



Norma McCallan 1933-2016

Tribute to an 'indefatigable' activist: Page 5.

Diversion madness continues

Stream Commission keeps pushing for expensive projects on Gila. Page 3

More protection for Organs

Udall-Heinrich legislation would make some areas off-limits to vehicles. Page 11

Rio Grande Sierran

Volume 54, Issue 3

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

July/August/September 2016

Court deals blow to wolves



Photo by Chad Horwedel

A federal judge has granted a stay to the state of New Mexico, which is suing to stop the federal government's efforts to boost the dwindling population of Mexican gray wolves in New Mexico. Page 6




EPA finalizes climate-boosting methane rules: Safeguards would reduce health hazards, climate pollution from new oil and gas sources. Page 7.



How did we do in the elections? Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter-endorsed candidates won 10 of 13 races in the June 7 New Mexico primary, and El Paso Group Executive Committee member Jim Tolbert (left) won his City Council race. Page 10.

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More inside:

PNM losing ground in rate case

The Public Regulation Commission forced the utility to justify its proposed rate for nuclear energy it purchased last year, and several parties have changed their support to opposition in rate case. **Page 12**

Water Sentinels organizer wins national award

Eric Patterson's programs engage Northern New Mexico students in protecting and monitoring our drinking water. **Page 4**

Berry continues to skirt input on Bosque trails

The City of Albuquerque is beginning Phase III of its trail construction on the Rio Grande Bosque, with little effort to hear input. **Page 12**

More: El Paso Group, Castner Range protection: **Page 6**. Chaco Canyon-area oil and gas leases: **Page 8**. Northern New Mexico Group, *Day Hikes* book: **Pages 13 and 14**. Pajarito Group: **Page 9**. Hikes and events: **Pages 15 and 16**

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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.

Interested in Executive Committee?

If you are interested in running for a position on the executive committee of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club, please contact Ken Hughes, John Buchser, Allyson Siwik, or Christine Newton.

The term is three years, beginning Jan. 1, 2017.

If you are interested in running for a position on one of the group executive committees, please contact one of the leaders for that group.

Our activists are doing inspiring work

The work of Sierra Club members is growing ever more important as our communities, country and world face accelerating climate change and global economic stresses. I am so proud of our members and the hard work



David Coss,
Chapter chair

they are doing in New Mexico and Texas. As we face the November elections, it will again be “all hands on deck” to protect our

beautiful land and communities.

A quick review of issues the Rio Grande Chapter members are confronting highlights how important your membership and your work are. On climate, wildlife, public lands and water, our members are working hard and being heard. I'll briefly review a couple actions, but there is so much more.

Of first importance, however, one of the hardest-working Sierra Clubbers, Executive Director Camilla Feibelman, will be having a baby, probably before you read this newsletter. As she begins her parenting time, the Rio Grande Chapter



Dan Lorimier

Former Rio Grande Chapter Chair John Buchser, right, speaks at the memorial for 40-year Sierra Club activist Norma McCallan on June 30. Our volunteer-led chapter is full of inspired activists. Read about some of them on pages 8, 10 and 12.

is excited for Camilla and her family: Xavier, big sister and the new arrival. We wish health and happiness for you and your family, Camilla. We can't wait to get you back, but we're glad there will be a new little Sierra Club member in our chapter.

As we are happy for Camilla, we also mourn the loss of our dear friend, Norma McCallan. We send our prayers and condolences to her wonderful family and her many friends. Norma's activism with the Sierra Club spanned over 40 years. As a leader, she influenced all of us to see the big picture, be inclusive and never quit. We will miss her but we

are sure that the gift of her spirit will continue to support and inspire all of us as we continue her work. Please see our tribute to her on Page 5.

On climate, Club members have led the way in fighting for new methane rules in the oil and gas fields. Unfortunately, the Four Corners region and Permian Basin region show some of the highest levels of methane pollution in our country, with all the damage that means for our community health and for climate change.

Rio Grande Chapter members demonstrate just how much we want the industry to reduce emissions of meth-

ane and how much health and economic sense it makes to do so. Both the Bureau of Land Management and the Environmental Protection Agency are moving to enact sensible regulations that will reduce these emissions while creating jobs and preserving the public's oil and gas resources (see Page 7 for more).

In the San Juan Basin, the Sierra Club is working with local citizen groups, Native groups and concerned individuals to block fracking planned for BLM lands near Chaco Canyon (Page 8). My hat is off to those fighting to protect their communities and one of our

most valuable cultural assets. The PNM rate case and energy-replacement case continue to occupy members of our Energy Team and our allies in the environmental community (see pages 12 and 13). The recent settlement of the replacement case may provide a route to total phaseout of coal-burning at San Juan. PNM, however, is trying to insert even more old, expensive nuclear power into rates when it could more economically develop renewable energy. This is not fair to our futures. The rallies, lawsuits and political activity cannot stop so long as PNM continues its record of bad decision-making for New Mexico.

Our members continue to fight for wildlife and public lands, for our water quality and quantity. The Gila River will not get dammed, wolf reintroductions will proceed according to the best ecological science and not politics, contest killing and trapping on our public lands will be stopped. New wasteful mines will be opposed, methane emissions will be reduced then eliminated, and coal-burning will end, because people like those in the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club stood with their communities to make things better.

Gila River not safe from diversion yet

Interstate Stream Commission continues to waste money on infeasible river-diversion ideas

By Allyson Siwik, Chapter Executive Committee and Gila Resources Information Project

With just a few months left before initiation of the environmental-compliance phase and with no proposed action identified yet, the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission continues its push for a Gila River diversion project to capture as much water as possible.

The local New Mexico Central Arizona Project (CAP) entity, responsible for the design of a diversion under the Arizona Water Settlements Act, must decide on a proposed action by July 11 in order to meet its schedule under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The ISC held a workshop recently to help the NM CAP entity reach consensus on a proposed action. Despite pushback from the entity, the agency is promoting large diversion and storage projects that rely on expensive pumping, exceed the amount of available AWSA funding to construct and are ecologically harmful.

Although a big project in the wild

Upper Gila Box seems to be off the table for now, the combination of project components under discussion could divert as much water as the billion-dollar diversion and cause significant negative impacts to the hydrology and ecology of the Gila River.

The billion-dollar Upper Gila Box project could also re-emerge as part of the NEPA alternatives analysis.

It's not time to let down our guard. All of the diversion components currently on the table pose a threat to the Gila River.

Moving the location of the diversion infrastructure doesn't take away the fact that water withdrawals anywhere on the Gila can negatively impact the natural flow of the river and consequently the myriad species that depend on the river's free-flowing nature.

After more than a decade and millions of dollars spent on evaluation, the ISC and the NM CAP entity still have not identified a viable project. With environmental-compliance costs estimated at \$10 million to \$30 million, it is a waste of AWSA funding to continue to pursue such a lost cause, rather than use these federal dollars to implement needed local water projects.

The AWSA requires a NEPA record of decision by 2019.

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Taos teens keeping our streams clean

By Eric Patterson
Water Sentinels — Ríos de Taos

It's been a busy summer so far for Water Sentinels and our youth group, the Tiger-Salamanders. Here are some highlights:
May 6: The Taos High School Tiger-Salamanders attended a fishing derby at Eagle Rock Lake near Questa. They monitored water on the lake and on the Red River and did some fishing afterward.

May 20-21: Sentinels coordinators attended a conference in Washington, D.C., with other Water Sentinel leaders and Sierra Club staff to discuss the Club's position on water quality. It was agreed that current leaders will help different chapters to establish water-monitoring.

May 21: Tiger-Sentinels presented their research projects at the annual Enchanted Circle Chapter of Trout Unlimited fundraising banquet. It was announced that Chanelle Medrano would be attending the Student Sierra Coalition SPROG workshop in Colorado, and that Daniel Romero would receive an award from the National Wildlife Federation in June. Daniel also received the Sierra Club's annual Aldo Leopold Scholarship, awarded to a Taos High School senior for outstanding environmental work.

May 28: Sentinels leaders demonstrated water-monitoring techniques to the backpacking leaders at Philmont Scout Ranch. The Scouts are hoping to have water-monitoring as one of the goals of Scouts who attend outings at Philmont from all over the country.

June 4: Sentinel Jim Morgan awarded fishing rods and SC backpacks to winners of the youth fishing derby at Lake Maloya.

June 8: Sentinels held a training session in Valdez.

June 9: First water-monitoring of the 2016 season. High e. coli levels were found in the Rio Fernando again. Our next monitoring dates are July 6 and Aug. 31.

June 25: The Annual Taos River and Land cleanup, co-sponsored by Sierra Club Water Sentinels for the last 10 years, collected trash and recyclables from rivers, streamsides and illegal dump sites in Taos County. About eighty community members participated.

In July, Sentinels will travel to southeastern New Mexico to monitor water quality in several sites on the Pecos River. We are particularly interested in testing where there may be contamination from dairy operations. If you have concerns about possible pollution on the Pecos, please contact Eric Patterson at eepatt@gmail.com. As always, if any Sierra Club Group would like to start a water monitoring project, please let us know.



Rich Schrader/Riverside Watch

Eric Patterson, center, who leads Water Sentinels — Ríos de Taos, has taught dozens of young people how to monitor our streams and rivers through the youth monitoring groups he has helped establish in Northern New Mexico.

Head Sentinel wins national award

Susan Martin, Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee

The national Sierra Club's Honors and Awards Committee notified Eric Patterson on June 25 that he was the recipient of the Club's 2016 Special Service Award, which honors Sierra Club members for strong and consistent commitment to conservation over an extended period of time.

Here's an excerpt from the award submission from our chapter:

Fighting the causes and results of climate change will take the energy of our next generation to prevent environmental devastation. Eric Patterson is the personification of mentor and coach, engaging diverse youth in environmental protection in Illinois and now in northern New Mexico.

Eric is a genial, humble person who makes others feel comfortable and willing to participate in unfamiliar



Eric Patterson

efforts.

According to Fran Caffee, the 2014 William E. Colby award winner, Eric's work and personal attention "revitalized the Illinois Chapter's North West Cook County Group which was lingering on the edge." Jen Hensley, Director of State Lobbying and Advocacy, said, "I credit Eric's welcoming nature as the real ingredient to the group's successful reorganization."

When Eric moved to tiny, rural, unincorporated Valdez (population 580) in Northern New Mexico, the Illinois Chapter's loss became the Rio Grande Chapter's gain. He single-handedly created a vibrant Water Sentinels — Ríos de Taos program in Taos County that is recognized

nationally.

As 2010 One Club Award-winner Norma McCallan said, "Eric has worked diligently with the local youth in the Taos area (a large percentage of whom are Hispanic, and many of whom come from low-income families), providing them a structure and specific tasks with which to not only test the local waters for contaminants, but to better understand the broader implications of the importance of clean, clear water resources for our arid state, now in the midst of a long-term drought."

Northern New Mexico Group Chair and recognized local educator Teresa Seamster noted that Eric's work with the Water Sentinels is exemplary in terms of educational outreach and grassroots involvement in testing and analyzing waterways for contaminants in northern New Mexico.

Book review: NM preacher made impression as naturalist

By Jerry Kurtyka, El Paso Group

Hamm, R. (2016). *Ross Calvin: Interpreter of the American Southwest*. Santa Fe: Sunstone Press.

For those who patronize literature, the arts and science, New Mexico evokes a real sense of place. You poke around a bit and find that the likes of Georgia O'Keeffe, Carl Jung, D.H. Lawrence, Robert Oppenheimer, Oscar winners, artists, musicians and others have made their own pilgrimages to the Land of Enchantment and left their mark here.

One such person was naturalist Ross Calvin (1889-1970), native Midwesterner, Episcopal priest and Harvard PhD (philology) who was posted to Silver City's Church of the Good Shephd in 1927 at age 37. He had left his position in Pittsburgh due to a failing voice, a career-limiting handicap

for a preacher then and now, and he hoped that the dry, high-altitude climate of New Mexico would restore his vocal capacity, which it soon did.

Calvin had rebounded from the tragic loss of his first wife, Adine Chilton, in the 1918 Spanish influenza epidemic that left him with an infant son, Ross Jr. In 1925, he remarried a Pittsburgh woman who accompanied him to Silver City as his spouse and mother of two additional children until her death in 1961. Calvin left Ross Jr. to be raised by maternal grandparents in Indiana.

New Mexico journalist Ron Hamm has crafted *Interpreter of the American Southwest*, a short biography of Calvin, to celebrate his accomplishments as an important regional environmental and historical writer. It would be hard to overstate the complexity of Hamm's

subject in the person of this scholarly, sometimes acerbic country parson.

Calvin, as Hamm describes him, was a dedicated cleric who ministered to a congregation in the rough ranching and mining town of Depression-era Silver City. But it is as a naturalist and scholar that Calvin made his mark in New Mexico's literary and scientific legacy.

Between his pastoral duties, Calvin studied the flora and landscape of New Mexico with a scientist's attention to the interaction of climate, terrain, and culture. The result was his first book, published in 1934, *Sky Determines: An Interpretation of the Southwest*, which was received with favorable reviews in the national literary press and is still considered an important scientific work, though it never brought Calvin financial success. A second book

followed in 1946, *River of the Sun: Stories of the Storied Gila River*, which was also received with critical acclaim. By this time, Calvin had been transferred to Clovis, where he was rector of the St. James Episcopal Church.

I enjoyed Hamm's book and it certainly made me aware of the importance of Calvin's literary and scientific contributions. I only wish that Hamm had devoted more space to Calvin's inner life, in which he must have struggled with his faith as a pastor against the loss of both his wives and his lifelong estrangement from his son Ross Jr. Hamm hints of an enigmatic deathbed confession by Calvin that alludes to this inner conflict. Still, Calvin's contribution to New Mexico is notable, and Hamm's book documents it nicely.

Norma McCallan: 1933-2016

'We can never have enough of Nature'

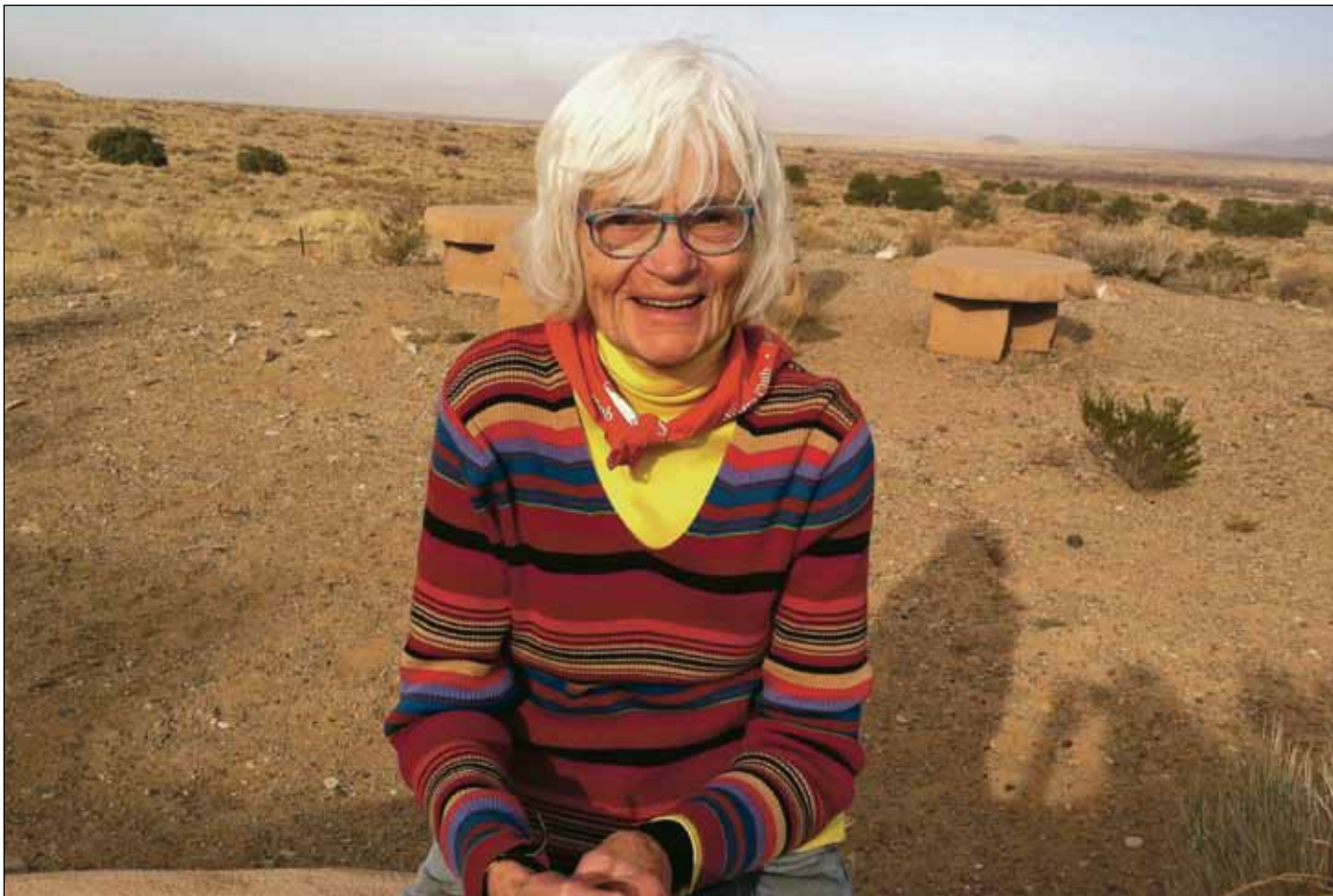


Photo by Eliza Kretzmann

Norma McCallan, shown here at Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge in 2013, held many leadership roles in the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter and was beloved for her organizational prowess and kind nature.

Indefatigable leader

McCallan was Rio Grande Chapter vice chair, Outings chair, Northern New Mexico chair and the heart of our chapter

By Teresa Seamster
Northern New Mexico
Group chair

If there is one person who would echo Henry David Thoreau's words "We can never have enough of Nature," it would be Norma McCallan, Sierra Club leader and wild lands advocate for almost four decades.

Due to the efforts of Norma and those she worked with in the Rio Grande Chapter, thousands of acres of New Mexico's sweeping vistas and native wildlife in the Valle Vidal and San Juan Basin Badlands are now preserved.

With the persistent efforts and canny political judgment that characterized her work, Norma led hiking trips to Valle Vidal to make people aware of its unique features, and then went door to door getting support from businesses and organizations to protect this "Yellowstone of New Mexico."

In, 2006, a bill sponsored by then-Rep. Tom Udall became law, and more than 100,000 acres of alpine meadows and New Mexico's largest elk herd became a protected unit of the Carson National Forest for future generations.

That campaign was one of many. Norma worked continually on environmental efforts that involved meet-



Left: Norma not only led nearly 450 hikes and ran the chapter's Public Lands campaign, she was also a dedicated campaign volunteer, helping elect U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Luján to Congress. Right: Norma with Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune.

ing with the National Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management on resource-management plans, better travel routes and protections for irreplaceable landscapes from extractive industries or urban development.

Her efforts ranged from restoring native plants at the historic town of Buckman to helping get the Columbine Hondo near Taos designated as a wilderness.

She was named a Santa Fe Living Treasure in 2014 and as one of *The New Mexican's* "10 Who Made a Difference."

Norma passed away on June 27, having taken a walk with her daughter earlier and entertained a small gathering of friends at her home. She was 83.

"It's like a light has gone out," said chapter Political

Chair Susan Martin.

"Norma was indefatigable in her efforts to protect wild lands, air and water quality."

Norma always looked for a reason to be outdoors. As the Sierra Club Outings chair, she led hikes for decades in the mountains and open spaces around Santa Fe and Northern New Mexico. "My most invigorating moments are in the special places," she said.

"Norma was the most active, energetic volunteer of the Sierra Club's Northern Group and beyond for decades," said Tobin Oruch, Northern New Mexico Outings chair. "She also led the Outings Program along with Norbert Sperlich for much of that time and led nearly 450 hikes. She was a giant in the local environ-



Photos courtesy Susan Martin

mental community."

Her love of the trail led to Norma writing up hike descriptions for the Northern New Mexico Group's *Day Hikes in the Santa Fe Area* book in nearly all of its eight editions.

Her close friend Mary Thompson commented, "Norma shares her love of the landscape with others in ways that enrich their lives and greatly benefit Northern New Mexico."

Her daughter, Julie McCallan, summed up her mother in one word as she wrote a memorial: "undefeatable."

In lieu of flowers, the family requested donations to the Rio Grande Chapter, 1807 Second Street, Unit 45, Santa Fe, NM 87505, or riograndesierraclub/donate.

Words from colleagues and friends:

Norma was a friend and inspiration to me from the first time I met her. It was on a hike on one of the Dale Ball trails, and our small group had so much fun hiking with her. She was that rare person who seemed to love equally nature and the humans who live in and alongside it. She took on many difficult leadership roles with relish, yet no task was too small for her attention.

I never saw Norma visibly angry or mean-spirited. She spoke her mind, but never attacked others in doing so.

I will really miss her — we all will. Hers was truly a life well lived.

— Pat Carlton

Above all she was a kind and welcoming presence that so enriched the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club and enabled many different personalities to work together for the same environmental protection and enhancement goals. She didn't let a minute go to waste, perhaps part of her proud Scottish heritage, and would carry copies of *High Country News* on hikes to read in rest stops. Her cheerfulness and enthusiasm were unmatched, and I will very much miss my friend Norma.

— Susan Martin

In the last 30 years, Norma worked on every campaign I was ever involved in. Her love of people and the earth serve as constant inspiration to me. She was all set to table for the new *Day Hikes* edition! She never, ever stopped. I will miss her so much.

— Chapter chair David Coss

After a few years of her enduring persistence, Norma roped me into a leadership role. I met with her monthly over lunch for over a decade, ensuring I was aware of all the players and the voluminous protocols of the Sierra Club. We became aware of the importance of politics together, walking the streets to ask voters to back the Club's endorsed candidates.

— John Buchser, former chapter chair

Every time I have the pleasure of hiking the Valle Vidal, I will think of Norma and her tireless advocacy to protect this important treasure. Norma believed that we had a responsibility to protect Mother Earth and to leave things better than we found them, and she achieved that every day with her words and her actions.

— U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Luján

I will cherish the times we were together on hikes and many meetings with environmental groups. She was an example and inspiration to so many, and embodied all that the Sierra Club stands for. I will miss her, but I know her spirit will live on in all those she touched.

— Tom Gorman

Most people in America think nothing about exercising their right to vote, much less working to get candidates elected. Not Norma. After endorsing candidates among the rest of us on the political committee, she would go door to door stumping for them. One late February afternoon going for Santa Fe City Council and mayoral candidates, I was bushed and suggested we call it a day. "But there's only one house left; I'll go up the driveway," she volunteered. Coming back to the car, she said, "I got their vote."

— Ken Hughes

Castner monument would help wildlife

by Rick LoBello,
El Paso Group

A growing number of people in El Paso are supporting a new conservation movement to protect the Castner Range area of the Franklin Mountains in northeast El Paso as a national monument.

The Castner Range is home to more than 650 species of Chihuahuan Desert plants, 33 species of reptiles, over 100 species of birds and nearly 30 species of mammals. There are also hundreds if not thousands of species of invertebrates and microorganisms yet to be discovered. Supporting local conservation efforts is a high priority, and many people in El Paso are involved with groups like the Sierra Club, Chihuahuan

Desert Education Coalition and the Audubon Society.

Last year U.S. Rep. Beto O'Rourke proposed legislation in concert with a letter campaign asking President Obama to use his authority under the Antiquities Act to protect the Castner Range landscape in western Texas as a national monument. The national monument would honor the cultural, historical, scientific and environmental connections to the region. More than 16,000 people have signed letters to the president (sign the e-letter at castner4ever.com)

Support for the monument is coming from across the community and is growing by the day. In January, El Paso's City Council unanimously approved a resolution urging that Castner Range

be dedicated as a national monument. Schoolchildren are also getting involved, and more than 1,000 people attending the Poppies Fest in April signed letters to the president.

Why should the United States designate a Castner Range National Monument in El Paso? The answer is pretty simple. A national monument will help protect this large area of the Franklin Mountains and the wildlife that lives there for the enjoyment of current and future generations. It will ensure that the public can enjoy these lands forever, and it will help the El Paso region maintain and build a strong, diverse economy by protecting important open space that create new opportunities for economic development through tourism and recreation.

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Cougars, wolves wind up in court

Mary Katherine Ray
Rio Grande Chapter
Wildlife chair

Last summer, the New Mexico Game Commission adopted new rules for cougar hunting that allow cougar trapping for sport on private and state trust land. The decision makes New Mexico one of only two states in the nation that allows any kind of trapping for mountain lions.

Our colleagues at Animal Protection of New Mexico along with the Humane Society of the United States filed suit to stop the cougar-trapping rule. As part of that process, the Game Commission was asked to stay its decision until a court could rule on the case. The commission listened to arguments about why it should do that at its public meeting in Silver City on May 12.

The main arguments for the appeal were that cougar hunters may not legally shoot spotted cougar kittens or their mothers, but traps cannot tell the difference. Thus traps set for cougars will capture, injure and result in the deaths of animals that the law forbids hunters to kill. Kittens can be injured by being trapped outright but also when they are orphaned by the loss of their mother when they are too young to fend for themselves. In essence, the cougar-trapping rule is inconsistent and at odds with the cougar-hunting rule.

In addition, the trapping rule allows traps for cougars to be set where there may be endangered Mexican wolves or endangered jaguars, potentially causing harm to these animals in violation of the Endangered Species Act. (But keep reading to learn how much the Game Commission is concerned with the fate of wolves.) One of the Game commissioners asked how the cougar quota could be met without trapping since hunters alone are not killing



Photo courtesy Anne-Marie Kalus

Animal Protection of New Mexico and the Humane Society have filed suit to stop the Game Commission's cougar-trapping rule, arguing that the law forbids hunters from killing kittens and their mothers, but traps will likely result in the deaths of kittens and mothers.

enough to meet the quota. The answer from the attorney is that the quota is the wrong number. Even by the department's own admission, the justification for wanting to kill so many cougars based on population estimates is very flimsy. We don't know how many cougars there are in New Mexico, and the assumptions being made by the Department are not defensible.

But unsurprisingly, after deliberations that centered mostly on technicalities and included reluctance on the part of commissioners to change the rule outside of the regularly scheduled rulemaking — which won't happen for another three years — and the question of whether commissioners could stay just the trapping portion of the rule and not the whole rule, they voted unanimously to deny any delay to the start of cougar trapping. The next stop is a real courtroom. But as of press time, cougar-trapping, along

with the trapping of all other "furbearers" like bobcats, foxes and badgers, will begin as scheduled on Nov. 1.

Setbacks for wolves

Last year, the same Game Commission denied permits to both the Ladder Ranch and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to import captive wolves into our state for the purpose of releasing them into the wild. But Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell gave the go-ahead to the Fish and Wildlife Service to introduce wolves into the wild without a state permit in order to uphold the federal Endangered Species Act.

The Fish and Wildlife Service acted accordingly. In carefully choreographed operations in May, three pairs of genetically valuable pups, born in captivity and so young their eyes were still closed, were transported into the wild and placed into dens with pups the same age. Two of the packs

that received extra pups are in Arizona — the Elkhorn and Panther Creek packs. The other pack, called the SBP pack, is in New Mexico. The new pups were rolled in den material and with their new siblings to make them smell like they belonged. All three transplants appeared to have been accepted.

Later in May, the state of New Mexico filed a lawsuit to stop the federal government from releasing the wolves and asked a judge to stay any more releases and remove those that were cross-fostered. Unfortunately, a federal district judge has agreed with the state and put a halt to any additional wolf releases. But it could have been worse: The judge did decide that the cross-fostered pups could stay in the wild. Had he required their removal, they would have been orphans condemned to forever live in captivity.

The wild wolf population needs more genetic diversity

that the captive population can provide. At least another two years will pass before pups born this year can breed. The release of adult wolves would have sped up that time frame. The latest wolf updates 6 weeks after placing the captive pups into wild wolf dens indicate that two of the packs are still showing denning behavior. But the SBP pack in New Mexico is ranging away from their den location, which could mean that there may be no surviving pups and that their foster pups have been lost.

Vote for Wildlife

The Game Commission and New Mexico Department of Game and Fish have said they want the federal government to get a permit from the state to proceed with more wolf releases. But they have refused to issue the permit until a new recovery plan is produced by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The old recovery plan dates from the mid-1980s but is still in effect. The FWS says a new plan will be ready by late 2017. Even so, by their actions, the Game Commission and NMG&F have made their opposition to wolves on general principle known.

The Game Commission hires the director of NMG&F, and all the commissioners are appointed by the governor. A different commission more in tune with the needs of conservation and less beholden to livestock and trophy-hunting interests would make a big difference for our beleaguered carnivores. It all comes back to the ballot box and the crucial need for the larger public that wants New Mexico to have vibrant wildlife populations of all species to vote. Nature does not put elk or deer in a hierarchy as being more worthy than other animals of existing. Neither should the officials who are supposed to represent the public trust.

Climate-protecting rules finalized

**By Alex Renirie
Methane organizer**

On May 12, the EPA finalized the first ever national safeguards on methane pollution from the oil and gas industry. And communities across the country, particularly those living in heavily drilled areas, are celebrating this critical step toward protecting citizens' health and our global climate.

The new safeguards represent one piece of a three-part suite of rules designed to fulfill President Obama's goal of reducing methane emissions by 40-45 percent by 2025, a cornerstone of his administration's Climate Action Plan.

Methane is 86 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than CO2 during its first 20 years in the atmosphere, and many see regulating it as the next big step for mitigating global climate change. Now we as a country are one step closer to that goal.

New Mexico has been an invaluable player in the national campaign to reduce industrial methane emissions, and all who have worked on the initiative deserve to celebrate this accomplishment. EPA has paid particularly close attention to our state throughout the rulemaking process, in part due to our high level of oil and gas development, the strong support of our U.S.



Flaring of methane at oil and gas operations contributes to global warming — methane is 86 times more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period. In May, the EPA finalized rules to slash methane pollution from new oil and gas sources.

senators and U.S. Reps. Ben Ray Lujan and Michelle Lujan Grisham, and the strong coalition of partners and activists committed to seeing these rules finished.

One notable characteristic that makes the methane rules unique is that often industry is on our side. We knew as early as February 2013, when our neighboring state, Colorado, passed its own statewide regulations on oil and gas methane, that these standards are a unique win-win opportunity for industry and environmentalists alike.

New Mexico taxpayers have lost out on more than \$42.7 million in royalty revenue since 2009 from leaking methane gas, and that means companies too are losing profit. But when producers are required instead to install common-sense technologies that capture that gas and keep it in the system, New Mexico makes more money and avoids the negative climate and health impacts caused by methane pollution. With the finalization of the first EPA rule, all New Mexicans should be applauding economic sensibility and environmental protection.

A big thank-you is also due to Sens. Udall and Heinrich. Both leaders took it upon themselves more than a year ago to champion rules from EPA and BLM that help fulfill our national commitments for methane reduction. They have tirelessly advocated for the rules and helped inspire a movement in New Mexico consisting of diverse organizations, volunteers, and activists across the state who recognize the importance of this issue and have taken action to fight methane pollution.

A giant round of applause is

also due to all the citizens who submitted comments, attended a public hearing, wrote a letter to the editor of their local newspaper, attended a forum event or signed a petition calling for action on methane and supporting EPA's action. During the comment period for the now finalized rule, 27,000 New Mexicans submitted supportive comments to the EPA docket, the largest number per capita of any state in the country. Together we are building a movement that exposes the dangers of oil and gas extraction, and this is one significant win we should all celebrate.

Of course, our work is not finished. The BLM's complementary methane rule covering public lands is expected to be finalized sometime this fall. And the EPA still must follow through on its commitment to regulating methane pollution from existing oil and gas facilities. A timeline has been established, and activists around the country will continue to pressure the EPA to write the rule quickly and the next administration to prioritize an existing source standard. Together, building on the momentum generated by this win, we will succeed in cutting this toxic greenhouse gas across the board.

'Threat map' shows community dangers

**By Alex Renirie
Methane organizer**

The Oil and Gas Threat Map is an exceptional new online tool that makes it easier to track what populations are most impacted by pollution from oil and gas development.

Created by a consortium of advocacy groups, including Earthworks and Fracktracker Alliance, with some help from the Sierra Club, the map is designed to expose the rampant threat of oil and gas extraction to communities' health across the country and activate new people to take action.

As its primary function, the map documents which homes, schools, and medical facilities are located within a half-mile "threat radius" of any oil and gas facility, including wells, gas compressor stations, and processing plants.

The half-mile delineation is a conservative estimate based on peer-reviewed literature, but of course does not mean that a person



is safe outside the half-mile area nor necessarily experiencing health risks within the half-mile.

In New Mexico, 145,000 people, 89 schools, and four medical facilities are located within the 9,051-square-mile threat radius. Online, anyone can search their address to find out how close they are living to a facility.

The map was released alongside a report by Clean Air Task Force entitled "Fossil Fumes," which

exposes the health impacts of co-pollutants that are often emitted from oil and gas sites alongside methane, including benzene, formaldehyde and ethylbenzene. It also informs a layer of the map that tracks which counties exceed EPA's cancer risk level of concern. Three counties in New Mexico fall under this heightened level of concern — Lea, Eddy, and San Juan.

A primary motivation for the development of this resource was the fact that,

unlike other kinds of highly visible pollution, leaking methane gas and the volatile organic compounds that are emitted alongside it are completely invisible to the naked eye.

Yet the domestic oil and gas boom has spurred health crises in communities across the country, ranging from worsened asthma to heightened risk for cancer. And too often, families are forced to live and send their children to school within feet of a well pad without ever being informed about the proven health effects that the industry is putting them at risk for. The threat map is designed to break down that barrier and expose the impact created by this extraction and the methane releases. It also includes stories of people living at risk and infrared footage that makes methane emissions visible.

To add your story or explore the map, visit www.oilandgasthreatmap.com/threat-map/new-mexico.

San Juan County ranks high for methane pollution

In 2014, the San Juan Basin ranked No. 1 in the nation for methane pollution per well, according to a new report by the Center for American Progress.

The think tank analyzed 2014 data on methane emissions reported by the oil and gas industry to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The oil and gas industry is the largest contributor of industrial methane pollution in the country.

Of the 15 regions with the most methane pollution from oil and gas production, New Mexico's San Juan Basin ranked third in overall emissions at 5.2 million metric tons and No. 1 in per-well emissions at 227 metric tons per well.

Methane is the primary component of natural gas and is wasted at oil and gas operations through venting, flaring, and leaks.

ConocoPhillips emitted the most methane from onshore production. Although ConocoPhillips reduced its methane pollution from 2013, the company still released 4.65 million metric tons—33 percent more methane than the next-highest-ranking company.

In May, the EPA adopted a rule to cut methane pollution (see above) and the BLM is expected to finalize a rule later this year to slash methane waste on federal and tribal lands.



Photo by Rebecca Sobel/WildEarth Guardians

Members of the Chaco Coalition gathered in front of Counselor Chapter House last year. Efforts to protect Chaco and the surrounding communities are gaining momentum, and the BLM removed three parcels near Chaco Canyon from its October auction for oil and gas leasing.

BLM stalls Chaco leases

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

In June, the Bureau of Land Management announced that it would postpone a planned lease of three Chaco Canyon-area parcels intended for oil and gas development until at least January.

But the BLM's Farmington Field Office has already approved nearly 300 wells for horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing (fracking) and has leased roughly 91% of public lands in the greater Chaco Canyon area.

The BLM claims to thoroughly review the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of drilling in the area, but no report back to the affected community members has been made. Oil and gas companies continue to expand their operations in close proximity to residents' homes, impacting air quality, community well-being, and the environment.

The BLM leases public lands four times a year for development, and nominated parcels require public, tribal

and industry consultation.

The BLM removed the three parcels totaling 2,122 acres in the greater Chaco Canyon from the Oct. 19 auction, acknowledging that environmental analysis of the area and tribal consultation was inadequate.

This is a victory for now. The BLM is still working on its Resource Management Plan Amendment for development in the area, due in 2018.

Efforts to protect Chaco Canyon, the surrounding communities and the environment are gaining momentum. Chairman Delegate Jonathan Hale from the Navajo Nation's Health, Education and Human Services Committee recently proposed legislation to ban fracking. Although opponents of the legislation say there is no scientific basis for banning fracking on the basis of health impacts, local communities are working with other organizations to highlight the health and environmental impacts felt by their communities.

On May 23, the Sierra Club, Counselor Chapter

House, McKinley Community Place Matters, Diné CARE and other community leaders hosted an information-exchange meeting on fracking and its impacts on human health, land, water and the environment. Community members also shared their concerns. Increased rates of cancer, respiratory problems, poor air quality, and water contamination were some of the concerns raised.

The meeting resulted in a Health Impact Report draft. The report will be used to support a request to the BLM Farmington Field Office to conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement for the greater Chaco Canyon area.

The report will lead to a fuller health assessment that will be used to inform Navajo Nation delegates, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the White House Council on Environmental Equality and our New Mexico Congressional delegates about the impacts of fracking on communities, the land, and the environment in the area.

Learn about oil and gas health risks

As more supporting evidence reveals the dangers of living near oil and gas facilities, the Sierra Club is launching a series of three forums on the health impacts of the industry in the Four Corners area.

Methane and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are released throughout the process of oil and gas production. When sunlight interacts with VOCs and nitrogen oxides, ground-level ozone is formed. Ozone, commonly referred to as smog, is known to cause negative health effects. Children, the elderly, and people with existing respiratory problems are at most risk for developing health complications, including asthma and cardiovascular disease.

The San Juan Basin emits the most methane pollution per well in the U.S. (see story, Page 7).

The forums are intended to raise awareness

about the current threats and impacts suffered by communities. Featured speakers include Dr. Jordon Johnson of McKinley Community Place Matters NM Health Equity Partnership, Dr. Richard Grossman, Navajo community leader Daniel Tso, and Lauren Pagel from Earthworks.

Lauren will be demonstrating the new online Oil and Gas Threat Map (see Page 7), which shows what populations and schools are at most risk living near oil and gas facilities.

The first forum was held on June 30, and the next two will be held on July 28 and Aug. 25.

Learn more: If you would like to attend a forum or get more information, please contact Miya King-Flaherty, Public Lands fellow, at miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org, or Alex Renirie, Beyond Dirty Fuels organizing representative, at alex.renirie@sierraclub.org.

Volunteer profile: Jody Benson

This issue of the Sierran kicks off a series of interviews with our hard-working and effective volunteer activists. Jody Benson is chair of our Pajarito Group in Los Alamos.

Q: How did you get involved with the Sierra Club?

A: I got into the Sierra Club because I admired the ability and courage of individuals who take action to work tirelessly on behalf of something they love. Jennifer Johnson is one such Sierran who was instrumental in turning the Valles Caldera into a Park Preserve rather than golf-club resort. I watched her unrelenting commitment and decided I wanted to be like her.

I wasn't yet a Sierran, though, when I got involved with an effort to prevent 2.1 acres of public wildlands on the edge of Acid Canyon from being flattened for an apartment-complex parking lot.

During that effort, I met a lot of other committed environmentalists, including Michael Smith. We won that effort with the county by involving lots of locals through letters, public forums, and just plain talking to people.

One evening, months after winning the referendum, as I was resting in front of Mesa Public Library, Michael grabbed me and dragged me to the Pajarito Conservation Committee Meeting. Michael thought I had potential to become a leader in the Pajarito Group. That group held me hostage until I agreed to join, then told me that since I was in the Conservation Committee, I may as well be on the Executive Committee. Because the gang was big on making a difference for the Earth we all love, and they took time to not only train me but listen to my ideas and enlist my talents, how could I resist?

Brave people working on important environmental issues led me into the Sierra Club. Those people's tenacity, intelligence, commitment, and lucidity showed me how to become an activist—and sometimes our efforts are actually effective.

Q: What has being a Sierra Club activist taught you?

A: As a group, we've won some, lost some, and haven't given up on issues that got suspended. One of those suspended issues, of course, is the fee for a single-use plastic shopping bag. Although the effort failed in 2015, we're not done yet. And we all won because we participated in a collaboration of so many other organizations and individuals, the gathering of hearts, so to speak, of people who both are aware of and care about difficult



Jody Benson is the Pajarito Group's chair and newsletter editor and one of the friendliest people you'll ever meet.

issues.

This bag fee is something that by regrouping and showing up to the county leadership, we can accomplish.

And the best thing about this regrouping? It's the same thing as the best thing about being in the Sierra Club. It involves like-minded people holding the same values and working toward important goals, and with whom we develop deep companionship.

This companionship and collaborative problem-solving is what is to me the most fun and exciting reason for being in the Sierra Club. Brainstorming together brings in floods of new ideas that a single little thinker couldn't have developed. As the Executive Committee taught me 20 years ago, every talent is essential, every individual adds another cell into the powerful creature of Us. That's what I like best.

Q: What would you tell others who would like to get involved in advocating for the environment in the Los Alamos/Jemez Springs area?

A: The Pajarito Group leadership understands how daunting it might seem to take on the Big Problems.

Maybe it is, but when we meet our goals (or have a fun outing or party), you will know absolutely that it was your light that helped the world become brighter. And don't forget the best part: The rest of us who were helped by others are here to help you contribute your ideas, energy, and talents to whatever cause is critical to you. Or you can just let us know you want to hang out with fellow environmentalists. Our leadership invites you to take an active role. Email me at echidnaejb@gmail.com if you want to get involved!

We’re coming back for the bags

**By Jody Benson
Pajarito Group Chair**

The 2014 Los Alamos County Council Leadership Plan focuses on strategic areas to envision what Los Alamos will look like in 20 years. One of those areas is environmental stewardship, something that the majority of the community lists as critical to quality of life, and, like the Lab and the schools, represents one of the most important elements for living in Los Alamos.

This vision supported our assumption for success when the Pajarito Group and the Los Alamos League of Women Voters introduced what we thought would be a no-brainer effort to limit single-use plastic shopping bags through a 10-cent bag fee (a.k.a., a “plastax”). What astonished us was the violent reaction that cowed the County Council into taking no action.

Our reasons for banning the single-use plastic shopping bag are the same reasons that 203 cities, two states, and multiple nations have banned the bag so far: reducing waste, saving resources, limiting deadly impacts on wildlife, reducing effects on human health of plastic toxicity, and simply doing the right thing for future generations.

Why wouldn’t Los Alamos join our neighbor Santa Fe to reduce (and eventually eliminate) the 380 billion bags that Americans throw away every year? Why aren’t we worried about the effects of bags on the environment? We’re going to have to limit plastic bags eventually; why not take the leadership to do it now rather than when it might be too late to clean up the mess? Kids care. They know bags get in the ocean and entangle wildlife — the PEEC Kinnickinick environmental Club for kids even had a rather effective campaign to educate people to bring their own bags: “Invest in me — plastic-bag-free!”

Bur our County Council didn’t take action.

Some of the fist-shaking testimonies in opposition to a bag fee at the meetings would’ve been funny had they not been so “persuasive.” They included:

“A bag ban would kill retail and tourism”; “even Greenpeace says bags aren’t a problem”; “it’s government interference”; “it’s an infringement



Tia Carmichael

Although there were strong arguments for a ban or fee on single-use plastic bags in Los Alamos, and some county councilors spoke in favor of a fee, opposition voices were louder, and the council got cold feet. But the Pajarito Group will continue to work to reduce plastic waste.

The councilors who supported the proposed 10-cent “plastax” indicated that we could bring the issue up again after the election. Now it’s our task to lobby every candidate to help Los Alamos go bag-free.

on consumer choice”; “the majority of people want bags”; “educate, don’t legislate”; “I need it for garbage and the dog”; “you go for the bag now — next it’s water bottles”; “the plastic bag is the last bastion of freedom”; and: “I don’t want to be arrested for walking out of a store with a plastic bag. And then you’ll come after me for my guns.” (Really, someone said this).

Joyce Anderson, who ran a local pro-bag blog, wept at the podium as she told how she had spent the past eight months away from her two young children, then pleaded to have this issue resolved. She reminded the Republicans that they had made their positions

clear — that this overreach of government authority is a waste of time and resources.

At the final County Council meeting, where nothing happened, we heard Councilor Steve Girrens echo a public comment: There’s no bag-litter problem in Los Alamos, so why waste time on the issue? Councilor James Chrobocinski insisted that we don’t want to be like the Socialist Republic of Santa Fe. Councilor Rick Reiss said we shouldn’t waste the very busy staff’s time on this issue. Councilors O’Leary, Henderson, Sheehy, and Izraelevitz talked about the issue but agreed not to take action at the time.

Although plastic bags aren’t yet the official flower of Los Alamos as much as they adorn the barbed wire, trees and arroyos of Española, feral bags fly from the mountains to White Rock and through the back yards all over town.

Time for a change. It’s time to get rid of them.

Change takes hard work, lots of time, and commitment. Maintaining the status quo doesn’t. If those who want to protect the environment aren’t committed to the time and work it takes to accomplish the desired protections — if we don’t show up to give decision-makers support in making difficult decisions — then decision-makers will usually go with the vocal faction no matter the consequences to the well-being of the true majority.

Now, before the election, is our opportunity to change the status quo.

Meetings

Meetings: Our Informational Meetings are on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. in UNMLA, Building 2, Room 203; however, every summer we hiatus our meetings to give everyone yet another hour to spend outdoors in the sacred long, warm evenings fragrant with flowers and hopefully monsoonal rains. Starting in September, please watch your emails and the *Los Alamos Monitor* and *LADailyPost.com* for announcements about our issues presentations.

The councilors who supported the proposed 10-cent plastax but didn’t take action indicated that we could bring the issue up again after the election. Now it’s our task as Sierrans to lobby every candidate to make it clear that we support the plastax.

Here are the current Council candidates in alphabetical, non-partisan order: incumbent candidates Steve Girrens Kristin Henderson, and Pete Sheehy; new candidates Patrick Brenner, Chris Chandler, and Jaret McDonald. Call them. Send letters to the editor —even a one-liner like: “Isn’t it time to have a fee on single-use plastic shopping bags?”

Emails for incumbents are: Steve Girrens, steven.girrens@lacnm.us, Kristin Henderson, kristin.henderson@lacnm.us, and Pete Shelley, pete.sheehy@lacnm.us. The Council email is: countycouncil@lacnm.us.

Our push will start up again in November. Be here now; be here then. See you there.

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Chapter goes 10-for-13 on Election Day

By Susan Martin
Chapter Political Chair

Thanks to Sierra Club members like you, 10 of the 13 candidates endorsed by the Rio Grande Chapter in contested primaries won their primary races on June 7.

Voters value the Sierra Club endorsement. And whether it's calling voters, contacting our members, knocking on doors or running ads for environmental champions, it is your time, energy, man- and womanpower and donations that fuel these winning efforts.

Much of the policy on climate, water, wildlife and land is made at the state and local level. Let's ensure that pro-environment lawmakers are elected across the state. Please contact riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org if you would like to volunteer or donate.

Here's a rundown of primary results:

New Mexico House of Representatives

District 5: Rep. Doreen Wonda Johnson; win. Rep. Johnson, who sports a 100% rating from Conservation Voters New Mexico, pulled out a tight race on June 7 but does not face a general-election challenger.

House District 21: Debbie Sariñana; win. We endorsed both Rep. Idalia Lechuga-Tena, who had an excellent pro-environment voting record in her only legislative session, and Debbie Sariñana in a three-way race.

District 25: Rep. Christine Trujillo; win. Rep. Christine Trujillo, whose voting record on environmental issues is superb, does not face a general-election challenger.

District 38: Mary Hotvedt; win.

Hotvedt is running to replace retiring Republican Rep. Dianne Hamilton.

District 48: Paul Campos; loss.

Campos, an environmental champion on the Santa Fe County Commission, lost to another strong candidate, Linda Trujillo.

New Mexico Senate

District 17: Sen. Mimi Stewart; win.

Sen. Stewart, who owns a 99% lifetime CVNM Conservation score, does not face a general-election challenger.

District 22: Sen. Benny Shendo; win. Shendo's primary opponent was Sandra Jeff, who has a poor record on conservation causes. Sen. Shendo does not face a general-election challenger.

District 36: Rep. Jeff Steinborn; win. In the state House, Steinborn has been one of the most knowledgeable and consistent voices for renewable energy, protection of public lands and water and wildlife issues.

Grant County Commission:

District 3: Alicia Edwards; win

District 4: Marilyn Alcorn; win

District 5: Harry Browne; win

These candidates could shift the composition of the Grant County Commission to a pro-environment majority in a region that is battling over the billion-dollar diversion of the Gila River and copper-mining issues.

Bernalillo County Commission:

District 2: Adrián Pedroza; loss

Pedroza, the only candidate in this race to openly oppose the Santolina sprawl development, came in second in a very tight three-way race.

Santa Fe County Commission

District 2: Miguel Chavez; loss

District 5: Ed Moreno; win.

We also endorsed Anna Hamilton, who was unopposed in District 4. Thank you again for all your help. Now it's on to the general election!



Rio Grande Chapter Political Chair Susan Martin, right, and Maria de Anda Hay, left, canvassed in January for Santa Fe City Council candidate Renee Villarreal, center.

Two recent big victories in city races

By Mona Blaber

The Rio Grande Chapter endorses and works for candidates not just in statewide primary races, but also in local elections such as city council.

In city races in March and May, our endorsed candidates won huge victories for the environment.

In El Paso, Jim Tolbert, a member of Rio Grande Chapter El Paso Group's executive committee, won a resounding victory to earn a District 2 seat on the city council. Jim won an astounding 59 percent of the vote in an eight-candidate race.

Jim has done great work with our El Paso Group in distributing reusable bags in low-income areas of the city. He also leads a campaign to protect the Franklin Mountains from the CEMEX quarry. Jim also writes a great blog at elpasonaturally.com about critical issues such as fracking on the Texas Diablo Plateau (Otero Mesa in New Mexico) and water shortages. He takes to task local bureaucrats and powerful El Paso developers.

In March, our endorsee Renee Villarreal won an equally impressive 65 percent of the vote against three opponents to succeed Patti Bushee in Santa Fe City Council District 1. Northern New Mexico Group volunteers knocked on hundreds of doors and called fellow Sierra Club members in the district to support Villarreal's candidacy.

Both these candidates canvassed their districts several times over, listening to voters about what's most important to them.

While big races consume most public attention, much important environmental policy is made at the local level, and these offices are where many Senate and presidential candidates launched their careers. The Rio Grande Chapter is proud of these two terrific candidates, and we're excited to watch them stand up for their constituents and our environment in office!



Jim Tolbert



Renee Villarreal

Volunteer profile: Susan Martin

This issue of the Sierran kicks off a series of interviews featuring our hard-working and effective volunteers. Susan Martin is the Rio Grande Chapter Political Team chair, former chapter chair and member of the national Sierra Club Political Team, which directs the Club's political program.

How did you get involved in the Sierra Club? The summer before my senior year in college @ UCSD I was a volunteer at Olympic National Park in the Hoh rain forest. I decided to pursue environmental law (on the protection, NOT the polluters' side) and joined the Sierra Club. I worked on *Ecology Law Quarterly* at UC Berkeley (Boalt) Law School. My family was of very modest means, and our only vacations were camping. My dad always taught us to "leave the place better than you found it."

What environmental issue is your biggest passion? Life-sustaining water, keeping it from getting contaminated, evaporated (by global warming) and appropriated by corporations as a commodity, rather

than a human right.

How did you come to your current role? I was counsel to the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee and held the first hearings on acid rain in the 1980s, when much of U.S.-produced pollution was acidifying lakes in the Northeast and Canada. It was a diplomatic issue.

I was the first lobbyist for Natural Resources Defense Council in DC, fighting to keep Ronald Reagan from gutting the EPA through the budget process. My colleague Larry Williams of Sierra Club and I created Citizens for an Effective EPA, and I saw firsthand the effectiveness of grassroots lobbying by Sierra Club members. I got involved at the group level and moved to the chapter level.

What are some favorite memories of your activist work? Working alongside Martin Heinrich, who was Rio Grande Chapter Wildlife Issues chair, as he progressed from Albuquerque City Council to U.S. House to being an environmental champion in the U.S. Senate. Walking blocks for Ben Ray Luján,

who became an energy expert and consumer advocate as a Public Regulation commissioner. Now he's a national leader in Congress, helping to get other progressive, environmental champions elected. The 2008 Obama election night. That year, 1 in 4 Obama organizers were Sierra Club members. We CAN make a difference.

Why do you invest so much time and energy in this work? Because, as Tip O'Neill said, "All politics is local." When we call and talk to neighbors about SC-endorsed candidates willing to enter public service, often a thankless task, we are fostering local leaders committed to the environment and energy efficiency. Some of these leaders go on to state and federal office.

How can others get involved? Contact me (505) 670-3279 or your local group chair and tell them you'd like to become involved. Our conservation efforts need volunteers from energy/climate change to mining to dairy contamination to wildlife. We can always use your energy and enthusiasm.

Organs legislation introduced

By Dan Lorimier
Chapter conservation coordinator

On June 10, U.S. Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich introduced the long-awaited Organ Mountains Desert Peaks Conservation Act to designate about 240,000 acres of the new Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument as “Wilderness.”

This permanent designation will assure higher levels of protection for the landscapes, wildlife, archaeological and historic resources located in these especially rough and fragile portions of the 486,000-acre monument. The Wilderness designation doesn’t allow motorized vehicles and will have a more protective management plan than the rest of the monument. The Udall-Heinrich bill moves the ‘temporary’ status of the pre-existing Wilderness Study Areas (designated as such back in the ’80s) to the permanent status of Wilderness and puts a pretty strong lock on any kind of development in these areas.

The chapter has worked with many groups, agencies and legislators over the last several years to protect these lands with National Monument status, and this effort to further protect large portions of the monument is the insurance policy future generations need.

Some ranchers, distrustful of jurisdictional changes or any changes to the rules for lands they ranch, and despite the full inclusion of ranching in the Wilderness management plan, will likely oppose this legislation. However, in April, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance sponsored a poll by Third Eye Strategies that found that 78 percent of residents in Doña



Photo by Lisa Mandelkern

Legislation introduced by U.S. Sens. Martin Heinrich and Tom Udall would designate some parts of Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument as Wilderness, preventing motorized vehicles and some types of development in those areas.

Outings to celebrate our monuments

In September, the Sierra Club will participate in the “Monuments to Main Street” event in Las Cruces, featuring hiking, mountain-biking, sightseeing, horseback riding and other events in the three national monuments surrounding Las Cruces: Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, White Sands and Paleozoic Trackways.

Southern Group Outings Chair Howard Dash will lead hikes on the four Sundays in September in the monuments. For more details, see full hike listings on Pages 15 and 16. Hope to see you there.

Sept. 4: Organ Mountain Desert Peaks National Monument, Fillmore Canyon. View the Central Organ Mountains and a seasonal waterfall. Along the way we will take a short hike along the North Face of the La Cueva rock formations. 3.5 miles, 400-foot elevation gain.

Sunday, Sept. 11: Paleozoic Trackways

National Monument, Discovery Site: A chance to step back in history 280 million years as we hike to the discovery site where pre-dinosaurs among others travelled when the Robledo Mountains were at the edge of the sea. Moderate hike, 3-4 miles.

Sunday, Sept. 18: Organ Mountain Desert Peaks National Monument, Aiden Crater. A chance to visit an ancient volcanic crater in the proposed Aiden Lava Flow wilderness area. This is an easy to moderate hike that will require scrambling over volcanic rocks in the insider of this crater.

Sunday, Sept. 25: White Sands National Monument, Alkali Flat Trail. We will hike up and down over the dunes to Alkali Flat and return. Five miles roundtrip.

For all trips, contact Howie Dash for meeting time and place: 575-652- 7550 or howiedash@aol.com.

Ana County support legislation to protect wilderness within Organ Mountains Desert Peaks.

With passage of this legislation, the region could expect a further boost to local economies. The Organ

Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument has already stimulated significant economic increases in Doña Ana County.

We owe our senators a big thank-you for introducing legislation that is the

capstone to the growing use and enjoyment of these truly unique and iconic places in New Mexico.

To send Sens. Udall and Heinrich a thank-you note, please go to riograndesierraclub.org/thank-you.

A first: Girl Scout monument badge

By Christine Newton
Sierra Club Southern New Mexico Group chair

President Barack Obama proclaimed the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks a national monument under the Antiquities Act on May 21, 2014. One year later, at the monument’s first-anniversary celebration, the Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest announced the first-ever Girl Scout patch series focused on a national monument.

Maria Ehlers, Membership Team leader, detailed the design and requirements for the patch. Others who assisted with the development included Dianne Flanagan, regional CEO of the Girl Scouts of the Desert South West,

Iris Maraboto, membership manager, and Carrie Hamblen, executive director of the Las Cruces Green Chamber. The patch series focuses on four skill-development areas: Leave No Trace, Discover, Connect, and Take Action. Requirements for the patch series vary by age group: K-third grade, fourth-fifth grade, sixth-eighth grade and ninth-12th grade.

In May, the Sierra Club and the Girl Scouts of the Desert Southwest co-sponsored a hike in the monument. Six “Daisy” Girl Scouts (the youngest age group) earned their hiking patch that day. Two local Sierra Club members participated. The hike was a great way to introduce nonmembers to the Sierra Club’s mission, and to interact with families on a shared nature

experience.

Hamblen is working with the council to create a White Sands National Monument patch and with the Girl Scout council in California to create a Mojave Trails National Monument patch. Her recommendation to others who are interested in working on patches for monument areas is to be organized and have patch ideas thought out before presenting to the local Girl Scout councils, since most councils have limited staff availability. Their ability to coordinate with other agencies would likely be, in part, dependent upon a well thought-out plan that could be carried out by organized volunteers working within the guidelines of the Girl Scout organization.

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

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PNM forced to justify nuclear buy

By **Mona Blaber**
Chapter communications director

PNM is hitting speed bumps in its efforts to add nuclear energy and raise customer rates. The PNM rate case, under consideration now at the state Public Regulation Commission, contains both positive and negative components for the climate and ratepayers. The utility wants to raise the base service fee from \$5 monthly to \$13, which would discourage energy efficiency, hurt low-income ratepayers and penalize solar owners, who would see the

return on their investment decrease. PNM has also proposed adding to rates its 2015 purchase of 64 megawatts at Arizona's Palo Verde nuclear plant. But PNM has not established that the nuclear capacity is needed or that the price it paid was justified. Hearings on the rate case were held in April, but the commission reopened hearings in June to get additional evidence on the value of the Palo Verde power and whether PNM's proposed rate for its customers is fair. In the June hearings, an expert witness for the attorney general argued that PNM paid too much for the nuclear

power, saying "In no way, shape or form did they justify the market value." After the new hearings, PRC staff withdrew its support for PNM's rate proposal based on the new testimony, and the attorney for Bernalillo County and the city of Albuquerque said many of PNM's purchases and investments appeared imprudent and unnecessary. The case has yet to go before commissioners. There are many other aspects to the case that will have a big impact on our climate, including rate structures that could encourage energy efficiency and solar and a decision that could make it harder to transition from coal-fired San

Juan Generation Station in the near term. **How to get involved:** To learn more about the case and send a message to the PRC, please go to www.riograndesierraclub.org/pnmratecase. Want to get active on PNM's plans for energy and rates in the future? Write to me at riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org. PNM is also beginning its "Integrated Resource Plan" process, a long-term plan for its energy future, which is likely to impact the 2018 proceedings on whether to keep San Juan coal plant open past 2022. See Page 13 for more on the IRP process and how you can make a difference.



Camilla Feibelman

Fred Houdek is the new co-chair of the Sierra Club Central New Mexico Group.

Volunteer profile: Fred Houdek

How did you get involved in the Sierra Club? I joined the Sierra Club in 2001 when I began my third retirement and was seeking activities to utilize my "volunteer time." I continued with my 47-year involvement with the Boy Scouts of America, but needed some additional activities. I became a Water Sentinel for the Valley of the Fox Group of the Sierra Club Illinois Chapter. In 2005, my oldest son, Joshua, became a Sierra Club organizer for the North Star Chapter in Minneapolis. Over the years we have attended several Sierra Club events in the Twin Cities and have helped with the logistics for their annual Tour De Sierra Club bike rides. When we moved to Albuquerque in 2013, I sought out the Sierra Club to see if I wanted to continue my involvement here. **What environmental issue is your biggest passion?** Right now, my biggest passion is protecting the Bosque. At the time we moved to Albuquerque, the mayor was considering developing new trails in the Bosque State Park. Having lived along the Fox River in Illinois for 25 years, I have seen all types of development along both sides of the river. The Bosque is Albuquerque's best natural asset. I want to help keep it that way and not see it become an urban park. **How did you come to be in your current role?** I attended the Sierra Club and Beer events in Albuquerque. I enjoyed the folks and began to learn about the area, issues and culture. I started to help with the tabling at the many events the group attended. Well, I was enjoying talking with people in our new home city. I soon started helping the volunteer coordinator plan the tabling events and securing volunteers to staff them. I assumed that responsibility and now coordinate that

effort. At one tabling event at the Roundhouse in 2015, I had the pleasure of meeting Norma McCallan, a 40-plus-year Sierra Club outings leader, activist and a great lady. We spent a few hours together as we were tabling. It was after that meeting that I decided to make the Sierra Club the focus of my volunteer efforts for the future. As I gained more knowledge of Albuquerque and New Mexico conservation issues, I joined the Bosque Action Team. I became the Central Group's representative to the Rio Grande Chapter's Executive Committee, which opened up, for me, a greater understanding of New Mexico issues and politics. Recently I became the co-chair of the Central Group. **Any favorite memories?** First is the time I spent collecting water samples in the three creeks I was responsible for. I was out in all seasons, even breaking through the ice in winter. I enjoyed being alone with "my creeks" and all of nature that goes along with it. Second is working with my son on the annual "Tour de Sierra Club" bike rides. Last is the progress we have made in the Bosque. This includes increasing public awareness of what the city plans, the "accessibility" hikes and the creation of the Bosque Sentinels to help monitor activity in the Bosque. **Advice for others who want to get involved?** Get involved! The Sierra Club has several avenues to help you. Go to our website (riograndesierraclub.org) to learn what is happening in your area. Participate in the outings, rallies and meetings. You can do everything from data entry to phone calling, letters to the editor to leading hikes. Once you start to get involved working with others, it is personally rewarding and fun, and Mother Nature appreciates it!

City taking input on Phase III of Bosque project

By **Richard Barish**
Bosque Issues Chair
The City of Albuquerque has begun its public process to obtain input on Phase III of its trail construction. This phase will extend the groomed trail for almost two miles, from Campbell Road to Montaño.

It appears that Mayor Richard Berry's administration is continuing to attempt to limit broad-based public input on its project. The administration is again violating the procedures for robust public participation that it agreed to in March 2015. Instead, the city's public process will consist of three walks, which have already happened, and a public meeting at 6 p.m. July 26 at Los Duranes Community Center, 2920 Leopoldo Road NW. You can send written comments to: ParksandRecreation@cabq.gov. The administration again went out of its way to not inform the public of its process. It did not tell the Bosque Action Team and the Sierra Club of its initiation of the public process so that we could in turn inform the 1,100 people on our lists, who constitute most of the people who are most concerned about what happens in the Bosque. The administration gave only a few days notice to other partners. A brief article did appear in the *Albuquerque Journal*, but only two days before the first walk. As a result of the late and limited notice, only 27 people total showed up for all three of the walks. There is absolutely no reason why the administration could not have provided more and better advance notice of its public process. In addition, the city's public meeting will be at the same location as the Phase II meeting, the Los Duranes Community Center, which was not big enough for the 200-plus people who showed up last time. There was also not enough time for everyone who wanted to

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comment in a single meeting. No specific alternatives are yet available. The March 2015 agreement provided that alternatives would include different trail designs, but the administration did not comply with this agreement in Phase II and decided, with no public input, that the trail would be a 6-foot-wide crusher-fine trail, a design that is not consistent with the natural character of the Bosque. The mayor needs to be told once again that improvement of Bosque habitat and preservation of the experience of nature in the Bosque should be the priorities of any project in the Bosque. The thing that makes the Bosque unique and wonderful is that it is a great place to experience nature in the middle of Albuquerque! A 6-foot-wide crusher-fine trail is not necessary to provide access. Any trail improvements should blend in with the natural surroundings of the Bosque. **How to get involved:** Please attend the July 26 meeting, and please submit written comments to ParksandRecreation@cabq.gov. To be added to our listserv and kept abreast of the latest developments, email richard.barish@gmail.com.

Multiple values of the state Wildlife Action Plan

By Teresa Seamster, Northern Group Chair
As a native New Mexican, I know how many of our traditions are deeply rooted in our state's beautiful landscapes and diverse wildlife. During my time in Congress, I have joined many of my colleagues in supporting the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program, which devotes resources to conserving wilderness and the wildlife that inhabits it throughout the country, including monitoring of endangered and threatened species. As Congress considers legislation protecting wildlife and their habitats domestically and abroad, please rest assured, I will keep your concerns and opinions in mind.

— letter from
U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Lujan
Despite widespread support, New Mexico has yet to approve a 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan that enables the state Department of Game and Fish to apply for state Wildlife Grants for many native species of conservation concern, including those most at risk for decline or extirpation.

Like many states, New Mexico faces increasing pressure from competing interests when it comes to protecting vulnerable species and crucial habitats. Extractive industries, water-dependent agriculture, ranchers, sportsmen and wildlife conservation groups have all had concerns that have delayed the final approval of this crucial plan.

Given the complexity of identifying vulnerable wildlife and developing conservation actions that go into the plan, the department was requested by the State Game Commission to extend the public meeting and comment period through 2016 and will submit a revised plan to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in November. An estimated \$900,000 to \$1.4 million annually in state and tribal Wildlife Grants can then be applied for.

In a recent presentation to the Commission, Department of Game and Fish Assistant Director Jim Comins emphasized that the SWAP contributes to two objectives of the Conservation Services Program's Strategic Plan:

“By 2018, information on

wildlife biology, habitat, and department management strategies is available to the majority of New Mexicans,” he said.

“The department retains its capacity to competently participate in the resolution of evolving global, continental, and regional-scale environmental and ecological issues or trends that could have a significant impact on New Mexico's wildlife,” he added.

In an April meeting between the Northern New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, and the department, the proposed reduction of the number of species on the list of species of greatest conservation need was the main topic of discussion. The removal of all 138 insect species (arthropods) from the list, including pollinators, was the principle concern, as well as the removal of beavers (a game species).

Since the department has no statutory authority over insects, it felt they should be removed, but because of insects' vital role in the food chain for many species and as pollinators of many agricultural crops, they felt

insects could be preserved through habitat protection and management. Also, as beavers are increasingly vital to wetlands and increased surface water storage, it was suggested that the department consider a statewide beaver plan to ensure their numbers are protected.

The primary purpose of the State Wildlife Action Plan is to ensure that all states have adequate funding to maintain population and ecological data and implement management strategies to ensure their native species do not become threatened or endangered.

The State Wildlife Action Plan timeline:

July 29: Draft posted on Department website

August 2-31: Public-comment period

October 7: Revised draft with public comments addressed

November 10: Final review and edits of draft Plan; Plan sent to Commission

November 17: Final presentation of Plan and Commission approval vote.

Contact Teresa Seamster, tc.seamster@gmail.com, for more information.

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Explaining utilities' planning process

By Patricia Cardona, Northern Group Energy Committee
Northern New Mexico Group members and other members of the Rio Grande Chapter have participated closely in energy issues in the past several years due to the partial closing of coal-fired San Juan Generating Station as well as policy issues regarding renewable energy.

In the changing landscape of energy production, there is a great need to demystify what energy is purchased by each investor-owned utility for its customers. This includes what happens when a utility stops purchasing coal power from a plant. Does this shut down a plant, or does someone else buy the energy, or does a company buy another type of generation, such as gas, nuclear, solar, wind, biomass or geothermal?

Is this information hidden from customers, buried in the caverns of litigation? The answer is NO. The basic information is available to anyone who can use a computer and wants to learn about any of the three major investor-owned utilities: Search for El Paso Electric, Southwestern Public Service or Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM) and add “Integrated Resource Planning” after the name of the utility to the search.

Every three years, each utility is required to update its four-year and 20-year plans for delivering reliable, affordable energy to customers.

The Integrated Resource Plan is required by New Mexico law and integrates layers of information on yearly energy use by a company's customers; generation source by percentage, age and location of facilities; replacement plans for facilities; percentage of customer types (residential, commercial, manufacturing); types of energy-efficiency programs and their anticipated reductions in energy use; criteria for selecting energy sources; and steps taken to meet state renewable-energy standards, just to name a few of the types of information available.

In addition, a public participation process is required. Attendance is not restricted to attorneys or representatives of organizations; anyone can attend. Time can be intensive to attend and read the materials.

These plans provide the opportunity to compare energy sources of the different companies.

For example, El Paso Electric's last IRP filing, issued in 2015, shows 47 percent nuclear energy, 35 percent from natural gas, 11 percent from purchase-power agreements (mostly solar and renewable-energy certificates and less than 1 percent company-owned renewables). It also has a biomass and battery storage project. El Paso Electric (EPE) is foregoing any further purchase of coal power from Four Corners coal plant. EPE has customers in Texas and New

How to get involved

Learn about PNM's stakeholder involvement and planning process for its 2017 Integrated Resource Plan by participating in planning sessions during the next six months.

PNM's first meeting for its 2017 process was June 30. To be included in future planning sessions, email irp@pnm.com or call 888-413-0064. To learn more or get involved in Sierra Club energy issues, email patriciacardona24@yahoo.com.

Mexico. New Mexico makes up 20% of its customers. PNM has 100% of its customers in New Mexico. PNM's 2014 IRP filing showed its use as 60 percent coal energy, 21 percent nuclear, 13 percent natural gas, 5 percent wind, 1 percent solar. It also has an experimental project for battery storage. Are these plans acceptable for meeting environmental concerns?

The IRP public participation process provides a challenge for customers to develop solutions by educating ourselves about the facilities, customers and energy sources. We can provide feedback to company planners about the results we as customers want on a long-term and short-term basis in energy products. This process requires commitment and dedication to create change in energy sources. The challenge is ours.

Day Hikes 8th edition coming in July

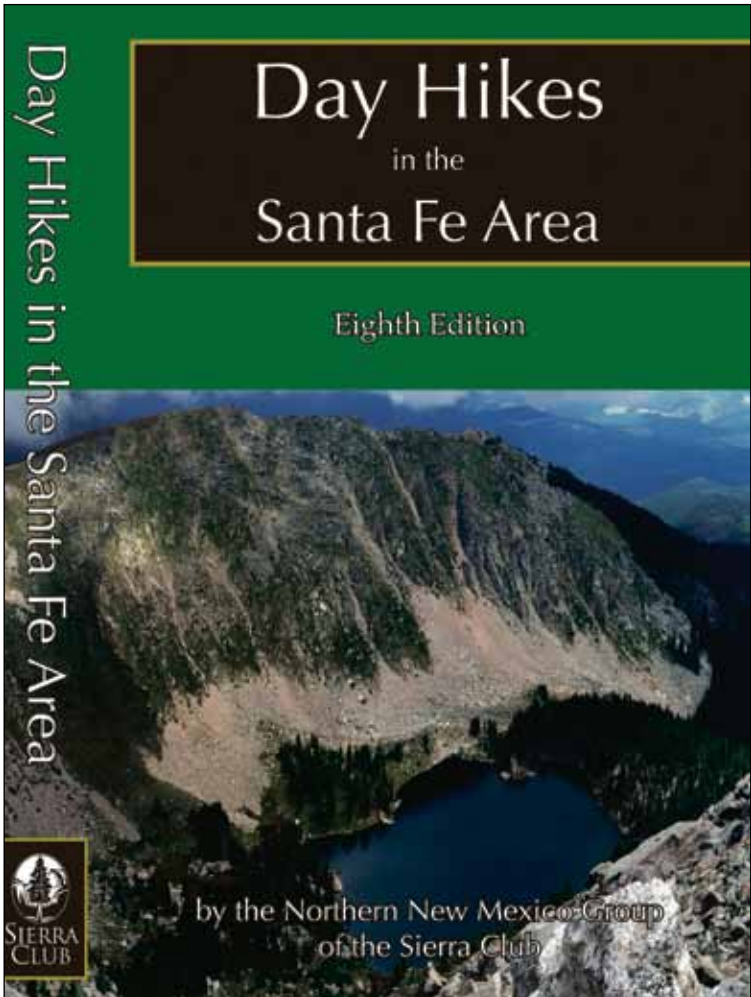
By Teresa Seamster
Northern New Mexico
Group chair

We did it! The Northern New Mexico Group has published the eighth edition of our popular *Day Hikes in the Santa Fe Area*. And this is not your grandfather's guidebook.

The eighth edition contains 410 pages, 68 hike descriptions that, counting all the options and variations provided, cover more than 125 individual day hikes, 71 maps including two in color, and 95 black-and-white photographs, most of which are new to this edition. The retail price is \$19.95. Sierra Club members can receive a discount by contacting the Northern Group directly.

"What is most obviously new is the color cover," said Aku, project coordinator and chair of the Hiking Book 8th Edition Committee, "but I think our readers will notice how hard we worked to broaden the scope, sweat the details, and organize the content inside the book. Generations of hikers in northern New Mexico have relied on our guidebook, so we didn't want to let them down with this eighth edition."

Edition 8 began at a meeting in January 2015, called to consider what to do as our supply of the seventh edition was dwindling. "We decided that more than enough had changed on the ground to justify a new edition, and there were opportunities to expand the number of hikes covered," Aku explained. "If we were going to publish a new edition, we wanted to do it right."



The eighth edition of the Northern New Mexico Group's 'Day Hikes in the Santa Fe Area' is in local bookstores now, with a kickoff event at Travel Bug in Santa Fe on July 8.

The Eighth Edition Committee set lofty goals: to retain the accuracy and tone of previous editions, thoroughly update the continuing content, expand the number of hikes, produce a pleasing design and layout, and, of course, to deliver as useful a guide to as wide a range of hikers as possible. So a group of 20 dedicated hikers, writers, proofreaders and editors got to work.

"Little did we realize that such a thoroughly updated and expanded book would require 18 months of intensive work by our volunteers to hike the hikes, research, write

the descriptions, collect the photographs, draw the maps, edit, do the graphic design and layout, and proofread everything over and over again at every stage," Aku noted. "Eight months alone over last winter and spring were consumed with maps and layout, both of which were done online."

"If there is one single thing that I take the most pride in from contributing to this book, it is this," said Northern Group treasurer Jim Baker, who took the lead for the graphic design and layout. "All of the writing, editing, field work, cartography, photography, graphic art,

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 at the Santa Fe office, 1807 Second St., Suite 45.

design, and production for this book were done by Sierra Club volunteers. The only party to receive a paycheck on this project was the company that did the printing."

"There is an old joke that a camel is a horse built by a committee," Jim continued. "But despite the complexity of the undertaking, and thanks to the skills and dedication of our Sierra Club volunteers, I think the eighth edition is no camel; it's a thoroughbred horse."

Jim gave as a specific example the maps in the new book. "While running his Travel Bug business full-time, Greg Ohlsen produced maps that are at once accurate, easily understood by the reader, and just plain gorgeous," Jim said. "When I placed his maps in the book layout, I felt like the curator at a museum hanging works of art for an exhibition."

The first edition of *Day Hikes in the Santa Fe Area* was published in 1981. Sales proved so strong that, after less than a year, the Northern Group did a second printing. Its ongoing popularity with hikers of northern New Mexico has sustained a run of seven editions. The eighth edition is gratefully dedicated to

Norma McCallan and Norbert Sperling — "Two who made possible editions 1 through 7."

The cover notes that sales of *Day Hikes* support the Northern New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club and our grassroots efforts to protect wild lands and creatures in and around Santa Fe and New Mexico.

To launch the eighth edition, we are hosting hospitality tables at the following times and retail locations:

Hiking Book Events:

Friday, July 8, 5-7 p.m., at the Travel Bug, 839 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe. Presentation by Aku and Ann Young, refreshments and sales.

Saturday, July 9, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at REI, 500 Market St, Suite 100, Santa Fe

Saturday, July 9, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at REI, 1550 Mercantile Ave NE, Albuquerque

Saturday, July 9, 3 p.m.-5 p.m. at Collected Works, 202 Galisteo St., Santa Fe.

Sunday, July 10, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., at REI, 1550 Mercantile Ave NE, Albuquerque.

We are grateful to these and other vendors that have sold our guidebook for many years. Please join us at one of these events to get your first look at the eighth edition.

Thank you for the incredibly hard-working members of the book committee: Norbert Sperlich, Greg Ohlsen, Helen Huntley, Alan Shapiro, Janet Peacock, Teresa Seamster, Roberts French, Bogdan Mihaila, Kathleen Burch, Christina Selby, Ingrid Vollenhofer, Daisy Levine, Heather Karlson, Robert Reifel, Rose Allen, Jean Dewert, Lester Drapela, and Aku & Jim!

Mapping slopes to preserve wilderness

By Teresa Seamster
Among the many ideas submitted to Santa Fe National Forest by our allies and members on areas that could be designated as wilderness areas, one stands out in a uniquely visual way — very steep slopes.

Mapper David Strip, a Carson-Santa Fe National Forest Coalition member, submitted this idea to the group with the map at right and a message:

"Here's a quick stab at a map I've started to put together to suggest a different kind of wilderness region.

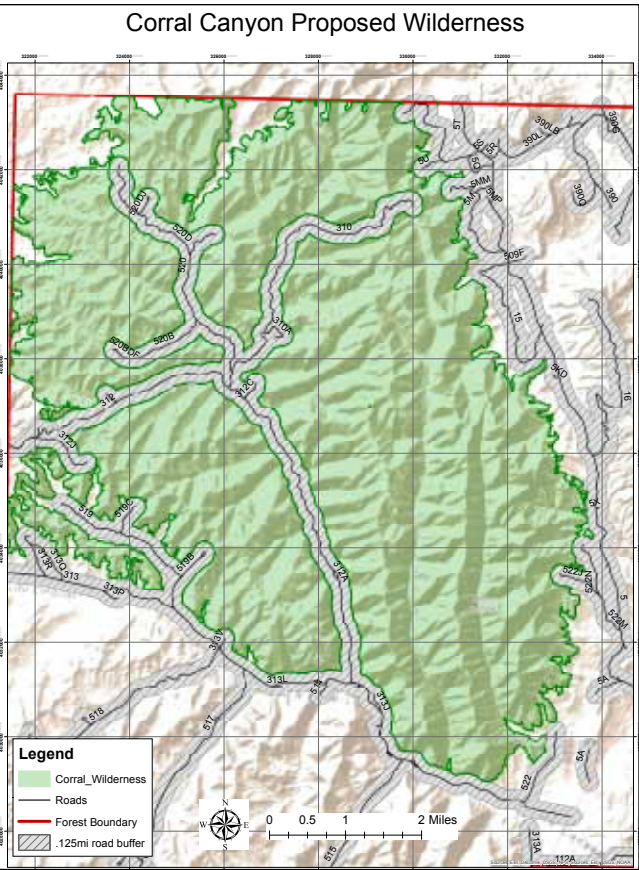
"This is the NW-most corner of the SFNE, east of NM-112, north of FR313, just south of the Jicarilla. The colored region is defined as surface with slope exceeding 20%. At present, there is no common or practical form of mechanized travel that can traverse most

of this terrain, and motorized travel is prohibited under the travel management plan. The area is ponderosa forest with stark red sandstone cliffs and a huge abundance of Gallina-era archeological sites, including the Nogales Cliff House. At about 25,000 contiguous acres, it meets the area requirement (to be considered as a new wilderness designation).

"I would be hard pressed to imagine anyone credibly claiming that defining this as wilderness will restrict his or her access or utilization.

"Why not protect this before someone figures out some gonzo truck to climb this terrain?"

Vertical vistas, green ponderosas, red cliffs, prehistoric cliff house and settlement sites and a place for the human species to better understand its origins. Thank you David!



Thanks for successful sale

The Northern Group's biannual yard-sale extravaganza was a "pretty good" success! Lots of people stopped by to shop and talk hiking, camping, photography and that riveting subject, elections! Two beautiful antique chairs and an elegant bed with pull-out trestle went unsold, but many people stopped to try out all the electric tools, fountains and photo equipment.

A huge thanks to Carole Owens and Ross Pope for organizing the items beautifully on their drive and setting up all the tables and purchasing area. Thanks to all our volunteers — Tom, Norma, Bob, Bonnie, Pat, Teresa and the show-stopping Owens-Pope cat!

Best sellers this year were camera equipment, camping gear, electric tools and fountains and plants sprouted from seed by Carole.

Thank you to all who donated and volunteered to help us raise almost \$700!

Hikes and Events, continued from Page 16

three national monuments surrounding Las Cruces. Our first will be a beautiful hike in Fillmore Canyon. View the Central Organ Mountains and a seasonal waterfall. Along the way we will take a short hike along the North Face of the La Cueva rock formations. Out-and-back hike is 3.5 miles on a well-maintained trail with 400-foot elevation gain. Call Howie Dash for meeting time and place. 575-652-7550 or howiedash@aol.com.

Sunday, Sept. 4: Strenuous hike to Lobo Peak in Taos, 9-10 miles, up Italianos Canyon, down Manzanita. 3,500-foot elevation gain. Marcia Skillman, marciaskillman@hotmail.com, 505-699-3008.

Saturday, Sept. 10: Exploratory Rio Chama Redwall Canyon descent. Seldom seen except by rafters, the Colorado Plateau Chinle formation closes in on the Rio Chama, 4 miles upstream from Christ in the Desert Monastery. We will either negotiate a way past the Monastery or more likely take Carson FR145 across miles of the Mesa de los Viejos, over to the Chama Canyon Rim. Then we descend 1,300 feet on relatively good trails and loop along the river edge to come back to the car. See Canyonlands but with evergreen trees added, on your doorstep! No dogs allowed due to unknown nature of what we will encounter by the river. Mark Dunham, 505-795-0199, medunham2@msn.com.

Saturday, Sept. 10: Let's talk cottonwood trees! Join us for a 1.5- to 2-hour walk in the Bosque. Meet at the Calabacillas Arroyo Picnic area and dig into the history and life cycle of our grand old cottonwood stands. For directions and further information RSVP: Peter Kelling, cloudsandwater@juno.com.

Saturday, Sept. 10: Strenuous hike to either Trailriders Wall in Pecos or Wheeler Peak via Williams Lake, Robert Reifel, 505-690-6109.

Sunday, Sept. 11: Strenuous hike, Santa Fe to Cowles crossover hike. One group will start at the Santa Fe Ski Basin and hike to Cowles, and the other at Cowles, hiking to the ski basin; groups will exchange keys and cars at the beginning of the hike and will meet in the middle. 12 miles, 2,500 feet, limit of 10 hikers. Daisy Levine; email tiadora1@gmail.com starting on Aug. 28. I will be out of email range for part of that time (yes, that really happens!), so please cc the hike co-leader, Alan Shapiro at nm5s@yahoo.com and one of us will respond. Include your phone number.

Sunday, Sept. 11: Tour Paleozoic Trackways National Monument, Discovery Site: Step back in history 280 million years as we hike to the discovery site where pre-dinosaurs among others travelled when the Robledo Mountains were at the edge of the sea. We will explore an area where these ancient creatures left their fossilized footprints. This is a moderate hike of three to four miles. Call Howie Dash for meeting time and place. 575-652- 7550 or howiedash@aol.com.

Saturday, Sept. 17: Very strenuous hike to Redondo Peak. We will take the standard route to Santa Fe Baldy and then head North off-trail along the ridge-line to Redondo Peak. About 17 miles and 5,000-foot-plus elevation gain. Early start. Two or three dogs OK. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, (505) 913-0589.

Saturday, Sept. 17: Easy hike in bear Canyon. Can be done with a walker or walking cane; however, trail is sand, not asphalt. Loop hike toward Elena



Photo by Mark Dunham

A view from Doctor Peak on an Alpine Meadows-Ski Basin hike (see July 12 listing), looking at the high Pecos reaches, including a view of Jicarita Ridge. Hikes are listed with difficulty level — easy, moderate or strenuous. Find one that fits you!

Gallegos can be shortened, depending on participants. Finish outing with optional potluck. Email odile@pitot.org and call 505-433-4692 by Sept. 15 for details.

Sunday, Sept. 18: Tour Organ Mountain Desert Peaks National Monument, Aiden Crater. A chance to visit an ancient volcanic crater in the proposed Aiden Lava Flow wilderness area. This is an easy to moderate hike that will require scrambling over volcanic rocks in the insider of this crater. Sturdy footwear is necessary. No beginners please. Bring plenty of water and sunscreen. High profile vehicle also required. Call Howie Dash for meeting time and place. 575-652- 7550 or howiedash@aol.com.

Wednesday, Sept. 21: Bosque By Wheelchair at the Bachechi Open Space. This area, just outside the river's levees, has a forested and wetland area, in addition to a large garden and educational center. We'll explore the garden of the Bernalillo County Open Space program and (as time permits) some of the other features of Bachechi. The purpose is to enjoy the garden and be together but also to explore the true accessibility of the trail (which was constructed to be accessible). We will do our best to ensure ease of use before the outing, but we may discover unexpected challenges the day of the outing. If you need special assistance, please contact us beforehand, but we also will have outings leaders who can help on the inclines if needed. All are welcome. 9 a.m. to noon. Bachechi Open Space. Bring good shoes and wheels, walkers, crutches, canes, etc. water, hat, sunscreen, snack. Please RSVP to Colston Chandler (505-343-9498 or ccent@swcp.com).

Saturday, Sept. 24: Moderate hike to Placer Peak (up to 8 miles/1,700 feet), few opportunities to visit the highest peak in the Ortiz Mountains, coordinated through The Santa Fe Botanical Garden and Santa Fe County. Mark Dunham, 505-795-0199, medunham2@msn.com.

Sunday, Sept. 25: Tour White Sands National Monument, Alkali Flat Trail. We will hike up and down over the dunes

to Alkali Flat and return. White Sands is the largest gypsum sand dune area in the world. Five miles roundtrip. Bring food, sunscreen and lots of water. Park entry fee may apply. Call Howie Dash for meeting time and place. 575-652- 7550 or howiedash@aol.com

Sunday, Sept. 25: Bosquitos Outing: Plants of the Bosque, Plant Walk and Talk with Dara Saville of Albuquerque

Herbalism. We will stop to look at plants closely while learning their names and their stories. Meet at 1 p.m. at Kit Carson Park at the play structure. The Bosquitos are the youth-centered group of the Bosque Action Team. Call Sarita Streng at 505-288-8713 for more information or if you have difficulty finding our group. If you need special assistance, please let us know.

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Hikes: July-September

July 8-11: Strenuous four-day backpack trip in the Weminuche Wilderness in Southern Colorado. This loop trip starts and ends at the 30-mile campground near the Rio Grande Reservoir. We will start along the Weminuche Trail to the Weminuche Pass and then head west along the Skyline Trail to the intersection with the Continental Divide Trail. Our first camp will be near this intersection beneath the Rio Grande Pyramid and “The Window.” Over the next two days we will hike east along the Continental Divide Trail to Squaw Pass. On our final day, we will take the Squaw Creek Trail back to 30-mile campground. This is a high-altitude trip — all three camps will likely be about 12,000 feet and our max elevation will be 12,800-plus feet. Total distance about 40 miles. We will likely stay in a motel or camp the night before and after the trip. One or two dogs OK. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, 505-913-0589.

Saturday, July 9: Moderate hike on the Upper Rio En Medio trail. 7 a.m. start. Hike down the river, steep trail, very rocky, poles suggested. Gorgeous views on the return with waterfalls. 5-6 miles, Marcia Skillman, marciaskillman@hotmail.com, 505-699-3008.

Saturday, July 9: Advanced moderate to strenuous hike to Jicarita Peak. Hike No. 46 from *Day Hikes (7th edition)*. 11 miles roundtrip and 2,450-foot gain. Jicarita is on the wet east side of the Sangres, so bring rain gear. We will see a lot of ferns and mushrooms. We need to start early to avoid the storms, and it takes about 1 1/2 hours to get to the trailhead. Please bring a robust lunch, at least 2 liters of water, and consider having a bivouac kit. We will likely see a herd of mountain sheep that roam in the area. Some can stay behind at the saddle to Serpent Lake if desired, while the rest proceed above timberline. We are going in conjunction with SF Hiking Adventures and SF Hiking Meetup Groups. Mark Dunham, 505-795-0199, medunham2@msn.com

Sunday, July 10: Strenuous Latir wilderness hike or perhaps a Wheeler Peak, since Latir has so many bighorn sheep and elk. Out of courtesy to those animals and those who want pictures, I prefer no dogs. Robert Reifel, 505-690-6109.

Tuesday, July 12, and weekly thereafter: Ascent to Alpine Meadows above Ski Basin. This is intended as a weekly burst of 90 minutes ascending 2,000 feet, with scenic rewards at the top. Some weeks we will just go to Deception Peak, sometimes to Lake Peak, and when time permits we

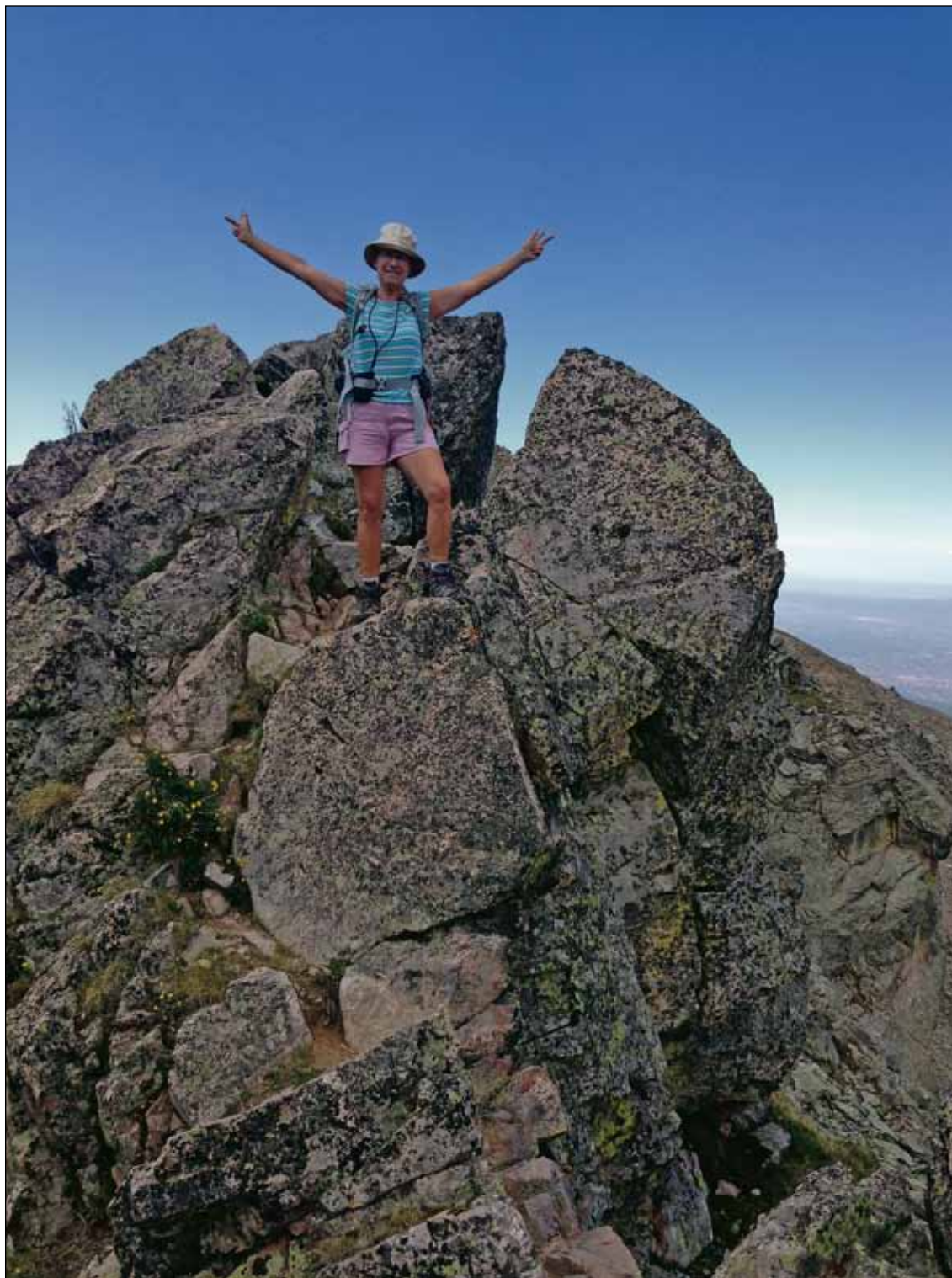


Photo by Mark Dunham

A hiker celebrates on the weekly Alpine Meadows-Ski Basin route. See July 12 listing for details on this every-Tuesday hike.

may descend Ravens Ridge or Puerto Nambé and return via the Winsor Trail. Half-day trip. Most times we will be back in time for a late lunch. Mark Dunham, medunham2@msn.com, (505) 795-0199.

Saturday, July 16: Easy hike early start Borrego Bear Wallow loop — short hike close to town, 4 miles, some steep sections, Marcia Skillman, marciaskillman@hotmail.com, 505-699-3008

Sunday, July 17: Moderate Hermit Peak hike (8 miles, 2,750 feet). My NM favorite, with its dramatic views and park-like top. Let's find the Hermit's cave too. Alan Shapiro, 505-424-9242, nm5s@yahoo.com

Tuesday, July 19: evening/full-moon walk in the Corrales Bosque 7-9:30 p.m. We'll check out the Corps' restoration project at Romero Road to see how much it has grown in, and enjoy the crepuscular light and the (relative) cool of the evening in the Corrales Bosque. We'll walk a bit at night, and, with luck, we'll see, or at least hear, some Western screech owls. Bring a headlamp or flashlight, binoculars, and long sleeves

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 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 with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS.

and pants or repellant for any mosquitoes. RSVP required to Richard, richard.barish@gmail.com or 232-3013.

Saturday, July 23: Strenuous Kit Carson Peak backpack Mark Dunham, 505-795-0199, medunham2@msn.com.

Saturday, July 30: Strenuous hike up South Peak, go up on Embudito trail, reach Osso pass, and then continue up to South Peak. Return along same trail. Strenuous hike, 3,500 feet

elevation. Finish outing with optional potluck. Email odile@pitot.org and call 505-433-4692 by July 28.

Sunday, July 31: Exploratory moderate hike to El Cielo Peak (about 8 miles, 2,200 feet), some off-trail, following the old Harvey trail north of Las Vegas, beautiful alpine meadow. Alan Shapiro, 505-424-9242, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Saturday, Aug. 6: Moderate hike to Nambé lake, early start

up to our closest alpine lake. Marcia Skillman, marciaskillman@hotmail.com, 505-699-3008.

Saturday, Aug. 13: Summer Poetry Walk in the Bosque, 8:30-10:30 a.m. Summer is a good time to see the cottonwoods fully leafed out in all their lushness, but also to note which trees have lost branches due to the ongoing drought. We will hike a route similar to previous hikes, to note changes in vegetation and animal populations, while stopping occasionally to hear poems about summer. Moderate hike, 2 miles, wear a hat, bring water and sunscreen.

Saturday, Aug. 13: Hike to be determined 8:30 -10:30 a.m., location to be announced when you register. Email M.J. Zimmerman at mjzim@hotmail.com to register.

Sunday, Aug. 21: Moderate hike on the Piedra Lisa trail, 1,200 feet elevation. Finish outing with optional potluck. Meet at 10 a.m. Email odile@pitot.org and call (505)-433-4692, by Aug. 19.

Saturday, Aug. 27: Moderate near town, maybe Rio en Medio (6 miles, 1,500 feet), 2-3 dogs OK, Tobin Oruch, (505) 690-6253, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com.

Saturday, Aug. 27: Strenuous and mostly off-trail (possible third-class scrambling) hike to Lake Fork Peak in the **Taos Ski Valley**. About 8 miles and 4,500 feet of elevation gain. Early start. Two or three dogs OK. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, 505-913-0589.

Saturday, Aug. 27: Exploring your Bosque, 8-10 a.m. Colston Chandler will lead a hike that returns to a silvery-minnow project one year after its construction on the east side of the river just south of Paseo del Norte. We will see how well the Bosque has recovered from the construction and the concurrent huge tumbleweed problem. Last year, despite the construction, we saw coyotes and egrets, among other things. Bring: Good walking shoes, water, hat, sunscreen, binoculars if you want to bird, walking stick if you wish. Long sleeves recommended to protect from scratches and in the unlikely event of bugs. RSVP: Colston Chandler (505-343- 9498 or ccent@swcp.com).

Saturday, Sept. 3: Strenuous hike to La Vega with steep “Elevator Shaft” trail return. (12 miles/3,000 feet), 2-3 dogs OK, Tobin Oruch, (505) 690-6253, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com.

Sept. 4: Tour the Organ Mountain Desert Peaks National Monument, Fillmore Canyon. We will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of the National Parks with a series of hikes in the

Continued on Page 15

July/August/September 2016