



To-do list:

- Improve renewable-energy requirement, increase green jobs 
-  • Protect Chaco Canyon, Sandoval County and region from fracking
- Stop cruel trapping on public lands in New Mexico 
-  • Outlaw coyote-killing contests
- Protect our families' drinking water 
-  • Keep electricity rates affordable and develop clean energy


Plan:

- Elect great people to Congress, state Legislature, county commissions and other state and local offices.



- See our endorsement list, Pages 7-9

EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET

 **Rio Grande Chapter**
Sierra Club
1807 Second St., Unit 45
Santa Fe, NM 87505

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More inside:

Albuquerque passes solar initiative

Tax breaks for solar and fossil all met roadblocks in the budget-constrained New Mexico legislative session Jan. 19-Feb. 18. **Page 3**

Environment secretary leaves for oil and gas

Gov. Martinez has named Butch Tongate to replace Ryan Flynn at the Environment Department. **Page 5**

El Paso Electric revokes anti-solar plan

The utility had planned to put solar users in a separate rate class, allowing them to be charged more than other ratepayers. **Page 11**

More: Chapter director's column: **Page 4**. Volunteers monitor dairies: **Page 5**. BLM to go forward with smaller Chaco lease auction: **Page 6**. Northern New Mexico, Water Sentinels: **Pages 12 and 13**. Hikes and other events: **Pages 15 and 16**

Rio Grande Chapter Contacts

Executive Committee
David Coss, chair, dcoss1@yahoo.com
Shane Woolbright, vice chair, 405-323-2569, mesoinc@hotmail.com
Laurence Gibson, secretary, 915-309-5419, lgibson@utep.edu
Susan Martin, 505-988-5206, smartin31@comcast.net
Fred Houdek, Central New Mexico Group representative: fjhoudek@gmail.com, 630-809-4234
Ray Shortridge, treasurer, 505-604-3908, rshortridge@gmail.com
John Buchser, jbuchser@comcast.net, 505-820-0201
Ken Newton, newtonsk@comcast.net, 575-644-8793
Allyson Siwik, (575) 590-7619, allysonsiwik@gmail.com
Eric Patterson, (575) 776-2833, eepatt@gmail.com
Tom Gorman, Northern New Mexico Group representative: 505-438-3932, gormantd@gmail.com
Jody Benson, Pajarito Group representative, (505) 662-4782
Christine Newton, Southern New Mexico Group representative, (575) 644-8682
El Paso Group representative: Open

Offices and Staff
Albuquerque office
2215 Lead Ave SE, Albuquerque, 87106, 505-243-7767
Camilla Feibelman, Rio Grande Chapter director, 505-715-8388 or camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org
Miya King-Flaherty, Chapter public lands fellow, (505) 243-7767, miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org
Southern New Mexico
Dan Lorimier, conservation coordinator (Southern and El Paso Groups), Chapter lobbyist, 575-740-2927, daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org
Northern New Mexico Office
1807 Second Street, Unit 45 Santa Fe, NM 87505 • 505-983-2703
Alex Renirie, methane organizer (NM, CO), 925-989-6957, alex.renirie@sierraclub.org
Mona Blaber, chapter communications coordinator, 505-660-5905, monablaber@gmail.com
Claire McKnight, PAC treasurer,

(646) 864-0209, claire.mcknight@gmail.com
Brintha Nathan, bookkeeper 505-310-0595, brintha2709@yahoo.com
Western New Mexico
Robert Tohe, Our Wild America senior organizing representative, (928) 774-6103, robert.tohe@sierraclub.org
Sierra Club National
85 Second St., 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105, 415-977-5500
Roger Singer, senior field organizing manager, (NM, CO, UT), mobile: 303-884-0064, office: 303-449-5595 x103, roger.singer@sierraclub.org

Local Groups
Central New Mexico Group, 2215 Lead Ave SE, Albuquerque, 87106 Co-chairs: Fred Houdek, fjhoudek@gmail.com, 630-809-4234, and Peter Kelling.
El Paso Group, P.O. Box 9191, El Paso, TX 79995, Chair: Laurence Gibson, lgibson@utep.edu, 915-309-5419.
Northern New Mexico Group, 1807 Second St., Unit 45, Santa Fe, NM 87505, 505-983-2703, Chair: Teresa Seamster, tc.seamster@gmail.com, 505-466-8964.
Pajarito Group, P.O. Box 945, Los Alamos, NM, 87544, Chair: Jody Benson.
Southern New Mexico Group, P.O. Box 735, Mesilla, NM, 88046; Chair: Christine Newton, (575) 644-8682, newtonsk@comcast.net.

Outings
Outings: Odile de la Beaujardiere, odile@pitot.org, 505-433-4692
Central New Mexico: Odile de la Beaujardiere, odile@pitot.org, 505-433-4692
El Paso: John Walton, walton@utep.edu, 915-539-5797
Northern New Mexico: Tobin Oruch, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com, and Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com
Southern New Mexico: Howie Dash, howiedash@aol.com
Inspiring Connections Outdoors: Ted Mertig, 915-852-3011, tcmertig@sbcglobal.net

Action Teams
Bosque Action Team: Richard Barish, richard.barish@gmail.com,

505-232-3013.
Otero Mesa Action Team: Jerry Kurtyka, jerrykurtyka@hotmail.com, 915-526-6297 (El Paso).
Bag-Free Team: Jody Benson, Pajarito Group representative, (505) 662-4782
Organ Mountains Desert Peaks: Christine Newton, newtonsk@comcast.net, 575-644-8682.

Conservation Issues
Conservation: Chair: Ken Hughes, 505-474-0550, b1family@comcast.net
Energy/Climate Change: Chair: Denise Fort, denisefort@msn.com; Verne Loose (natural gas), vlsilver@gmail.com, 505.301.2917; Elliot Stern, willistar4142@gmail.com; Shane Woolbright, mesoinc@hotmail.com, 405-323-2569; Ken Hughes (solar), b1family@comcast.net, 505-474-0550
Water: Chair: John Buchser, 505-820-0201, jbuchser@comcast.net; Allyson Siwik, allysonsiwik@gmail.com, Eric Patterson, Paul Paryski; Ray Shortridge, Kurt Anderson, kurt@nmsu.edu
Dairy: Dan Lorimier, 575-740-2927, daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org
Public Lands Team: Tom Gorman, Teresa Seamster, Mary Katherine Ray, Ken Newton
Wildlife: Chair: Mary Katherine Ray, 575-772-5655, mkrscri@gmail.com
Four Corners: Robert Tohe, 928-774-6103, robert.tohe@sierraclub.org
Methane: Alex Renirie, alex.renirie@sierraclub.org
Mining, Sand & Gravel: Open
Zero Waste: Open

Activism Teams
Communications Team: Chair: Open. Members: Jim Klukkert, Laurence Gibson, David Coss, Benton Howell, John Buchser
Rio Grande Sierran Editorial Board: Laurence Gibson, Ken Hughes, Mary Katherine Ray, Jody Benson, David Coss
Sierran Editor: Mona Blaber, 505-660-5905, monablaber@gmail.com
Web Editor: Ellen Loehman, loehman@msn.com, (505) 328-2954
Elections: John Buchser

Finance: Ray Shortridge, chair, 505-604-3908; Members: Brintha Nathan, Jim Baker, Claire McKnight
Fundraising: John Buchser
Members: David Coss, Jim Baker
Legal: Richard Barish, 505-232-3013, richard.barish@gmail.com
Legislative: Co-chairs: Melinda Smith, Patricia Cardona. Members: John Buchser, Judy Williams, Elliot Stern, Mary Katherine Ray, Jim Klukkert, Melinda Smith, Tom Gorman
Membership: Open
Nominating: Ken Hughes, John Buchser, Allyson Siwik, Christine Newton
Personnel: Chair: John Buchser. Members: David Coss, Laurence Gibson, Ken Hughes, Fred Houdek
Political Team: Susan Martin, 505-988-5206, smartin31@comcast.net
Members: David Coss, Richard Barish, Ken Newton, Jody Benson
Political Compliance Officer: Richard Barish, 505-232-3013, richard.barish@gmail.com
Sierra Student Coalition: Neysa Hardin, nrhardin@yahoo.com

Coalitions/Working Groups
America Votes: Susan Martin
Chaco Coalition: Miya King-Flaherty, Robert Tohe, Teresa Seamster
Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy: Denise Fort
Doña Ana County: Ken Newton
Environmental Alliance of New Mexico: Dan Lorimier
Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte: Eric Patterson
Valles Caldera: Teresa Seamster
Rio Puerco Management Committee: Tom Gorman

National Representatives
Council of Club Leaders Delegate: Susan Martin, 505-988-5206, smartin31@comcast.net
Sierra Club Board of Directors member: Liz Walsh, 915-342-7630
Building Healthy Communities Team Facilitator: Ken Hughes
BLM Subcommittee of the Wildlands Committee: Tom Gorman
Rio Grande Water Fund: Teresa Seamster

Vote on your chapter and group executive committees

Voting in the Chapter election is for Sierra Club members only. Please use this ballot so your member number and appears on the mailing label on the other side. Two-member households can each vote, using both boxes. Each member can vote in the chapterwide Executive Committee election and for his or her local group. Candidate statements for the chapter Executive Committee are on Page 3. El Paso Group ballots and candidate statements will be mailed separately. Mail completed ballot to: 1807 Second St., Unit 45, Santa Fe, NM 87505. Ballots must be postmarked by Dec. 3, 2016. **Electronic ballots will be emailed to members in November if you wish to vote online.**

Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee

- Please vote for three
- ☐ ☐ David Coss
- ☐ ☐ Eric Patterson
- ☐ ☐ Patrick Madden

Pajarito Group Executive Committee (4 open seats)

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

Northern Group Executive Committee (5 open seats)

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

Central Group Executive Committee (3 open seats)

- ☐ ☐ Odile de la Beaujardiere
- ☐ ☐ Julie Wilt
- ☐ ☐ Fred Houdek

Southern Group Executive Committee (4 open seats)

- ☐ ☐ Glenn Landers
- ☐ ☐ Christine Newton
- ☐ ☐ Howie Dash
- ☐ ☐ Mary Katherine Ray



PNM gets (some of) what it wants

By Mona Blaber
Rio Grande Chapter
communications director

On Sept. 28, the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission voted on the contentious PNM rate case.

PNM, the electric utility serving most of New Mexico, had asked for a 15 percent residential rate increase. A PRC hearing examiner in August recommended a 6.6 percent increase instead.

The hearing officer exonerated PNM for failing to justify several multimillion-dollar transactions it wanted consumers to pay for.

The commission's final decision held good news and bad news for ratepayers and the climate.

While PNM gets to make consumers pay for its unjustified coal and nuclear decisions, the commission prevented PNM from imposing significantly higher service fees, and customers won't have to foot the bill for the company's unnecessary San Juan Generating Station expenses.

Key elements of the case:

■ Commissioners didn't allow PNM to saddle customers with a \$53 million bill for unnecessary equipment it installed at San Juan



Commissioners Sandy Jones and Valerie Espinoza voted against the final rate hike. "This is a sad day" for consumers, Espinoza said.



Solar victory!

El Paso Electric revokes its proposal to put solar-rooftop owners in a separate rate class.

See Page 11.

Generating Station. The "balanced draft" equipment was not required by either the Environment Department or the EPA and is of dubious environmental value. If PNM got its way, its shareholders would have earned a rate of return at consumers' expense, and millions would have been added to the cost of retiring San Juan coal plant and transitioning to clean energy.

■ The commission refused PNM's request to raise monthly service fees from \$5 to \$13. These service charges hurt low-income customers the most, because no matter how little electricity they use, they must pay the fees. High fees also punish energy-efficient residents, who see little reward for saving electricity.

And they discourage residential solar by making the return on investment lower (solar users pay the same fees other customers do). The commission did raise the fee to \$7, but that's better than PNM's requested \$13.

■ The commission unfortunately allowed PNM to charge consumers for its ill-advised decisions at Four Corners Power Plant. PNM extended its ownership in the plant and signed a contract to pay for coal from the plant's mine for decades — even if the coal isn't used. PNM didn't get commission approval before it committed us to this dirty energy source for years, and we shouldn't have to pay for executives' poor decision-making. The hearing examiner didn't find that the coal transactions were justified but said the concerns should have been raised in a previous case. However, this was the first rate case since the contracts were signed.

■ The biggest sticking points were PNM's purchase of 64 megawatts of Palo Verde Nuclear Plant and renewal of other leases there, deals it made without commission approval or considering any other resource.

The hearing officer and commission found the transactions to be imprudent and not in ratepayers' best interest. But despite the hearing officer's recommendation to allow the nuclear into rates but deny PNM cost recovery for these transactions, the commission did allow the transaction costs into rates, though at a lower price than PNM was seeking.

More than 700 of you wrote to the commission about these issues, and many of your concerns were addressed. Commissioners Valerie Espinoza and Sandy Jones voted against the final order on the basis of the nuclear cost recovery.

The rate hike goes into effect in October.

Albuquerque passes solar initiative

By Mona Blaber, Chapter
communications director

At the end of September, the Albuquerque City Council unanimously set a goal to get 25 percent of electricity at the City's facilities from solar energy by 2025.

Achieving this goal will help make Albuquerque a leader in solar energy, decrease air and water pollution and save the city money.

The effort was led by our coalition partner Environment New Mexico and generated thousands of calls and emails to city councilors supporting solar energy.

"I was proud to work with Environment New Mexico to move solar energy forward in the city of Albuquerque," said Councilor Pat Davis, co-sponsor of the resolution. "Setting a strong solar goal for the City of Albuquerque will provide numerous benefits, from protecting the city against future electric-rate increases to creating badly needed jobs."

Solar energy is a jobs creator. In New Mexico, there are 102 solar companies that employ nearly 2,000 people, the majority located in Bernalillo County.

The City of Albuquerque currently gets about 3 percent of its electricity from solar energy. Upon reaching the goal set by the City Council, the city could save approximately \$3.6 million each year at current electric rates, with savings likely to increase with ever increasing energy costs.

"We applaud the Albuquerque City Council for setting a strong goal for solar energy," said Sanders Moore, director of Environment New Mexico. "Solar energy protects our environment by decreasing air and water pollution, and improves public health. I am very proud that the Albuquerque City Councilors unanimously voted to embrace solar energy and move our city and state forward."

The measure was supported by partners including 350.org, New Mexico Interfaith Power & Light, New Mexico Solar Energy Association, and Union of Concerned Scientists, among others.

PNM should add renewable energy now

By Shane Woolbright
Northern N.M. Energy Chair

The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club has several members who are participating in PNM's Integrated Resource Planning, or IRP. The IRP is a required effort for PNM to plan for future electric-generation resources with members of the public and stakeholders. The planning effort will continue through next summer.

Nearly all groups involved in the process want PNM to add renewable generation. Groups are pressuring the Legislature to require substantially more renewable energy by 2030. PNM has in its planning process alternative scenarios where renewable energy and energy conserva-

tion would reduce fossil fuel. Meanwhile in its rate case, PNM invested hundreds of millions of dollars in nuclear and coal without planning or public input and with the idea that the PRC would hand it hundreds of millions without question.

Recently, MidAmerican Energy in Iowa, with nearly twice the energy load of PNM, received approval from the Iowa regulation board for \$3.6 billion in wind energy investment that would provide 85% of its 1.7 million consumers' energy in just five years.

An ad hoc committee of Sierra Club volunteers has been meeting on the IRP and has considered scenarios that might be part of a long-range plan.

PNM plans to file another rate case within weeks. And no matter how much

input PNM receives supporting renewable energy, it does not have to meet those consumer and stakeholder desires.

With all of this in mind, the chapter Executive Committee has approved a resolution seeking that PNM include in its next filing to the PRC a request for pre-approval of a package of renewable energy investment now. Not on a planning horizon, not on paper — now.

Our resolution sets a framework to put those green units of energy into the PNM system at limited cost to consumers.

A program that adds 450MW of wind and 100MW of solar power would replace 25% of the energy PNM receives from coal-fired San Juan Generating Station.

To learn more, please contact me at director@meso.org.

We're fired up and ready to go vote

This election, I can hardly wait for early voting to begin October 11. I want to vote for environmental candidates up and down the ballot. I want to vote against ignorance, intolerance and pollution in our state and in our country.

As I wait to vote, I am alarmed that due to tax cuts and a bad economy, New Mexico has run up a \$600 million state deficit. Job creation is nearly non-existent, yet New Mexico has become a hot spot for air pollution, ground water contamination and gross mismanagement of wildlife. After all the tax cuts, deregulation, job cuts, service cuts etc., New Mexico has a \$600 million deficit! What is Governor Martinez's response? She wants to bring back the

death penalty.

This is nonsense. Restoring the death penalty will do nothing to close the \$600 million deficit. After six years, Gov. Susana Martinez and her allies are out of ideas and out of excuses, even if some of them are getting good jobs in the industries they should have been regulating. I can hardly wait to vote.

In this election, the stakes are high. Rational, pro-environment individuals such as those endorsed by your Sierra Club, can get elected if we vote, volunteer and get involved. If we act together, we can make sure the New Mexico House of Representatives becomes a pro-environment body once again. We can make sure our state addresses its problems with sound policy instead of divi-



David Coss
Rio Grande
Chapter Chair

sive social battles. In this election, we know that the idea of "The Wall" is an ugly idea, simultaneously disrespecting cultures, histories and ecosystems of the Southwest we all call home. Sierra Club members have always been instrumental in protecting and improving our beautiful state. Whether working with allies from the 4-Corners area to protect Chaco, protecting desert mountains and the Gila River, or fighting for renewable, clean energy to fuel the economy of New Mexico,

sive social battles.

In this election, we know that the idea of "The Wall" is an ugly idea, simultaneously disrespecting cultures, histories and

Sierra Club members know how important this election is.

Because of our members, the endorsements made by the Rio Grande Chapter in this election will be important throughout our state and region.

I want to thank and congratulate all of the Rio Grande Chapter volunteers and staff who met with candidates in their community, consulted with others and participated in the endorsement process. Individuals from Taos to Las Cruces and from Silver City to Las Vegas worked hard to endorse candidates that would best address their environmental issues. I also want to thank each of our endorsed candidates for being willing to serve.

Take a look at the candidates we have endorsed in our special

election section on Pages 7 through 9 and commit that you, your friends and your family will vote. Please vote for environmentally progressive candidates as soon as you can and then help turn out the vote for these candidates in your community.

Mobilizing our membership to volunteer is the key to the Rio Grande Chapter's winning record for our endorsed candidates. Please contact our political chair, Susan Martin, at smartin31@comcast.net, or Mona Blaber at monablaber@gmail.com to volunteer for the most crucial races across the state.

I can hardly wait to vote. This election is too important to stay home.

Finding time for kids and time for saving them

Our baby boy was born on July 15 at 8 pounds 6 ounces.

I've taken these first few months of Rafael's life to reduce my scale of thinking to his small universe. I spend hours at a time staring at him, watching him breathe at night (and at the



Camilla Feibelman
Chapter director

same time thinking about whether the air he'll breathe will be clean), watching him wiggle as he nurses (and wondering will there be green places where he can play), listening to his sweet noises (and hoping he'll experience quiet and places where he can see the stars), and laughing as he holds his right arm up watching his balled fist for minutes at a time (I think he's reminding us that indeed, yes we can — si se puede).

Each thing he does seems like a small miracle, but even more than miraculous is that he is the result of our great



Rafael is Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman's new baby.

evolutionary inheritance. Millions of years of evolution of the lungs, the eyes, the uterus, of mother's milk — most of which didn't happen in human time.

We are the recipients of the work of all of the species that led to us, that have loaned us their innovations. There's a theory that babies pass through each phase of evolution in utero to birth at the human phase — maybe as a subtle lesson in the origins of our species.

But even as little humans, they come out too early. Their heads would be too

big for birth if they came out when they were developmentally ready, so their first 3 months on earth are like a fourth trimester. These floppy-headed beings need intensive care for a long time. And I'm so very grateful to be part of an organization like the Sierra Club that has allowed me to care for my baby for three months on paid parental leave.

I'm one of the lucky few who work for an organization that allows this. I can't imagine what I'd do if I had to deliver my baby to someone else's arms in his first weeks. This time has allowed me to truly reflect on parenthood, make the foundations for our little family and find new energy for our work to protect this delicate planet.

I've had time for quiet reflection with my baby. I've had time for visits from friends, neighbors and Sierra Club volunteers who've come to welcome Rafael into our community. For the first time in my adult life, I haven't felt rushed! And so rather than rushing to react to each crisis, each spill, each explosion, each thoughtless proposal,

I've been thinking about the bigger picture, about what we need to do collectively to make this planet a place we can responsibly leave this new generation of little people.

As a start, we have to find a way to reach many, many more people, especially families of young children.

As a generation, we can't seem to spare a minute because we are rushing from work to school to some small amount of family time to bed time that with two kids seems to take several hours (though it is lots of fun! Think jumping on the bed, tooth-brushing while singing and snuggles at story time). But what would a world where people can really get involved with acting on climate change with their kids look like? Is it flash actions we can take at the Farmers market? Is it shorter work weeks that make time for kids and activities with them? Is it six-month paid parental leave for everyone? Is it subsidized child care? I don't have the answers, but I do know that our kids and our planet need us, and we need a way to make way for both of them.

Sierran publication information

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Contributions — articles, photos, artwork, poems, letters to the editor, paid advertisements — are welcome. Send to the editor (see Page 2). Submissions by Rio Grande Chapter members will take precedence over others.

Articles are subject to editing. Letters to the editor may be up to 500 words, are also subject to editing and are printed at the discretion of the editorial board.

The contributor's name and email address will be printed as a source of more information, unless the contributor specifies otherwise. Submissions must be received by the 10th of the month prior to publication.

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Contents of the Group pages are the responsibility of the editor for that Group and any policies that are in place from that Group.

If you wish to opt out of the mailed copy of this newsletter and read it online: Contact Mona Blaber at monablaber@gmail.com.

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When you contribute to the Rio Grande Chapter, your entire donation stays here in New Mexico and West Texas to protect our air, land, water and wildlife. You can use the Q-code app on your smartphone to scan our code here, or send your check to:

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

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

To stay updated on issues you read about in *The Sierran*, go to riograndesierraclub.org and subscribe to the chapter e-mail list.

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

Volunteers needed

Northern New Mexico Group Volunteer Coordinator: This important position seeks out, tracks, and monitors volunteers to help out with our many commitments and issues. Pat Carlton, 505-986-1596, carlton505@comcast.net

Tabling Coordinator: Seek out tabling opportunities around Santa Fe and Albuquerque for the Northern Group to distribute literature and sell merchandise, and coordinate tabling volunteers. Contact Teresa Seamster, tc.seamster@gmail.com.

Environment chief heads to Oil and Gas

By Susan Martin
Chapter Executive Committee

In August, New Mexico Environment Secretary Ryan Flynn announced he was stepping down. Soon after he was named New Mexico Oil and Gas Association executive director.

A recent *Santa Fe New Mexican* article about the Martinez administration's favors to Helena Chemical Co. exposes just how submissive Gov. Susana Martinez and Flynn have been to polluting industries and campaign contributors. But advocates who have defended clean-water

safeguards against Flynn's dismantling efforts already knew that.

Almost any new Environment boss would be an improvement, given Flynn's plundering of air and water protections at the behest of polluting industries and his ability to charm those he wants something from, including too many legislators.

For example, remember the time Flynn discarded his own technical team's draft of a rule that was supposed to protect our drinking water from copper-mining contamination? What did he submit instead to the Water Quality Control Commission? A substitute rule

containing every single change requested by copper-mining giant Freeport-McMoRan.

The original draft was developed during a months-long process that included industry representatives, technical experts, community members and environmentalists. The rule Flynn replaced it with expressly allows copper mines to contaminate groundwater — which his own staff told him would violate the Water Quality Act.

Clean-water and community groups appealed, and that case is now in front of the state Supreme Court, which heard oral arguments in September.

Then there's the time Flynn stopped enforcing the Dairy Rule, which is supposed to protect our drinking water from the millions of gallons of untreated waste produced by New Mexico dairies. All that waste was going unregulated because the dairy industry wanted to weaken the rule, and Flynn facilitated their success.

Flynn's parting shot is an attempt to limit public participation in permitting processes (see article below).

Martinez has named long-time Environment Department employee Butch Tongate to replace Flynn. He is considerably more qualified and has

greater knowledge of environmental regulations and safeguards than Flynn. But Tongate chaired the Water Quality Control Commission for the hearings that rubber-stamped that industry-written Copper Rule.

Tongate has an opportunity to at least enforce the weakened safeguards that are still in place and protect current public-input requirements.

There's room for hope but also skepticism that our families' water and air will be less vulnerable under the new Martinez Environment Department than under the old.



A typical New Mexico dairy produces as much waste each day as a small city. A group of Sierra Club volunteers is now monitoring reports from 13 dairies suspected of polluting groundwater beyond state standards.

Water-rule changes may stifle public

By Mona Blaber

The Martinez Environment Department is proposing changes to water-quality regulations that could cause more harm than good to our water.

The Environment Department is proposing rule changes it says will improve the state's compliance with federal water requirements.

But these changes would also allow facilities to permanently skirt water-quality rules and weaken standards on some contaminants.

The department is proposing that variances, which temporarily excuse facilities from complying with groundwater rules, should become permanent.

Variances are supposed to be temporary exceptions to water-quality rules to be reviewed every five years (with public notice and participation) to give facilities time to come into compliance, not a permanent excuse to ignore the rules. And removing time limits removes the public's chance to oppose a variance.

The proposals are ostensibly to bring the state up to federal standards on contaminants. And some changes are worth supporting, such as increases to permit fees that haven't been changed since 2004 and cover only 10% of staff costs. But the department also proposes to weaken standards on some contaminants, such as chromium.

To see the proposal, go to www.env.nm.gov/gwb/. Send comments by Oct. 17 to NMENV.GWQBrulerev@state.nm.us.

Southern New Mexico Group Executive Committee

P.O. Box 735, Mesilla, NM 88046
Ken Newton, newtonk@comcast.net, 575-644-8793
Glenn Landers Pollution, Grasslands Issues, 575/525-0491, glenn.landerson@gmail.com
Cheryll Blevins, Treasurer, Editor Group Page, 575/524-4861, spotblev@earthlink.net
Mary Katherine Ray, Secretary, Wildlife, Membership, 575-772-5655, mkrscrim@gmail.com
Christine Newton, chair, newtonk@comcast.net, 575-644-8682
Howie Dash, Outings chair, howiedash@aol.com, 575-652-7550
Kurt Anderson, kurt@nmsu.edu, 575-646-1032

Volunteers monitoring dairies

By John Buchser
Rio Grande Chapter Water Chair

The Rio Grande Chapter is helping to protect the aquifers of New Mexico by monitoring quarterly reports from 13 dairies we suspect are polluting our groundwater.

Dairies produce large amounts of waste in the process of keeping their milking facilities clean. This waste includes large quantities of manure, which is ultimately applied to fields as fertilizer for crops. The storage of this waste can be a safe process if the waste pits are lined with impermeable (synthetic) liners. However, in the development of recent regulations, there was industry opposition to these liners, due to the claimed cost. As a result, clay liners are now allowed.

The majority of dairies use plastic liners. However, about 15 percent do not. Our coalition consultant, Kathy Martin, with the help of former Environment Department Groundwater Quality Bureau Chief Bill Olsen and chapter conservation coordinator Dan Lorimier, is training chapter volunteers to compare the permit, reports, and visual data from Google Earth to determine where

Take Action

We would be pleased to add more folks to our dairy-monitoring team. If you're interested, please contact Dan Lorimier at daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org, 575-740-2927.

violations exist. Most existing clay liners of the type of clay we have in New Mexico generally don't work, so we fully expect to show that many of these dairies continue to not meet regulations for keeping our water within legal limits of groundwater pollutants.

We must file a request with the Environment Department for each quarterly report for each dairy we are looking at. Training is provided by Kathy to help each volunteer monitor two or so dairies.

We just started this process this summer, and already we are noting quarterly reports that raise questions. One expects that the data from monitoring wells for nitrates, sulfur, and chloride will vary slightly from quarter-to-quarter. If you have ever been in a chemistry class and try measuring something more than once, the

likelihood is that each data point will vary slightly. If your measurement results in all the numbers being the same, especially when separated by 3 months, one suspects that some of those values are incorrect. Of course other impacts can be substantial, especially upgradient dairies other than the facility under consideration. That is why the permit application process includes documentation on things that can have an impact, including both up-gradient and down-gradient monitoring wells.

We believe there is insufficient staffing at the Environment Department to carefully review the current data against past data, and that the priority of reviewing the quarterly reports is usually reserved for dairies renewing their permits (every five years). More than half of New Mexico's dairies have contaminated groundwater in excess of state water-quality standards.

Thus our goal is to work with the department to bolster its capacity to assure New Mexicans that our dairies operate within the law. This extra oversight, we hope, will result in a more closely monitored and well-regulated industry.

Clean water is one of our most valuable resources!

NASA study shows methane sources

By Miya King-Flaherty
Chapter Public Lands
fellow

On Aug. 15, NASA released a report that affirms what we already know about the infamous 2,500-square mile methane cloud that hovers over the Four Corners area.

Throughout oil and gas operations, methane leaks occur from storage tanks, pipelines and well pads, adding to the methane plume and exacerbating climate disruption.

The NASA study identified 250 sources in the San Juan Basin that significantly contribute to the methane cloud. Even more astonishingly, only 10 percent of these sources — also known as “super-emitters” — are responsible for more than half of all methane emissions.

In an effort to document and highlight the severity of methane emissions in the Four Corners, Sierra Club representatives teamed up with an Earthworks-certified thermographer to retrace “super-emitting” areas delineated in the NASA report.

After hours of searching for “super-emitting” sites using a FLIR infrared camera, the crew located one area near a Go Cart racing track in Aztec, N.M. In this area, the crew found three



Miya King-Flaherty

Reporters film an Earthworks-Sierra Club team with an infrared camera at one of the Four Corners sites a NASA report found to be a “super-emitter” of invisible methane.

oil and gas well pads in close proximity, all revealing methane leaks. One well pad had four leaks. Another, less than 100 meters away, had one, while the third pad, less than a mile away, had three leaks. This is a total of eight leaks in a single area that constantly release methane into the air. The following day, representatives from Diné CARE, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Earthworks, the Sierra Club and several media outlets visited a

number of methane-emitting sites to see the problem first hand.

Oil and gas operators are the largest industrial source of methane pollution in the Four Corners area. Methane is a greenhouse gas that is 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period. Reducing methane waste also cuts pollutants like volatile organic compounds such as benzene, toluene, or xylene

that form ground-level ozone or smog when they interact with sunlight. Smog has been linked to a host of health problems including asthma, heart failure and upper-respiratory disease.

Now is the time to adopt common-sense rules that the Bureau of Land Management and the Environmental Protection Agency have proposed to address methane waste from the hundreds of

thousands of existing oil and gas facilities across the country. The BLM and EPA rules are a win-win, generating more revenue for industry as well as helping to curb global warming.

For more information about the NASA study, or to read the report, please visit: www.riograndesierraclub.org/nasa-methane-study/

BLM planning smaller Chaco lease auction

By Miya King-Flaherty
Chapter Public Lands fellow

Despite a recent explosion that destroyed thirty-six storage tanks on July 11 in Nageezi, N.M., the Bureau of Land Management’s Farmington Field Office continues to lease lands and approve drilling permits.

The BLM’s Environmental Assessment reports, which are supposed to thoroughly analyze the impacts of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) before approving leases and drilling permits, constantly cite ‘Findings of No Significant Impact’ to the surrounding communities, land, water or sacred sites.

The explosion occurred at a newly developed WPX site that caused 55 residents to evacuate their homes — some lost their pets and others lost livestock. This site is less than half a mile away from many residences, and within 5 miles of dozens more. Safety continues to be a concern for communities living in the greater Chaco area. Fracked wells are increasingly moving closer to Chaco Culture National Historic Park, and the surrounding communities experience the impacts.

The BLM is moving forward with leasing more parcels of land in the greater Chaco region for oil and gas development. Many of these parcels,



Photo courtesy Carol Davis

At a September BLM community meeting in Counselor, Samuel Sage speaks out against the BLM’s auction of public land in the greater Chaco region to oil and gas developers.

in the Counselor-Ojo Encino-Torreon Tri-Chapter area, include cultural and ceremonial sites.

The nominated parcels all involve Navajo allotment lands with federally owned minerals — also known as a split estate. Although the surface rights are privately owned tribal lands, the federally owned minerals have precedence when oil and gas industries express interest.

This past spring, the BLM proposed leasing 2,122 acres in the greater Chaco area, then removed the nominated

parcels, admitting they lacked sufficient tribal consultation. Now, the BLM is moving forward with their nomination after reducing the acreage from 2,122 to 843.

The Rio Grande Chapter joined a coalition of groups to launch protest comments against the nomination of these parcels. With your help, we generated thousands of comments against the BLM’s “Findings of No Significant Impact” report.

While the BLM is still working on its Resource Management Plan-Amendment, it has yet to do a thorough environmental analysis on the impacts on the environment or surrounding communities of horizontal drilling in the Mancos-Gallup Shale formation. The agency also failed to do a thorough survey of sacred sites. Instead, the BLM is fast-tracking leases and permit applications to drill by completing individual Environmental Assessments. The BLM continues to violate the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

To date, there are more than 200 fracked wells in the greater Chaco area. The BLM has approved an additional 160 more. One of the latest fracking wells is within 1,500 feet of multiple residences, and the approval process for the well lacked an Environmental

Justice analysis.

You can help prevent more fracking: From Oct. 19 to Nov. 17, the BLM will accept protest comments against the lease sale of the 843 acres, followed by a formal 30-day protest period that begins Nov. 18. We plan to join our coalition partners in launching a full-on charge of comments and need your help to make an impact. Personalizing your comments is the most effective way for the BLM to consider them.

Health Assessment update

Groups working to address the impacts of fracking on local communities continue to forge ahead with the Health Impact Report. Though still in its early stages, Counselor outreach representative Kendra Pinto has been able to collect testimonies from impacted community members. Since methane and volatile organic compounds are leaked, vented and flared throughout the oil and gas process, degrading air quality, the next stage will be to collect toxic air emissions in close proximity to resident’s homes.

For information on how you can help, please visit our website: www.riograndesierraclub.org/chaco.

Learn more: Watch a video on fracking in the greater Chaco area and please share with others. www.riograndesierraclub.org/chaco-canyon-precious-frack/.

A note about Sierra Club endorsements

By Susan Martin
Chapter political chair

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

The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter

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

These pages list only endorsed candidates who have opposition in the Nov. 8 general election. The

chapter may add to its list of endorsed candidates after press time.

Our chapter political action committee runs a grassroots, volunteer-based effort to elect environmental champions who will work to prevent climate disruption, protect our wildlife and wild spaces and keep our drinking water clean. We recruit volunteers for key swing races, canvass, inform our

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

Get in on the action! To learn how to volunteer or donate to our winning efforts, please write to Mona Blaber at riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org or Susan Martin at smartin31@comcast.net.

New Mexico Senate

District 10: Dave Simon

Dave Simon, former Director of New Mexico State Parks, has thirty years of experience



working on conservation and environmental issues, including professional and volunteer positions at the local,

state, and national levels.

Simon, a former Rio Grande Chapter director, vows to fight to safeguard New Mexico's water and land, keep public land in public hands, promote renewable energy, protect wildlife, and reform the New Mexico Game Commission.

The stakes for the environment in the race for this open Albuquerque-area seat are sky high. Simon's opponent is, literally, married to the oil and gas industry; her husband is an oil and gas industry lobbyist and is the former chair of the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association.

District 9: John Sapien



Sen. Sapien has been a strong voice in opposing the SandRidge application to drill for oil near Rio

Rancho and for enacting protective ordinances in Sandoval County. He will continue to be an ally on important environmental issues in the Senate.

District 39: Liz Stefanics

Stefanics has been a long-time friend of the conservation community. As a former state senator for District 39 and as a current Santa Fe County Commissioner, Stefanics has been an advocate for the safety and availability of water, the quality of our air, and for the protection of

our most special places.

As a state senator, Stefanics was a member of the Conservation Committee, and in the Legislature she pledges to work to protect our state's natural, traditional and cultural heritage and support land grants as political subdivisions.



Senate Majority Leader Michael Sanchez with voters.

District 29: Michael Sanchez

Senate Majority Leader Michael Sanchez has been an unsung hero for conservation issues.

When an anti-environment majority took over the state House in 2014, passing harmful bills that would have truncated the Renewable Energy Act and removed cities' and counties' jurisdiction to regulate oil and gas operations, Sanchez was instrumental in

defeating those measures.

He has often acted as the last line of defense against dangerous bills that would reward polluting industries at the expense of New Mexicans' health and has consistently championed positive legislation. Sanchez is being targeted by out-of-state PAC money, and his re-election is absolutely critical to the environment.

Dist. 36: Jeff Steinborn

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

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



is apparent when he's speaking up about the importance of renewable energy, common-

sense protections for drinking water and access to public lands.

In this north-central Doña Ana County seat, Steinborn is challenging Sen. Lee Cotter, who has a 0% record on environmental issues.



District 13: Bill O'Neill

Sen. O'Neill has been a champion for the Sierra Club since his first election to the Senate in 2008. He has repeatedly gained our endorsement for his stellar pro-environment voting record.

As a resident of Albuquerque's North Valley, he is concerned about the mayor's plans for the Bosque and has attended several meetings to hear our issues.

Sen. O'Neill has also earned



Conversation Voters New Mexico's designation of Lifetime Champion.

His opponent is Blair Dunn,

who shares the views of his father, state Land Commissioner Aubrey Dunn, on privatizing public lands.

District 15: Daniel Ivey-Soto

Sen. Ivey-Soto earned an 89 percent score on the Conservation Voters New Mexico scorecard for the 2016 legislative session and a 100 percent for the 2015 session.

Ivey-Soto is a former state elections director and recently represented the League of Women Voters in a case that



would make it easier for voters to change the state law that requires school-board elections to be held separately from general elections.

District 18: William Tallman



Tallman managed one of the first cities in Illinois to implement curbside recycling.

He is a former member of the Albuquerque Mayor's Recycling Task Force and is a RoadRunner Foodbank board member.

He supports increasing the Renewable Energy Act standards for renewable energy, and ending trapping and coyote-killing contests.

District 23: Joy Garratt

Garratt, a teacher, is challenging Sander Rue, whose environmental voting record is just 34%.

"I am committed to what is best environmentally for the people of New Mexico not just today but for our descendants 100 years from now," Garratt said. "Our waters, our lands, our wildlife — everything about our natural resources should look better and be cleaner in the future, not polluted and removed from public access."



District 37: Bill Soules

Sen. Soules has been a champion for progressive causes, and especially protection of our families' drinking water, in his first term in this Las Cruces seat.

He has become a respected voice on the important Senate Conservation Committee, contributing considerable knowledge and thoughtfulness.

Soules has a stellar 97%



record of voting to protect our climate, water, wildlife and public lands.

He is also one of the most approachable legislators and carefully listens to his constituents' concerns.

Election 2016: Make history

N.M. House of Representatives



District 1:
Glojean
Todacheene

Todacheene was the first Native woman to serve as San Juan county commissioner. She is running for this Northwest New Mexico seat because “environmental issues, out-of-state migration and a loss of funding from oil and gas industry are big issues in the state. We need to use science to solve problems.”



District 10:
Andres Romero

Romero made environmental policy a central issue in his 2014 campaign. Now as a first-term legislator, he has remained committed to ensuring New Mexicans can enjoy clean air, water and land. He has a stellar voting record and has spoken on the floor many times in favor of pro-environment bills.



District 15:
Ane Romero

Romero is running in a key Albuquerque district needed for a more environmentally friendly Legislature. She believes New Mexico can be a national leader in renewable energy and must invest in renewables to limit climate disruption as well as create jobs and insulate the state budget from booms and crashes of an oil economy.



District 20:
Giovanni
Alexander Haqani

Haqani is passionate about creating a sustainable world, which, he says, always involves considering and being conscientious of the environmental context. He emphasizes that New Mexico is uniquely positioned to foster the growth of the green-energy sector.



District 22: John
Wallace

In Sandoval County, Wallace has been involved in efforts to stop gravel mining and oppose fracking in Rio Rancho and has organized neighborhood cleanups. He also worked with local groups to promote water conservation in Placitas Village. His opponent has a 21% environmental voting record.



District 23:
Daymon Ely

As a Sandoval County commissioner, Ely was instrumental in putting additional air-quality controls in place for Intel. He also worked with Sen. Heinrich on environmental friendly land issues for the Rio Puerco Valley. Most recently, he testified in favor of a moratorium on test drilling in Rio Rancho by Sandridge Energy.



District 24:
Elizabeth
Thomson

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



District 29:
Ronnie Martinez

Martinez is a firefighter who expresses a passion for protecting our world and way of life for his young daughter. His opponent has voted in favor of protecting the environment just 7% of the time, according to Conservation Voters New Mexico.



District 30:
Natalie Figueroa

As a high-school teacher, Figueroa helps students explore issues related to our environment so they understand we have a shared responsibility to make our communities healthier and more sustainable. Figueroa pledges to fight for public policy that supports the protection of our water, air, land and natural resources and creates jobs and opportunities.



District 31:
Bob Scott

Scott told us “I am grateful that I live in New Mexico, a place with so much natural beauty. We need to protect and nurture the environment because it is one of New Mexico’s greatest assets and must be used wisely so that it is available to our children and their children.” Scott is opposing an incumbent with a 29% environmental score.



District 33:
Bill McCamley

Rep. McCamley has proven to be a stalwart defender of environmental safeguards and wildlife in his tenure representing this south-central Las Cruces district. He is one of the few voices of reason on the Wildlife and Agriculture Committee, and his thoughtful arguments on the floor are key to stopping bad bills and advancing good ones.



District 35:
Angelica Rubio

Rubio’s qualifications and knowledge make her an outstanding choice to follow Rep. Jeff Steinborn, who is stepping down to run for Senate, in this north-central Las Cruces district. A native New Mexican, Rubio has a deep understanding and passion for issues relating to environmental justice and environmental racism.



District 36:
Nathan Small

Small is an outdoorsman, conservationist and former Las Cruces City Councilor. Working for New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, Small was instrumental in the designation of the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument in 2014.



District 37:
Joanne Ferrary

Ferrary lost this East Las Cruces seat in 2012 by just eight votes. She has been a longtime community activist and involved in environmental issues in Las Cruces. Her opponent has a lifetime environmental voting record of just 14 percent.



District 38:
Mary Hotvedt

Hotvedt is a longtime resident and community activist in District 38 (Silver City and surrounding areas) and sponsor of the Gila River festival. She supports legislative action to protect our wildlife, increase renewable-energy standards and keep the Gila River free-flowing.



District 39:
Rudy Martinez

Martinez was a House representative with a strong environmental record when he lost a close race for this Doña Ana-Sierra-Grant County seat in 2014. His opponent sponsored a bill in 2015 to remove all protections from cougars in New Mexico.



District 43:
Stephanie
Garcia Richard

Rep. Garcia Richard has been a leading voice for protecting our water supply and investing in renewable energy in her Los Alamos-area district. She has a record of successfully negotiating passage of bills, including one that established



District 47:
Brian Egolf

Egolf, the House minority leader, will become the majority leader if we elect pro-environment lawmakers in November. Egolf has been a smart leader, defending against destructive anti-environment bills and proposing innovative legislation to promote renewables.



District 50:
Matthew
McQueen

In his first full term in this Eldorado-and-south seat, McQueen has become one of the Legislature’s most informed and passionate environmental champions. He is a vital and outspoken ally for our air, water, land and wildlife.

U.S. Congress: Lujan, Lujan Grisham, Soules

For U.S. Congress, the Rio Grande Sierra Club endorses two incumbents who have stood up for the environment and one challenger.

In District 1, Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham has amassed a solid environmental voting record, and she opposes the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which would allow corporations to challenge environmental laws and regulations as expropriations of their profits before unaccountable arbitration panels consisting of corporate trade lawyers.

In District 3 (Northern and eastern New Mexico), Ben R. Luján has been a climate champion since his tenure as a Public Regulation commissioner requiring



Ben Ray Luján

utilities to produce more renewable energy and pass out energy-efficient light bulbs. Luján serves on the Natural Resources Committee and is an outspoken advocate for resource protection.

Luján has an excellent 95 percent record



Michelle Lujan Grisham



Merrie Lee Soules

of pro-environment voting, according to League of Conservation Voters. In District 2 (Southern New Mexico), Merrie Lee Soules is an engineer who has intervened as a citizen in utility cases at the Public Regulation Commission to require utilities to comply with renewable-energy requirements and keep rates fair for consumers.

Soules is challenging one of Congress's worst polluter advocates, Steve Pearce.

Sierra Club presidential endorsement

The Sierra Club has enthusiastically endorsed a presidential candidate, but because of federal campaign and financing restrictions, we cannot list that choice in this chapter newsletter. To check out our presidential endorsement, please see: content. sierraclub.org/voterguide/ to learn more.

Secretary of State: Maggie Toulouse Oliver

We enthusiastically endorse Maggie Toulouse Oliver in the key race for Secretary of State.

The Sierra Club is a coalition partner in the Democracy Initiative, which states:



“Our democracy is built on the idea that every citizen can participate in the electoral process and each ballot counts equally. However, barriers exist that prevent some Americans

from voting, rendering our voices unequal.”

We want to arrive at a democracy in which the voice of the people counts.

In 2013, the Supreme Court ruling in Shelby County vs. Holder struck down key protections of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and opened the door for the same discriminatory voter suppression laws that the Civil Rights Movement protested more than 50 years ago. These increasingly common barriers include restricting the types of identification and complicating the process required to register and obtain a ballot.

Oliver has an excellent record as Bernalillo county clerk of making voting more accessible, and she would bring needed reform and organization to the Secretary of State's office.



Photo courtesy Alicia Edwards

From left: Grant County Commission candidates Alicia Edwards, Marilyn Alcorn and Harry Browne.

Grant County Commission Three for the Gila

By Mona Blaber

In Grant County, voters have a great opportunity to elect a county commission that could swing the commission to a pro-environment — and pro-Gila River — majority.

Alicia Edwards, Marilyn Alcorn and Harry Browne are all committed conservationists who have pledged to preserve Southwestern New Mexico's unique treasures and resources.

Edwards is running in District 3; Alcorn is vying for the District 4 seat; and Browne is running in District 5.

All three candidates oppose the billion-dollar Gila River diversion plan that experts have called infeasible. Instead, these candidates advocate for much more cost-effective alternatives to meet Grant County's future water needs.

Browne is one of the founders of the Aldo Leopold Charter School. He is also the former executive director and a current board member for Gila Resources Information Project, the organization at the forefront of protecting the Gila River and fighting the state Copper Rule (see Page 5), which is a wish list for mining giant Freeport McMoRan and allows contamination of groundwater underneath mines.

Edwards is the founder of the Grant County Volunteer Center and the founding director of the Commons Center for Food Security and Sustainability. She is also the county Healthy Kids-Healthy Communities coordinator.

Alcorn, a Navy veteran and former teacher, is the board president of Silver Adult Care Services, a nonprofit she founded in 2009.

Los Alamos County Council: Peter Sheehey

Pete Sheehey is an incumbent on the Los Alamos County Council and is among six candidates running for three spots on the council.

Sheehey is an outspoken defender of the environment on the council and consistently supports Los Alamos conservation and climate efforts, including the Carbon Neutral 2040 initiative, which is a suite of innovative goals, plans and benchmarks for Los Alamos to be carbon-neutral by 2040.

Sheehey also championed curbside recycling of lawn waste to be mulched. He was a driving force behind the “walkable Los Alamos” initiative that supports downtown development and a more walkable city.

Sheehey publicly supported amenities to get people outdoors. These include the Pajarito Environmental Education Center, the walking paths as and Atomic City Transit.

And Sheehey was an advocate of the campaign to transfer the Valles Caldera Preserve to National Parks ownership, a key local victory for the public.

Sheehey supports the citizen-developed Comprehensive Plan in making decisions. He was formerly a member of the Planning and Zoning Committee and championed publicly supported amenities — including the huge town system of trails, the municipal swimming pool, the golf course and tennis courts and expanding bike trails on upgraded road plans.

And Sheehey walks (or buses) his talk: He takes the local bus whenever he can, including to the Los Alamos Co-op, which is very inconveniently located two miles out of town.



Sandoval County: Alexis Jimenez

This Sandoval County Commission seat is critical because the county is facing the threat of fracking and has no ordinances in place to address the dangers to water, health, cultural values and infrastructure that oil and gas drilling bring.

Alexis Jimenez supports a moratorium on all exploration and drilling while the county draws up and discusses suitable ordinances.

The current draft ordinance, guided by mining school New Mexico Tech,



is woefully inadequate, and in the meantime the county is vulnerable to drilling near Rio Rancho.

The current commission has dragged its feet

on a moratorium, so electing commissioners who will actively put residents' health and safety first is crucial.

What district am I in?

To learn which district you're in for any office, check your registration information at voterview.state.nm.us.

What are the hot races?

Want to know where your help will have the biggest impact? Write to Mona Blaber at monablaber@gmail.com.

Join us Oct. 8, 15, 22, 29 and Nov. 5 on canvasses in the most hotly contested races near you. Email Susan Martin at smartin31@comcast.net or Mona Blaber at monablaber@gmail.com.

Three things you can do to stop trapping

By Denise Fort
Wildlife Team volunteer

The trapping of wildlife is barbaric, a relic of a time when species were extirpated in the West to supply fashion houses across the world. As wildlife populations shrink in New Mexico and the value of wildlife viewing is beginning to be understood, it is long past time for the state to ban trapping. The painful encounters of dogs and other animals in traps is bringing this practice to widespread condemnation.

A constellation of unfortunate policies has taken us to this place. The regulation of hunting is in the hands of state game commissions. New Mexico's Game Commission, as Sierrans know, is appointed by the governor and reflects a narrow range of anti-wildlife positions.

The problem is deeper than this governor; it is that the state does not protect ecological value or wildlife, so the focus is on killing in the guise of management of (and revenues from) "game" species.

A second policy is that of federal deference to these pro-hunting state commissions. Thus, if states fail to protect nongame species from hunting and trapping, federal land managers follow, and wildlife on our federal lands are no better managed than are state and private lands.

If this issue touches you, there are several ways you can make a difference.

U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer has introduced legislation to prohibit certain traps on federal lands (LIFT for Public Safety). Let's get our House members to sign on. All — Reps. Ben Ray Lujan, Michelle Lujan Grisham, and Steve Pearce — have contact forms on their websites.

A coalition of groups, including our Sierra Club chapter, will be back in the Legislature this January with legislation to stop trapping on public lands and to end animal-killing contests. Now is the time to speak to your state legislators and try to line up support from chambers of commerce, newspapers, etc. The economic value of wildlife viewing is becoming evident around the state; why wouldn't we provide more opportunities to New Mexico's visitors and residents?

These issues also highlight the importance of your vote! Check Pages 7-9 for the Sierra Club list of endorsed candidates, all of whom have voiced their opposition to trapping. Who is elected will make the difference on whether these bills can prevail!

Third, we are examining whether the BLM and Forest Service will close an

area of high recreational use to trapping using existing regulatory authority. Santa Fe's Caja del Rio is one such area, where we hike, picnic and enjoy splendid views. Noodles, a border collie mix, was taking her human on a hike up the mesa when she was caught in a leg-hold trap.

This and similar occurrences on other recreational lands is unacceptable; why should those who profit from selling coyote skins to foreign buyers outweigh the interests of everyone else? Speak to those who are managing your national forests and public lands and ask them to use their authority to restrict trapping. You can join the mailing list for the Santa Fe National Forest Plan Revision by writing to santafeforestplan@fs.fed.us

To volunteer for our anti-trapping efforts, write to Mary Katherine Ray at mkrscime@gmail.com.

Ravens, wrens and trees

By Mary Katherine Ray
Chapter Wildlife chair

As you read this issue of the *Sierran*, feelings of being overwhelmed would be understandable.

The challenges to nature are daunting. The climate is changing. There are forces at work trying to sow doubt about the worldwide physical evidence that humans are causing these changes or, if we are, that we need not address them by altering the way we as a species and as individuals operate. Polluting industries, in their PR campaigns of obstruction, are following the model of deception pioneered by tobacco companies denying the health impacts of smoking.

Wildlife, especially carnivores, struggle in a world crowded with humans, where the biomass of one species, our own, exceeds that of all other living wild land vertebrates on earth combined.

Yet in our state there are factions that cannot tolerate the existence of more than a few hundred wolves. The wild places that wild creatures call home are under perpetual threat of exploitation. The latest scheme to persuade people that our nation's public lands should be turned over to individual states to do with as they please is a ploy for industry to gain access to drill, mine, log and otherwise render Nature in all her vibrant glory into nothing more than numbers in quarterly earnings reports printed on a page.

And yet ... there is still so much to celebrate. Nature,



At left: The Bewick's wren, a common year-round resident across New Mexico.

All photos by Mary Katherine Ray



Above: The Wilson's warbler in migration through New Mexico from beyond the Arctic circle to South America.



Left: The Audubon's warbler changes elevation with the seasons.

despite our abuse, is resilient. We have come to the close of another monsoon season when all it takes for the desert to burst in grass green and wildflower color is a little rain. You

can find cause for celebration in all the creatures who still manage to survive and thrive, from beetles to birds, rabbits to coyotes. You can find cause for celebration right in your

backyard with the migration of hummingbirds, the less obvious warblers and year-round resident wrens and flickers.

Take heart. Take time to be out under the sky and under the trees. Listen for the songs. Put down the phone, step away from the computer, turn off the TV. The beauty is still everywhere. On the original 9/11 of 2001, I had to do just that after the incomprehensible horror of those collapsing buildings. I walked out onto the back porch, and two ravens flew just over the trees, cawing joyfully to each other. In their world that morning, there was no crashing, no exploding, no senseless destruction. For a moment, I stepped into that world and the reality that is bigger than we are.

Pay attention, volunteer, donate, vote; do what you can to stand up against the polluters, the exploiters and the abusers, but don't forget the rewards. Smell the balsam-sweet cottonwood trees whose leaves are starting to fall, tingle to hear the hawk scream, walk through a forest or along a stream and lose yourself to the quest for a glimpse of a yellow warbler whose travels will take him to the tropics and back again without burning a single drop of gasoline.

Many have lamented that if we don't fight for wilderness and wild places, we could lose them, and that is true. But an even worse tragedy would be to lose them without ever knowing them at all.

Have you found your wren today?



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



With your help we can protect the wolf

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

Lead the pack and JOIN Sierra Club.

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

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F94Q 1700

Victory! EPE revokes anti-solar plan

By Robert Moss, Eco El Paso board member

El Paso is again “The Sun City” but has an opportunity to be “SolSmart” too.

In a surprising settlement of its rate case in Texas, El Paso Electric in August completely withdrew its proposed fees on the sun.

EPE had in August 2015 proposed a new rate structure that would have caused its residential customers to be separated into two residential rate classes: those with solar and those without. Under that proposal, unwarranted charges would have penalized customers who had made investments in rooftop solar for using clean energy from the sun.

The utility, following recent moves by other monopoly utili-



Eco El Paso volunteers, shown here at a press conference in November, opposed El Paso Electric’s proposal to put solar-rooftop owners in a separate rate class from other customers.

ties, had falsely asserted that the solar customers were not paying their fair share and were shifting costs to other, poorer customers. Fortunately for customers in El Paso, the city’s leaders, the Office of Public

Utility Counsel, Eco El Paso and other intervenors waged an effective legal battle to discourage the unjustly discriminatory rate structure.

Adding to news settling the rate case, EPE announced

it had sold the last remaining coal from its generating portfolio, while highlighting its increasing investment in renewable energy. Provided the company maintains this path, these pronouncements provide EPE an opportunity to further demonstrate leadership in support of sustainable systems.

The City of El Paso also has an opportunity to make the most of the recent gains in support of the environment. On Sept. 26, the federal SolSmart program announced the first 22 communities to receive recognition. SolSmart is a Department of Energy program that acknowledges communities working to make it easier to go solar. Cities are recognized with three designation levels, gold, silver and bronze.

Austin, a gold-level designee, is the only city recognized as a SolSmart Community in Texas and New Mexico. The El Paso community should seek designation as a SolSmart community. This would affirm El Paso, the Sun City, as a leader in a future powered by solar energy. Many jobs in renewable energy are still on the line in El Paso, so acting now to solidify the region’s support for these jobs is a must. Let’s encourage El Paso to demonstrate leadership and become a SolSmart community.

To contribute to the great work Eco El Paso is doing to defend and promote renewable energy in El Paso, please donate at www.ecoelpaso.org/donate/

Coalition renews Big Bend International Park campaign

By Rick LoBello

The El Paso Sierra Club Group and the Greater Big Bend Coalition are petitioning U.S. Rep. Will Hurd, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and President Obama to establish an international park on the Rio Grande.

The proposed park boundaries include Big Bend National Park and protected wildlife areas in the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Coahuila.

A new website, greaterbigbend.org, contains a link to the change.org petition drafted by our coalition and additional information on the international park project. Most visitors to Big Bend National Park — and park enthusiasts nationwide — have no idea that an international park on the Rio Grande was first proposed by Congress in February 1935. On Nov. 24, 1935, environmental officials from Mexico and the United States met in El Paso and signed the first binational agreement to create an international park.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote to Mexican President Manuel Avila Camacho in 1944 expressing his opinion that Big Bend National Park (established in 1944) would remain incomplete until “both sides of the Rio Grande form one great international park.” In 1946, President Harry S. Truman wrote to President Camacho on “behalf of the late President Roosevelt” to continue the international park campaign.

International parks are not unknown to the National Park Service and North America. The US and Canada established the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park in 1932, combining Glacier National Park (Montana) and the Waterton Park (Alberta). While both nations manage their respective parks separately, the guiding principle is that shared ecosystems — divided only by arbitrary political boundaries — should be conserved as a single, unified preserve.

The coalition agreed to the following proposal for the size and scope of the park at a meeting on Sept. 3.

The Greater Big Bend Coalition calls upon the U.S. and Mexico govern-

ments to designate lands currently protected by the National Park Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife and Comision Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas as one giant U.S. Mexico International Park. Both countries would retain their national sovereignty over all lands within the international park area and each land-management agency would continue to manage lands as authorized by each government.

The combined area would be managed using the successful model of cooperation at Waterton Glacier International Park on the U.S.-Canada border with each protected area managed and protected under its respective national legislative frameworks. Guiding principles would be established relating to natural and cultural resource management, visitor use and interpretation, science and research and relations with peoples living in the area, reflecting strong cooperation among the property managers. Management plans and their associated goals and objectives should be periodically reviewed and updated with all stakeholders.

The Boquillas International Crossing between the Big Bend National Park and Boquillas, Coahuila, should be the sole crossing within the national park, and no bridge should be built in Big Bend National Park. International bridges built or reopened in the future, such as La Linda Bridge north of Big Bend National Park, should be considered.

The next step to establish this now 80-year-plus proposal for both countries would be for both countries to draft legislation calling for the creation of the international park or for the presidents of the United States and Mexico to jointly declare the area as an International Park with the support of the land-management agencies involved. Legislation may not be required since the lands that could be included already have protected status. The International designation could be a symbolic gesture made by presidential orders in the U.S. and Mexico.

Each of the eight protected areas proposed to be included as part of

the International Park has a distinctive climate, physiographic setting, mountain-desert interface and significant scenic values with abundant and diverse flora and fauna.

1. Big Bend National Park, Texas, 801,163 acres
2. Maderas del Carmen Protected Area, Coahuila, 520,000 acres
3. Ocampo Natural Protected Area, Coahuila area, 826,000 acres,

4. Cañón de Santa Elena Protected Area, Chihuahua, 511,508 acres
5. Big Bend Ranch State Park, Texas, 311,000 acres
6. Black Gap Wildlife Management Area, Texas 54,000 acres
7. Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River (196-mile portion of Rio Grande)
8. Monumento Río Bravo del Norte in México (300 -portion of Rio Grande).

Pipeline issue hits close to home

By Teresa Seamster
Northern NM Group chair

On Sept. 6, the Northern New Mexico Group's Executive

Committee voted to prepare a letter for the Rio Grande Chapter to show our solidarity with the members of the Standing Rock Sioux in opposing the Dakota Access pipeline.

A similar letter from the New Mexico Congressional Delegation and a statement soon after from the Department of Justice, U.S. Army and Department of Interior show an almost simultaneous and proactive response to the events as the Standing Rock Sioux rally in North Dakota to stop Energy Transfer Company's bulldozing and threatening of ancient burial grounds, croplands and water supply.

Thousands of people have come together across the country in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux. Below are excerpts of the three letters as just a few examples of how people at all levels of the political spectrum, from grassroots to the highest elected office, responded when people's rights were violated, legal protest was attacked, and due process was bypassed.

Letter 1: Rio Grande Chapter to Congressional Delegation

Sept. 8, 2016
The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club has 7,500 members in New Mexico and West Texas and is united in standing with the First Peoples of Standing Rock to demand the immediate stop to the illegal proceedings of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

The 1,100-mile four state pipeline has been allowed to start construction without adequate and required government oversight, and is now threatening the water supplies of millions of residents and is crossing thousands of acres of cropland and important Native Peoples' spiritual, cultural and archaeological sites. Support for the pipeline, according to an August poll of Iowans in the Des Moines Register, has dropped to 38% despite intense media promotion by Dakota Access.

The Army Corps of Engineers granted the Dakota Access pipeline's permits using a controversial fast-tracking process called "Nationwide Permit 12" that allows the Corps to essentially rubber-stamp pipeline projects on private property or Native American lands with little environmental review and no meaningful public input.

The Corps incorrectly applied this fast-track process in conflict with numerous federal laws and agreements. ...



Photo courtesy 350 New Mexico

New Mexicans in Albuquerque and Santa Fe were part of nationwide events Sept. 13 in solidarity with Standing Rock Sioux efforts to protect their water supply from the Dakota pipeline.

For those who have never faced the threat of eminent-domain seizure of their private or tribal land, the process is sanctioned in non-specific wording in state statute and allows continual corporate "landsman" pressure to get private easements. Private landowners have little protection under law except to hire their own counsel and try to negotiate unenforceable land-use agreements with multibillion-dollar corporations.

The costs and risks of pipeline accidents, malfunctions, leaks and damages are the responsibility of the landowner except on the 150-foot easement strip that runs through their land. Tribal and rural communities are unable to provide trained first responders in case of the all too frequent accidents, and local banks respond to the increased risk by cancelling farm and home mortgages, dropping homeowner's insurance and raising loan rates. ...

We are deeply disturbed that private corporation security guards and attack dogs have assaulted peaceful and largely Native American demonstrators. This racial violence evokes the shameful past of aggression against Native Americans. ...

We respectfully urge that our elected officials convey our request that President Barack Obama order an immediate review of the situation in North Dakota and the coercive actions of this pipeline company, and to take the strongest possible steps to prevent further injustice.

Letter 2: Congressional Delegation letter to President Obama

Sept. 8, 2016
Dear Mr. President: We would like to bring to your attention the attached letters and resolutions shared with us by Pueblo of Isleta Governor E. Paul Torres on behalf of the All Pueblo Council of Governors representing 20 pueblos, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan

Nez, and the President of the Shiprock Chapter Duane Chili Yazzie. In particular we call to your attention the resolution from the Shiprock Chapter calling on your administration to intervene in the deplorable recent escalation of violence between private security personnel and Native American protestors over the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

We oppose and condemn unjustified violence against protestors in the strongest possible terms. The aggressive actions undertaken by private contractor security personnel in North Dakota including the use of pepper spray and dogs are alarming, and it is important that the concerns regarding this project are given due consideration and steps are taken to ensure the safety of everyone on site. ...

We request an immediate intervention into this escalating violence and that your administration respond to the growing concerns in tribal communities across New Mexico about the First Amendment rights and abusive treatment of Native American protestors.

Sincerely,
Tom Udall, U.S. Senator
Martin Heinrich, U.S. Senator
Ben Ray Lujan, U.S. Representative
Michelle Lujan Grisham U.S. Representative

Letter 3: Statement from DOI, Justice and Army

Sept. 9, 2016
We appreciate the District Court's opinion on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act. However, important issues raised by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and other tribal nations and their members regarding the Dakota Access pipeline specifically, and pipeline-related decision-making generally, remain. Therefore, the Department of the Army, the Department of

Justice, and the Department of the Interior will take the following steps.

The Army will not authorize constructing the Dakota Access pipeline on Corps land bordering or under Lake Oahe until it can determine whether it will need to reconsider any of its previous decisions regarding the Lake Oahe site under the National Environmental Policy Act or other federal laws. Therefore, construction of the pipeline on Army Corps land bordering or under Lake Oahe will not go forward at this time.

The Army will move expeditiously to make this determination, as everyone involved — including the pipeline company and its workers — deserves a clear and timely resolution. In the interim, we request that the pipeline company voluntarily pause all construction activity within 20 miles east or west of Lake Oahe.

Furthermore, this case has highlighted the need for a serious discussion on whether there should be nationwide reform with respect to considering tribes' views on these types of infrastructure projects. Therefore, this fall, we will invite tribes to formal, government-to-government consultations on two questions: (1) within the existing statutory framework, what should the federal government do to better ensure meaningful tribal input into infrastructure-related reviews and decisions and the protection of tribal lands, resources, and treaty rights; and (2) should new legislation be proposed to Congress to alter that statutory framework and promote those goals.

"Finally, we fully support the rights of all Americans to assemble and speak freely. We urge everyone involved in protest or pipeline activities to adhere to the principles of nonviolence. Of course, anyone who commits violent or destructive acts may face criminal sanctions from federal, tribal, state, or local authorities. The Departments of Justice and the Interior will continue to deploy resources to North Dakota to help state, local, and tribal authorities, and the communities they serve, better communicate, defuse tensions, support peaceful protest, and maintain public safety.

"In recent days, we have seen thousands of demonstrators come together peacefully, with support from scores of sovereign tribal governments, to exercise their First Amendment rights and to voice heartfelt concerns about the environment and historic, sacred sites. It is now incumbent on all of us to develop a path forward that serves the broadest public interest."

Northern New Mexico Group Contacts

Executive Committee

Chair: **Teresa Seamster**, 505-466-8964, tc.seamster@gmail.com
Vice chair: **Tom Gorman**, 505-438-3932, gormantd@gmail.com
Treasurer: **Jim Baker**, 505-473-0457, bakerjim.sw@gmail.com
Patricia Cardona, patricia-cardona24@yahoo.com, 505-515-5141
Alice Cox: 505-780-5122, auntialice@cybermesa.com
Paul Paryski, pparyski@aol.com
Sandrine Gaillard, sandrine.gaillard@gmail.com
Shane Woolbright, 405-323-2569, mesoinc@hotmail.com
Jim Klukkert, 505-577-2483, jimklukkert@yahoo.com

Conservation

Chair: Tom Gorman
Public lands: Tom Gorman, Teresa Seamster
Water: John Buchser, 505-231-6645, jbuchser@comcast.net
Wildlife: Teresa Seamster
Solarize Santa Fe: Sandrine Gaillard, sandrine.gaillard@gmail.com
Energy Team: Shane Woolbright, 505-474-2870, mesoinc@hotmail.com; Elliot Stern, 505-989-9486, stern-wcs@comcast.net
Zero Waste: Open

Other responsibilities

Chapter Representative: Tom Gorman
Membership: Alice Cox
Volunteers: Open
Office: Jerry Knapczyk
Outings co-chairs: Tobin Oruch, 505-820-2844, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com, and Alan Shapiro, 505-424-9242, nm5s@yahoo.com
Phone Support: Bebs Taylor, 983-9129
Political: Susan Martin, 505-988-5206, smartin31@comcast.net
Publicity: Open
Book Sales: Janet Peacock 505-988-8929, sfdahikes@gmail.com.
Sales backup: Ann Anthony, anrascal@gmail.com, 795-7472. Hiking book: Aku Oppenheimer
Book mailings: Gail Bryant, 505-757-6654.
Nominating Committee: Open.

Regional Contacts

Las Vegas: Joann Sprenger, 505-454-0551, gisprenger@cybermesa.com
Farmington: Art Jaquez, 505-360-0176, artjaquez2@gmail.com
Taos: Eric Patterson, 575-776-2833, eepatt@gmail.com

A day with the Taos Water Sentinels

Teresa Seamster, Northern New Mexico Group

There is not much to top spending a day in the late-summer sunshine, wading and checking the waters of some of our northern rivers.

Eric and Nora Patterson are the linchpins of the Taos Water Sentinels. Skilled at all aspects of sampling and monitoring water quality, they keep records on the rivers of Northern New Mexico, train volunteer monitors, team up with Amigos Bravos and Taos High School students to provide vital water measurements for lab analysis and send results to the state Environment Department.

Our state is strapped for funding when it comes to monitoring our many streams and rivers. The Pattersons have secured their reputation with the state with their reliable data collection and analysis and their attention to detailed protocol when sampling and shipping. Part of that protocol is taking “custody” of every sample shipment, noting who took the sample, who received the sample for shipping, and who provided delivery to the lab.

When every step is recorded, the chances of the EPA lab in Alamosa receiving a degraded sample resulting in useless results are almost nil, and the Sentinels can be confident that their results are accurate before going into the state’s river database. When training new monitors, Eric always stresses: “Bad data is worse than no data. Take your time and get it right.”

One site tested primarily for e. Coli is the Rio Hondo, flowing past Taos Ski Valley.

The process of taking water samples is deceptively easy. It takes under 10 minutes to scramble down the bank to the river’s edge, dip the requisite two or three (depending on which tests will be run) labeled sample bottles into the flow and cap them tightly, hand to an assistant, and then use the water meter to measure:

1. Water temperature (can range on the upper Rio Hondo from 6 degrees Celsius to 17 degrees Celsius down on the Rio Grande)
2. pH units (often in the



Top: Taos Water Sentinels Chris Ellis and Nora Patterson point out developments that impact the Rio Hondo waters to Taos County Solid Waste Director Ed Martinez and Enforcement Officer Lorenzo Gutierrez.

Above: Nora and Lorenzo test for dissolved oxygen at confluence of Rio Hondo and Rio Grande.

Right: Nora and Teresa below John Dunn Bridge with the last samples.

- normal range 5.5-7.5)
3. Dissolved oxygen
 4. Electrical Conductivity (microsiemens/cm)
 5. Hardness (ppm)

As the samples are taken, the assistant records the date and time and general description of the site and water conditions. Important factors noted include any amount of precipitation in the past 24 hours (storm greater than 2.5 centimeters to showers less than .85 centimeters), the appearance of the water (clear, cloudy, foamy, etc), water conditions (normal, flooded, high, low, dry), any odors and type of sediment on the river bottom (gravel, sand, mud-silt, algae coating).

Then the monitors clamber back up the bank, call the dogs — there were three who came with us on this day who obligingly stayed out of the test area — and drive on



to the next site.

This monitoring day in late August included visiting five sites. The four on the Rio Hondo started with the Cuchilla Campground then went further upstream to the Taos Ski Village sewage treatment plant effluent pipe, then upstream from the day-care center at the Ski Village, and finally 10 yards upstream from the confluence of the Rio Hondo with the Rio Grande. The final test was done about 5 meters downstream from the John Dunn Bridge on the Rio Grande.

Four hours after starting out at 9:15 a.m., we were finished and back in Valdez. All samples were in the cooler with ice, and Eric was already back with his samples from the Rio Fernando de Taos.

The Taos County officials who came were excited about the tests. Tasked with stream-

side and arroyo cleanups that can see collections of trash of more than 25 tons in one day, both Ed and Lorenzo wanted to know more about what washes into the water, and how much results can tell you.

Nora told them water analysis can detect much more than e. Coli, nitrates, phosphate and ammonia, it can also indicate cocaine usage, estrogen levels and residues from campfires.

The day was an immense education in beautiful weather and surroundings. With a teacher like Nora, who wastes no time on non-essential information but aids understanding with a wealth of demonstration -- all schooling should be like this!

To volunteer for Water Sentinels or learn more about testing water near you, contact Eric Patterson at eepatt@gmail.com.

Volunteer profile: Teresa Seamster

Seamster is chair of the Northern New Mexico Group.

Q: What is your role with Sierra Club?

A. The chair of our group has many responsibilities: running monthly excom meetings, keeping members informed of group activities, submitting comments and writing letters of support on a wide spectrum of city-county-regional issues, attending coalition meetings, arranging volunteer activities and public outreach such as outings, tabling, and presenting at public events such as the recent “Co-Existence with Carnivores” panel. We also have published a hiking book, and I arrange for book shipments from the publisher and work with groups such as Taos Water Sentinels and Dr. Eric Metzler to award proceeds from the book sales to their water-monitoring and pollinator research in the state.



My main work is split between monitoring wildlife in Santa Fe County, speaking at Game Commission meetings on behalf of the State Wildlife Action Plan (due to pass at the end of this year), getting trained to assist with water-monitoring, working with our Santa Fe National Forest and Carson National Forest coalition on forest-plan revisions, working on the Environmental Committee of the Sustainable Santa Fe Commission, and working on a Health Impact Assessment for the Tri-Chapter communities in the Chaco area.

Q: How did you get involved with Sierra Club?

A: Carol Oldham (former chapter organizer) and I met at a PRC meeting in 2008. We started talking after PRC commissioner Ben R. Luján pointed to her in the crowd and told the PNM folks to meet with her and give her more CFL light-bulbs to hand out. I was impressed by the Chapter’s simple program to hand out CFLs and promote energy efficiency at public schools and volunteered to get trained, creating a powerpoint and speaking to fourth-through sixth-graders. After two years I joined the executive committee under Norma McCallan’s urging.

Q: What environmental issue is your biggest passion?

A: Whatever impacts the things I value: wildlife, forests, clean water, Navajo families (I was head of the Communications Department at San Juan College before we moved to Santa Fe from Aztec and many of my students were from the Navajo Nation. I got to know many fami-

Changing protocol for euthanizing bears

By Jody Benson
Pajarito Group chair

On a very hot June 18, during the Valles Caldera Marathon, a mother bear attacked marathoner Karen Williams, who ran too close to one of her cubs. The injuries required Williams to be transported to UNM Hospital for treatment.

Reasonable people would recognize that in this encounter the mama bear was just doing her thing. She was being defensive and protective. Reasonable people understand that the single encounter would not give a predator a taste for human flesh so that she continues to go after humans (a myth that Williams’ research nullifies), nor would the bear be a threat to another human who isn’t threatening her cubs. The mama bear was simply acting as any other good mother would.

As in most bear/human interactions, the state’s action was predictable. Two days after the encounter, NM Game and Fish, aided by a radio collar with a GPS tracking device (the bear had been tagged for a black bear study) tracked down the mama and killed her.

What was not predictable is that Karen Williams, an emergency-room nurse in Los Alamos who spends a lot of time in the wilderness, decided to (1) research rabies and the rules requiring an animal’s unevaluated “euthanasia,” and (2) enlist local state Rep. Stephanie Garcia Richard to draft a bill that rewrites the rule that all wild animals that bite humans must be euthanized.

The current rule directs that almost all wild animals that bite humans must be euthanized and the brain extracted so the DOH can test it for rabies. But Williams, an endurance runner who spends many hours on the trails, wants to create a protocol that uses an evidence-based, scientific approach to determine whether a bear should be euthanized.

Rather than “destroying” all animals, the fate of the offender would be assessed through a decision tree that includes: (1) the species’ potential for rabies (the rule already exempts rabbits and rodents, for example, because they don’t carry rabies — bears can be under a similar exemption), (2) whether the action is predatory or defensive/protective, and (3) whether the attack location is in human or wildlife habitat.

The logic of the new rule can’t be disputed. Bears rarely get rabies. The reaction of this mama bear was provoked only because she thought Williams



Photo by Jim Robertson

State law requires bears to be euthanized if they attack humans. Karen Williams, who was attacked when she ran too close to a mother’s cubs in the Valles Caldera, wants to change that.

threatened her cubs.

Williams’ research shows that since 2012, there have been 85 cases of rabies in New Mexico, primarily in skunks (42) and bats (30), with one coyote, seven foxes, two raccoons, two dogs, and one ringtail. She also cites a 1963 study indicating that bears might be comparatively rabies-resistant: a black bear inoculated with 1,000 MLD50 of the virus showed no signs of disease over a five-month period, while a dog and three arctic foxes that had received 100 MLD50 of the same inoculum died of rabies in 67 to 106 days.

If those data and that decision tree show that this bear — a species that rarely gets rabies, a mamma protecting her babies in a wildlands far from normal human interactions — is not a threat, then why kill her?

That’s the question Williams poses. That’s why she wants to change this archaic rule.

“If it’s a bat,” she said, “then it needs to go. Bats, skunks, foxes ... but if it’s a bear, then look at what happened. If it was just doing its thing, then don’t euthanize it.”

In creating the bill, Garcia Richard doesn’t need to reinvent the wheel. Again, Williams’ research found reasonable rules in other states (including hunter-centric Alaska) that address “predatory versus defensive” behavior.

Garcia Richard has already submitted new language to the Legislative Council Service. They are using Williams’ research to craft the bill.

After the bill is refined, it goes to the chief clerk of the Legislators’ chamber, where it is assigned a number, after which it goes to (usually at least) two legislative committees. Within the committees, expert witnesses present testimony, followed by audience comments. The committees decide whether to advance the bill to the floor.

Once the bill is approved, it goes to the governor, who

may sign a bill, veto it or take no action (a bill that is “no action” can become either a law or a pocket veto, depending on when the bill is sent for the governor’s consideration).

As Sierra Club members, can help move the bill out of committee by attending hearings and offering our comments. Attending committee meetings where the bill is being heard is more important than attending the session on the floor of the House or Senate. Because there’s no public comment on the floor, the Committee hearing is the only place you can have a voice. Please come prepared with a succinct, science-based comment.

The Sierra Club will also send out an online action alert. Watch for the notice, use it to write to your legislator, and forward the link. Finally, Garcia Richard has the draft bill in process. Garcia Richard is a friend of the environment. In this election she faces Sharon Stover, who is well funded. A vote for Stephanie is critical so that we don’t lose the push for a reasonable, data-driven approach to wildlife management. Early voting begins Oct. 11.

Karen Williams’ story

“The bear was just doing her thing,” Williams said.

There had been about 150 runners ahead of her in the Valles Caldera Marathon with no problem, but as she ran over the rise, Williams saw the cub. Maybe two. Then the mama bear saw Williams.

Williams has always had dogs. She knows how to read animals. When the black bear attacked as Williams inadvertently ran too close to the cubs, Williams knew that the bear was as scared as she. “She was huffing. I could tell she was scared, worried about her kids,” Williams said.

“I raised my hands and yelled, ‘No!’ which is what you’re supposed to do with

mountain lions. The bear charged. I thought, ‘crap, that’s not going to work.’ I saw only one cub that had run up a tree. Where the other was, I don’t know. Maybe in the creek.”

“The bear was huffing the whole time except when I screamed. That’s when she stopped huffing and whacked me.” A bear expert whom Williams later talked to said bears don’t like “that kind of noise.” Williams said, “The noise was coming out of my head, so she moved from mauling my arm to biting my face and neck.” It was Williams’s CamelBak water pack that kept the bear from doing more damage.

Williams stayed down. “The bear slapped like a cat playing with a dead animal. She knew I wasn’t dead, but she just wanted to go to her cubs. I didn’t look at them because I knew she was nervous. After about 10 minutes, I heard them walking away.” It was then that, on that hot June day, Williams was finally able to move off the sun-baked trail and into the shade to wait for the next runners to come by and organize a rescue. She was transported by chopper to UNM Hospital.

On June 20, New Mexico Game and Fish tracked down and shot Mama bear. The orphaned cubs wandered for five days before they were chased up a tree and rescued.

Anyone bitten by a wild animal is required to have the series of rabies shots. Williams’ medical team told her to get the series, but Williams knew the bear wasn’t rabid. “It was just doing what it needed to do.”

When she got out of UNM Hospital and found a pharmacy that carried the rabies vaccine as well as the recommended rabies immune globulin, the cost (not reimbursed by her insurance) was around \$1,000.

“The epidemiologist said that the person who got bitten doesn’t get to decide whether the bear gets killed. The person only gets to decide whether to get the rabies treatment,” Williams said. Given that the

potential for dangerous side effects were far greater than the bear having rabies, Williams opted out.

Williams cites costs to cash-strapped New Mexico as another nudge that could help rewrite the current rule. She lists the expenses of: the team to kill the bear; the veterinarian extracting the brain; the DNA testing and other lab expenses; finding/capturing/transporting the cubs; and state payment for treatment if insurance won’t.

Asked if Williams has any “bearmares,” she said, “If it had been a two-legged predator, I would’ve had nightmares. But it was a bear, not a human. No,” she said, “I don’t have bearmares. The only reason I have a hard time sleeping is because I’m trying to get this done.”

What happened to the cubs? After about a week, trackers found the two cubs. The trackers’ dogs chased them up a tree. Hungry and dehydrated, the brother and sister were plucked from about 90 feet up by a boom truck borrowed from an electric company and transported to Kathleen Ramsey’s Wildlife Center near Española.

The sister, Valley Girl, weighed about 12 pounds, and brother Cowboy weighed a scrawny 9; as of August, they were at around 40. The Wildlife Center hopes to release them at the end of October so they can find a place to hibernate for the winter. The expectation is that in spring, after hibernation, the yearlings will have forgotten their lives in proximity to humans. The hope is that in spring, by the time Cowboy and Valley Girl wake up, the New Mexico Legislature and governor will also have woken up to replace a rule based on unexamined generalities and fear with one decided on a science-based decision tree.

To donate to the cubs’ upkeep, please go to www.thewildlifecenter.org. In addition, Los Alamos residents can take excess fruit for the cubs to the Los Alamos Eco Station: 505-662-8163, 3701 E. Jemez Road, Los Alamos.

Pajarito Group Directory

riograndesierraclub.org/pajarito
Executive Committee
Chair/Secretary: Jody Benson, echidanaejb@gmail.com, 505/662-4782
Howard Barnum, hnbarnum@aol.com
Iris Chung, itlchung@hotmail.com
Michael DiRosa, mddbbsm@gmail.com
Nona Girardi, nonamg@aol.com

Committee Chairs
Bag Ban, Treasurer: Mark Jones, jonesmm1@comcast.net, 505-662-9443
Conservation: Michael DiRosa
Global Warming: Charles Keller, alfanso@cybermesa.com, 505-662-7915
Mining: David Torney, dtorney@valornet.com, 575/829-3433
Newsletter Editor, Publicity, Sprawl, Transportation,

Tom Petencin, desert explorer, 1952 – 2016

By Carol Chamberland
Chicago native Tom Petencin already loved the desert when he moved to Albuquerque circa 1992.

He joined the New Mexico Mountain Club, hoping to meet fellow hikers and learn about places to explore. Eventually Tom realized there were a set number of locations this group visited, and he'd seen them all. If he wanted more variety, he'd have to take the lead.

Tom scoured topological maps for wilderness areas within two hours of Albuquerque. When the Internet came along, he scoured that, too. He listed his hikes with the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club and a local organization, Outdoor Adventures for Singles. He soon acquired a following of dedicated hikers who would go wherever he would lead.

Tom was a quiet man who showed



PHoto courtesy Carol Chamberland

As a Rio Grande Chapter hike leader, Tom Petencin acquired a following of dedicated hikers who would go wherever he would lead.

many a hiker the joys of rambling off trail. He favored canyons and mesas where unusual geology was in full

display, but during the heat of summer, he'd brave monsoon storms and head for the mountains and forests.

Year-round, he was leading a group somewhere or other — he became known for his Desert Exploratory outings.

His early hikes were lengthy and often finished after sunset, so the regulars knew to bring a flashlight. A dinner stop on the way home was an added treat, full of noisy camaraderie.

Many of Tom's friends were aware of his heart troubles. He'd need a rest break when his arrhythmia kicked in, but then he'd motor on as if nothing was wrong. As his condition worsened over the years, his hikes became shorter and less frequent. He led his last hike for the Sierra Club in 2013.

Earlier this year Tom suffered a fatal heart attack at his home. He was 63 years old. The Albuquerque hiking community will never be quite the same.

Hikes and Events, continued from Page 16

to Valle de los Posos overlook near Valles Caldera. Six miles, 650 feet elevation gain. Trail passes through forest recovering from the Las Conches fire, a meadow, and a Douglas fir forest to a view into the preserve. Limit 10 hikers. One or two dogs OK. Lisa Bowdey, lisab4628@yahoo.com, (505) 699-2953.

Tuesday, Nov. 8: Alpine Meadows Adventures Above Ski Basin. See October 4 description.

Saturday, Nov. 12: North Truchas Peak via Rio Quemado. Strenuous 12 miles, 3,600-foot gain. Via Rio Quemado to North Truchas Peak. Limit 12 persons. Significant scree and rock scrambling near the top. Some might want to stay down in the inner basin. Mark Dunham (505) 795-0199, medunham2@msn.com.

Sunday, Nov. 13: Easy hike in Eldorado Preserve. Four miles, 800 feet gain. Limit 10, one or two dogs OK. Dag Ryen, (505) 466-4063.

Tuesday, Nov. 15 Alpine Meadows adventuresa Ski Basin. See Oct. 4 description.

Saturday, Nov. 19: Strenuous hike to Sandia Crest, up La Luz and Crest Spur and return via South Crest and Pino trails. About 16 miles and 4,000-foot elevation gain. Early start and car shuttle. Two or three dogs OK. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com (505) 913-0589.

Sunday, Nov. 20: Strenuous hike in the Sandias on Whitewash/Tres Pistoles/Embudo loop. About 10 miles and 3,000 feet of gain. Starts and ends at parking at east end of Menaul in Albuquerque. First two miles are very steep and loose. Great views. Two dogs OK. Tobin Oruch, (505) 690-6253, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com.

Sunday, Nov. 20: moderate hike around the basaltic plug of Cabezon peak (but not to the top of Cabezon plug). Gorgeous views. About 2.4-mile loop starts and ends with fairly steep 650-foot trail. End with optional potluck at Odile's house. Odile de La Beaujardiere, 505-433-4692. odile@pitot.org.

Tuesday, Nov. 22 Alpine Meadows adventures above Ski Basin. See October 4 description. (Last of season).

Thursday-Sunday, Nov. 24-27: Moderate/strenuous hike or snowshoe in Taos, come for one day or more. Dogs OK. Tobin Oruch, (505) 690-6253, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com

Saturday, Nov. 26: Moderate hike (eight miles, 1,100-foot gain) on Rio One Way: Ancho Canyon to Red Dot. Beautiful hike through White Rock Canyon, almost all on-trail. Car shuttle from Red Dot to Ancho Rapids, hike from Ancho to Red Dot. Sign up on Sierra Hiking Meetup for automatic updates. Mark Dunham (505) 795-0199, medunham2@msn.com

Tuesday, Nov. 29: Road biking around Santa Fe (moderate, less than 20 miles). Winter program to get aerobic, in place of the Ski Basin ascents. Series of moderate bike loops around Santa Fe. Not the Tour de France, but abundant hills around Santa Fe. Meet at 9 a.m. Although Sierra Club hiking Meetup has RSVP open, still contact leader. Mark Dunham, medunham2@msn.com, (505) 795-0199.

December
Saturday, Dec. 3: Moderate hike (3.5 miles, 1,200-foot elevation gain) to Black Canyon and beyond. Steep climb in places to high vantage

Get into outings

Our Northern New Mexico Group's weekly outings e-mail, Sierra Trail Mix, provides outings updates plus useful outdoor information such as trail conditions. Send an email to Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS.

point above the Santa Fe watershed. Go in at Black Canyon, then go off-trail. Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Saturday, Dec. 3: Moderate/strenuous (11 miles, 1,700 feet of elevation gain) loop hike in Santa Fe National Forest near Medanales (Window Rock area). Significant off-trail portion. Long, sandy arroyo stretches. Climb unnamed peak in the badlands to enjoy great views of the Chama River Valley. Aku, (505) 577-2594.

Saturday, Dec. 3: Moderate/strenuous hike or snowshoe in Taos. Dogs OK. Tobin Oruch, (505) 690-6253, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com.

Sunday, Dec. 4: Moderate (8-10 miles, 1,500 feet of gain) Rio Grande Canyon Rim exploration hike. A number of trails now exist in the Explore hike/bike trails in Rio Grande del Norte National Monument south of Taos. John Buchser, (505) 231-6645.

Tuesday, Dec. 6: Road biking around Santa Fe (Moderate, 20 miles). See Nov. 29 event for details.

Saturday, Dec. 10: Moderate hike to Otowi Peak and Chile Line Trail, 8 miles and 1,000-foot gain. (Buckman Crossing trails), combining moderate ascent of Otowi Peak with excursion out the Chile Line Trail to the San Ildefonso boundary. RSVP via Sierra Northern Meetup for auto-

matic updates. New hikers must contact leader. Mark Dunham, medunham2@msn.com, 505-795-0199

Saturday, Dec 10: difficult hike in White Mesa area (5.1-mile loop). Meet at 9 a.m. at the Target parking lot at Paseo del Norte and I-25. End with optional potluck at Odile's house. Odile de La Beaujardiere, 505-433-4692. odile@pitot.org.

Saturday, Dec. 10 and/or Sunday Dec 11: Moderate/strenuous hike or snowshoe in Taos, come for one day or both. Dogs OK. Tobin Oruch, (505) 690-6253, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com

Tuesday, Dec. 13: Road biking around Santa Fe (Moderate, 20 miles). See Nov. 29 event for details.

Saturday, Dec. 17: Strenuous snowshoe or hike depending on conditions. Two or three dogs OK. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, (505) 913-0589.

Saturday, Dec. 17 and/or Sunday, Dec. 18: Moderate/strenuous hike or snowshoe in Taos, come for one day or both. Dogs OK. Tobin Oruch, (505) 690-6253, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com

Tuesday, Dec. 20: Road biking around Santa Fe (moderate, 20 miles). See Nov. 29 event for details.

Saturday, Dec. 24 and/or Sunday Dec. 25: Moderate/strenuous hike or snowshoe in Taos, come for one day or both. Dogs OK. Tobin Oruch, (505) 690-6253, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com.

Central N.M. Group report

By Fred Houdek
Central New Mexico Group chair

The Bosque Action Team continues to meet monthly, and our hikes and activities in the Bosque are increasing in attendance.

The city of Albuquerque has begun the public-input process on Phase 3 of the multi-use trail between Campbell Road and Montañito. The city proposed four alternative route alignments for the trail. The alternatives were to be presented and reviewed at a public meeting on July 26. Just days before the meeting, it was rescheduled for Aug. 11. Neither date was announced except on the city's website. Only 78 people attended, including several Bosque Action Team members.

On Sept. 9, the city posted the final trail alignment on its website. To the City's credit, much of the public input and comments from the action team and Sierra Club were incorporated in the final plan.

Volunteer Wednesday
We have volunteers on Wednesdays to do data input, make calls and other projects. If you'd like to join our volunteer office Wednesdays, contact miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org.

Artist of the Month
The Central Group hosted two First Friday art events this summer. Join us every first Friday evening of the month for food, fun, great art and great people!

Central New Mexico Group contacts
Chair: Fred Houdek, fhoudek@gmail.com, 630-809-4234.
Treasurer: David Ther, treasurer, grelbik@gmail.com, 505-867-6283
Secretary: Heather Kline, heather9387@yahoo.com, 505-577-2798
Outings: Odile de La Beaujardiere, outings odile@pitot.org, 505.433.4692
Bosque rep: Peter Kelling, cloudsandwater@juno.com, (505) 604-7735
Political chair: Richard Barish, richard.barish@gmail.com

October-December events



Photo by Aku Oppenheimer

Sierra Club hikers approach Lake Fork Peak on a summer hike.

October

Tuesday, Oct. 4: Ascent to the Alpine Meadows Adventures Above Santa Fe Ski Basin (recurring hike). Weekly burst of 90 minutes ascending 2,000 vertical feet, with variety of scenic rewards at the top. Departure at 8:30 a.m. from De Vargas Mall, meet behind Albertsons (west side). Mark Dunham medunham2@msn.com, (505) 795-0199.

Friday-Monday, Oct. 7-10: **Strenuous four-day backpack in Southern Colorado's South San Juan Wilderness.** About 32-mile loop trip starting and ending at the South Fork TH. The second- and third-night campsites will be above 11,000 feet. One or two dogs OK. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com (505) 913 0589.

Saturday, Oct. 8: (reschedule from Sept. 10): Moderate exploratory Chama River Redwall Canyon off-trail scrambling. 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. Mark Dunham, medunham2@msn.com, 505-795-0199.

Saturday, Oct. 15: Moderate hike to Placer Peak in Ortiz Mountains, up to 8 miles and 1,700-foot gain. Mark Dunham, medunham2@msn.com, 505-795-0199.

Saturday, Oct. 15: Strenuous hike to enjoy late autumn in the Cañon del Rio de las Trampas with a hike to the Trampas Lakes. Length 11-13 miles and 2,500 to 2,700 feet of elevation gain, depending

16 Rio Grande Sierran



Photo by Mark Dunham

Hikers on the north side of Kit Carson peak, viewed from the Willow Lake Basin.

on group and conditions. We will visit all three lakes if we do the longer hike. Aku, (505) 577-2594.

Sunday, Oct. 16: Strenuous hike to Jicarita Peak, a windy, barren top south of Taos. Much of hike will be above tree line. Chances for mountain sheep and elk. Total of 12 miles, 2,800 feet of gain.

Limit 8, one or two dogs OK. Early start from Eldorado. Dag Ryen, (505) 466-4063.

Tuesday, Oct. 19: Alpine Meadows adventures above Ski Basin. See Oct. 4 description.

Saturday, Oct. 22: Easy hike in Bear Canyon in northeast Albuquerque. Optional potluck after outing. (Rescheduled from Sept. 17). Odile de La

About our hikes

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

from a parent or guardian. Ask leader for form. Dogs permitted only if noted in write-up.

Always contact leader before the outing to confirm participation and details.

Please see riograndesierraclub.org/outing 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.

Beaujardiere, odile@pitot.org, 505-433-4692.

Saturday, Oct. 22: Strenuous hike to Lobo Peak, up via the Yerba Canyon trail and down via Italianos Canyon trail. Nine miles and 3,900 feet of elevation gain. Early start. Two or three dogs OK. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, (505) 913-0589.

Saturday, Oct. 22: Creatures of the Night Bosquitos outing for families. Valle del Oro National Refuge. 5:30-8 Hike, stargazing, s'mores, banana boats, storytelling. Meet at the front of the refuge.

Sunday, Oct. 23: Easy, short off-trail hike to La Mesita near Embudo. See interesting example of an a'a lava flow. Very careful crossing of a section of this flow on way up to top of the mesa. Just 1.5

miles, 400 feet elevation, but somewhat tricky, slow climb. Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Tuesday, Oct. 26: Alpine Meadows Adventures Above Ski Basin. See October 4 description.

Sunday, Oct. 30: Strenuous hike in the Glorieta Baldy area. Call for details. Aku, (505) 577-2594.

November

Tuesday, Nov. 1: Alpine Meadows adventures above Ski Basin. See Oct. 4 description.

Saturday, Nov. 5: Easy hike up a steep, shortcut route to the high ridge along the Hyde Park Circle Trail. Two miles, 550-foot elevation gain. Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Sunday, Nov. 6: Easy hike

Continued on Page 15

October/November/December 2016