridor. It will happen eventually.

Check out the study at: <http://bit.ly/EPlightrail>.

Tolbert returns to El Paso Group

Those who follow El Paso politics know how dysfunctional this last City Council was. So, following a crazy May election where most of the incumbents were either termed-out, thrown out, or quit, we were elated when our super-blogger (see elpasonaturally.blogspot.com) former El Paso Group vice-chair Jim Tolbert asked if we wanted him back. "You bet we do" was the obvious answer. Jim had resigned when he won the

District 3 seat several years ago to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest, since city council seems to be perpetually infected with such.

Anyway, Jim brings new energy as he returns. In addition to great perspective and new insight into city government, he heads up El Paso's great fall outings entity, Celebration of Our Mountains, as well as working with El Paso Solar Energy Association and Franklin Mountains Wilderness Alliance. In El Paso, Sierra Club is an umbrella for folks who narrow their focus with single-issue groups. We hope Jim will want to resume his work on replacing the ubiquitous plastic shopping bag with reuseable bags in El Paso. Welcome back, Jim!

New youth outings program here

By Raymond N. Greenwell,
Rio Grande Chapter Inspiring
Connections Outdoors chair

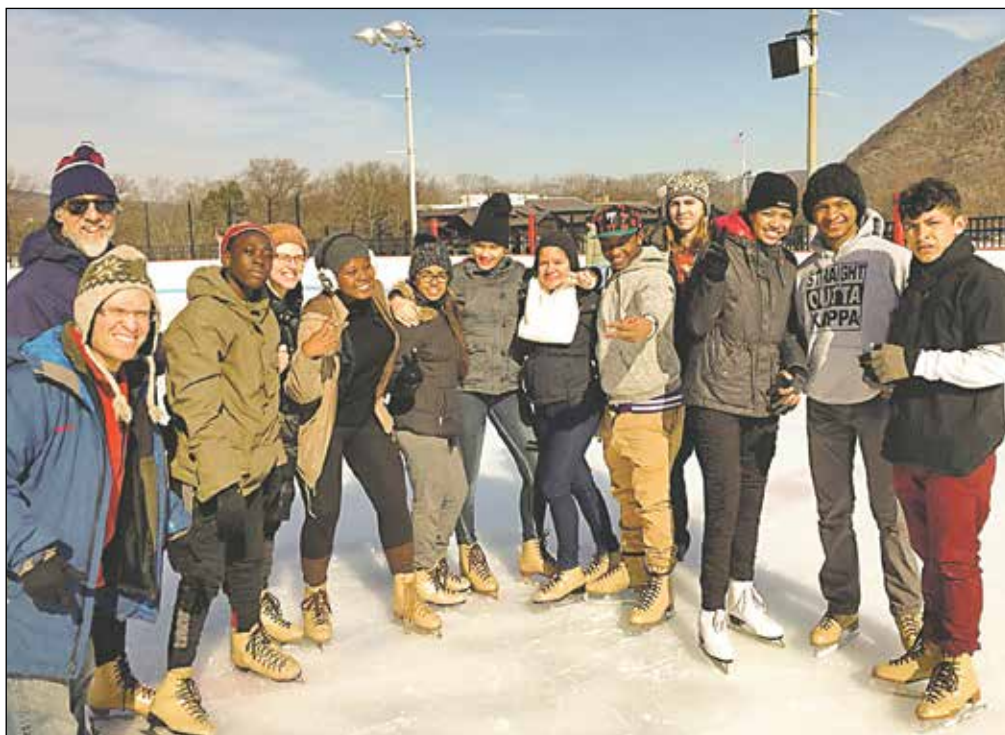
Sierra Club Inspiring Connections Outdoors is a community outreach program that provides opportunities for urban youth (and also adults) to explore, enjoy and protect the natural world.

Inspiring Connections Outdoors is dedicated to providing outdoor opportunities to people who would not otherwise have them, including low-income youth of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. ICO is made up entirely of volunteer leaders who work to provide young people with outdoor recreational opportunities, leadership training, positive group experiences, and environmental education, while imbuing in them a love of nature and the outdoors.

I have been leading trips with the New York City ICO group since 1984. Now that I live in Santa Fe, I'd like to start a group in the Santa Fe/Albuquerque area.

If you think you might be interested in helping out, contact me at matrng@hofstra.edu. To start, I need at least five dedicated individuals who can either serve as volunteer leaders on trips, fundraise, serve as treasurer, or manage a website.

The requirements to become a certified leader in the ICO program include first aid (usually for the wilderness), leadership training, and training in child-abuse recognition and prevention. However, to join trips as a volunteer, all that is needed is membership in the Sierra Club, filling



Ray Greenwell, second from left, ran the Inspiring Connections Outdoors program in New York and is ready to start it up in New Mexico. ICO gives kids who live in cities the opportunity to explore the natural world. Contact matrng@hofstra.edu for more info.

out a volunteer application, signing the ICO Code of Conduct, and attending a new volunteer orientation session.

ICO partners with schools or community agencies to make trips happen. The New York City ICO chapter works with eight different agencies. In recent years I worked with Ellis High School in the Bronx, where students from around the world were learning English as a second language. We did about eight trips a year, mostly day hikes, but also apple-picking,

rafting, orienteering, and ice skating at an outdoor rink in the mountains north of New York City.

There is already one ICO group in the Rio Grande Chapter — in El Paso, Texas. Led by Gloria Santellano, the group has provided outdoor activities for the Reynolds Home for women and children, as well as Girl Scouts.

For more information about the ICO program, visit <http://content.sierraclub.org/outings/ico>.

A heads-up to gardeners

An Albuquerque reader sent us this cautionary tale:

"A neighbor suggested I get manure for the garden from an alpaca farm a few miles from the house. So I got a pick-up truck full in March and worked it into the dirt. We planted our tomatoes, peppers, squash in May, and they all shriveled up in 2 weeks!

My wife researched the symptoms and called the county agent and state agriculture inspectors to come out for a look and tests. Turns out the manure was contaminated with an herbicide. Apparently some farmers who raise animal feed spray the fields with selective herbicides that will stay active for years, even being digested and passing through the animals. In fact it comes out concentrated in the manure! The remedy is to let the dirt set for a few years or remove the contaminated soil.

Same thing happened to my neighbor who recommended it, and other gardeners in the area. The state inspector said he has many complaints of herbicide-contaminated feed."

So be careful out there in your back yards!

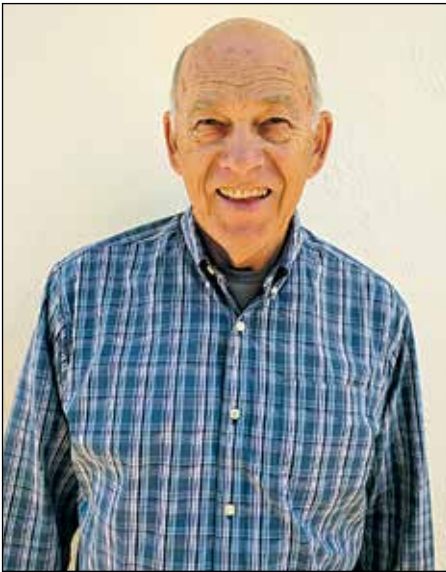
Volunteer profile: Karl Braithwaite

By Mona Blaber

Our featured volunteer this issue is Karl Braithwaite, the new chapter Conservation chair.

What do you do with the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter? My new assignment is to take over the Conservation Issues chair from Ken Hughes. That is an impossible task, since Ken has been doing a great job for years. But he chose to step down, and I will clearly need to rely on him a great deal. I also know that the issue-team chairs are very experienced, so I will rely on them. Prior to this position, I have been working with Robb Thomson and Mark Williams on the PNM Integrated Resource planning to assure that coal is phased out soon.

What's your background? I have a PhD in political science, three years on the faculty at Duke University, 10 years staffing the Environment Subcommittee in the U.S. Senate under Sen. Ed Muskie working on clean air, clean water, resource conservation, Superfund, etc. It was a great time to be there. Then 21 years at Los Alamos National laboratory as executive staff director, four years as



Karl Braithwaite replaces Ken Hughes as chair of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter's Conservation Committee.

dean of the Muskie School of Public Service in Maine, then 11 years heading the Government Relations office at Sandia National Laboratories. I retired in April 2016.

Why do you commit time to the environment? For my graduate work I

studied the behavior of scientists who were trying to warn the government about environmental problems they were seeing in the research. This was in the late 1960s and led me directly to environmental issues. Many scientists were stepping up to the responsibility of doing more than research; they saw that they had to inform government and the public. I was happy to be able to help translate that work into public policy.

Why did you pick the Sierra Club? When I retired from Sandia, I wanted to get into more direct environmental advocacy. I looked around and felt that the breadth and depth of the Sierra Club was unmatched. So I called up Camilla (Feibelman, our chapter director) and she put me to work. It was a good decision on my part.

What's your favorite environmental memory? The passage of the 1977 Clean Air Act amendments. The 1976 amendments failed to get past a filibuster on the Senate floor. I thought we could come back in 1977 with even stronger legislation, and we did. It was very satisfying. The 1970 Clean Air Act and the 1972

Clean Water Act were high points, but a strong counterattack was aimed at those laws in the mid-'70s, so it was rewarding to be able to beat that back.

What's your weirdest hobby? To some people it seems weird that I root for three NFL football teams: Green Bay Packers, Washington Redskins and New England Patriots. That's because I have lived in all three places. I was at the University of Wisconsin doing graduate work when the Packers were great, I lived in Washington when the Redskins were doing well, and I moved to Portland, Maine, in 2001 when Tom Brady took over the Patriots and led them to winning the Super Bowl. So how can I lose?

What would you tell someone who wants to get involved but doesn't know how? If people want to get involved and don't know what to do I simply suggest calling Camilla or any of the issue team chairs and ask what you can do to help. Once you get involved, you can easily add other issue areas or switch around. They are a great bunch of people with a lot of knowledge and experience and will help you figure out how to plug in.

Excursiones a la naturaleza

By Camilla Feibelman

Please join us in welcoming Cecilia Chávez Beltrán, the newest Rio Grande Chapter staffer. She will organize bilingual hikes and outings.

Tell us about yourself:

I was born in the coastal city of Lima and have also lived in the Andes, in Peru. Here in Albuquerque I have learned to admire this high desert with its distinct air, clear sky, open spaces, roadrunners ... I love the immensely diverse community all living together, always aware we are in native land.

Tell us about the new Spanish Language Outings Program. The Rio Grande Sierra Club is launching Excursiones a la Naturaleza to promote the enjoyment of natural spaces that are right in front of us — the Bosque is the best example and the best place to go for a walk and be present: Leave behind the busy-ringing cell

phone, the illusion of having to constantly post or tweet or text.

Why is this important? It is important because it is an easy way to recharge ourselves as we commune with the green leaves, the texture of the bark, the grasses moviéndose con la brisa ... oh yes, because this would happen in Spanish! This program is for Spanish-speakers who have been wanting to explore natural spaces in their mother tongue :)

Tell us about your connection to nature and the outdoors. When young, at the country club my family visited on weekends, I remember walking and going through a tunnel to play with the stones and sticks at the creek all by myself. It was all about experiencing exciting moments outdoors.

What is your favorite view (of nature)? Why does it inspire you? It took me a while to realize the beauty of my surroundings here in



Cecilia Chávez Beltrán is the new Rio Grande Chapter bilingual-outings coordinator.

Albuquerque, you know, that idea that it is so hot and so dry and so so so but once a tiny cactus showed me its minuscule flower that had sprung in the middle of a hot, unpopulated sidewalk, all I could do is to be grateful for noticing the resilience and grace of nature.

What's your hope for the future? For Excursiones a la

Naturaleza to be the beginning, the start of many other paths for the Spanish-speaking community to enjoy organized excursions, eventually forming many lideres de excursiones.

As always, we are open to suggestions and ideas, call us and let's work together to walk together. A disfrutar la Naturaleza!

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. Friday, July 7.

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. 30% of sales support the Rio Grande Chapter's work.

Volunteer Wednesday

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

Central New Mexico Executive Committee

Chair: Fred Houdek, fhoudek@gmail.com, 630-809-4234.

Treasurer: David Ther, treasurer, grelbik@gmail.com, 505-867-6283

Secretary: Heather Kline, heather9387@yahoo.com, 505-577-2798

Outings: Odile de La Beaujardiere, odile@pitot.org, 505.433.4692

Political chair: Richard Barish, richard.barish@gmail.com

Ray Shortridge, rshortridge@gmail.com

Endorsees win races for conservancy district

Congratulations to Sierra Club-endorsed candidates Karen Dunning, Joaquín Baca and Derrick Lente for winning seats on the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District Board of Directors in the June 6 election.

In what *New Mexico Political Report* called "the year's most important election you didn't know about," Sierra Club Central New Mexico Group Political Chair Richard Barish worked hard to educate and activate Sierra Club voters in the district, which owns the land comprising the bosque and has considerable influence on what happens there. Thanks to all who helped and voted; all three of the Sierra Club's endorsed candidates won!



Karen Dunning



Derrick Lente



Joaquín Baca

Prehistoric cave in S.F. Forest

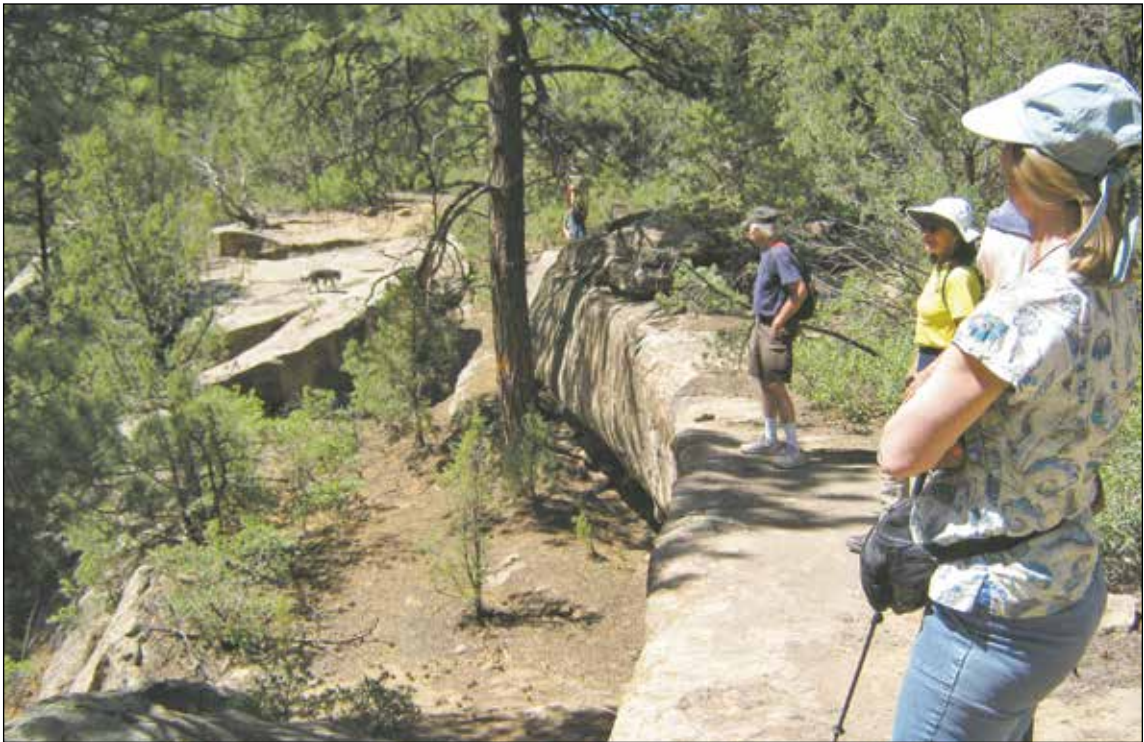
By Teresa Seamster
Northern New Mexico
Group Chair

The residents of the tiny settlement of La Cueva are surrounded by national forest and the beauty of rugged rock ledges and steep canyons that descend to the floor of Glorieta Pass. The densely treed mountain slopes support towering Ponderosa pines as well as clusters of oak bush, piñon and juniper and cedar.

Tucked away in a small quiet canyon overlooking Rowe Mesa to the east is a rock-slab cave with delicate pre-pueblo handprints on an inner wall. Hidden from sight from the canyon rim, the ancient site looks over a steep rock wall where a waterfall will naturally run down during the monsoon season.

La Cueva resident Carol Johnson wants to protect this subtle prehistoric site along with many other high-value resources and places in this part of the forest. She recently led an outing of landowners who live in and around the national forest to look at the cave and the surrounding canyon. Forest tree thinning is scheduled for this summer, and crews have been notified about this sensitive site. Carol and other residents want the area to remain untouched.

As the fire season advances and a dozen wildfires are burning in New Mexico along with the recent Cajete fire west of Santa Fe, the large-scale fire-shed treatment plans for Santa Fe National Forest and its watershed areas are gaining more attention from local residents, city officials and fire departments. La Cueva's fuel-break project is scheduled to start in July and there is a proposal to thin trees and do a prescribed burn on 1,875 acres



Photos by Teresa Seamster

Residents look over the canyon rim near Rowe Mesa in the Santa Fe National Forest. La Cueva resident Carol Johnson wants to protect this subtle prehistoric site.



Ancient, faint handprints can be seen on the cave wall.

in the Hyde Park area north of Santa Fe this fall.

While many residents agree that they want protection from wildfire damage to the Santa Fe watershed or their homes, several have voiced concerns that high rates of tree-cutting followed by prescribed burns could cause long-term damage to the forest ecology by opening up and drying out the forest cover and causing greater insect infestations, higher surface wind and soil erosion. Forestry research supports both the benefits of fuel reduction as well as the problems caused by resulting heat and higher surface wind. Current studies are looking at treatments that mimic beneficial low-intensity burns.

On the La Cueva outing, Carol pointed out immense rock ledges that break up the forest and line the canyon tops throughout this area, providing hikers with open vistas and natural walkways. Despite the heat of a June day, the canyons and rocks stayed cool and shady.

La Cueva residents have questioned the placement of the proposed firebreak as well as the high rate of tree removal. Forest officials have postponed the initial tree thinning until July and are meeting with those groups and landowners concerned about the preservation of the area's high-value resources, including the caves, cultural sites, and the overall habitat benefits and beauty of

the forest.

Residents interested in learning more about proposed future 5,000- to 10,000-acre treatment projects in the greater Santa Fe fireshed should check the Santa Fe National Forest website for a public meeting this summer.

A risk-assessment workshop is being planned for mid-August so the public can become better informed on the Santa Fe fireshed as well as participate in identifying important forest areas and resources they want to see protected.

The greater Santa Fe fireshed area comprises 107,000 forested acres north and west of Santa Fe. Large thinning projects up to 5,000 to 10,000 acres in size are being planned over the next several years. Residents from Española, Tesuque and Santa Fe to Glorieta and Pecos and the small forest communities including La Cueva all have a stake in identifying how our national-forest values can be protected and the tree ecology made more resilient.

Minimizing waste from public events

By Joe Eigner, Northern Zero Waste
Committee Co-chair

Our committee worked with Eldorado/285 Recycles this year to make its Fourth of July Pancake Breakfast a true zero-waste event. The breakfast is based on the Santa Fe Plaza event, but is held at the La Plancha Restaurant in Eldorado. We are using ceramic plates and real (stainless) silverware! All food-prep items and serving utensils, and all wastes will be reused, recycled or composted. Our goal is to send nothing to the landfill.

Our co-chair, Karen Sweeney, is working to make two larger, outdoor Eldorado events also zero-waste, but full details have not been worked out with the event organizers. The first, on Aug. 13, is the Vista Grande Public Library's fundraiser (\$8

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.

admission). The second, on Sept. 17 (free) is the Eldorado Fire & Rescue's annual BBQ. These events attract 500 to 1,000 people, so each will be a real challenge for us and the Eldorado/285 Recycles group to carry out. We may ask local Sierrans to volunteer as well as to attend. For updates or to volunteer, contact joseigner@gmail.com or go to eldorado285recycles.org.

At a Northern New Mexico Group

Executive Committee meeting recently, we distributed some "zero-waste kits." Sierrans can assemble one of their own for less than \$5. What you need are a plate, a hot beverage cup, a "doggie bag" (a kid's lidded pencil case works), a spork (or equivalent single utensils), and a napkin (a handkerchief is fine). All items should be non-breakable, so select metal or washable/reusable plastics! Your kit should be contained in your backpack, purse, or a reusable grocery bag, and always be readily available in your car, on your bike, or on your person!

Its use can be a great educational moment when you produce it (and explain why you do it!) at any place (restaurant, fast-food line, business meeting, wedding, etc.) where food and beverages are offered on single-use plates or cups.

Northern New Mexico Group Contacts

Executive Committee

Chair: **Teresa Seamster**, 505-466-8964, tc.seamster@gmail.com
Vice chair: **Tom Gorman**, 505-438-3932, gormantd@gmail.com
Treasurer: **Jim Baker**, 505-473-0457, bakerjim.sw@gmail.com
Patricia Cardona, patriaciardona24@yahoo.com, 505-515-5141
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Sandrine Gaillard, sandrine.gaillard@gmail.com
Shane Woolbright, 405-323-2569, mesoinc@hotmail.com
Jim Klukkert, 505-577-2483, jimklukkert@yahoo.com

Conservation

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

Other responsibilities

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

Regional Contacts

Las Vegas: Joann Sprenger, 505-454-0551, gisprengr@cybermesa.com
Farmington: Art

Santa Fe River water testing begins

By Teresa Seamster and Irina Goldstein

The newly trained and just-forming Santa Fe Water Sentinels, trained by Taos Water Sentinel leader Eric Patterson, collected their first water samples from the lower Santa Fe River in May.

We worked with Santa Fe Girls School biology teacher Megan Auer and collected samples from the school's natural preserve, which includes a stretch of the Santa Fe River near La Cienega.

Santa Fe River was tested for some pharmaceuticals (2002 and 2008 surveys), but has not been tested in almost a decade for heavy metals, PCBs and pharmaceuticals. The purpose of the water testing was to see what contaminants that are known to affect aquatic life were present in this part of the river, located just below Santa Fe's Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Environmental effects of pharmaceuticals

Most pharmaceutical residues are considered harmless to ecosystems because they do not stay in the environment for a long time (sunlight can rapidly degrade pharmaceutical residue) and in most cases are not toxic. However, some antibiotics, hormones and painkillers (diclofenac) have a severe



Northern New Mexico Group volunteers worked with Santa Fe Girls School biology teacher Megan Auer to collect samples from the school's preserve, which includes a stretch of the Santa Fe River.

Photos courtesy Teresa Seamster



impact on the environment, e.g. declines in vulture populations and decreases in egg production of fish and frogs.

In its draft white paper on aquatic life criteria for contaminants of emerging concern, EPA

lists a few of these contaminants due to their potential deteriorating effect on the environment:

- synthetic estrogens (e.g., 17 alpha-ethynylestradiol
- trenbolone (a veterinary drug)

— naturally occurring estrogens (e.g., 17beta-estradiol, testosterone)

— organochlorine pesticides capable of modulating normal hormonal functions and steroidal synthesis in aquatic organisms.

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.

Environmental effects of heavy metals

Although heavy metals such as arsenic, cadmium, chromium, lead and mercury occur naturally, high concentration of any of them can affect aquatic life, ranging from mild disease to reproductive problems and mortality.

Use of water contaminated with heavy metals for irrigation leads to concentration of heavy metals in soil and plants.

Results from the testing have been received and are now being analyzed as to what the contaminant levels indicate regarding impacts to wildlife or livestock that live in or drink the water.

Valles Caldera brimming with upcoming changes

By Tom Ribe

Caldera Action

As the wild iris bloom across the Valles Caldera National Preserve and the upper Jemez Mountains, it's time to come up to the Jemez and feel the freedom of our public lands and wide-open beauty.

The Valles Caldera National Preserve, or VCNP, is one of the few places you can go in New Mexico and find beautiful streams in untrampled settings. You can fish or take a little dip in the privacy of some curving cliff or grassy stretch of stream. Though much of the VCNP was burned by the Las Conchas and Thompson Ridge fires, if you travel back to the Rio San Antonio area of the Preserve, you can find large areas where spruce forests come down to the river that were not affected by the fire.

There are many plans for the near future that the National Park Service will detail soon and will be seeking public input on, as required by law. Plans will go through National Environmental Policy Act reviews.

Before long, the visitor center will be moving from the current manufactured house at La Jara to one of the 1970s-era cabins in the headquarters area. The cabin is being prepared now. Supervisor



Photo courtesy Caldera Action

The National Parks Service has some changes planned for Valles Caldera National Preserve, above, including a new location for the visitor center.

Jorge Silva-Bañuelos plans an interpretive walk in that area where visitors can learn about the human history and volcanism. Eventually there will be new parking areas near the headquarters, carefully designed to protect the area.

Keeping in mind that the Las Conchas fire was started by a tree striking a powerline, the NPS plans eventually to have the VCNP fed by solar power generated on site so the power-

line to the Preserve can be removed. This summer, the VCNP will start using electric shuttle vans, which it already owns.

The NPS will be greatly improving the South Mountain Trail and the La Jara Trail, and we expect there will be volunteer opportunities here. Caldera Action will be involved in both of these projects, and we hope our members will join these efforts.

The Trump administration has proposed a 13% budget cut to the National Park Service. The National Parks Conservation Association has warned that this massive funding cut could cause parks to close across the country. However, the US Senate has so far rejected Trump's debilitating budget cuts and will write its own budget for the National Park Service and other agencies.

Volunteer and help restore the watershed

You can volunteer to help restore the VCNP watersheds with the Amigos, the VCNP friends group at their Rito de los Indios Volunteer Workshop and Campout from July 14 to 16.

The first workshop and campout in these tributaries of San Antonio Creek and the first of the summer on the Valles Caldera National Preserve is near. Come join Los Amigos and Albuquerque Wildlife Federation as we work to enhance the water quality of these drainages. Children are welcome. Tents, pickup campers, small RVs and tent or travel trailers will be allowed. For more information, email Jim Counce at jimcounce1111@gmail.com or call 575-829-3885.

Pajarito collaborations and new faces

By Jody Benson
Pajarito Group chair

Pajarito Environmental Education Center (PEEC) is evolving into the environmental “clearinghouse” for Los Alamos. With the center’s goal of “Connecting People with Nature” and our goal to “Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet,” this collaboration merges both organizations’ passion to join humans with the rest of life. First love it, then protect it.

This new liaison offers PEEC’s state-of-the-art planetarium for the Pajarito Group’s public presentations. These talks are planned to take place quarterly, and the first is scheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 5. The Nature Center is at 2600 Canyon Road (a block east of the Aquatic Center).

On Sept. 5, Charles Strickfaden presents “Partnership parks in the 21st century — building a national park from nothing: Manhattan Project Historical Park (with a perspective by Valles Caldera National Preserve staff).”

Visitors take for granted the seamless relationships of Los Alamos museums and National Park Service staff and volunteers for the new operation, what led up to this and what is behind making all this look so easy in setting up a new park unit. Strickfaden, our Los Alamos site manager, will enlighten us on some of the efforts required to initiate, design, and develop a newly established unit of the National Park Service. Please join us at Pajarito Environmental Education Center to ask questions and find out about volunteer opportunities with this growing park.

Tentatively scheduled upcoming talks include “Global warming and the Arctic.”

Los Alamos County is still in

The Trump Administration, in a “reassertion of America’s sovereignty,” abrogated the U.S. commitment to the Paris Climate Accord’s agreement to curb manmade greenhouse-gas emissions. America will instead “continue to engage with key international partners in a manner that is consistent with our domestic priorities, preserving both a strong economy and a healthy environment.”

The Trump Administration may be out of the Climate Accord, but Los Alamos County is still in. In fact, Los Alamos leaders have been addressing this issue for almost two decades, gather-



Cheryl Bell, left, the Sierra Club Pajarito Group's new Wildlife chair, worked for nearly a decade at New Mexico Wildlife Center. Carene Larmat, right, came to Los Alamos National Laboratory as a geophysicist and has joined our Executive Committee to help protect the natural beauty here.



Frijoles Rim Trail, and almost completed the Frijoles Canyon Trail from Upper Crossing to headquarters.

Stillman may have a project for us this winter with “a bunch of work” on the Falls Trail. Stay tuned to the *Sierran*, or contact Kevin to get the volunteer alerts at kevin_stillman@nps.gov.

New Pajarito Wildlife Chair Cheryl Bell

Cheryl Bell has been a resident of White Rock for six years and has lived in New Mexico for 22 years. But she hails from Northern California, where she grew up camping, fishing and hiking up and down the Sierra Nevada Mountains. It is fitting that she is increasing her involvement in the Sierra Club, whose roots are in those same lakes, rivers and mountains. She has spent her career working for local nonprofits, most recently for nearly a decade at New Mexico Wildlife Center, educating the public about the amazingly diverse wildlife residents of New Mexico. She is a rabid re-user/recycler; is wild about wildlife, often stopping to move snakes off the road or swerving to get a better look at an interesting bird; and is determined to ensure that her children's grandchildren have the same opportunities she has had to explore a liveable planet, full of diverse flora and fauna.

Meet new ExCom member Carene Larmat

Carene was born in the South of France in the region of Alpes Cotes d’Azur, but grew up on the Atlantic coast in the culturally Celtic region of Brittany. After completing college in Rennes, France, she earned her PhD in geophysics at Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris.

She came to Los Alamos in 2007 after an initial post-doctoral appointment at the California Institute of Technology. Here she became a staff member pioneering time-reversal work to image earthquakes.

Although she had initially planned to stay only one year at LANL, her love for the Jemez and Northern New Mexico, the vistas, the wildlife, and the astonishingly vast and accessible public lands seduced her to remain in Los Alamos and also to become an American citizen. Coming from France, Carene understands how rare, how precious are America’s public lands, and wants to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to continue to enjoy and explore them.

Pajarito Group Directory

riograndesierraclub.org/
pajarito

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Executive Committee

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

Newsletter Editor, Publicity, Sprawl, Transportation, Endangered Species/ Wildlife: Jody Benson, echidnaejb@gmail.com, 505/662-4782

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

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

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

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

ing data, using that data to support decisions, developing procedures for actualizing the decisions, and finally, putting the community’s money where its values are with everything from the free Atomic City Transit to partnering with Japan (NEDO) for a solar/ smart grid supporting the electrical utility to an impending divestment from both our 10 megawatts of the coal-fired Laramie River station and our 7.2% share in the coal-fired San Juan Generating Station near Farmington.

What we have not convinced the county to limit in its quest for a carbon-neutral 2040 county is the single-use plastic shopping bag. Our conversations with some of the councilors implied that 2017 might present opportunities to revisit an ordinance requiring a fee for bags. The 2017 tactic prior to reinitiating our bag-fee is this:

When you meet our councilors, bring up the expectation that Los Alamos, Science City, Where Discoveries are Made, and where citizens are both educated and economically endowed — in Los Alamos, the tourist gateway to three areas in the National Park System—Manhattan Project, Bandelier, and Valles Caldera — we should let our values guide our behavior. Wasting resources is bad for our prestige as well as for the planet. Let’s limit that unrelenting chemical degradation by instating a bag fee. Please contact Jody Benson at echidnaejb@gmail.com with your good ideas.

For more history on the Pajarito Group’s support of the county’s carbon-neutral efforts (including the bag fee), please go to www.riograndesierraclub.org/pajarito/ to read some of our archives.

Bring your own cup as well as your own bag

Have you gone into Starbucks lately where people are sitting around talking, computing, reading, or relaxing with their coffee-based beverages in disposable cups? Every day at the Los Alamos Starbucks locations, multiple giant plastic garbage bags are filled with disposable cups and plastic lids. But if you plan to stay, you can just say, “For here” and the barista will put your coffee in a nice ceramic mug. Voila! One less piece of trash to contribute to the Anthropocene geologic era.

And gas-station coffee or MacDonald’s? You can bring your own cup there, too, even a used Styrofoam or paper cup. A small perk besides saving the environment is that the gas-station cashier usually discounts the coffee (and whatever additives you put into it) as a refill. With just a little foresight, deciding whether to get coffee need not be a moral choice between going without caffeine or trashing the Earth.

Update on Bandelier trails

The bad news? There will be only very limited volunteer opportunities for trail work at Bandelier this summer.

The good news? Bandelier Trail Boss Kevin Stillman is busy, which means back-country trails are reopening for hiking. After many years of no funding for trail work and therefore, only small crews of volunteers (including Sierrans) responsible for any trail construction, this spring Stillman and youth crews have made massive progress. Stillman and his Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crew rebuilt the Turkey Springs Trail, rebuilt the Upper Alamo Trail, rerouted both the Frijoles Rim Burro Trail and the upper

Hikes and Events, continued from Page 16

hike to the crest (great views!). Easy/moderate hike: four miles round trip with a 1,000-foot elevation gain. Dogs on leash OK. To register, contact Terry Owen by July 26, 505-301-4349, teowen@q.com.

Sunday, July 30: Medicinal and Edible Plants of the Bosque. Discover the edible and medicinal plants of our Bosque with herbalist and geographer Dara Saville of Albuquerque Herbalism. We will explore the multitude of plants used in natural healthcare practices and sample a few herbal remedies from the Bosque. We will also discuss how these wild plant populations are changing and what that means for the health of our riparian ecosystems. Meet: 5:15 p.m. at the Westside Community Center, 1250 Isleta Blvd SW, for a short carpool to the trail head. RSVP Dara, albuquerqueherbalism@gmail.com.

Thursday, Aug. 3: Trekking Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin: (Recurring hike) See July 13 entry for description,

Saturday Aug. 5: Sandia Cave Trail. See one of the most important archaeological sites in the U.S. One mile round trip. Meet at 10 a.m.. End with optional potluck at Odile and Jim's house. Contact Odile de La Beaujardiere by Aug. 4. Home: 505-433-4692, cell: 505-933-1930, Odile@pitot.org. Please specify: cell-phone number if you have one; if coming to the potluck; and where you can meet the group.

Sunday, Aug. 6: Explore the Big Tesuque area, with a steep climb up the south trail to Aspen Vista then down the main Big Trail. Moderate hike, about 6-7 miles, some steep climbing on non-maintained trails. One to two dogs OK. Early start, 7 a.m. from Sierra Club parking lot. Marcia Skillman, 505-699-3008, marciaskillman@hotmail.com.

Thursday, Aug. 10: Trekking Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin: (Recurring hike) See July 13 entry for description,

Thursday, Aug. 17: Trekking Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin: (Recurring hike) See July 13 entry for description,

Thursday, Aug. 24: Trekking



Photo courtesy Ken Krasity

Hikers pass Serpent Lake on their way to Jicarita Peak in June. See July 16 entry for recurring Thursday hikes in Alpine Meadows.

Get the scoop on outings

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.

Interested in training to be a Sierra Club hike leader? Contact Odile de La Beaujardiere at odile@pitot.org.

Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin (Recurring hike). See July 13 entry for description,

Saturday, Aug. 26: Bosque walk. By the end of August, we may be seeing subtle changes in the flora and fauna of our Bosque, and changes in our Rio Grande! We'll start at the parking lot on Montaño, west side of the Rio, where the tree sculptures are. We will be able to see the changes resulting from Corps of Engineers work as well as viewing the Oxbow. It should take 1-2 hours and will start at 9 a.m. Bring water and hats, and please keep Fido home this time. Margaret 505-321-5931.

Thursday, Aug. 31: Trekking Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin: (Recurring hike) See July 13 entry for description,

Thursday, Sept. 7: Trekking Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin: (Recurring hike) See July 13 entry for description,

Saturday, Sept. 9: Strenuous hike to Old Mike Peak in the Taos area. Starting on the

Williams Lake Trail, we will hike up Wheeler Peak and then continue south and east for about another 1.5 miles along the ridge line to Old Mike Peak. Early start. About 13 miles and 3,700-foot elevation gain with max elevation over 13,000 feet. Two or three dogs OK. Larry Hughes, 505-983-8296, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com.

Sunday, Sep. 10: Explore the Big Tesuque area with a steep climb up the south trail to Aspen Vista, then down the main Big T trail. Moderate hike, about 6-7 miles, some steep climbing on non-maintained trails. One to two dogs OK. Early start, 7 a.m. from Sierra Club parking lot. Marcia Skillman, 505-699-3008, marciaskillman@hotmail.com.

Saturday, Sept. 10: 9/11 Memorial Hike at Wheeler Peak. Sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program; all are welcome. Climb the tallest peak in New Mexico to honor those who have given their all

since 9/11. Meet at 6:30 a.m. Sept. 10. Challenging hike starts near the upper ski area at 10,000 feet and proceeds up the Williams Lake route to the summit at 13,161 feet. Nine miles round-trip. Rated difficult. Enjoy a beautiful alpine lake, towering ponderosa pines and unforgettable views. Camping the evening before (Sept. 9) across the parking area from the heart of Taos Ski Valley. Contact Terry Owen by Sept. 6. 505-301-4349, teowen@q.com.

Thursday, Sept. 14: Trekking Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin: (Recurring hike) See July 13 entry for description,

Saturday, Sept 16, Piedra Lisa hike. Meet at 9 a.m. at the trailhead parking lot. We will climb starting from the south side, (close to the La Luz trailhead) then down to the Placitas side. Difficult hike: about six miles and 2,100-foot elevation change. One-way hike: car(s) will be located on the Placitas side. End with optional potluck at Odile and Jim's house. Contact Odile de La Beaujardiere by Sept 14; home: 505 433 4692, or cell: 933 1930, Odile@pitot.org. Please specify: cell-phone number; if coming to the potluck; and where you can meet the group.

Saturday, Sept. 23-Sunday,

Sept. 24, Castle Peak. Hike among peaks with very treacherous ascents, lacking switchbacks. We'll avoid the overrun Aspen side of the Elk Range and ascend its highest peak from the Crested Butte side. Unless you can walk without poles, you are not well suited for these rocky, scrabbly climbs. Contact Mark Dunham medunham2@msn.com, (505) 795-0199 near event time.

Sunday, Sept. 24: Easy/moderate hike to Pajarito Ski hill above Los Alamos. Four miles, 1,200-foot elevation gain. Alan Shapiro, 505-424-9242, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Sunday, Sept. 24: Tour Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument. Celebrate Monuments to Main Street Month with a hike on the Pine Tree Loop, Aguirre Springs. Spectacular views of the Organs and the Tularosa Basin to the east. This is a moderate hike with elevation gain of 1,000 feet. 4.5-mile loop. Day use fee required for Aguirre Springs. To register, call Howie Dash 575-652-7550 or email at howiedash@aol.com.

Sunday, Oct. 1: Easy/moderate hike on Borrego Trail to viewpoint of Santa Fe Baldy, five miles, 1,000-foot elevation gain. Alan Shapiro, 505-424-9242, nm5s@yahoo.com.

My favorite view

Mary Katherine Ray, Wildlife chair, Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter:

There are lots of wonderful views from which to choose, but this one is easily accessible on Cibola National Forest land. It is **Red John Box** (see photo at right) in the San Mateo Mountains.

It almost always has water and the steep, tall cliffs are breathtaking. I've seen red-faced warblers, painted redstarts, canyon wrens, and Peregrine falcons there.

If you'd like to see your favorite view in The Sierran, email us a high-resolution photo and a short description of where the view is and why it's your favorite. Send photos and text to: monabla-ber@gmail.com.



Volunteer

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.

Our new Inspiring Connections Outdoors program for urban kids to explore nature is looking for volunteers for a wide array of roles. Contact Ray Greenwell at matrng@hofstra.edu if you're interested.



Robert Reifel took this shot during an outing to Latir Peak Wilderness near Questa.

July-September hikes & events

April

Saturday July 1 to Tuesday, July 4: Strenuous four-day loop backpack in the Pecos Wilderness. Starting at Jack's Creek trailhead, we will hike trails 25 and 24 to the Skyline trail on the Santa Barbara Divide. Taking the Skyline Trail west to Truchas Lakes and then south to Pecos Baldy Lake and on to Horsethief Meadow. Continuing another couple of miles on the Skyline to the Cave Creek Trail, which will take us to Panchuela and then back to Jack's. Total of about 39 miles, 7,000 feet of elevation gain, with a max elevation of 12,500 feet. Larry Hughes, 505-983-8296, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com.

Saturday July 8: strenuous hike in the San Pedro Parks Wilderness Area, 10-14 miles, 1,400-foot elevation gain. Mark Dunham 505-795-0199, medunham2@msn.com.

Sunday July 9: Explore the middle Rio en Medio area from Aspen Ranch. A beautiful short hike (about four miles), but some steep climbing on old non-maintained trails. Early start at 7 a.m. from Sierra Club parking lot. Marcia Skillman, 505-699-3008, marciaskillman@hotmail.com. One to two dogs OK.

Sunday July 9: 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Explore the Durand Open Space Bosque. The Bosque Action Plan, the city plan governing the Bosque, designated the southernmost part of the Rio Grande Valley State Park as a "wildlife preserve." The county created the Durand Open Space on the west side in the far South Valley, giving access to the area designated as a wildlife preserve. The residents of the far South Valley now have local access to lovely Bosque trails, but at the expense of chipping away at the wildlife preserve area. Is this a good or a bad thing? I don't have an easy answer to that question, but since it is there, we will explore it. Meet at the Durand Open Space: take Rio Bravo to Isleta, then 1.6 miles south on Isleta. There will likely be mosquitoes,

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Top photo by Rebecca Crumbacher; bottom photo by Gustavo Seluja

Top: Participants take a break during a June outing to La Plata Peak. Above: Trip leader Larry Hughes led a group of 11 hikers to Painted Cave in Capulin Canyon in May.

so long pants and long sleeves and/or repellent are highly recommended. Bring binoculars if you have them so we can check out any birds we encounter. RSVP: richard.barish@gmail.com, 505-232-3023.

Thursday, July 13: Trekking Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin: (Recurring hike) This is a weekly burst of 90 minutes ascending 2,000 vertical feet, with a variety of scenic rewards at the top. Some weeks we will just go to Deception Peak, sometimes to Lake Peak, and

when time permits we may descend Ravens Ridge or to Puerto Nambe and return via the Winsor Trail. This is by far the quickest route above timberline in our area, passing by rushing water for almost the entire hike. 8:30 a.m. departure. Most times we will be back in time for a late lunch, which may happen too. Email Mark Dunham at medunham2@msn.com, or call (505) 795-0199 near event time.

Sunday, July 16: Armijo and Faulty trails, Moderate

hike about 4.5-mile loop, little elevation change. Meet at 10 a.m. close to I-40 and Central, in the Smiths parking lot (west-most side). End with optional potluck at Odile and Jim's house. Contact Odile de La Beaujardiere by July 14, home: 505-433-4692, or cell: 505-933-1930, Odile@pitot.org. Please specify: (1) cell-phone number if you have one; (2) if coming to the potluck; and (3) where you will meet the group.

Thursday, July 20: Trekking

About these hikes

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

Always contact leader before the outing to confirm participation and details. Please see riograndesierraclub.org/outings 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.

Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin: (Recurring hike) See July 13 entry for description,

Saturday July 22: Strenuous Rio Quemado to Truchas Peak, 14 miles, 3,500 feet of elevation gain. Mark Dunham, 505-795-0199, medunham2@msn.com.

Thursday, July 27: Trekking Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin: (Recurring hike) See July 13 entry for description,

Saturday July 29: Tree Spring Trail in the Sandias, 9 a.m. Sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program, and all are welcome. We will

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