



# Oil, gas and justice

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EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET



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Sierra Club  
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Page 1 banner photo by Lajla Ryen

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If you’re not a member yet but like what you see, **join now for only \$15!** Go to **riograndesierraclub.org/join** on the Web.

Volunteers needed

**Northern New Mexico Group Volunteer Coordinator:** This important position seeks out, tracks, and monitors volunteers to help out with our many commitments and issues. Pat Carlton, 505-986-1596, carlton505@comcast.net  
**Tabling Coordinator:** Seek out tabling opportunities around Santa Fe for the Northern Group to distribute literature and sell merchandise, and coordinate tabling volunteers. Contact Teresa Seamster, tc.seamster@gmail.com.



# Oil & gas woes kill good, bad bills

By Dan Lorimier  
Chapter Conservation Coordinator

New Mexico's income is highly dependant on excise and severance taxes from oil and gas extraction.

Because of overproduction, prices for these commodities have been very low, and during the session, New Mexico's budget went into "free fall."

The effect of these falling prices was a serious lack of funding for important programs administered by the state. Additionally, 2016 was a "short" 30-day budget session (Jan. 19-Feb. 18), making it much more difficult to move legislation through this difficult process.

Gov. Susana Martinez's veto power is another hurdle. An example was her veto of Senate Bill 224, Advanced Mapping Fund for Rio Grande Trail, a good bill that passed both chambers.

All this played out at a legislative session with few environmental legislative pieces proposed. Those few pro-environment bills represented new funding for programs (like tax credits for residents who install rooftop solar) reaching the end of their initial funding.

SB13, HB26, the residential solar tax credit; SB104, HB175, a tax credit for utility-scale renewable-energy production; and SB233 (a construction tax credit for utility-scale renewable-energy facilities) all fall into that category. None passed the Legislature.

On the other hand, bills to bail out the gas and oil industry also failed because of lack of available dollars. These bills included HB107, HB285 and SB34, which attempted to sharply reduce the taxes oil and gas companies pay.

Some environmental legislative pieces



Camilla Feibelman

**The students of Global Warming Express spoke at Renewable Energy Day at the Roundhouse in January. A top Sierra Club priority in 2016 was extension of expiring tax credits for residential and small-business solar as well as utility-scale solar, but the state's budget crunch put the brakes on most tax breaks, including those the oil and gas industry sought.**

materialized and worked through the process as memorials or resolutions. Ones that we supported included HM15, Statewide Efficient Residential Water Use (passed); HM51, Expand Use Of Solar Power on State Facilities (failed); HJM3 and SJM4, Importance of Environmental Education (both passed); SM11, New Mexico Public Lands Legacy — In Recognition (passed); and SJM6 Bee Aware Day (failed).

Pieces we opposed included HM40 and SM34, Lea-Eddy Energy Alliance Storage Facility (both passed); HM43, Alternative

Land Designations Near Pecos (passed); HJR9, Convention Of States (failed); and SJR8, Compel Legislative Witnesses and Testimony, CA (failed).

Because projections for gas and oil continue to call for weak commodity pricing, New Mexico will likely face similar budget woes in 2017. In 2016, the Legislature began to understand the need for a more diverse income stream for the state that doesn't rely so exclusively on gas and oil revenues.

For the second year, the Rio Grande Chapter (with help from ally orga-

nizations and legislators) conducted citizen lobby trainings in Las Cruces, Albuquerque and Santa Fe. We also held trainings in the Capitol on both Renewable Energy Day and our Wildlands, Wildlife and Water Day. Over 20 organizations had tables at this popular annual Roundhouse event. Several activist alerts, asking for calls and e-mails to various legislators, elicited strong response rates from the Chapter's activists and citizen lobbyists.

Our thanks to the growing citizen lobby corps!

# 2 wolf pups released in wild, but more needed

By Mary Katherine Ray  
Chapter Wildlife chair

In a surprise meeting in late February, the New Mexico Game Commission gathered to consider only one question: whether to allow New Mexico's Ladder Ranch a permit to house Mexican wolves, with the caveat that it would only be wolves destined for release in Mexico.

Previously, Game commissioners have bowed to pressure from livestock and hunting interests and voted twice to deny the private Ladder Ranch wolf facility a permit to house any Mexican wolves. But this time, they voted unanimously that the private land wolf pens could be used for wolves in transit to outside the United States.

Game commissioners have said wolves should be restored in Mexico but not in the U.S. Of course, the U.S. Endangered Species Act requires that our small native wolves be recovered here, where they also belong. Wolves were systematically exterminated by the U.S. government in the early 1900s to placate the livestock industry. The forests of the Southwestern U.S. evolved

## Take action

Contact Interior Secretary Sally Jewell to urge that U.S. Fish and Wildlife release more wolves in the wild in New Mexico. You may send an email to Secretary Jewell at [secretary\\_jewell@ios.doi.gov](mailto:secretary_jewell@ios.doi.gov). Please copy Dan Ashe, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, at [dan\\_ashe@fws.gov](mailto:dan_ashe@fws.gov).

Or go to [riograndesierraclub.org/release-the-wolves](http://riograndesierraclub.org/release-the-wolves).

with wolves, and the balance of nature still needs them.

Yet Mexican wolves still hover perilously close to extinction 40 years after they were first listed under the Endangered Species Act. The end-of-year count found only 97 wolves in the wild of Arizona and New Mexico, down from the previous year's 110. It isn't clear yet why it dropped so much. But what is clear is that more wolves need to be released from captivity. The wild population has become more inbred than the



Art Rescues

**Wolf supporters gather in front of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office in Albuquerque to urge more wolf releases.**

captive one. Releasing wolves this year will not only help bolster the population but will also increase the wild population's genetic diversity.

In the last week of April, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service cross-fostered a pair of pups from a captive wolf mother to a wild pack's den. Cross-fostering requires impeccable and precise timing. Both the pups in captivity and the litter in the wild who will be on the receiving end have

to be the same age and only days old. The location of the wild den must be found and the weather must cooperate. It all came together for this wolf family in the Gila of New Mexico, and so far it appears that the wild mother has accepted her new offspring. We laud the Fish and Wildlife Service for taking this step to increase the wild wolf population and bring in sorely needed new genes. The agency has also announced plans to

release one adult pair of wolves.

Nevertheless, in a letter last fall, scientists wrote that the releases of at least five adult wolf pairs are needed for the genetic rescue of the wild population. More wolves are needed in the wild this year! Gov. Susana Martinez's administration has announced its plan to sue over any releases, even though it cannot possibly prevail because the U. S. Constitution is clear about the supremacy of federal law over state law.

Please contact Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe to thank them for adding two pups to the wild and urge that more wolf pairs be released into New Mexico this year (see box for contact information). The science is clear, the mandate of the Endangered Species Act is clear, the support of a majority of New Mexicans is clear; anti-wolf political interference has gone far enough.

For more information, visit the "More wolves; less politics" page at [mexicanwolves.org](http://mexicanwolves.org) or email [mkrscrim@gmail.com](mailto:mkrscrim@gmail.com).



# Desperation, death, life, hope, action

**M**y husband and I will be having a baby in June. I'm seven months along and in the early evening I can feel this new little person kicking and moving.

They say that at this stage of development the baby can even



**Camilla Feibelman,**  
Chapter  
director

dream. But I wonder — what would a baby dream about? What has she seen or experienced? What might he expect from the world?

I admit to worrying about bring-

ing a new person to the planet, not just because of the impact of another human, but more because of what it means to be alive in a time where so much is at stake and where global climate disruption is already hurting people and ecosystems across the globe.

I write this on Earth Day. The world's leaders are signing the Paris Agreement in New York as I type. John Kerry signed holding his little granddaughter, and the world's island nations reminded us of the coastlines they are already

losing. There's hope in this signing, but there is also a stark reminder in this morning's news that it's not enough — Arctic ice is melting this year earlier than ever and 2016 is already becoming the hottest year on record.

Even though my day-to-day work is to help curb global climate change, I'll admit to sometimes skipping a headline because it can all feel so overwhelming and make me feel like I should run to the office and keep at it no matter the time of day. Naomi Klein describes this as a kind of climate denial in *This Changes Everything*, writing, "All we have to do is not react as if this is a full-blown crisis... All we have to do is keep on denying how frightened we actually are. And then, bit by bit, we will have arrived at the place we most fear, the thing from which we have been averting our eyes."

So I asked myself what I can do to confront that nagging fear that it's just not enough, or just not the right action. In *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene — Reflections on the End of Civilization*, author Roy Scranton, an Iraq War veteran, describes being paralyzed by fear in service. He eventually realized that he had to confront and accept the



Ash Haywood

**Sometimes climate change makes us feel hopeless, but there's a lot we can do right now — and a lot of progress we must defend.**

likelihood of his own death in order to handle the realities of war. He writes that our society must do the same in confronting global climate disruption — that we won't be able to do what we really need to do without accepting that it may already be too late. Somehow accepting our failure makes it easier to fight.

It's hard to confront the thought of dying and loss when my body's main project is giving life. But at the same time I have to imagine a world where what we know is gone and what we might do to survive in order to keep the world from going that way. So I focus on the tangible and the measurable ways in which we can make a real differ-

ence right now.

The U.S. commitments to the Paris agreement include reducing our methane pollution from oil and gas production by 40-45% by 2025. But gosh, what a technical-sounding sentence. Let me put it another way: Methane is natural gas. It's invisible and odorless and yet it is 86% more potent as a global-warming gas than carbon dioxide. It silently sneaks out of oil and gas operations at almost every point, making natural gas, some think, even worse for the climate than coal.

But methane's accidental leaking, and purposeful venting and flaring off by producers, is something we can solve

right now. Twelve New Mexico companies make or install the technology for controlling this stuff. Some estimates show our state has lost just under \$50 million in lost royalties since 2010. The president has promised strong rules on methane out of the BLM and EPA, and we hope the rules will be in place before the administration changes.

That leads me to my last point. You can bet that baby and I will be canvassing for pro-environment candidates throughout the fall. The idea that 195 countries would agree to the Paris Accord, that more countries would formally sign on Earth Day than ever have on the first day of signing of an accord, contrasted with the thought of having a climate denier leading our country is more than I, for one, can take.

We must active our silent majority — the mass of our voters who agree with us but feel alienated, unmotivated or too overwhelmed to act. We can make the change we need for ourselves and the future generations that inevitably come behind us. I commit again today on Earth Day 2016 to make this world a place that will be safe and habitable for this creature I hold who this week learned how to dream.

## Get out to the bosque!

**What: "An Introduction to Medicinal Plants of Central New Mexico" talk**

**When:** 7-9 p.m. Wednesday, May 4

**Where:** New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, 1801 Mountain Road NW

Dara Saville will give a talk to the Native Plant Society about Yerba Mansa, as well as other medicinal plants of the Bosque, the Sandias, the Foothills, Desert Grasslands, and the city. The talk is free and open to the public.

**What: Bosque Exploratory Hike, South Diversion Channel Outfall**

**When:** Sunday, May 8, 1:30 to 3:30

**Where:** South of Rio Bravo, contact Richard for directions

We'll explore a little-visited part of the Bosque around the outfall of the South Diversion Channel, south of Rio Bravo. This is often a good area for birds, and migration should be in full swing, so bring your binoculars. We'll check out what the Corps of Engineers has been up to in this area in terms of restoration projects and otherwise.

Please RSVP to Richard, richard.barish@gmail.com or 505-232-3013.

**What: Bosque Restoration Field Day**

**When:** 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, May 14

**Where:** meet at parking lot off Tingley Drive, 0.8 miles south of Central and marked with the sign 'Bob Gerding Catch and Release Pond'

This event is an opportunity to show the Bosque some love through habitat restoration and increasing native plant biodiversity. We will be removing invasive non-native Ravenna Grass and preparing areas for replanting natives. This event is open to everyone, including kids. Be prepared by wearing long-sleeve clothing to protect yourself from scratches and bring lots of water and snacks. You can also bring your own work gloves and shovels or mattocks, if you have them. Please RSVP. Find out more about this project at: [albuquerqueherbalism.com/yerba-mansa-project](http://albuquerqueherbalism.com/yerba-mansa-project). Contact: Dara Saville at [albuquerqueherbalism@gmail.com](mailto:albuquerqueherbalism@gmail.com).

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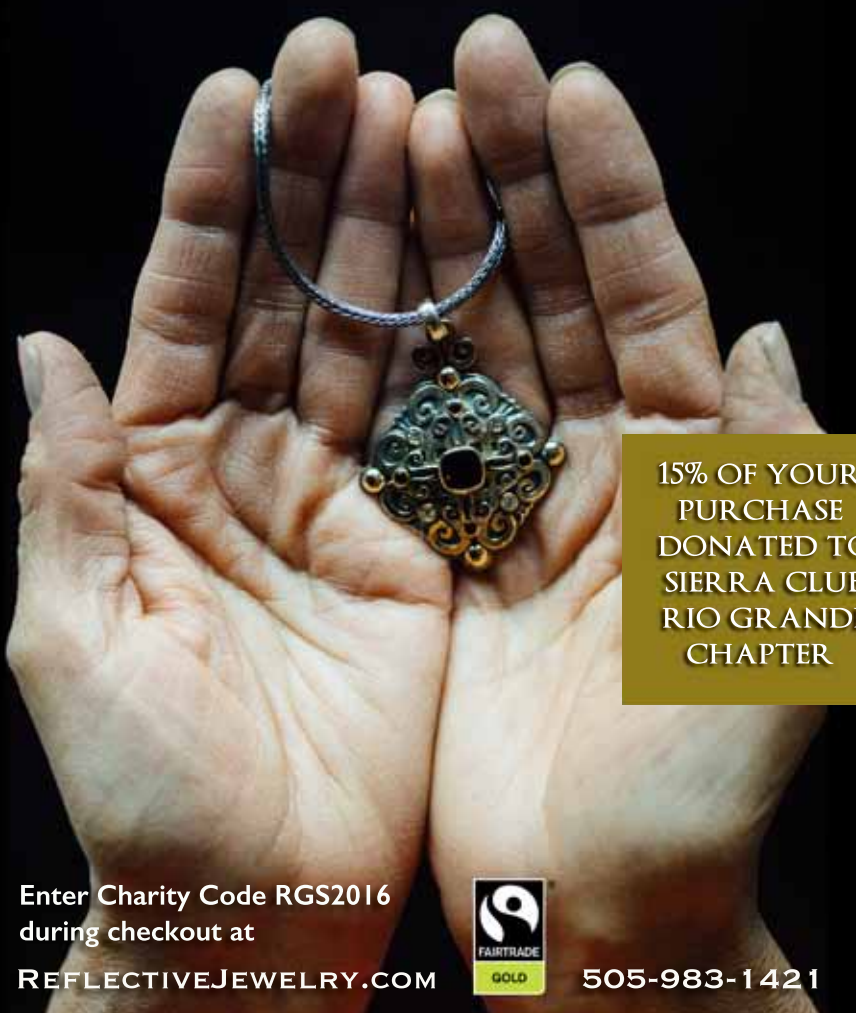
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To donate, please go to [riograndesierraclub.org/donate](http://riograndesierraclub.org/donate) or send donations to 1807 Second St., Unit 45, Santa Fe, NM, 87505.

Thinking about going solar? If you use Sungevity, they will give Sierra Club-referred customers a \$750 discount and contribute \$750 to the Rio Grande Chapter. To learn if you're eligible for Sungevity's discount and chapter donation, request an iQuote at [content.sierraclub.org/solar/sungevity?ref=203](http://content.sierraclub.org/solar/sungevity?ref=203) or call Sierra Club Solar Homes Coordinator MacKenzie Cane at 415-977-5634.


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# Students restore, monitor

**By Eric Patterson**  
The Water Sentinels — Rios de Taos are ready to begin the 2016 water-monitoring season. There will be a training meeting in Valdez June 8, with the first monitoring on June 9, second monitoring on July 6, and our third monitoring on Aug. 31.

**Any Sierra Club member in New Mexico is invited to attend the training meeting on Wednesday, June 8. Contact Eric Patterson at eepatt@gmail.com if interested.**

The Taos community just received a remarkable gift. The Taos Land Trust recently acquired a 20-acre tract of land that has not been farmed for 20 years. It is adjacent to Fred Baca Park, has many large trees, and is just beautiful. TLTr is planning public access of some sort. Perhaps a park, maybe a school and/or community gardens, hiking trails, bike paths? They would like suggestions for use from the public.

On Saturday, April 23, the land trust invited students from UNM'S Upward Bound program and students from Rocky Mountain Youth Corps to take part in three concurrent projects.

One group looked at the old acequia and how it functioned and actually made repairs. They also learned about the role of acequias in Northern New Mexico, in both cultural history and in modern agriculture. A second group of students studied the forestry of the property. They determined the species, location, girth and heights of the many tall trees and fruit trees that grace the property. The third group of students, led by Water Sentinels Nora Patterson, Shannon Romeling and Eric Patterson, monitored the Rio Fernando de Taos, which flows through the property.

They determined the temperature, the pH, dissolved oxygen, total dissolved solids and flow rate of the river. Then they used kick seines to collect and observe the benthic macroinvertebrates from the river bottom.

This will be a regular monitoring site for the Sentinels. It is especially important because just downstream in Fred Baca Park, the Rio Fernando water most accessible to playing children had an *e. coli* level of "too numerous to count" at the Sentinel's last monitoring in 2015. We would like to change that!

The students from all three projects came together at the end of the afternoon, shared what they had learned, handed in suggestions for future use of the property, and enjoyed a hearty, well deserved dinner provided by the Taos High School Culinary Club.

### Planning and training

The Water Sentinels will be holding a planning and training meeting on June 8 to kick off the 2016 water-monitoring season. We are interested in monitoring in other parts of New Mexico outside Taos County. If you have a concern about a possibly contaminated stream in your area, please contact coordinator Eric Patterson at eepatt@gmail.com. We are particularly interested in possible pollution of streams from the dairy industry.

The Taos High School Tiger Salamanders participated in stocking Rio Grande cutthroat trout at La Junta

**May/June 2016**



Top photo: Rich Schrader/Riverside Watch. Bottom photo: Nora Patterson



**Top: Members of Tiger-Salamanders, the Water Sentinels student group, drill holes to plant cottonwood seedlings on the banks of the Rio Pueblo. Above: Students identifying benthic macroinvertebrates from the Rio Fernando on the Taos Land Trust property.**

## Take action

Want to get involved in Water Sentinels or have water tested in Southern New Mexico? Do you know of a young person who wants to participate in an environmental workshop in Denver this summer? Contact Eric Patterson at eepatt@gmail.com.

point on March 22. Students from Taos High School and Questa High School joined other volunteers to assist N.M. Game and Fish employees to carry bags of trout fingerlings down the trail to the junction of the Red River and the Rio Grande.

The Tiger-Salamanders have sched-

uled water monitoring on the Rio Pueblo April 6 and on Eagle Rock Lake/Red River on May 6. Two of the Tiger-Salamanders will present their research projects at the annual Trout Unlimited banquet on May 20.

Do you have a young person who is interested in working to improve the environment? Tell them about the SPROG workshop near Denver this summer. This is a weeklong program sponsored by the Sierra Student Coalition aimed toward giving young people the knowledge and skills to really make a difference in their community. For more information, contact me at eepatt@gmail.com or Camilla Feibelman at camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org.

# Protecting the Pecos

**Mark Allison, Executive Director, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance**

A broad-based coalition of conservationists, sportsmen, businesses and pueblos continues to build public support for protecting 120,000 acres of roadless areas adjacent to the existing Pecos Wilderness.

This citizen proposal seeks to permanently protect these special areas from commercial development and extractive industry through federal legislation through a combination of Wilderness and Special Management Area designations.

The proposal area includes federal public lands within the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests in five counties. County commissions in Santa Fe and San Miguel have already passed resolutions in support, as have Picuris, Nambé, Pojoaque, Taos and Okay Owingeh pueblos. We are working with communities in Taos County and hope to gain the support of the Taos County Commission in late summer. The campaign's moto is "safeguarding our watersheds, protecting traditions."

Thanks to Sierra Club members for their steadfast support. You can learn more at [www.nmwild.org](http://www.nmwild.org).



**"Every good thing, great and small, needs defense"**  
- John Muir

**Join Sierra Club and help protect all creatures, great & small**

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Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 15	N/A
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 49
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35

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

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Camilla Feibelman

**Mayor Richard Berry’s administration violated its agreement with Bosque community advocates when it decided to extend the Bosque trail this winter after just one standing-room-only public meeting (above), with no surface or width alternatives offered.**

# More Bosque deceit

*City violates process agreement, extends Bosque trail*

By Richard Barish, Central Group Bosque Issues chair

Albuquerque Mayor Richard Berry has disregarded his agreement on a process for public involvement in Bosque decisions in order to rush through plans to extend the developed Bosque trail this winter for another 1.2 miles, from the I-40 bridge to Campbell Road.

The Administration created an uproar in February 2015 when it began construction of the first phase of its Bosque development in the middle of a promised public process, short-circuiting public involvement. In order to avoid such an uproar in the future, the Administration entered into an agreement with the Sierra Club and the Bosque Action Team that established a good public process for future Bosque projects. The agreement was finalized in March 2015 and presented to City Council in April.

Unfortunately, the Mayor does not believe that he actually has to comply with his agreement. By the time the Administration decided to extend the trail this winter, there was not enough time to comply with the agreed procedures and complete construction before nesting season in the spring, when it has to cease work in the Bosque. Although construction could have waited until the fall, the Mayor decided instead to just scrap the agreement.

The Administration instead employed a highly abbreviated public process. It held one public meeting, on Jan. 7. At that meeting, a standing-room-only crowd of about 175 people turned out, and others were seen searching for parking places and leaving when none could be found. The Administration ended the meeting before everyone who signed up to

speak had the opportunity to do so. The Administration’s agreement on process required it to present alternatives for route, width and material out of which the trail would be constructed. At the outset of the Jan. 7 meeting, however, the Administration informed the audience that the trail design would be a 6-foot wide, crusher-fine trail, the same as the controversial first section of the trail. The Administration thus pre-decided this issue without any public input. The Administration only presented alternatives on the route of the trail.

The comments at the meeting were overwhelmingly critical of the Administration’s plans. Comments favored prioritizing environmental protection and keeping the Bosque as natural and undeveloped as possible.

After the meeting and disclosure of the alternatives, the Administration allowed only very limited time for written comments, again contrary to its agreement.

The option selected by the Administration does move the multi-use trail and the heavy traffic that may exist on that trail away from the sensitive river bank for a good portion of the length of this section of the trail. The trail appears to incorporate more curves than the section of the trail south of I-40, which may help to slow down those few of the bicyclists who may be inclined to travel faster than they should. In these respects, the Administration was responsive to the concerns that were expressed, and our work did improve the trail.

However, the trail is another 6-foot-wide, crusher-fine-surfaced trail that is an obvious developed feature in the Bosque and that is thus not consistent with the natural character of the Bosque. The Administration could have met its wheelchair-access objectives with a trail design that was more in keeping with the what makes the Bosque a special place, that it is a great natural space in the middle of the city.

### What you can do

To stay on top of Bosque developments and events and find out when you can take action, please send an email to [richard.barish@gmail.com](mailto:richard.barish@gmail.com).

Although the Administration felt a great urgency to extend its trail this winter, it has not felt the same urgency about the restoration projects that it has committed to doing as part of its Bosque project. At this point, little progress has been made on those projects, and it is appearing more and more questionable whether those projects will be completed before the end of the mayor’s term in December 2017.

The Administration now moves on to further Bosque development, including a proposed 10-foot-wide bridge across the siphon outfall, halfway between Central and I-40. The Open Space Advisory Board voted against the bridge as designed, although this vote is advisory only. It can also be anticipated that the city will extend its trail from Campbell to Montañó next fall and winter.

### Central New Mexico Executive Committee

Treasurer: David Ther, treasurer, [grelbik@gmail.com](mailto:grelbik@gmail.com), 505-867-6283  
Secretary: Heather Kline, [heather9387@yahoo.com](mailto:heather9387@yahoo.com), 505-577-2798  
Outings: Odile de La Beaujardiere, [outings\\_odile@pitot.org](mailto:outings_odile@pitot.org), 505.433.4692  
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Political chair: Richard Barish, [richard.barish@gmail.com](mailto:richard.barish@gmail.com)  
Fred Houdek, [fjhoudek@gmail.com](mailto:fjhoudek@gmail.com), 630-809-4234.

# One threat removed, Sandoval remains vulnerable

By Mona Blaber  
Citizens of Sandoval County have seen the conflict over oil and gas development near their homes take many twists and turns in the past four months.

The county’s Planning and Zoning Commission initially appeared ready to recommend an application from financially troubled SandRidge Energy to drill an exploratory oil well just 2 miles outside of Rio Rancho.

After a surge of citizen activism, including thousands of

messages to commissioners and hundreds of residents packing meetings, the Planning and Zoning Commission found that SandRidge’s application didn’t meet numerous existing zoning requirements.

The county commission was expected to deny the application and consider a moratorium on new drilling while it updated its ordinances to include oil and gas development. It did neither, sending the application back to Zoning to allow Sandridge to address its gaps.

Then, in another surprise twist, SandRidge withdrew its application.

But we’re far from victory. With no ordinances that address the potential hazards and liabilities of oil and gas drilling, the county could be forced to approve similar applications. Sandoval has drawn increased interest from development companies, in part because recent improvements in fracking technology have made the area’s Mancos shale formation more lucrative.

Thanks to allies at Food and Water Watch and Oil and Gas Accountability Project, the cities of Bernalillo and Corrales have now passed resolutions supporting a moratorium on new drilling while the county develops ordinances that safeguard its water, roads, nearby residences and cultural resources from oil and gas exploration.

But commissioners are considering exempting from protective ordinances the areas around tribal lands such as Counselor and Cuba, which are already feeling the brunt of unbridled oil and gas extraction. Citizen engagement is required to protect all citizens of Sandoval County. Please call County Chair Darryl Madalena to urge a moratorium (see box) pending appropriate ordinances that ensure the public safety.

Go to [riograndesierraclub.org/sandoval](http://riograndesierraclub.org/sandoval) to learn more.

### Take Action

Call Sandoval County Chair Darryl Madalena at (505) 206-7470 and ask him to put on the commission agenda a moratorium on new drilling while the county develops ordinances to address oil and gas. See [riograndesierraclub.org/sandoval](http://riograndesierraclub.org/sandoval) for more.



# PNM resubmits request for gas plant

**By Mona Blaber  
Rio Grande Chapter  
communications coordinator**

Last year, PNM proposed a 187-megawatt natural-gas plant as part of its replacement for the power lost when it shuts two units of coal-fired San Juan Generating Station in 2017.

PNM issued a request for proposals for the project. But they limited the proposals only to natural gas.

Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy,

of which the Rio Grande Chapter is a member, and New Energy Economy intervened in the case before the Public Regulation Commission, arguing that PNM did not need the extra capacity, in part because the Navopache cooperative and city of Gallup had ended their contracts with the utility. PNM asked to delay consideration of its application and said it would reconsider its need.

In a December order, the Public Regulation Commission hearing examiner said “PNM’s Strategist modeling

appears to show the absence of a need for the 187-MW natural gas plant proposed by PNM until 2023. Instead, PNM’s modeling shows the need for a series of solar plants starting in 2019.”

The hearing examiner also noted that “PNM carries the burden of proof to show that its proposed resource is the most cost-effective choice among feasible alternatives to serve PNM’s resource needs.”

PNM subsequently withdrew its request, but stated that it may file a new

request. In late April, PNM did indeed refile to build a much smaller, 80-megawatt natural-gas plant at the San Juan site.

PNM should be required to perform an all-source request for proposals to determine whether the gas plant is the most cost-effective way to serve PNM’s resources needs, and to file new testimony supporting the amended application that includes the scope of alternatives evaluated. To keep updated on this case, please email [riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org).

## Climate at stake in PNM rates

**By Mona Blaber  
Chapter communications  
coordinator**

We all know utility rate cases can make a big impact on our pocketbooks.

But from the lifespan of San Juan coal plant to rooftop solar, the PNM rate case being decided now will have a big impact on our climate.

PNM wants to raise the base service fee on every residential bill from \$5 to \$13, a 160% increase. This hurts low-income and energy-efficient ratepayers, who would have to pay a larger bill no matter how much energy they use. And rooftop solar owners will see the return on their investment go down steeply.

The utility also wants ratepayers to pay for a pollution control it installed at coal-fired San Juan Generating Station that was not required by the EPA or the state and is of dubious benefit.

PNM gets a 10% rate of return from ratepayers off its capital investments like this. Allowing this expense into rates would increase the unrecovered investment cost of San Juan, making the coal plant harder to retire in the near term.

Not all the changes PNM proposes are bad. The utility has proposed a decoupling rate structure that would encourage energy efficiency and boost solar energy.

It has also proposed different possible fixes to large users’ “fuel windfall.” That’s a loophole that allows the largest electricity consumers, like Intel, to pay a lower percentage of their bills for renewable energy than residents and small business do but still get the same level of fuel savings. This means some large users actually make a profit from PNM’s compliance with the Renewable Energy Act, while residents and small businesses foot the bill.

Since this cap also reduces



San Juan Citizens Alliance

**PNM is proposing to add the expense of its “take or pay” coal contract and continued participation in Four Corners Power Plant, above, into its rates. The Public Regulation Commission should require PNM to prove this decision was prudent before forcing ratepayers to foot the bill.**

the amount of renewable energy that PNM is required to provide, fixing this loophole would return some of that “windfall” to regular ratepayers and free more funds to develop renewables.

PNM has also applied to add more electricity from its Palo Verde nuclear plant in Arizona to New Mexico’s rate base.

PNM owns a portion of Palo Verde and had been previously selling the nuclear power on the open market at a loss. In its San Juan proposal, PNM wanted to charge its own ratepayers much more for the power than it was getting on the

open market.

As part of the modified stipulation, the price was lowered considerably from \$2,500 per kilowatt to \$1,100 per kilowatt, but it was still allowed into the rate base. In the current rate case, PNM has included another new purchase of 64MW of Palo Verde that it had leased out in 1985 and purchased back in 2015 for \$2,500. PNM has not established that the capacity is needed or that the price was justified.

This proposal would add more nuclear power at a price of \$2,500 per kilowatt, more than double the \$1,100 per kilowatt PNM eventually

**Take Action**

Go to [riograndesierraclub.org/pnmrates](http://riograndesierraclub.org/pnmrates) to send a note asking Public Regulation Commissioners to protect the climate and reject unfair rates for solar owners, low-income ratepayers and other PNM customers.

**PNM wants to raise its base service fee from \$5 to \$13, penalizing low-income and energy-efficient customers and rooftop solar owners.**

agreed to charge ratepayers in the San Juan case.

PNM also wants to continue its participation in add its coal contract for the Four Corners Power Plant and add a new coal contract to its New Mexico customers’ rates. PNM entered into this take-or-pay coal contract (meaning PNM and others must pay for the coal for the decades-long duration of the contract whether it needs it or not) in 2013, but intervenors including Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy and New Energy Economy contend that PNM must prove that extending its ownership interest and entering into this contract was prudent before ratepayers are forced to foot the bill.

PNM has an excess of fossil-fuel baseload power, which makes less room for renewable energy in its portfolio.

PNM should consider the future and the large majority of New Mexicans who prefer renewable energy over polluting fuels when it structures its rates. Please see [riograndesierraclub.org/pnmratecase](http://riograndesierraclub.org/pnmratecase) to read more and tell the Public Regulation Commission your concerns.

## Solar fees argued in EPE, SPS rate cases

**By Mona Blaber**

El Paso Electric’s proposed rate increase for El Paso customers is moving forward to administrative-law judges and the Texas Public Utilities Commission after a non-unanimous settlement with the city of El Paso, which had rejected the company’s rate proposals last year.

Yet to be litigated are terms regarding solar charges and the costs to exit Four Corners Power Plant.

The original proposal would have raised most EPE customers’ rates by about 10% but put solar customers into a separate rate class and raised their rates about double that. The proposed settlement no longer segregates solar users in a separate rate class.

However, the proposed settlement would add an \$11 monthly fee for new solar customers. That fee is being challenged by solar advocates. Although EPE and other utilities claim these fees are to make up for solar users’ costs to the system, every independent study has shown that solar customers *reduce* costs for utilities and other customers, in part because they provide energy to the grid at peak demand times.

Southwestern Public Service, which serves Eastern New Mexico customers, has already imposed a standby fee for solar users. In its current rate case, SPS proposes to increase that per-Kwh fee but structure it in a fairer way, charging for potential load rather than potential generation from solar systems. Solar advocates are hopeful they can stop the increase in the charge per Kwh and support SPS’s improvement to the structure. SPS has to rejustify this charge every three years, so next year solar advocates will have the opportunity to require SPS to prove this fee is legitimate. Utilities’ claims to justify these solar fees so far have not been supported by evidence.

Contact [riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org) to stay updated on the EPE case for El Paso.



# A note about Sierra Club endorsements

By Susan Martin  
Chapter political chair

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

The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter sends questionnaires and interviews

eligible candidates, and two chapter political and executive committees must approve every endorsement by a two-thirds vote in order for a candidate to be endorsed. (Incumbents can be judged by their public record rather than a questionnaire).

**These pages list only endorsed candidates who have opposition in the June 7 New Mexico primary elections. The chapter may add to its list**

**of endorsed primary candidates after press time.** Please see [riograndesierraclub.org](http://riograndesierraclub.org) for final listings.

Environmental champions who are unopposed in the primary but face contested general elections will be featured in the October *Sierran*.

In many races, the primaries decide the office-holder because there is no or only nominal opposition in the general election. And because far fewer votes

decide primary elections, and Sierra Club endorsements have greater influence in primaries, volunteering to help these candidates win is a great way to impact your local government — and you'll have fun and meet some terrific candidates in the process.

Want to help us elect great candidates? Please write to Susan Martin at [smartin31@comcast.net](mailto:smartin31@comcast.net) and [camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org](mailto:camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org).

## N.M. House District 48: Paul Campos

By Susan Martin  
Chapter Political Team chair

Paul Campos has been successfully protecting the environment since he served as Santa Fe County commissioner from 2001 to 2008.

Campos will bring that commitment to this Santa Fe seat vacated by the retirement of another environmental champion, Lucky Varela.

As a commissioner, Campos took a leadership role in bringing Rio Grande water into the city and county water systems and in the adoption of a moratorium and ordinance regulating oil and gas fracking.

Campos worked to make new construction projects energy-efficient (including the First Judicial District Court House). He advocated for land-use planning and zoning rules that discouraged sprawl, encouraged clustering and required adequate water supplies and infrastructure to protect our environment. He also championed the county's open-space and trail plan.

Campos is committed to making New Mexico "water-secure" by advocating for water-reuse investment and by mandating that agriculture use its water more efficiently. He believes New Mexico will be unable to establish a strong economy and good-paying jobs until it effectively addresses water security, establishment of an outstanding education system, and makes a large public investment in broadband.



Photo courtesy Jeff Steinborn

**Jeff Steinborn brings expertise and a dedication to the environment to the Legislature.**

## N.M. Senate District 36: Jeff Steinborn

By Mona Blaber  
Chapter communications coordinator

In his career and his tenure in the New Mexico House of Representatives, Jeff Steinborn has proven to be a leader in protecting our water, our land, our wildlife and our climate.

He has sponsored legislation that would outlaw coyote-killing contests in New Mexico and was an outspoken advocate for designating Organ Mountains Desert Peaks a national monument, which protected the area permanently and brought an economic boost to the area. His expertise and knowledge are apparent in committee meetings when

he's speaking up about the importance of renewable energy, common-sense protections for our drinking water and access to our public lands.

If Steinborn wins the June 7 Democratic primary in this north-central Doña Ana County seat, he will challenge Sen. Lee Cotter, who has a 0% record from Conservation Voters New Mexico. That's not a typo. It's a zero. Turning this seat over from a staunch anti-environmentalist to a smart and dedicated conservation champion would be crucial for policies like improving our renewable-energy requirements, ending trapping on public lands, stopping coyote-killing contests and extending tax credits for rooftop and utility-scale solar energy.

## N.M. House District 5: Doreen Johnson

By Mona Blaber

Doreen Wonda Johnson didn't take long to make a positive impression on the New Mexico Legislature.

A native of Crownpoint, Johnson has become an environmental champion in her first two years in this San Juan-McKinley county seat that includes Gallup and Chaco Culture National Historical Park. The Democrat has achieved a 100% score on the Conservation Voters New Mexico environmental scorecard.

She has worked tirelessly on issues of air and water protection and sought to expand benefits to workers who have been poisoned by uranium-mining operations in the state. She'll be an outstanding ally for the conservation community.



## House District 25: Christine Trujillo

By Richard Barish  
Central Group Political chair

Christine Trujillo is running for re-election to State House District 25 in Albuquerque's near Northeast Heights.

Rep. Trujillo, who is running in the Democratic primary, has a lifetime 91% Conservation Voters New Mexico rating. She says "clean water, a healthy, thriving natural environment and caring for wildlife are very important to me."

In 2015, she co-sponsored the Wildlife Protection and Public Safety Act, which would restrict the use of animal traps, and a bill to appropriate money to NMSU to develop technologies to abate uranium in drinking water, among other environmental bills.

Rep. Trujillo is a long-time teacher who has served six terms as president of American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, and has served 12 years as the president of New Mexico Federation of Labor-AFL-CIO, among other positions.



## El Paso City Council: Jim Tolbert

By Laurence Gibson,  
El Paso Group chair

El Paso Group Sierra Club Vice Chair Jim Tolbert is running to fill the unexpired term of Larry Romero, who resigned earlier this year, in the city election on **Saturday, May 7.**

A longtime environmental activist, Tolbert is the author of the [elpasonaturally.blogspot.com](http://elpasonaturally.blogspot.com) website. He began blogging during his tenure on the board of the Carnation Farmers Market, a local, organic market that he helped found in Washington state. Tolbert blogs about critical issues such as fracking on the Texas Diablo Plateau (Otero Mesa

in New Mexico), water shortage, and the destruction of the Franklin Mountains by the CEMEX quarry. He takes to task local bureaucrats and powerful El Paso developers.

Tolbert is also leading the El Paso Group's efforts to encourage shoppers to use reusable bags rather than plastic bags when they shop. The group is currently distributing 2,000 bags to El Paso shoppers.

The environmental community is excited at the prospect of restoring a bit of intelligence to a city council that currently seems to be hand-picked, elected, and controlled by El Paso's rich and powerful development community.





# Santa Fe County: Chavez, Moreno

By Susan Martin  
Chapter Political chair

Residents of Santa Fe County Commission District 2 are fortunate to be represented by Miguel Chavez, who has been a stalwart in his work to make the county's new Sustainable Land Development Code live up to its title.

The code establishes zoning for wise land-use choices, imposes impact fees for developers to offset or pay for infrastructure improvements, and contains energy efficiency building requirements. Moreover, thanks to Chavez's strong support, it establishes a mechanism for public input when the county is considering landfills, junkyards, and extractive



Miguel Chavez



Ed Moreno

operations.

As vice president of the North Central Regional Transit District Board, Chavez collaborated with several agencies in the creation of the Mountain Trail Route Shuttle service to Santa Fe Ski Area. This shuttle has reduced the number of vehicles traveling to the Ski Area, thus

reducing the carbon footprint and boosting economic development via tourism.

In Commission District 5, Ed Moreno has developed expertise in policy development, collaboration and understanding of the issues that are facing Santa Fe County.

In 26 years in the district, Moreno has practiced policy development as a journalist, senior advisor to former State Land Commissioner Ray Powell, and as a public-policy facilitator.

As a government analyst, Moreno staffed three legislative committees and two executive agencies. He has showed a strong commitment to environmental protection in all of his roles and will be a valuable addition to the county commission.

## Endorsement list:

### El Paso City Council:

Jim Tolbert

### N.M. State Senate:

Jeff Steinborn

Mimi Stewart

### N.M. State House:

Paul Campos, Doreen Johnson,

Christine Trujillo, Mary Hotvedt

### Santa Fe County Commission:

Miguel Chavez, Ed Moreno

### Bernalillo County

Commission: Adrian Pedroza

### Grant County Commission:

Alicia Edwards, Harry Browne,

Marilyn Alcorn



Sen. Mimi Stewart for two years in a row sponsored and championed renewal of tax credits for residential and small-business solar installations.

## N.M. Senate District 17: Stewart

By Richard Barish  
Central New Mexico Group  
Political Chair

The Sierra Club is once again very pleased to be able to endorse Sen. Mimi Stewart in her legislative race.

No one has been a stronger advocate for the environment or a more reliable environmental vote than Sen. Stewart. In more than 20 years as a Representative and now

as a Senator, Sen. Stewart has voted with us an astounding 99% of the time.

Recently, Sen. Stewart sponsored and led the campaign for renewing tax credits for New Mexicans who install solar panels at their homes, a critical issue for the Club, since the tax credits are an effective incentive to increase renewable energy, while increasing jobs in the state.

Sen. Stewart has the experience, savvy, and skill to shepherd important environmental legislation

through the Legislature to passage.

Sen. Stewart is facing a challenge in the Democratic primary from a former senator with a poor environmental record. Sen. Stewart is a passionate, knowledgeable, and ethical voice for public lands, water, wildlife and climate protections in the Senate. The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter enthusiastically endorses her and urges your support for her campaign and your vote for her on June 7.

## Grant County Commission: Browne, Alcorn, Edwards

By Mona Blaber

Grant County voters have a great opportunity to elect a county commission that will preserve Southwestern New Mexico's unique treasures and resources.

In District 3, Sierra Club has endorsed Alicia Edwards; in District 4, Marilyn Alcorn; and in District 5, Harry Browne. All oppose the billion-dollar Gila River diversion plan that experts have called infeasible and instead advocate for cost-effective alternatives to meet Grant County's future water needs.

Browne is former executive director and current board member of Gila Resources Information Project, the organization at the forefront of protecting the Gila River and fighting the polluter-written New Mexico Copper Rule.

Edwards founded the Grant County volunteer center and is the county Healthy Kids-Healthy Communities coordinator.

Alcorn is board president of Silver Adult Care Services, a nonprofit she founded in 2009.



Alicia Edwards



Marilyn Alcorn



Harry Browne

## Bernalillo County Commission: Pedroza

By Richard Barish  
Central New Mexico Group  
Political chair

Adrian Pedroza was until recently the Executive Director of Partnership for Community Action, advocating for education, economic, immigration, and civil-rights issues, as well as working with Southwest Organizing Project on environmental justice advocacy.

He has been a strong voice opposing the Santolina development, a huge sprawl develop-



ment project southwest of Albuquerque with no plans for how water will be provided for the development. "Bernalillo County District 2, with the Rio Grande, Bosque, and acequias running through it, with its wildlife, with its farmland, the Valle de Oro Wildlife Refuge and Tingley Beach, and with its magnificent vistas, both

east and west, is one of the most beautiful spots on the planet. It's important that we preserve our most special places while demanding environmental and economic justice," Pedroza said.

"Everyone, in our district and elsewhere, has the same basic right to a safe and healthy place to live, work and play. I appreciate the work done locally by the Sierra Club to protect this right and look forward to partnering with them as a County Commissioner," he added.

## House District 38: Mary Hotvedt

Mary Hotvedt is our pick in a Democratic primary with two strong candidates.

Hotvedt is a longtime resident and community activist in District 38 (encompassing Silver City and Truth or Consequences) and sponsor of the Gila River festival. She understands the relationship between our environment and communities' economy and health and supports legislative action to protect our wildlife, water, air and public lands.





# Smart water development for southwest N.M.

In the Southwest, water is the lifeblood of our economy and culture. Access to adequate clean and affordable water means that our cities can bustle with activity, our farmers can grow local food, and our rivers can sustain the cottonwoods and wildlife we all know and love.

In exchange for developing water downstream in the Colorado River watershed, the Arizona Water Settlements Act of 2004 (AWSA) gave the state of New Mexico money to fund water-supply-improvement projects. This money could either partially fund a major dam, reservoir, and delivery project on the upper Gila River or instead pay for other types of water projects in the State's Southwest Planning Region — Catron, Luna, Hidalgo, and Grant Counties.

The U.S. Department of the Interior and the state of New Mexico recently signed an agreement that set out a framework for a multi-year environmental and cost evaluation of a Gila River diversion project and alternative proposals for water development on the upper region of the Gila. The question on the table is whether a diversion project should even be in the cards.

Proponents of a diversion project



By **U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich**

have argued that New Mexico needs to take any chance that comes its way to develop water, regardless of context, costs, or value.

Based on analysis to date, however, it is hard to imagine a dam or diversion of the Gila River that is not irresponsibly expensive as well as destructive to other economic and resource values.

Initial cost estimates put the price tag for a full diversion project on the Gila between \$800 million and \$1.18 billion. And with only around 8 to 13 percent of the total cost coming from the federal AWSA funding, some of which has already been spent just to study the proposal, New Mexico taxpayers would be on the hook for covering the rest.

On top of that, water users in Southwest New Mexico — residents of Silver City, Deming, and other communities, and farmers and ranchers in the

four counties — would likely see their water bills go up drastically in order to pay for expensive water coming from the diversion project.

We must also carefully consider what could be lost. The upper Gila is the last free-flowing river in the American Southwest. It is home to many species of fish and birds that rely on its natural hydrology. It is dominated by an amazing gallery forest of native cottonwoods and white-trunked Arizona Sycamores towering over riparian willows because of the river's natural flooding regime.

Recreation tourism, which brings significant dollars to local businesses in the region, depends on a healthy Gila River. And local communities, farmers, and ranchers all depend on the greater Gila-San Francisco watershed to recharge their aquifers and groundwater supplies.

I believe that there are smarter and more responsible ways to spend taxpayer dollars than to dewater the Gila River. We should use the AWSA money to fund proven water-efficiency and infrastructure measures. In recent years, state Sen. Howie Morales, who represents Grant and Catron counties, has introduced legislation that would direct AWSA funds toward 13 high-

priority water projects in all four counties. Each of these projects has broad support and would yield real results for a fraction of the cost of a billion-dollar dam.

Watershed restoration, regional water-supply projects and improvements to irrigation infrastructure will do far more to sustain future water needs in southwest New Mexico than a Gila diversion project ever could.

At a time when reduced revenue streams from low oil and gas prices are forcing our state into difficult budget decisions, we need to be deliberate in our assessment of whether dewatering the Gila River is a wise use of taxpayer dollars. And when better, data-driven alternatives exist, it's wasteful to throw millions of dollars at studying a diversion project when we could be spending those millions on real projects that will yield real water at an affordable price.

New Mexico's taxpayers deserve responsible, cost-effective, science-based solutions if we are to manage both our limited water supplies and constrained budgets. Damming or diverting the Gila River simply does not meet that standard.

## TorC rescinds Copper Flat support

*Thank you for your comments opposing the Copper Flat Draft EIS*

By **Allyson Siwik**

**Gila Resources Information Project, Chapter Executive Committee**

At its April 26 meeting, the Truth or Consequences City Council voted 4 to 1 to rescind a January resolution of support for the Copper Flat Mine based on the numerous challenges to the Bureau of Land Management's draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

According to the *Herald of Truth or Consequences*, the T or C city council

rescinded its support for Copper Flat "with the stipulation that the issue will be revisited when new information comes to light concerning water-usage rights currently under litigation."

The New Mexico Copper Corporation proposes re-establishing a polymetallic mine and processing facility located near Hillsboro, N.M.

The 2,190-acre project would use BLM-managed public land and private property to mine and process copper and molybdenum.

The Copper Flat Mine would cause surface and groundwater contamination, reduce the amount of water flowing to adjacent streams and springs, the Rio Grande and Caballo Lake, and will have

significant negative impacts on wildlife, air quality, roads, traffic, recreation and tourism, cultural resources, and the economy.

Thanks to all of you (600 Sierra Club members) who sent in your comments to the Bureau of Land Management opposing the reopening of the Copper Flat mine.

Copper Flat Mine is not the answer to Sierra County's economic woes. Just like Grant County's copper mines, it will be subject to the boom-and-bust economic cycle caused by volatile global copper prices and will potentially create a huge environmental liability for the public to clean up.

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## Southern Group: Methane, Organs, elections

By **Ken Newton, Southern New Mexico Group co-chair**

In February, the Southern New Mexico Group met with Alex Renirie, Sierra Club's New Mexico methane campaign coordinator, and New Mexico State University Prof. David Dubois, the state climatologist, to discuss plans for methane-reduction efforts in Southern New Mexico.

We also met with the Progressive Voter Alliance board, which approved Sierra Club's methane campaign as its "Action Item" in March. Alex attended the meeting and led the action — groups holding signs of support for methane-waste reduction that

were photographed and then tweeted to Gina McCarthy, administrator of the EPA. Alex also spoke with one of Dr. Dubois' classes while she was here.

The Southern Group also published two letters in the *Las Cruces Sun-News* in support of both the EPA and BLM proposed rules to reduce methane waste from oil and gas operations.

Co-chair Ken Newton attended a kick-off meeting of the Organ Mountain Desert Peaks Wilderness Coalition at the Ramada Palms in Las Cruces. Representatives from many organizations, including Friends of the Organ Mountains, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, New

Mexico Wildlife Federation and Pew Charitable Trusts were in attendance. New Mexico senators will be introducing legislation this spring to formally identify wilderness areas within the OMDP National Monument. The Sierra Club will primarily be involved in educational tasks in support of the legislation.

Sierra Club members participated in Southwest Environmental Center's La Mancha Wetlands construction. The wetlands will be a 3-acre aquatic refuge just west of the Rio Grande and about three-quarters of a mile south of I-10. Once approvals come in for direct linkage to the Rio Grande, La Mancha will provide a sorely needed

aquatic river refuge, the first of its kind.

Members of the OMDP Action Team partnered with local Girl Scout Leaders on a hike May 7 at La Cueva. The girls are working on the OMDP Badges and Patch. The patch is the first National Monument Girl Scout Patch in the country.

After dramatic victories by Sierra Club-endorsed candidates in November's city elections, the Southern Group will turn its focus to the 2016 elections, among the most critical in some time. Many Southern Group members will be active in supporting progressive candidates. See pages 8 and 9 for endorsements in the Southern New Mexico area.





Above: A pipeline facility flares methane along Highway 550. Earthworks also recorded a ground-level leak at a valve assembly at this facility using infrared cameras. (Photo courtesy Detso.) Below: Daniel Tso speaks at the April 20 rally outside the BLM’s auction to lease public lands for oil and gas development. (Photo courtesy Ash Haywood.)



Teresa Seamster  
At a rally outside a BLM lease auction April 20, Angela KunKowski of EarthCare shows the health effects of fracking.

# Communities unite at BLM lease protest

By Alex Renirie

On April 20, 200 concerned New Mexicans rallied outside the BLM oil and gas lease sale in Santa Fe to call on the Obama administration to enhance its climate legacy and protect local communities from the impacts of oil and gas development.

Just two days before President Obama signed the Paris climate deal in New York, 22 New Mexico groups used the rally to call on the administration to realize its climate commitments by ending the federal fossil-fuel-leasing program and enacting immediate safeguards on methane pollution. Each of these actions would help put the country on track to keep global temperature rise below 2 degrees celsius. The lively demonstration featured local musicians and representatives from diverse constituencies concerned about the state’s dependence on fossil fuels, including indigenous leaders, youth advocates, health professionals, faith leaders, and representatives from nearby communities resisting oil and gas development in their backyards.

Large banners that spanned nearly 300 feet outside the Courtyard Marriott read, “Protect Chaco Canyon,” “Protect Sandoval County,” and “Protect Santa Fe National Forest,” three areas under threat of increased oil and gas development. Though 2,300 acres of public land were still auctioned off inside the hotel, the outcry is fueling a larger movement across the country united under the banner of “Keep it in the ground.” Protests at fossil-fuel lease sales in Utah, Colorado and Louisiana since November have resulted in cancelled auctions and a cautious BLM. And while the BLM hasn’t yet updated what it admits is an outdated local resource-management plan that doesn’t consider the effects of horizontal fracking in the region, parcels in Chaco Canyon will be on the table at auctions in New Mexico in July and October.

The Santa Fe rally was unique in advocating for strong methane safeguards in addition to ending new leasing. Methane standards covering new equipment in the oil and gas industry are expected to be finalized in May, but the EPA had not yet proposed the necessary subsequent rule to reduce methane emissions from all oil and gas sources. Rally participants signed a large letter to the president that asked for immediate action on this front.

# Plug the methane leaks

By Alex Renirie  
Beyond Dirty Fuels  
organizing representative

2016 has already seen several exciting developments for the climate movement nationwide, and reducing methane emissions from oil and gas operations remains a top priority for many — from policy-makers in Washington D.C. to concerned citizens in New Mexico.

On Feb. 16, nearly 60 diverse constituents from across the state gathered in Farmington to show federal Bureau of Land Management representatives that New Mexicans support strong methane safeguards. The hearing was the first of four across the country at which BLM gathered public input on its proposed limits to methane waste on public lands.

Although hundreds of oil and gas workers attended in response to industry opposition, speakers supported the rules by a 2-to-1 ratio. Tribal leaders, medical professionals, faith leaders, youth, sportsmen, moms, veterans and ranchers cited the \$127 million New Mexicans have lost in royalties from methane leaks; the toxicity of methane pollution for oil and gas communities; and the fact that methane is 86 times more potent than CO2 as a greenhouse gas. Despite industry’s claims, advocates spoke about the opportunity to put people back to work fixing leaking pipes and updating equipment to prevent the direct loss of natural gas (methane) into our air.

On April 22, 200,000 comments, including 13,000



## The president’s March announcement directs EPA to start the process of regulating all oil and gas sources of methane pollution, new and existing.

by New Mexicans, were submitted to the BLM favoring the rules.

In March, President Obama delivered more good news. His joint announcement with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on tackling climate change included a commitment to regulate all sources of methane pollution. As some may recall, the EPA proposed its own rule to cut methane emissions last August. But the proposal did not cover existing sources of pollution, which will amount to 90% of all methane emissions in a few years.

Obama’s announcement directs EPA to immediately start the process of regulating all oil and gas pollution sources, new and existing. The EPA needs to hear that the public supports a rule proposal as soon as possible.

Throughout the country these common-sense rules are finding support. Without them, the U.S. will not meet its Paris Climate commitment of reducing methane pollution by 40-45% by 2025.

These rules also reduce the health impacts of oil and gas extraction. This year’s American Lung Association State of the Air Report gave F grade on ozone pollution to San Juan and Eddy counties. Ozone is formed when volatile organic compounds, which are released with methane from oil and gas operations, combine with nitrogen oxide and sunlight. Ozone is known to exacerbate asthma and respiratory disease. It is key to control the elements of natural-gas production that are so dangerous to our communities.

On April 28, 68 mayors and county commissioners released a letter supporting the EPA rules and calling for fast action. Santa Fe Mayor Javier Gonzales, Rio Arriba County Commissioner Alex Naranjo, commissioners from Doña Ana, Bernalillo and Santa Fe, and Aztec City Commissioner Katee McClure were among the signers.

The *Farmington Daily Times* quoted McClure: “I’m so tired of this ‘The sky is falling’ complaining and blaming everything on the (federal government’s) rules over the industry. Is the health of our people important? Yes. Is the quality of our air important? Yes. Is the oil and gas industry here important? Of course. But like I have said before, if I started burning tires in my front lawn, I’d be arrested. ... Without rules and government stepping in sometimes, we’d still have child labor. Oil and gas isn’t solely to blame. But come on — (sources of atmospheric methane are) not all landfill and cow farts.”





Miya King-Flaherty

A fracking well in the greater Chaco Canyon region sits less than 400 feet from a home in Nageezi, N.M.

# Documenting drilling impacts

*Chaco Coalition groups conduct inspections, health surveys to show effects of oil and gas operations on communities*

By **Miya King-Flaherty, Public Lands Fellow, & Teresa Seamster, Northern Group**

On Feb. 23 and 24, one of our Coalition partners, Earthworks, filmed oil and gas sites in the Greater Chaco Canyon area. Earthworks took infrared footage, revealing severe gas pollution, leaks and operation violations within close proximity to residents' homes and a community school, showing many ways oil and gas development in the region impacts community health, culture, livelihoods, and the environment.

### Citizen inspections

A new initiative is emerging to help protect the region — citizen inspection of oil and gas sites. Before filming began, several community members attended a citizens inspection workshop hosted by the Sierra Club. Sierra Club member Tweeti Blancett shared her struggle with the Bureau of Land Management that ultimately led to oil and

gas development on her family ranch. Through her experiences, Tweeti learned how to inspect and document oil and gas operator violations. Over the course of the two days, Earthworks, the Sierra Club and community members traveled to locations throughout Lybrook, Nageezi and Counselor. FLIR footage revealed high amounts of methane and volatile organic compounds being released into the air. One filming site was near Dzilh-Na-O-Dith-Hle community school. The group conducted several inspections of oil and gas sites, and violations and infractions were photographed and documented. These included leaking compressors, leaking well heads, the absence of an overflow pit, no fencing, no cattle guard, non-rehabilitated areas, and more. One site had cattle grazing and resting within the well pad site. Earthworks also filmed several testimonies from citizens who shared their stories about the impacts of

fracking on the community. The impacts are deeply felt and transcend health and the environment. There are also cultural, social and economic impacts. The Sierra Club is working with impacted community members, concerned citizens and other volunteers to carry out another citizen inspection of oil and gas sites.

### Health impacts

The health impacts of oil fields near homes and communities are extensive and often life-long. Highest on the list of concerns in 2015 were exposure to toxic emissions from nearby flaring of methane and benzene, polluted water appearing in residential water supplies, destruction of traditional ceremonial sites by oil developers, dust and safety hazards from heavy truck traffic and domestic violence and disruption of families. This year, with the drastic drop in oil prices and royalties, the focus is beginning to shift to include not just the immediate health impacts but

also the longer-term damage to the area's rural economy and the lack of job opportunities. A new health initiative is underway with members from the Counselor Chapter House, New Mexico Health Equity Partners — Place Matters, Diné CARE and the Rio Grande Chapter collaborating to bring health information to the community as well as prepare a Health Impact Rapid Assessment this summer.

### How to help

The BLM loosely enforces rules and regulations that govern oil and gas operations in the San Juan Basin. A working group is reaching out to citizens impacted by oil and gas extraction in the region to monitor oil and gas sites and document violations. If you would like to help advance this initiative, please support the Citizen's Monitoring Project by making a donation. For more information, contact Miya King-Flaherty, Public Lands Fellow, at miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org.

## Volunteers remove pipes hazardous to wildlife

By **Teresa Seamster, Northern New Mexico Group chair**

The Bureau of Land Management provides for multiple uses on public lands, including mining. One legacy of marking and fencing mining claims is a long-standing inventory of open standpipes that have become lethal traps for birds and small mammals throughout New Mexico.

On La Bajada Mesa, near La Cienega southwest of Santa Fe, a number of expired mining-claim markers have been located. These mining-claim markers are open at their tops and made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipes. They can act as a lethal trap to wildlife, specifically migra-

tory birds. Animals that can fit within these small openings can mistake them for areas suitable for roosting or nesting. They can be trapped and unable to escape due to the smooth walls of the pipe, or restricted size of the pipe. Not all mine claims are marked with open pipes. However, those found on the mesa do pose a threat to birds and other wildlife species. The BLM Taos Field Office, in cooperation with concerned citizens and interest groups, including the Northern New Mexico Group of Sierra Club, identified approximately 30 of these open-pipe PVC markers and removed them on April 2.



Photo by Teresa Seamster  
**Remains of birds trapped in an open PVC pipe used to mark a claim.**

## Northern New Mexico Group Contacts

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# Site gives lowdown on installing solar

By Sandrine Gaillard, Northern New Mexico Group

I am very excited to announce that I have created a website — **www.GoSolarNowNM.info** — to inform homeowners on how to go solar.

It all started as I was making the decision to go solar in the fall of 2015. I had a lot of questions: How many panels? Which panels? Which manufacturer? Which provider? For what cost?

Which warranties? And the list goes on.

As I was gathering more information, I found out that going solar turned out to be more complex than I had anticipated — especially being able to choose a solar system that's right for one's needs and expectations.

After compiling my findings for my own needs, including comparison tables and charts, it became clear that these findings, which are not readily available elsewhere, could also benefit my fellow

New Mexicans. And what better place than a website to share the information all in one place.

The **www.GoSolarNowNM.info** site is comprised of the following pages:

1. Is PhotoVoltaic solar right for you?;
2. How about switching to a solar powered vehicle;
3. What kind of solar panels should you choose?;
4. Picking a solar provider and What else to expect once you choose to go solar;
5. Why I created this website and recommended

contacts; and 6. News, interesting articles & links, updates and more.

Going solar makes so much sense, and hopefully, with all the information available on **www.GoSolarNowNM.info**, you will feel confident that you can go solar with a system that's right for you.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at **sandrine.sierraclub@gmail.com**.

Sierra Club members gathered March 19 at the Commons in Santa Fe to honor former Rio Grande Chapter Chair John Buchser, left; Political Chair Susan Martin, center, and former Northern New Mexico Group Chair Norma McCallan.



Teresa Seamster

## Three special volunteers honored

By Teresa Seamster Northern New Mexico Group

On March 19, friends, fans and supporters of our longtime Rio leaders John Buchser, Susan Martin and Norma McCallan came to raise a glass of champagne to toast these dedicated, savvy and indomitable defenders of water, politics and public lands. These three Sierra Club leaders are emblematic of the spirit of volunteerism in the Chapter. Without their expertise and dedicates hours of work from people like John, Susan and Norma we would not be making much needed progress towards a sustainable New Mexico.

Former Chapter Chairs John and Susan

have guided statewide members to greater involvement and understanding of water issues, endorsements of strong environmental candidates and motivating voters and the public to address the importance of water protection and informed elected officials in our state.

John had served as chapter chair for close to 10 years when he handed the reins over to former Santa Fe Mayor David Coss. And Susan has served at all levels from local, state and national helping to guide and elect pro-environment candidates.

Former Chapter Vice Chair Norma has an outstanding record of decades-long involvement and work in all aspects

of Sierra Club's work on wilderness and public lands, the Northern Group's well known "Day Hikes in the Santa Fe Area" and leading outings. One toast was to Norma's "40 years and 450 hikes!" Norma joined the Sierra Club when she was invited to be the cook on a Grand Canyon outing.

Norma described coming up to the rim as the group was ending their trip. Her eyes brimmed with tears. She didn't want to leave, but knew she would be returning and that she'd continue to be involved in the Sierra Club. "I have a tiny family," she said, "so in many ways the Sierra Club has become my family."

## Valles Caldera still needs protection

By Teresa Seamster

Now that the move of the Valles Caldera National Preserve into the National Park System has been successful — what is next?

Caldera Action reports that in light of broad demographic trends and political realities, they see a tremendous need to continue advocating for protection of natural and cultural values at the Preserve and to help broaden the base of supporters of the Preserve.

A key focus will be to expand the VCNP role as an education and science center so that the Preserve and its programs can help diverse

audiences deepen their understanding of the natural world and hopefully be inspired to help protect the Preserve long into the future.

Recently the VCNP staff asked Caldera Action to help them qualify for a \$40,000 Centennial Grant from the National Park Service that will involve Pueblo and Hispano youth in citizen science at the Preserve.

Together with the Amigos de los Valles and the National Park Foundation, they contributed \$20,000 to match \$20,000 from the NPS. The Northern New Mexico Group is helping supply the remaining \$5,000.

The new Centennial Grant will allow Preserve staff to work with rural Northern New Mexico high schools engaging young people in science. For selected students, the grant will fund a staff classroom visit, a one- or two-day forest-restoration monitoring field trip, and post-trip academic support for students interested in presenting their data to the public and scientists.

Not only will these young people get hands-on exposure to field science, they will learn to think about ecology and how nature works. They will be outdoors in a beautiful place working with others and challenging their minds.

This is a big part of what the National Park System is for and this experience could influence their interests, lives and career paths.

There are many ways to engage in activities at the preserve. The upcoming transportation plan will determine which roads and trails will be improved or closed in the coming years. This is a key issue for public access and wildlife protection. There are also volunteer activities such as fence removal or helping with field research projects. Activities will be posted on the Chapter Calendar and under the Northern Group page.

## Clear out and stock up at our yard sale!

Please join us for our semi-annual Northern New Mexico Sierra yard sale:

**When:** Saturday, May 21

**Where:** Home of Carole Owens and Ross Pope, 1859 Camino de Pabilo, Santa Fe, 87505

**Directions:** Take St. Francis to Zia, south on Galisteo, 2nd street to the right.

**Time:** 8 a.m. until 2 p.m.

**Contact:** Carole at 505-577-2682

Now that spring has sprung, it's time to clean out your attics, garages and closets. Re-use is the highest level in the recycling chart, and we all have still-good but little-used items cluttering our life.

We need gently used items for a good sale, and we need volunteers to price items the day before and help customers on the sale day. Start setting aside saleable items now!

Furniture, sports equipment, books, household items, bedding, toys, pet supplies, clothing and garden supplies are welcome. Electric appliances and tools in working order will sell. No computers, please.

Items can be dropped off at our home the week of May 15. Call ahead to make sure we are home. If assistance is needed with large items, call and we can pick it up.

### Meetings

**Northern Group Executive Committee meetings** are the first Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m.

**The Conservation Committee** meets at 7 p.m. every third Tuesday of the month. Meetings are held at the Sierra Club Santa Fe office, 1807 Second St., Suite 45.

### Hike Book!

Look for the latest edition of the Northern New Mexico Group's classic *Day Hikes of Santa Fe* hike book, with a new look and updated and new hikes, in May! Check your email for release date.



# Los Alamos to go carbon-neutral

By Jody Benson  
Pajarito Group chair

The United Nations convened climate talks in Paris in December despite the Daesh/ISIS attack on Nov. 13. The refusal to postpone the international meeting accentuates the fact that the world thinks the climate issue is at least as important (or even perhaps what exacerbates) terrorism.

Many leaders recognize climate as the most critical concern humans will confront into the next century. Actually, these leaders recognize that this is the most critical issue for humans right now.

We in Los Alamos know first-hand about how climate change has disrupted our community. Just a few examples: two catastrophic wild fires, and the destructive flash floods that followed. Or the 2001 regional piñon-tree mortality, and the ongoing die-off of big conifers. These events not only impacted our town and regional communities, but cost American taxpayers millions.

Here, however, is some very hopeful news, Thanks to smart leadership supported by local activists including the Pajarito Group of the Rio Grande Chapter, Los Alamos County has already taken actions to mitigate climate threats at a local level. These include:

- Initiating a study for future electric-energy generation (including plans for energy efficiency in new building construction and increasing solar-power generation), with the goal of carbon-neutral electricity generation for the county (excluding Los Alamos National Lab) by 2040;
- Participating in a community-wide smart-meter study of residential electricity use;
- Expanding our capacity for solar electric power with a collaboration between NEDO (Japan) and Los Alamos National Laboratory to initiate community solar power generation;
- Supporting the Los Alamos Middle School in its solar-power grant;
- Increasing our investment in hydro-electric power;
- Establishing the free Atomic City Transit bus system;



Christopher Benson

**In 2012, the Los Alamos Dept. of Public Utilities, NEDO of Japan and Los Alamos National Laboratory collaborated to create this smart-grid facility with 2 megawatts of photovoltaic power at a capped county landfill. The facility included an experiment with battery storage. Los Alamos County is leading at the local level to protect our climate. See [www.losalamosnm.us/utilities/Pages/LosAlamosSmartGrid.aspx](http://www.losalamosnm.us/utilities/Pages/LosAlamosSmartGrid.aspx) to read more about the smart-grid facility.**

- Linking to regional public transportation systems;
- Large-scale recycling of everything from asphalt and plastic to glass and yard waste;
- Collaborating with Bandelier to develop and run the Bandelier Shuttle;
- Installing electric-car fueling stations at the County Municipal Building;
- Adding bicycle lanes on most major roadways in town;
- Developing a trail system to “short-cut” through canyons to neighborhoods on multiple mesas;
- Designating capital improvement money to fund the Nature Center that inspires generations to protect and conserve the natural world of which humans are a part; and
- Reducing the risk of damage

from wildfires to our town and to the National Laboratory and the subsequent CO2 emissions, through better forest management and fuel reduction strategies.

Despite local reactionaries trying to implode this work with claims of “higher utility costs” and “too much government interference,” the County Council adopted all but one of the Future Energy Resource Committees recommendations. These will add even more clean-energy options, along with a commitment to reduce all energy consumption in Los Alamos County.

In a world where few citizens can involve themselves in local government, in a world where few cities pay attention to their citizens, we can be proud that our county — with its citizen investment in both the leadership and in directing the direction of issues—is already working to mitigate climate disruption. Let’s keep it up. Los Alamos is not merely a National Historic District, a brass plaque that honors a long-ago project when a team of brilliant scientists collaborating on a single problem could save the world from fascism.

Los Alamos is still alive and kicking back at problems that threaten civilization, both through LANL research and county investments.

Los Alamos can continue to contribute to saving the world, although the problem is so much more huge, difficult, and insidious than a war against a multi-nation army.

This problem is global, and the primary enemy is attitude, ignorance, misdirected political posturing, the failure to understand the cost-benefit analysis of working toward sustainable energy, corporatocracy that puts profit ahead of the good of the nation, money

## Meetings

Our Informational Meetings are on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. in UNMLA, Building 2, Room 203. Please watch your emails and the LA Monitor and LADailyPost.com for announcements about our Issues Presentations.

## County offers opportunity for comments

The Los Alamos Forum offers an ongoing series of online forums with questions about issues of interest to the Pajarito Group regarding the direction of our community. Previous surveys included important issues such as whether the community wants to continue investing in renewable resources (we won), and, of course, the Bag Ban (we lost Round One). Go to [www.losalamosnm.us/gov/Pages/PublicCommentForum.aspx](http://www.losalamosnm.us/gov/Pages/PublicCommentForum.aspx) and enter your email address to receive updates on issues of interest.

You will be notified of all issues for public comment— from renewable energy and distributed solar, to updating the Comprehensive Plan and choosing library art.

The local government and planners pay attention to these comments. Don’t let the comments from unreasonable opponents overwhelm environmental protections as they squashed the bag issue.

in politics, and just plain laziness. But— Here, in Los Alamos, at this local level, we’re working on it, and doing a darn good job.

## Pajarito Group Contact Information

[www.riograndesierraclub.org/pajarito](http://www.riograndesierraclub.org/pajarito)

### Executive Committee

Chair/Secretary: Jody Benson, [echidanaejb@gmail.com](mailto:echidanaejb@gmail.com), 505/662-4782  
Treasurer: Mark Jones, [jonesmm1@comcast.net](mailto:jonesmm1@comcast.net), 505/662-9443  
Howard Barnum, [hnbarnum@aol.com](mailto:hnbarnum@aol.com)  
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Michael DiRosa, [mddbbm@gmail.com](mailto:mddbbm@gmail.com), 505/663-0648  
Nona Girardi, [nonamg@aol.com](mailto:nonamg@aol.com)

### Committee Chairs

Conservation; Outings, Leadership Training: Michael DiRosa, [mddbbm@gmail.com](mailto:mddbbm@gmail.com)  
Global Warming: Charles Keller, [alfonso@cybermesa.com](mailto:alfonso@cybermesa.com), 505/662-7915  
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Newsletter Editor, Publicity, Sprawl, Transportation, Endangered Species/Wildlife: Jody Benson, [echidnaejb@gmail.com](mailto:echidnaejb@gmail.com), 505/662-4782  
Open Spaces, Caldera Issues: Howard Barnum, [hnbarnun@aol.com](mailto:hnbarnun@aol.com)  
Water Issues: Barbara Calef, [bcalef@yahoo.com](mailto:bcalef@yahoo.com), 505/662-3825





Robert Reifel

A view from the Latir Wilderness hike last fall. All hikes are listed with difficulty level — easy, moderate or difficult. Find one that fits you!

## Hikes and Events, continued from Page 16

**Workout**, see May 3 description.

**Wednesday, May 18: Moderate but fast-paced evening hike**, max of 3-5 miles and 1,500 feet of gain in Hyde Park or higher. Meeting in Fort Marcy area at 5 p.m., usually back by 8 p.m, and 1-2 dogs OK. Robert Reifel, email rdrsantafe@gmail.com and provide your phone number and I'll get back to you with meet details.

**Saturday, May 21:** Moderate hike on Rim Vista trail near Abiquiú. Will continue on a section of the Continental Divide Trail to an overlook above Echo Amphitheater. Approximately 8 miles round trip and 1,600 feet of elevation gain. Great views of Pedernal, red-rock cliffs, and the Ghost Ranch valley. Lisa Bowdey, (505) 699-2953.

**Saturday, May 21: Santa Fe River Cleanup.** 9-11 a.m. Meet at Closson Street Footbridge by 9 a.m. Bring work gloves; rubber boots helpful if recent rains. Leader will supply trash bags. Contact leader if attending. Greg Lower, (505) 699-6893, or gfactorial@hotmail.com.

**Sunday, May 22:** Strenuous Sierra Negra Loop hike near Abiquiú. About 10 miles, 2,500 feet of gain. Aku, (505) 577-2594.

**Tuesday, May 24: Weekly Tuesday Workout**, see May 3 description.

**Saturday, May 28-Monday, May 30: Strenuous Memorial Day Weekend backpack trip** to San Pedro Parks Wilderness. Lollipop loop trip starting and ending at the Rio Capulin trailhead. About 28 miles and 3,200 feet elevation gain. Two or three dogs OK. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com (505) 913-0589.

**Sunday, May 29: Moderate hike to Cerro Grande**, 4 miles, 1,300 feet elevation gain. Cool off in the high country! Michael Goldey, (505) 820-7302, m.goldey@mindspring.com.

**Tuesday, May 31: Weekly Tuesday Workout**, see May 3 description.

### JUNE

**Thursday and Friday, June 2 and 3: Carcamp at Turkey Run in Gila National Forest**



### Saying goodbye to a hike leader and friend

As we went to press, one of our longtime and most beloved hike leaders, Art Judd, was living out his last days at a Santa Fe hospice. Art was perhaps best known for his knowledge of mushrooms. He taught many a hiker how to identify “edibles” in the Santa Fe “high country” once the summer monsoon season began. He also taught survival skills at the community college.

Incredibly, Art is 92 years old and was leading Sierra Club hikes at a good pace just last summer. He never wanted his age known, perhaps for concern that some might judge him by it. Fair enough, but our knowing it now has shown us that age is truly only a number if you're lucky enough to maintain a strong body, clear mind, and — most of all — a joyful spirit such as his.

— Tobin Oruch

just north of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. Day hikes into the wilderness including down into Diamond Creek and up to the Continental Divide Trail. Paul Pierce, (505) 670-7653.

**Saturday, June 4: Advanced moderate but exploratory hike on the Rio Medio** below Pecos Baldy. This will be a chance to explore the Santa Fe National Forest's preferred west-side accesses from Borrego Mesa trailheads, with the adjustable goal of reaching Brazos Cabin if we feel so motivated. It will not be a marathon, but instead an exploration and investigation, joint with Santa Fe Hiking Meetup and hopefully with Santa Fe National Forest district rangers. This is a beautiful and lush part of the Sangres that is less traveled by Santa Feans and opens the door to many fine hikes that the rangers have been promoting. Read ahead in the *Sierra Club's Day Hikes* book under No. 43, Brazos Cabin. Dogs allowed case by case. Celebrate National Trails Day! Mark Dunham, medunham2@msn.com or (505) 795-0199.

**Sunday, June 5: Moderate loop hike off the Chamisa Trail**, not far from town. About 9 miles, 2,400 feet of gain. Aku, (505) 577-2594.

**Tuesday, June 7: Weekly Tuesday Workout**, see May 3 description.

**Saturday and Sunday, June 11-12: Moderate backpack to Santa Fe Baldy.** Cut this 14-mile day hike down to a more manageable size with an overnight at Puerto Nambé. Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com, (505) 424-9242.

**Saturday, June 11: Cienega Canyon and Pino Trail.** Strenuous hike of about 8 miles and 1,800 feet of gain on steep and bad trail, then go down 2,700 feet. Meet at 8:30 a.m. for carpool, or 9:30 a.m. at trailhead. Finish outing with optional potluck. Email odile@pitot.org and also call (505) 433-4692 by June 9.

**Sunday, June 12: Moderate hike to Hamilton Mesa.** About 8 miles, 1,000 feet. High-clearance vehicles needed; if you can bring one, please advise leader when you call. Michael

### Get into outings

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.

Goldey, (505) 820-7302, m.goldey@mindspring.com.  
**Tuesday, June 14: Weekly Tuesday Workout**, see May 3 description.

**Wednesday, June 15: Moderate but fast-paced evening hike**, max of 3-5 miles and 1,500 feet of gain in Hyde Park or higher. Meeting in Fort Marcy area at 5 p.m., usually back by 8 p.m, and one to two dogs OK. Leader Robert Reifel; email rdrsantafe@gmail.com to provide your phone number for meeting details.

**Saturday, June 18: Strenuous and partly off-trail hike to Jicarita Peak**, one of New Mexico's highest at 12,835 feet. Starting at Santa Barbara Campground, we'll go up the Middle Fork trail to the “switch-backs” and then head off-trail along the West Ridge of Jicarita Peak to the summit. Our return will be via the Serpent Lake, East Fork, and Middle Fork trails. About 16 miles and 4,000 feet of elevation gain. Early start. Two or three dogs OK. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com or (505) 913-0589.

**Saturday, June 18: Santa Fe River Cleanup.** 9-11 a.m. Meet at Closson Street Footbridge by 9 a.m. Bring work gloves; rubber boots helpful if recent rains. Leader will supply trash bags. Contact leader if attending. Kathleen Davis, (505) 795-3286 or kdav40@gmail.com.

**Sunday, June 19: Moderate hike on Dockwiller Trail**, 8 miles and 1,700-foot gain. Wildflowers are normally great at this time, and new leader Ken Collins knows a lot of their names. Come support him! (505) 455-7107.

**Tuesday, June 21: Weekly Tuesday Workout**, see May 3 description.

**Saturday, June 25 and Sunday, June 26: Strenuous one-night backpack to Kit Carson Peak**

(14,194 feet) near Alamosa, Colo. In order to tame this legendary mountain a bit, we will drive up Saturday and walk in 6 miles, gaining 2,700 feet, to beautiful Willow Lake. Think light pack, as we will eat an early dinner in Alamosa on the way up. After our bivouac at the Lake, we arise with a quick breakfast and proceed 2.8 miles and 2,500 more feet to the summit of Challenger Point. Some can stay there or at the lake if desired, but the game can then proceed another 1.4 miles and 1,000 feet of roundtrip elevation on the ledges that access the main summit. The route is Class 3 or less the entire way, but affords scenery normally only seen by technical climbers, including the famous Prow. We will descend to the car, find dinner in Crestone or Alamosa, and come home. Mark Dunham, medunham2@msn.com or (505) 795-0199.

**Saturday, June 25: Strenuous hike on Gold Hill Loop above Taos** in newly designated Columbine Hondo Wilderness. Up Long Canyon, off-trail along spectacular, wide ridge above treeline, return on Gavilan Trail if weather permits (otherwise BOTW trail). About 11 miles, 3,500-foot elevation gain, 12,711-foot summit, early start, two or three dogs OK. Tobin Oruch, (505) 690-6253, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com.

**Sunday, June 26: Moderate hike to Santa Barbara West Fork**, 9-10 miles, 1,000-foot elevation gain. Beautiful hike through mountain meadows along the Rio Santa Barbara, lots of wildflowers, plus great views of Chimayosos Peak. Limit of 8. Daisy Levine, please email tiadora1@gmail.com and provide your phone number.

**Tuesday, June 28: Weekly Tuesday Workout**, see May 3 description.





By Larry Hughes

Human and canine hikers enjoy lunch on Penitente Peak in February.

# May-June hikes & events

**T**hanks to the energetic volunteerism of many long-time leaders and a couple of new ones, the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club is pleased to offer you the following fantastic smorgasbord of hikes and other outings.

Please note that, new this quarter, we're offering several weekday morning and evening hikes in Santa Fe. Continuation of these depends on your participation, so please try one out and return often if you like it.

Also, we're excited to have two new leaders, Mark Dunham and Ken Collins, leading hikes. Please support them as well by attending their events.

These hikes are posted on the Chapter Outings web page and calendar, and near-term ones are on our Meetup site. Sign-up is by contact with leader. To go you'll need to sign a waiver that the leader will provide. Trips are normally free (pay when carpooling) and open to non-members (spread the word!), though we do like it if you join the Club to increase our local and national clout.

Because stuff happens, these hikes are subject to change. When new information is received, we'll update the online listings as soon as possible, and also advertise the up-to-date weekend's events in the Sierra Trail Mix newsletter.

## MAY

**Sunday, May 1: Moderate hike to Nambé Lake**, 7 miles and 2,100 feet of gain, steep in a couple of spots. Waterproof boots and gaitors may be needed for lingering snow, or we'll go elsewhere. Marcia Skillman, (505) 699-3008, marciaskillman@hotmail.com.

**Sunday, May 1: Tour the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument**, Picacho Peak Revisited. We'll hike the new Western Ridge trail to the top of Picacho Peak. At the top of Picacho Peak you will enjoy 360-degree views of the entire National Monument as well as views into Texas and Mexico. We'll return via either the original trail route or one of the other trails in



Photo by Robert Reifel

**A hiker on the Northern New Mexico Group's Hawkwatch Loop hike.**

development around the mountain. About 3-4 miles roundtrip and 700 feet of elevation gain. Howie Dash, (575) 652-7550 or howiedash@aol.com.

**Tuesday, May 3 (and most weeks thereafter, as posted): Ascent to the Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin.** This is intended as 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 Nambé and return via the Winsor Trail. This is by far the quickest route above timberline in our area, passing by rushing water for almost the entire hike. Take this trip to the Southern Rockies in half a day, and get in shape for longer climbs! 8:30 a.m. departure from De Vargas Mall; meet behind Albertsons (west side). Most times we will be back in time for a late lunch, which may happen too. Email Mark Dunham at medunham2@msn.com to confirm, or call (505) 795-0199.

**Saturday, May 7: Strenuous hike in Bandelier to the Painted Cave.** We'll start from the Dome trailhead and take Trail 427 to Capulin Canyon and then follow the Canyon floor to the Painted Cave. About 15 miles and 2,600 feet of elevation gain — most of the gain coming on the return. Early start. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com (505) 913-0589.

**Sunday, May 8: Easy hike to the eagle traps**, 4.5 miles. Visit up to three old Indian traps on the edge of Bandelier National Monument. Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com, (505) 424-9242.

**Tuesday, May 10: Weekly Tuesday Workout;** see May 3 description

**Friday and Saturday, May 13 and 14: Car camp at Springtime Campground** in San Mateo Mountains. Day hikes into Apache Kid Wilderness, including to the crest trail and up to 10,000 feet elevation. Paul Pierce, (505) 670-7653.

**Saturday, May 14: Strenuous hike to Glorieta Baldy** at 10,199 feet, probably loop including little-used Ruiz Canyon route and ghost town (or in/out from

## The lowdown:

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

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

**To receive the weekly e-mail** with updated outings info, send an email to [Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org](mailto:Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org) with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS.

Apache Canyon), so up to 13 miles and 2,800 feet of gain, 2-3 dogs ok. Tobin Oruch, (505) 690-6253, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com.

**Sunday, May 15: Bandelier National Monument**, moderate hike. After, we'll drive back to Albuquerque through Valles Caldera and Jemez Springs, adding one or two small hikes and an optional swim in a natural Jemez hot spring. Meet: 8 a.m. for carpool, or 9:30 a.m. at Bandelier. May finish outing with optional potluck or dinner out. Email odile@pitot.org and also call (505) 433-4692 by May 13.

**Tuesday, May 17: Weekly Tuesday**

Continued on Page 15

May/June 2016