N.M. proposes anti-science science curriculum

New Mexico’s Public Education Department finally moves to update the science curriculum for public schools, but it wants to remove mentions of climate change and references to the earth’s age, and to add assignments promoting oil and gas. Please see Page 3.

Endorsed candidates advance in Albuquerque

The Rio Grande Chapter endorsed three candidates in Albuquerque’s municipal election. Mayoral candidate Tim Keller and City Council candidate Cynthia Borrego advanced to runoffs, and City Councilor Diane Gibson won outright. See Page 11.

More inside:

Puerto Rico hurricane recovery
Rio Grande Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman is part of a Sierra Club team supporting local hurricane-relief efforts. Page 4

Monumental decisions
Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke’s leaked report advises exposing New Mexico’s newest national monuments to extractive industries. Page 6

Dairy coalition to hold training
Industry watchdog will hold a training in Anthony for those affected by nearby dairy operations. Page 7


Sandoval County considers a measure that fast-tracks approval for all oil and gas drilling — without public notice or input

Right under their noses

These people weren’t allowed to speak at the Sept. 21 Sandoval County Commission meeting because they didn’t fit in the packed meeting room.

Miya King-Flaherty
Vote for Rio Grande Chapter executive committees

Four candidates are running for three open spots on the Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee. Candidate statements are available online at riograndesierraclub.org. Voting in the Chapter election is for Sierra Club members only. Please send this ballot with the member information intact on the label on the reverse side, or vote online. Voting online will be available in November at riograndesierraclub.org. To vote on paper, mail this completed ballot to: Sierra Club Election Committee, 9671 De Vargas Loop NE, Albuquerque NM 87109. Ballots must be postmarked by Nov. 27, 2017. Two-member households can each vote, using both boxes. Please also vote for candidates for the group executive committee where you live.

Note: El Paso Group ballots and candidate statements will be mailed separately.

Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee

There are three positions open. Please do not vote for more than three candidates.

Pajarito Group Executive Committee

-  Howard Barmum
-  Iris Chung
-  Mary Hotvedt
-  Susan Martin

Northern Group Executive Committee

-  Alice Cox
-  Patricia Cardona
-  Jim Klukkert
-  Shane Woolbright

Central Group Executive Committee

-  Ray Shortridge
-  Shane Woolbright
-  Claire McNight
-  Patricia Cardona
-  Jim Klukkert

Southern Group Executive Committee

-  Cheryl Blevins
-  Kurt Anderson
-  Amanda Munro
-  Nate Cote

Executive Committee

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Jody Benson, Pajarito Group representative: echidnaejb@gmail.com, 505-662-4782
Kurt Anderson, Southern New Mexico Group representative, kurt@nmsu.edu
El Paso Group representative: Open

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Legal: Richard Barish, 505-232-3013, richard.barish@gmail.com
Legislative: Co-chairs: Melinda Smith, Patricia Cardona
Membership: Open
Nominating: Ken Hughes, John Buchser, Allyson Siwik
Personnel: Chair: John Buchser.
Members: David Coss, Laurence Gibson, Ken Hughes, Fred Houdek
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Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy: Camilla Feibelman
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Environmental Alliance of New Mexico: Dan Lorimier, Patricia Cardona, Melinda Smith
Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte: Eric Patterson
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Rio Puerco Management Committee: Tom Gorman
Turquoise Trail Regional Alliance: Denise Fort

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Building Healthy Communities Team Facilitator: Ken Hughes
BLM Subcommittee of the Wildlands Committee: Tom Gorman
Rio Grande Water Fund: Teresa Seamster

Banner photo by Robert Reifels
No climate in Science

By Ellen Loehman
New Mexico Science Teachers Association

On Sept. 13, the New Mexico Public Education Department quietly released a draft version of new science standards. For non-educators, standards determine what is taught and what is tested in New Mexico public schools (including charter schools). They have widespread importance—from textbooks and curriculum to standardized testing to teacher evaluation.

The current science standards date from 2003 and were developed by teams of New Mexico teachers and community members, including a few scientists and members of the intelligent-design community. They are not bad, as standards go, but they are outdated and problematic for a variety of reasons.

Since 2013, professional, educational and other organizations have been urging Gov. Susana Martinez and PED to adopt the Next Generation Science Standards. There are many reasons these standards are superior, most importantly that they were developed under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences. They explicitly include the best consensus of scientific understanding, including Earth’s history, evolution and climate change.

In its draft release, the PED made subtle changes to the Next Generation standards—changes that smack of political interference. The PED will not say who developed the altered standards, and they did not give reasons for the changes (and, in fact, they are not required to justify the changes).

As expected in this administration, the changes are within the topics of evolution, Earth’s history and climate change. “Climate change” was renamed “climate fluctuation.” A reference to Earth’s “4.6 billion-year-old history” was changed to “geologic history.” “Minimizing human impact became “managing” impact.

The standards that were added pay particular homage to oil and gas developers. One such example is “Describe the benefits associated with technologies related to the local industries and energy production.” The omission of associated risks is glaring.

Scientific organizations, educational institutions, environmental groups, professional organizations, and even newspapers have been quick to denounce this outrage. You can, too. The Public Education Department is holding a required public hearing from 9 a.m. to noon Monday, Oct. 16 in Santa Fe. This, of course, ensures that neither teachers nor students will be able to participate in the public hearing. You can also submit written comments electronically or by mail until Oct. 16. Send comments to rule.feedback@state.nm.us. Please urge the department to adopt the unedited Next Generation Standards. For more information, please visit nmsta.org.

Chapter Executive Committee candidate statements

Mary Hotvedt
I live in Pinos Altos, on the edge of the Gila. I am both a cultural anthropologist and licensed marriage and family therapist. I teach part time at WNMU and am active in New Mexico politics and several local organizations. I am a member of the American Association for Family Therapy and led a 20-year strategic vision for that organization.

My strong environmental interests are in the interplay of human systems, politics, and water planning.

Susan Martin
As a former Rio Grande Chapter chair and current Political chair, I absolutely believe that the chapter is a positive force against threats to our environment and democracy. Our endorsements have resulted in the election of environmental champions at the local, state, and federal level, and the creation of new activists to sustain this progress.

I request your vote to continue as a member of the Chapter Executive Committee. The Trump and Martinez administrations seek to roll back safeguards. We must redouble our efforts to fight these actions at every level.

Ray Shortridge
I am currently the volunteer treasurer of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter and serve on the Water Committee.

I’m a retired information technology executive and operations project manager.

As a grandfather, I am deeply concerned about the state of the environment which the next generation of my family will be experiencing and believe that the Sierra Club is one of many organizations that, particularly in New Mexico, is making a difference.

Shane Woolbright
I received an MPA from the University of Arkansas, served in city management for seven years before becoming executive for trade associations of electric and natural gas transmission utilities, and was appointed to various industry boards including that of a major electric utility.

On the side, I’m an avid bird-watcher, former president of the Oklahoma City Audubon Society, and writer of editorial opinion.

Kids’ climate program, chapter hits funding goal

By Mike Hopkins
Global Warming Express board

July fundraiser with The Global Warming Express results in 250% expansion of GWE Program!

As you may know, The Global Warming Express (GWE) and the Rio Grande Chapter hosted a joint fundraising event on July 21 at the Hotel Santa Fe. Attended by more than 150 Sierra Club members and GWE supporters, the event helped push fundraising over the $30,000 threshold for the chapter and GWE to continue working together. Through the generosity of the attendees and other donors, the GWE after-school program has expanded from two schools in the 2016-2017 year to seven for the fall 2017 term, including schools in Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Las Cruces.

At the event, former Santa Fe Mayor David Coss and current Mayor Javier Gonzales explained why they support GWE. GWE founder Marina Weber read an excerpt from The Global Warming Express, the newly published book that she co-authored with co-founder Joanna Whyte. GWE Kids Asha and Ruhe spoke about the urgency of dealing with climate change and the need to support programs like GWE.

And GWE Executive Director Genie Stevens recruited seven highly qualified mentors from the Rio Grande Chapter membership to lead the program in this year’s schools. At an anticipated participation of approximately 15 students per school, this year’s GWE program will be reaching more than 100 students — a big step forward for the program.

Our ambitions are much bigger, though. We are looking ahead to further expansion of the GWE program to all of New Mexico. You can help make this a lasting program with the Sierra Club by making a donation that will go specifically to supporting GWE at sc.org/GlobalWarmingExpress.

Take action

Attend the rally and hearing on the proposed science curriculum at 9 a.m. Oct. 16 at the Jerry Apodaca Education Building, 300 Don Gaspar Ave., Santa Fe. To comment, go to riorgrandesierraclub.org/science or nmsta.org.

Climate education
A morale boost in a troubling time

I tly received a needed morale boost when our national Sierra Club sent me a certificate of recognition for five years of membership. As we approach the 55th anniversary of our Rio Grande Chapter, I know many of you have been members of the Sierra Club far longer. Your work and support are more important now than ever. In 1961*, two years before our vision- ary predecessors started the Rio Grande Chapter, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. observed “…the labor-hater and labor-baiter is virtually always a twin-headed creature, spewing anti-Negro epithets from one mouth and anti-labor propaganda from the other mouth.” I think we now realize that the right-wing creature described by Dr. King is running our Congress, our presi- dency and many of our state and local governments. The creature has grown even more heady, including one that seeks to tear up the environmental prog- ress our nation, you and I, have always fought for. Our Sierra Club is now a leading part of the resis- tance.

In Las Cruces, our members stood up with allies to oppose the Trump admin- istration’s threat to our monuments. On the border, we are opposing the wall and all the harm it can do to commu- nities, wildlife and watersheds. In the Four Corners, our members are working with local allies to protect greater Chaco Canyon from rapidly expanding oil and gas facilities. Our members are standing up in Sandia County, demanding land-use regulation and public process that protects the community from the impacts of oil and gas development.

We are standing up with friends and allies in rural communities, demanding worker and community rights as well as protection of critical water supplies by the dairy industry. In Taos, our water team trains teens to monitor local streams for contaminants. In Santa Fe, we are helping to expand the kids after-school program called Global Warming Express that is creating a new generation of educated and activated citizens. In Albuquerque, our volunteers flooded the editorial pages to show public opposition to the awful proposal to remove climate change and evolution from our public schools’ science curriculum.

Finally, the Sierra Club, including our own director Camilla Feibelman, is working to help our friends and fellow Americans in Puerto Rico suffering from not only the effects of the hurricane, but the animus and neglect of our president.

Next year we celebrate 55 years of work and commitment. I just want you to know, it is an honor to serve with you in the resistance.

*MLK speech to AFL-CIO convention, 1961

Stepping into the breach for Puerto Rico

D uring what is an incredibly difficult few weeks for our country, I want to take the opportunity to high- light a ray of hope and some positive work the Sierra Club and our local allies are doing in response to Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.

The scope of the de- vation and disaster in Puerto Rico is all too clear. Entire communi- ties are destroyed, electricity is out, clean, fresh water is scarce, and flooding is devastat- ing.

But, following the example of our colleagues in the Gulf Coast and Florida who raised funds for community groups in response to Harvey and Irma, Sierra Club volunteers and staff have gone to work on the long path toward a just and equita- ble recovery. Thanks to your donations, we’re already seeing results.

As you know, the Sierra Club has an active and productive chapter in Puerto Rico, with a deep network of local partners and a track record of achieving environmental victories and demanding justice for Puerto Ricans.

You might not have known that your Rio Grande Chapter director, Camilla Feibelman, was the founding director of the Puerto Rico chapter. Soon after I started at the Sierra Club, Camilla asked me to visit Puerto Rico and support the chapter’s ultimately successful campaign to protect the Northeast Ecological Corridor.

Today, we are so fortunate to have Camilla leading our team in New Mexico, but she’s working overtime to help our response in her former home of Puerto Rico as well.

She’s been an integral leader in helping the Sierra Club get thousands of solar lanterns for partner organization Casa Pueblo in Puerto Rico to distribute to communities still without power.

We are also sending water filters, as well as thousands of lights with phone chargers from a company in Haiti to both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. If you would like to help, please go to bit.ly/mariarecovery to contribute.

The contributions of Sierra Club members and support- ers to Maria relief and recovery broke the online one-day fund- raising record for this organization. More than 19,000 Sierra Club members have donated over $1.2 million.

In an effort to ensure all of the money raised goes directly to support organizations in Puerto Rico, 100% of the funding will be allocated to support organizations in Puerto Rico working on relief and long-term recovery, with the Sierra Club paying for all administrative and transaction costs.

These funds are being distributed directly to our partner organizations doing first response — distributing lunches, making roof repairs, etc. Other funds will help part- ner environmental groups get back on their feet and develop an integrated, holistic, sustain- able response and rebuild from Hurricane Maria.

While we have been shaken by the devastation in Las Vegas, Houston, Florida and across the Caribbean, it’s important to take note of the positive work you are doing, even and espe- cially in the aftermath of the most challenging circumstances. I could not be prouder of representing the Sierra Club as we come together with unprec- edented strength and unity of purpose in the aftermath of Maria.

Rio Grande Sierran publication information

T he Rio Grande Sierran is published four times a year, in January, April, July and October, by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club as a benefit for members living in New Mexico and West Texas. Rio Grande Chapter offices are at 2235 Lead Ave. SE in Albuquerque. For extra copies, e-mail ti@sierraclub.org.

The opinions expressed in signed articles in the Rio Grande Sierran are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club. Articles may be reprinted for nonprofit purposes, provided that credit is given to the author and the Rio Grande Sierran.

(If you’re interested in helping out, please let us know if you reprint.)

Products and services advertised in the Rio Grande Sierran are not necessarily endorsed by the Sierra Club.

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 chosen to be published are subject to editing. Letters to the editor may be up to 500 words, are also subject to editing and are printed at the discre- tion of the editorial board.

The editor’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 15th of the month prior to publication.

Editorial practices as developed and adopted by the Rio Grande Chapter will be used in production of the Rio Grande Sierran.

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, and tell her you want to be on the opt-out list.

Volunteer opportunities

We’re looking for outings leaders and other volunteers for our new Inspiring Connections Outdoors program that fosters appreciation of the outdoors in children.

Please contact Ray Greenwell at martrn@hofstra.edu if you’re interested in helping out.

Membership questions? Call 415-977-5653 or e-mail member- ship.services@sierradub.org

4 Rio Grande Sierran

October/November/December 2017
By Mary Katherine Ray
Chapter Wildlife chair

A t its August meeting, the New Mexico Game Commission considered the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s new Mexican Wolf Draft Recovery Plan.

The plan was the result of a court order to replace the old recovery plan, which is decades out of date. Despite the plan’s questionable ability to actually recover wolves, both the Farm and Livestock Bureau and the New Mexico Cattlegrowers, staunch wolf detractors, testified at the commission meeting that it is too generous to wolves.

Wolf biologists and conservation organizations (including Sierra Club) also oppose the plan, for the opposite reason: It is woefully inadequate and will not result in wolf recovery. Game Commissioner Robert Ricklefs berated the plan by saying, “If there’s ever any reason to believe that the Endangered Species Act is unenforceable, this is Exhibit One.”

Game Commission Chair Paul Kienzle added, “This problem started December 28, 1973, when Richard Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act, to create and maintain one subpopulation of wolves for resiliency and redundancy in the case of catastrophic loss of the U.S. population. Scientists previously recommended that these subpopulations are needed for this purpose and that there is suitable habitat in the U.S. for two more encompassing law come from members of a commission tasked with protecting wildlife.

The Fish and Wildlife wolf-recovery plan would:

• Require Mexico, a sovereign nation not subject to following the U.S. Endangered Species Act, to create and maintain one subpopulation of wolves for resiliency and redundancy in the case of catastrophic loss of the U.S. population.

Most of the wolf habitat that remains in Mexico is privately held, so the need for private landowners’ cooperation is unenforceable. Moreover, this Mexican subpopulation will be as geographically isolated from the wild wolf population in the U.S. as is the captive population, offering very little chance for recolonization of one from the other, defeating the purpose of having subpopulations in the first place.

The Fish and Wildlife Service’s draft plan for wolf recovery is likely to be disastrous for Mexican wolves. The New Mexico Game Commission approved it despite commenting that it was too kind to wolves.

Game Commission Chair Paul Kienzle said, “This problem started December 28, 1973, when Richard Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act.”

Concede to the states of New Mexico and Arizona the power over the timing, circumstance and location of future wolf releases in each state, releases that are critically and quickly needed to bolster the genetics of wild wolves. These states’ Game Commissions have been hostile to wolf reintroduction. New Mexico especially in the Gov. Martinez era has thwarted such releases by requiring and then denying permits. Yet in order to assure that the wild population has as much needed genetic diversity as the captive one, around 70 wolves will have to be released within the next few years.

Notwithstanding the negative comments about wolves, the commission did vote to support the plan, not because it limits where and how many wolves there can be, or because it gives so much decision-making authority to the commission or because the commission would like to see successful wolf recovery, but because the Fish and Wildlife Service is under court order to produce a plan by the last day of November.

Cynically, as the Commission chair said, “If we do not as a Commission comment on this plan, the way federal law is structured, we are essentially boxes from effectively participating in litigation over this plan.”

In other words, by supporting the plan with all its concessions to wolf detractors, the New Mexico Game Commission is reserving its standing to sign onto lawsuits over whatever small part of the pie is left to wolves.

It remains to be seen if the Fish and Wildlife Service will modify the draft plan for the November deadline. Will any consideration be given to the 30+ wolf biologists and wildlife organizations that commented on the plan’s inadequacy, or to more than 100,000 comments from the public, most of which voiced similar dismay? If your comment is among them, thank you! Will reason or political contrivance prevail?

Check your email for news from our chapter at the end of November.

Wildlife
NM backs weak federal wolf plan

By Cheryl Bell
Pajarito Group Wildlife chair

It’s that time of year when bears are trying to pack on the pounds; spending up to 20 hours a day looking for 20,000 calories to prepare for their winter sleep. Most of us live in an urban-wildland interface so it’s no longer possible for bears to have their own habitat and humans to have ours. We have to take the right steps to reduce human/bear interactions.

Bears are incredibly smart and can smell seven times better than dogs. So do the math, if a bear could spend 20 hours eating one acorn at a time in the forest or just two hours knocking over a few trashcans and sleeping down a hummingbird feeder or two to reach her calorie goal, do you think she’ll choose?

For example, last month I took a drive up to Los Alamos the night before trash pickup. I counted 33 out of 55 houses next to the open space that had left their trash bins unsecured on the street. That is 60% of houses in an area with a great deal of bear activity leaving their trash out for our nocturnal friends to rummage through.

On the bright side, some counties are tackling this issue. In Los Alamos, bear-resistant trash locks are currently available and the county is developing an ordinance requiring trash to be put out the morning of pickup. Grizzly-proof cans will be available next summer for purchase for those who have particularly challenging bear/trash issues.

Also bird feeders never attract just birds. The good news is that people who feed the birds have already developed an appreciation for local wildlife. The bad news is that many continue to feed the birds even after they catch a bear emptying their feeders. Caring for one type of wildlife while creating a problem that does not attract wildlife stewardship make. Save the seed for winter when bears are hibernating and birds actually need it.

As for beehives, chicken coops and compost piles: electriy. Period. Got fruit trees? Pick up fallen fruit on a regular basis. If you have an overwhelming amount, invite friends and neighbors to share in your bounty.

Why not just relocate “problem” bears to that Bear Nirvana in the bountiful wilderness far from our stinky trash and feeders.

First, the wilderness surrounding many of our communities is their home. Second, relocation is rarely successful. A successful relocation depends on the age and gender of the bear, as well as how far away they are taken and their proximity to humans in the new location. An adult female is more likely to try to return to her home territory than a juvenile male with no established territory. The farther a bear is taken, the less likely he is to return but proximity to humans will have an impact if bears are attracted to a new town that offers the same delicious smells.

When bears are relocated, they may be put in the territory of a male bear, who will kill them immediately. Of those that try to return to their home territory, many are killed by cars. New Mexico Game and Fish does not put tracking collars on relocated bears, just ear tags. The outcome for New Mexico bears is usually known if these animals is later killed by car or hunter.

However, research data from other states indicates relocation success is minimal at best.

When Game and Fish is called to deal with nuisance behavior, they will either relocate or euthanize the bear. In autumn when bears are desperate to put on weight, game officers are busy with hunting season and sometimes do not have the time or resources to relocate bears, so they opt for euthanasia. So far this year, New Mexico Game and Fish has killed 58 bears and relocated 19.

When that bear comes over the mountain, and wanders through our towns, smelling for food, if everyone works together to make sure they are not rewarded, we will see a reduction in their food-seeking activities. In addition to eliminating sources of food, please remember to employ some common sense, respect and tolerance when you see a bear walking down your street or sitting in your apple tree. If you’re causing no harm, enjoy the fact that you are lucky enough to live in bear country. 

Preventive action reduces bear encounters
Changes threaten NM monuments

By Mona Blaber
Communications coordinator

On Sept. 18, a leaked report revealed Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke’s recommendations on national monuments, including two that were under review in New Mexico.

The document’s vague recommenda-
tions call for rolling back protections from New Mexico’s Organ Mountains Desert Peaks and Rio Grande del Norte National Monuments by allowing “traditional” uses such as mining.

The leaked report revealed recommen-
dations for shrinking four monuments, showing disregard for more than 2.8 million public comments, 98% of which urged the administration to maintain current and future protections, accord-
ing to a comment analysis by Key-Log Economics.

While Zinke didn’t recommend shrinking either New Mexico monument—a surprise to many because of U.S. Rep. Steve Pearce’s advocacy for down-
sizing Organ Mountains Desert Peaks — the report’s changes could reduce protected areas by opening the sites to fossil-fuel extraction and development.

“This can’t happen, and we need to maintain our monuments. Our national monuments are national treasures, and the administration is violating our trust,” said Rio Grande Chapter Conservation Coordinator Daniel Loomis.

The wide-ranging coalitions came together to defend the monuments when President Trump issued the executive order that prompted Zinke’s review.

“Local communities hosted events the day the news came out to oppose the recommen-
dations,” said Mark Allison of New Mexico Wilderness Alliance.

“While this review never should have been ordered, the fact that the recom-
dendations do not include boundary reductions as anticipated must be seen as a result of the overwhelming public outcry,” said Allison.

Although reported test results indicate only two hormoness at concentrations greater than reporting levels, we cannot state with certainty that water in the Santa Fe River at the sampling point is free from other hormones. For example, the indicated report-
ing level for highly estrogenic 17a-ethinylestradiol (EE2) is 5.0 ng/L, which means that concentrations lower than reporting level could not be detected by the lab used for this analysis.

The potential threat of EE2 in an aquatic environment is reflected in the decision of the European Commission to list it in the Water Framework Directive proposes for EE2 at 0.035 ng/L.

Aspects of hormone contamination:

There are many ways hormones can enter the environment. Until recently, we have been widely believed that hormones enter the environ-
ment mostly through human excretion and the disposal of unused medications into toilets, sink, and landfills.

Adeel et al. (2017) suggest that “the possible release of estrogens to the environ-
ment from livestock is much higher.” It was reported in “the United States and European Union, the annual estrogen discharge by livestock, at $8,000 per year, is more than twice the rate of human discharge (Shrestha et al. 2012).”

EE2 and MeEE2 are synthetic estrogens used in contraceptives, in treatment of various reproductive system disorders and in hormone replacement therapy. They are also referred to as endocrine-active compounds, because of their disruptive effects on endo-
ctrine function. Some stud-
ies have linked EE2 harmful effects on aquatic life at levels as low as 0.1 ng/L.

These negative impacts include feminiza-
tion of male population, fertili-
ity and loss of fish. Clearly, potential impact of hormones and other pharmaceuticals on the environment remains an area of great research.

Contaminants of emerging concern:

Hormones, among other pharmaceuticals and chemical compounds, are often referred to as Contaminants of Emerging Concern. This term is used to encompass unregu-
lated substances that were recently discovered in water sources and can potentially be harmful to ecosystems and human health.

Improved analytical meth-
ods, coupled with persistent environmental awareness may help move CECCs to becoming included in routine monitoring programs.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke didn’t recommend shrinking the boundaries of Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument, above, but he advised opening it to harmful uses such as mining.

U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich called on Zinke to “get his facts straight,” noting that Zinke’s claims of road closures and some grazing permits not renewing permits in Organ Mountains Desert Peaks were not true.

“While this review never should have been ordered, the fact that the recom-
dendations do not include boundary reductions as anticipated must be seen as a result of the overwhelming public outcry,” said Allison.

Call for volunteers

The Northern New Mexico Group needs you to help the current volunteers with distribution of the Sierra Club coffee shops, libraries, etc., in the Santa Fe area.

If you have a few hours to spare once every three months and would like to help, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Pat Carlson at 505-988-1596 or carlton505@comcast.net. Thank you!

We also need volunteers to hold down the fort in the Albuquerque office while staffs are not present during the week. Contact Camilla Feibelman at camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org.

Are you good at cataloguing photos? Social media? We have lots of photos that need to be categorized and shown off on Instagram. Contact Mona Blaber at mona.blaber@gmail.com.

Southern N.M. Group

RO. Box 735, Mesilla, NM 88046
Chair: Howie Dash, Outting-
howiedash@aol.com, 575-652-
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Glenn Landers, 575-525-0491, glenn.landers@gmail.com
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Mary Katherine Ray, Secretary, Wildlife, 575-772-5565, mkscrim@gmail.com
Kurt Anderson, kurt@nmsu.edu, 575-646-1032

A national movement is afoot to resist shrinking of national monuments, including in New Mexico. The leak of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke’s recommendations was going to allow for harmful uses such as mining in protected areas.

The news came out to oppose the recom-
mendations. Strombolian eruptions in the United States and Mexico have been described as some of the largest in the world.

Algorithms are a mathematical tool used in computer programming to solve problems. The algorithms are used to test equations of interest and to determine the best solution available.

Long-term (decades) volcanic eruptions can produce gases that are toxic to humans,

sentinels test Santa Fe River for hormones

By Irina Goldstein, Water Specialist & Teresa Seamster

Sierra Club’s Water Sentinel program is one of several grassroots initiatives that help to supplement federal and state efforts to monitor national surface-water resources.

As part of this initiative, the Sierra Club Northern New Mexico Group conducted water-quality testing for pre-

ence of hormones, PCBs and heavy metals in the Santa Fe River downstream from the City of Santa Fe’s wastewater treatment plant.

The water samples were analyzed for 17 hormones. The results detected presence of two hormones in water samples: 1) Androstenedione is an andro-
genic steroid hormone that regulates sexual characteristics and is used to enhance athletic and sexual performance. 2) Androstenedione and testosterone and is mostly used as a supplement by bodybuilders to boost strength and muscle mass. Some companies use these hormones in pheromone perfumes. Steroid andro-
genics are also administered to humans for medical reasons.

Although reported test results indicate only two hormones at concentrations greater than reporting levels, we cannot state with certainty that water in the Santa Fe River at the sampling point is free from other hormones. For example, the indicated report-
ing level for highly estrogenic 17a-ethinylestradiol (EE2) is 5.0 ng/L, which means that concentrations lower than reporting level could not be detected by the lab used for this analysis.

The potential threat of EE2 in an aquatic environment is reflected in the decision of the European Commission to list it in the Water Framework Directive proposed regulatory standard for EE2 at 0.035 ng/L.

Aspects of hormone contamination:

There are many ways hormones can enter the environment. Until recently, it has been widely believed that hormones enter the environ-
ment mostly through human excretion and the disposal of unused medications into toilets, sink, and landfills.

Adeel et al. (2017) suggest that “the possible release of estrogens to the environ-
ment from livestock is much higher.” It was reported in “the United States and European Union, the annual estrogen discharge by livestock, at $8,000 per year, is more than twice the rate of human discharge (Shrestha et al. 2012).”

EE2 and MeEE2 are synthetic estrogens used in contraceptives, in treatment of various reproductive system disorders and in hormone replacement therapy. They are also referred to as endocrine-active compounds, because of their disruptive effects on endo-
ctrine function. Some stud-
ies have linked EE2 harmful effects on aquatic life at levels as low as 0.1 ng/L. These negative impacts include feminiza-
tion of male population, fertili-
ity and loss of fish. Clearly, potential impact of hormones and other pharmaceuticals on the environment remains an area of great research.

Contaminants of emerging concern:

Hormones, among other pharmaceuticals and chemical compounds, are often referred to as Contaminants of Emerging Concern. This term is used to encompass unregu-
lated substances that were recently discovered in water sources and can potentially be harmful to ecosystems and human health.

Improved analytical meth-
ods, coupled with persistent environmental awareness may help move CECCs to becoming included in routine monitoring programs.

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Dairy group is industry watchdog

By Dan Lorimier
Chapter Conservation Coordinator

The New Mexico Citizens Dairy Coalition has been busy monitoring not only the dairy industry, but its regulators. In addition to the Rio Grande Sierra Club, the dairy coalition includes clean-water and workers-rights organizations as well as animal-advocacy groups and community members living near dairies. It was convened in 2009 to help craft water quality and permitting rules for the dairy industry.

With a comprehensive set of regulations tailored to the dairy industry now in place, the Citizens Dairy Coalition now serves as New Mexico’s dairy-industry watchdog organization. The New Mexico Environment Department is proposing changes to the water-quality regulations that contain the dairy rule. While we agree with some of the proposed changes, especially those changes that bring New Mexico into compliance with federal water-quality standards, there are some changes to the protocols the agency uses to administer the rule that are very troubling and relate directly to the dairies. To strengthen our position and impact on this process, the coalition is holding a training in Anthony, N.M., an epicenter of drinking-water pollution.

On the status of the plan that was put in place several years ago to attempt a groundwater cleanup in the area. We will also examine the proposed changes to the state’s water-quality rule and point out those areas of concern for local residents. Then, in November, the coalition will supply transportation and lodging in Santa Fe for those Southern Doña Ana County residents who want to provide public testimony to the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) at its hearing on the proposed changes. The WQCC is the state panel that rules on whether to adopt the changes to the water-quality rule. They commission is scheduled to consider these changes at a hearing on Nov. 14-16 in Santa Fe.

If you are interested in testifying at the Water Quality Control Commission hearing or if you would like to attend the Anthony training, please contact Dan Lorimier at daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org.

We would also very much appreciate any and all donations to the Coalition’s transportation and lodging fund. To donate, please contact Dan at the above email address.

Lots of water issues on tap in NM

By John Buchser
Chapter Water chair

The Rio Grande Chapter water committee met in Valdés in late August, overlooking Eric and Nora Patterson’s acequia-irrigated garden. Acrequias are the finest example of water-sharing in New Mexico. Examples abound that more “modern” water-management strategies have challenges in abundance.

Here are some of the issues our water team is working on:

San Augustin Plains Ranch Water Grab: The third iteration of a request to transfer huge quantities of water (about half of Albuquerque’s water use) from the San Augustin Plains into the Rio Grande Valley is making its way through the water rights transfer process at the state engineer’s office. The technical hang-up on the first two requests was that there was no clear destination for the water, but that appears to be changing — investors in the Santolina project west of Socorro and Catron counties, whose wells are likely to go dry.

WCS Mixed-Waste (radioactive) Dump at Eunice: Waste Control Systems has applied for a New Mexico groundwater permit near Eunice. The temporary storage at near ground level of mixed waste — which means a hodge-podge of chemicals and radioactive waste — is not very temporary, as no permanent solution exists for these waste products. Uranco already operates a storage facility for used fuel rods at this location, so Waste Control is looking at this far-from-civilization location as a promising solution. But if waste is buried in 10-foot holes with 3-foot berms, it is subject to the contaminants of a big hurricane, a 20-inch rainfal may spread this stuff all over the place, gradually soaking into our aquifer (not to mention creating a big wasteland).

The WIPP project near Carlsbad is looking like a long-term disposal site for mixed industrial waste, despite this not being how it was sold to the public. This is getting more waste-disposal companies to the area. We will be facing another long regulatory process starting in 2018 for another ground-level storage project near WIPP proposed by Holtec: State Groundwater Rules Changes: The first significant change to New Mexico’s groundwater rules is under way. Club volunteers and allied organizations attended Environment Department hearings last year, and the department accommodated some of our concerns before the proposed changes were submitted to the Water Quality Control Commission.

The proposed changes set out allowed limits of pollutants in our groundwater. Many are not being changed, but for some pollutants the limits are being weakened, and some harmful pollutants regulated by EPA and California have been left off the list altogether. The Environment Department also proposes to enact standards that could expose 10 times as many people to cancer risk than the EPA and some other states do.

Another change would allow lifetime variances from water quality regulations that would allow industry to pollute for the life of a facility, rather than review variances every five years in a public process, as is currently required. Other changes would allow “permits” to permit change requirements for reporting, sampling, monitoring and other important aspects of regulations.

Our thanks to Amigos Bravos, New Mexico Environmental Law Center and the Gila Resources Information Project for providing background on these changes. Technical written testimony from regulated industries and environmental groups can be viewed at www.env.nm.gov. You will have an opportunity to speak at the Water Quality Control Commission’s hearing on the proposal Nov. 14, 15 and 16 (see dairy story above for details). Water Sentinels: Eric Patterson is continuing his excellent work educating young folks about how to test for water quality. He has extended his testing to Santa Fe, working with the Teresa Seaman and the Santa Fe Girls School (see story, Page 6), where samples were examined for personal-care products, pharmaceuticals and endocrine disruptors — rather expensive testing ($1,200/sample). To donate to the Rio Grande Chapter’s efforts, please go to riograndesierraclub.org/donate.

Thanks to Amigos Bravos, where Shannon Romeling has been working to identify the high E. coli levels on the Rio Fernando in the Taos area (cows, leaky septic tanks, but where?). We need your help in identifying residents in the Roswell area, who could expand their interest in science by extending the baseline data that Eric and Ray Shorthand obtained this year.

Contact Eric Patterson at epatt@gmail.com to volunteer or find out how you can help.
BLM ready to auction more of Chaco

By Miya King-Flahery
Chapter Public Lands Fellow

The lands surrounding Chaco Culture National Historical Park encompass an intricate network of ancient roads, great houses, and kivas that spread across the Greater Chaco landscape. These lands have profound meaning to modern-day tribes and are home to Navajo communities that are increasingly inured with fracking wells. Nearly 92% of public lands in Greater Chaco are already leased to oil and gas. Now the government wants to destroy 4,500 more acres.

In August, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Farmington Field Office notified Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye that it intends to auction off 25 more parcels in Greater Chaco for fracking. These parcels are unenviably close to the 10-mile buffer that protects Chaco Culture National Park, a World Heritage Site.

Drone footage taken by River Healers on fractracker.org shows how close Lybrook Elementary School is to five fracking well heads. The River Healers have sent documentary footage to the Bisti Badlands and Chaco, to the Anasazi and is home of countless sacred sites that date back to the great houses, and kivas that spread across the Greater Chaco region. For more information and actions, please visit riograndesierrclub.org/chaco.

Health Impact Assessment
The chapter is part of the Councilor Health Impact Assessment Committee, which is now applying for permission from the Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board to administer a self-evaluation health survey to community residents in Greater Chaco.

We have partnered with the Environmental Health Project to develop the survey. Data from the survey will be incorporated into an interactive web-based map that enables the public, researchers and health professionals to look at compelling evidence related to air quality and health.

Other coalition efforts are focusing on solarizing the Chapter Houses of the Tri-Chapter Alliance—Counselor, Torreon/Starlake, and Ojo Encino Chapter. This clean-energy initiative comes at a time when last month, Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye issued an executive order that promotes energy security while safeguarding the health of the Navajo people.

Unearthed debuts in November
Unearthed is an educational initiative designed to bridge the gap between ideological extremes, linking climate, economy and health empowering viewers to think critically when solving environmental issues. To date, we’ve interviewed 50 more people across New Mexico and the West. The initiative will launch this November, releasing monthly online videos and conducting free public webinars. The webinars and videos aim to bring together disparate views to promote dialogue and deeper understanding of the issues surrounding oil and gas extraction in New Mexico while working toward actionable, community-driven solutions. We believe it is critical that all parties have a voice in shaping the policies and priorities that will affect the future of our public health, environment, education, and economy.

Join the conversation at unearthednm.org.

Donate; it's easy!
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 donate to riograndesierrclub.org/donate, or send your check to: Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter 1807 Second Street, Unit 45 Santa Fe, NM 87505.

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

To stay updated on issues you read about in The Sierran, go to riograndesierrclub.org and subscribe to the chapter e-mail list. If you’re not a member but like what you see, join now for only $15!-riograndesierrclub.org/join or fill out the form on Page 7.
Oil and gas pollution

Climate-saving rules need you, again

By Camilla Feibelman
Chapter director

I t wasn’t so effective the first five times you commented on EPA and BLM methane safeguards, I wouldn’t ask you to do it again. And I definitely wouldn’t ask you if it weren’t so very important. Methane that is leaked, vented or flared from oil and gas operations is a potent global-warming gas and is accompanied by compounds that are extremely dangerous to our health.

This happened, though, on the very same day in October that the BLM initiated a formal administrative process to delay the rule for 18 months. The EPA had already done something similar, and we are waiting for them to formalize a two-year stay of that rule.

What’s with all the stays? The agencies stalled with short-term stays (found illegal) while they worked on the formal process for longer-term stays. So here we go again. Even though the Senate was due to permanently revoke the BLM safeguards failed in May — one of the first legislative victories over the Trump administration — and even though the courts have said that the rules are legitimate, the agencies are plowing ahead, doing the bidding of the oil and gas industry and allowing companies to waste a natural resource that belongs to all of us.

Here’s where your latest action comes in. The BLM is taking comments on its proposed 18-month stay of its methane rule. The agency is not holding a single public hearing, even though five were held in the original rulemaking process, and is allowing the public only 30 days to submit comments. The deadline is Nov. 6. Go to rpd.mc2industrial.org to submit your comments.

Finally, to understand how serious the impact is for communities and especially kids, please check out the Oil and Gas Threat Map, which not only shows every well in our state, but schools within a half-mile radius of these operations. In New Mexico, that includes 52,009 students going to 99 schools & day cares, 138,399 residents, and 12 medical facilities in San Juan County alone 98,727 people, 28,161 of whom are school-aged children. To see it, go to oilandgasthreatmap.com.

Will Sandoval choose oil and gas over people?

By Miya King-Flaherty
Chapter Public-Lands Fellow

O n Sept. 21, the Sandoval County Commission voted 4-1 to consider an oil and gas ordinance that would shut out public input and endanger drinking water. But there’s still time to stop it.

Planning and Zoning Commissioner Dan Stoddard’s ordinance would give one county staffer sole authority to approve or deny drilling applications — with no public notice or input, no hearings, and no commission vote.

All an oil or gas company has to do is to fill out an application. The staff is only required to make sure it is complete — then within 10 days the department director must grant a permit.

This means a well could be drilled anywhere in the county that is zoned for it, and the public or property owner would not be notified or have any recourse to dispute it.

The ordinance also wouldn’t require baseline groundwater testing or post-drilling monitoring. That puts the Albuquerque and Rio Rancho aquifers, used by Sandoval County, Rio Rancho and Albuquerque, at risk of contamination from chemicals used in drilling, fracking and production.

The commission’s vote was to post the ordinance for consideration, and it is scheduled for a second publish-and-post vote at the Oct. 19 commission meeting. The commission may make changes to the ordinance. If that occurs, a final vote can come as early as November.

Representatives of the oil and gas industry were given reserved seating at the Sept. 21 meeting, but more than 200 residents showed up to oppose the Stoddard ordinance.

When the room filled, about 75 people were shuttled to an overflow room and not allowed to sign up to speak. Still, comments opposing the ordinance dwarfed the few oil and gas and non-county residents supporting it.

Sandoval has claimed the state already protects groundwater at drill sites. That is not true. The state neither requires monitoring wells nor does monitoring itself. In fact, while oil and gas companies have been cited for thousands of violations since 2010, the state Oil Conservation Division has not levied a single fine. The Stoddard ordinance requires only a $300 fine for a violation. Counties can and must go further than the state to ensure that oil and gas operators are acting responsibly and not endangering Sandoval families’ drinking water and health.

At a Planning and Zoning Commission meeting earlier in September, Sandoval resident Mary Feldum presented the “Citizens Ordinance,” which lays out strong, common-sense protections, based on proven components from other successful ordinances, as well as elements from various Sandoval County drafts.

“Hundreds of residents have attended county meetings asking for strong safeguards against oil and gas damages. We have even presented the Citizens’ Ordinance as a responsible alternative,” Sandoval County resident Randy Erickson said.

“Somehow the commissioners seem to listen to the few, not the many,” he said.

“If the Stoddard ordinance is passed, it will mean multiple SandRidges — and you remember SandRidge — except we won’t have the chance to object,” Erickson said.

Please attend the Oct. 19 meeting and write to your commissioners to tell them to reject the Stoddard ordinance and adopt the Citizens Ordinance. Write to miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org for more information.

“I hope county commissioners listen to their constituents, listen to the facts and adopt the Citizens Ordinance rather than weak regulations that give residents no say,” said Placitas resident Connie Falk. “The people of Sandoval County have spoken: We want clean, safe drinking water, clean air, peace of mind, stable property values. The Citizens’ Ordinance can give us that, not the industry giveaway they are currently considering.”

Take Action

You can help stop this ordinance that offers oil and gas companies a free ride in Sandoval County. Please write to miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org to join our action list and get information on how you can help. And please attend the Oct. 19 County Commission meeting and rally at 4:15 p.m. at the County Administration Building, 1500 Idalia Road, Bernalillo.

Sandoval County residents have spoken their minds loud and clear. We need your help to get the message to your local elected officials. If you are a member of the Sierra Club or will be attending the meeting, please consider making a short personal statement to oppose the ordinance.
**Federal legislation**

**N.M. volunteers visit Capitol Hill**

By Mona Blaber

Chapter communications coordinator

A delegation of Rio Grande Chapter volunteers visited New Mexico’s congressional delegation in Washington, D.C. in late September to share stories about living near the border and growing up in the Four Corners oil, gas and coal extraction economy.

During the visit, part of the Sierra Club’s Lobby Day, which brings volunteers from around the nation, we met with Rep. Ben Ray Lujan and staffers for Sen. Tom Udall, Sen. Martin Heinrich and Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham.

Each of these lawmakers has been a staunch ally in votes and sponsorship of legislation protecting our climate, water, air, land and wildlife. But all lawmakers want to hear from their constituents — and they need to know that we have their backs when they do the right thing.

Michael Marquez, a University of New Mexico student from Kirtland, in San Juan County, told the congressional delegation about growing up in a community dependent on oil, gas and coal employment. “Growing up, we thought it was normal that our parents told us not to play at the pump jack next to our elementary school, or that we could swim in Morgan Lake in November. We didn’t realize it was warm because it cooled the generators at San Juan coal plant,” Marquez said.

“I assumed I’d eventually get an oil and gas job, but when I grew up, the jobs had dried up,” Marquez told the policy-makers that he wants more sustainable, healthy industries to invest in the Four Corners.

He encouraged the senators to back the Reclaim Act, which commits $1 billion from an oil and gas fund to coal-mining companies paid into in the ‘60s and ‘70s for economic development and diversification in communities with older abandoned coal mines. Reps. Lujan and Lujan Grisham are already sponsors of the House version of the bill, which has picked up bipartisan support.

We also expressed thanks to Rep. Lujan Grisham for standing up on the House floor recently to speak against a budget amendment that would prevent implementation of climate-protecting methane rules. The amendment passed the House, but the Senate has not agreed on a budget yet. The deal President Trump and Democrats agreed to continues current funding levels through Dec. 8, when a new budget must be passed.

Kendall Anderson, a New Mexico State volunteer and intern, shared her experiences of living near the border and the near constant awareness and fear of the border patrol even for citizens. She expressed the Sierra Club’s commitment to keeping funding for a border wall out of congressional budgets.

Marquez and Anderson are also student interns for a Rio Grande Chapter project to promote the life-saving mission of the Environmental Protection Agency on their campuses. Conservation chair Karl Braithwaite, who helped pass the Clean Air Act when he worked for Sen. Ed Muskie in 1970, urged our delegation to defend funding for the EPA.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, who was a vocal opponent of the agency before he was named to head it, has asked for a 30% reduction in funding. The current House budget includes a 10% cut in a budget that was already bare-bones in cuts in previous years. Each of our senators and both representatives we visited promised to do everything in their power to defend the EPA’s current funding and defeat border-wall funding, but their power is limited with an anti-environment majority in both chambers.

Students share EPA's importance on campus

By Michael Marquez

Rio Grande Chapter intern

For the fall semester, Kendall Anderson and I have been leading campaigns to raise awareness at New Mexico State University and University of New Mexico, of the importance of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and how its programs impact on our state and campuses.

While most people know about the regulations and cleanup efforts the EPA spearheads, many are not aware of how much research the EPA sponsors at universities around the country, including those in our state.

One example is the UNM College of Pharmacies Native American Health Equity Research Center, or Healthy Voices, to which the EPA has promised $1.5 million in funding. This program would, with the help of Montana State and Washington Universities, research the health and environmental impacts of uranium mining on the indigenous lands and people of the Navajo Nation, Crow Tribe and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

That’s just one example. In fiscal year 2016, UNM received $565,596 in EPA funding that went to a long list of programs around campus.

But not only are we trying to spread the word on the EPA’s contributions, we are also talking about some of the myths around the agency.

Part of the challenge is that the EPA is being discussed as a partisan issue. We are reminding students about the environmental disasters that led to the agency’s creation and the bipartisan response to resolve them. My favorite quote to drive this point home comes from Ronald Reagan’s 1984 State of the Union address:

“Protecting the environment is not a liberal or conservative challenge, but a common-sense one.” This was a little more than a decade after the agency was signed into existence by another Republican, Richard Nixon.

We are petitioning our student governments, ASUNM and ASNMSU, to make a statement of support to show our delegation in Washington D.C. where UNM stands when it comes to the EPA’s funding, and by extension the important research at our universities.

At UNM, I am organizing an AlleyCat — a scavenger-hunt-style bike race that would tour Albuquerque Superfund and brownfield sites.

At UNM, I am organizing an AlleyCat — a scavenger-hunt-style bike race that would tour Albuquerque Superfund and brownfield sites. We are working with a local cycling club called Gatos Calleros that organizes these kind of rides throughout the year.

The event would involve activities at each stop that act as a way to show students how to make political action, such as writing or calling their senators and representative. We also want to use the activity to drive home what the EPA does for our city by physically visiting toxic-waste sites, as well as buildings refurbished through the brownstone program, and why it’s worth defending.

If you’d like more information on the ride, go to http://bit.ly/EPAAlleyCat.

For more info on EPA defense at UNM, please visit our Facebook page at fb.me/UNMSierraStudentCoalition.

At NMSU, Kendall is working to increase the presence of the Sierra Club and encourage activism by engaging students on social-media platforms and through outdoor activities.

These activities include a hike through the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument and outdoor mindfulness sessions around campus! We’re hoping to build lasting relationships with students, equip them with the tools to make their voices heard, and foster appreciation for our outdoor spaces and community.

For more information about their campaign and upcoming events check out our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/nmsuisertachbl.
PNM proposes 50MW of new solar facilities

By Chuck Noble, Coalition for Clean, Affordable Energy

I
t the renewable-energy plan, PNM is required to produce every year, New Mexico’s largest electric utility has proposed to build 50 megawatts of solar upgrade and add energy output to the New Mexico Wind Energy Center contract and upgrade and add energy to the geothermal facility near Deming. PNM will enter into a contract with the facility that keeps all risks on the provider. This is that, while large customers have a lower cost cap, and not upgrade the facilities. Then when the contract expires in 2028, the latest technology at the time can be added. CCAE supports PNM’s plan to have the Wind Energy Center upgraded and extend the contract. The center supplies very inexpensive wind power (2 cents per kWh). CCAE also supports refurbishment of the Dale Burgett geothermal facility near Deming. PNM will enter into a contract with the facility that keeps all risks on the provider. While New Mexico’s Renewable Energy Act required the three major utilities to provide 15% renewable energy by 2015, only Southwestern Public Service actually provides 15% (actually 21%). That’s because utilities don’t have to comply if renewable excesses exceed certain caps — for residential taxpayers, 3% of monthly bills, and for large industrial taxpayers, 2% or $100,000, whichever is less. But the PRC’s required method for calculating costs unfairly inflates renewable energy’s price by excluding some savings it provides. CCAE proposes to adjust the method for calculating costs to reflect those savings. Two of New Mexico’s largest utilities exceed the cost cap, so they won’t be adding renewables any time soon. While PNM’s costs are under the cap, the PRC could use this case to set precedent for all utilities’ calculations. Another damper on renewable growth in New Mexico is that, while large customers have a lower cost cap than residents, suppressing the amount of renewable energy a utility is required to provide, a loophole allows those large customers to receive a windfall in fuel savings from renewables. Adjusting that loophole would make large customers pay their fair share.

Endorsed city candidates advance

By Mona Blaber

All three of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter’s endorsed candidates in the Oct. 3 Albuquerque municipal election either won outright or advanced to a runoff. Thanks to all our volunteers who made hundreds of calls and turned out the vote for them. Now there’s more work to do for two of them!

An enthusiastic ground game, including by Sierra Club volunteers, helped Tim Keller to a first-place finish in the Albuquerque mayoral election with nearly 40 percent of the vote in an eight-person field. Keller defeated City Councilor Dan Lewis in a runoff on Nov. 14 because no candidate reached 50 percent of the vote.

Cynthia Borrego, whom the chapter endorsed for City Council District 5, advance to a Nov. 14 runoff in the Albuquerque mayoral election. The chapter also endorsed Cynthia Borrego, who advanced to the District 5 City Council runoff, and City Councilor Diane Gibson, who won outright in the Oct. 3 election.

He was the most committed and knowledgeable candidate of all those interviewed when it came to clean energy, water conservation and protecting the bosque. Keller was the subject of relentless — and discredited — attack ads. The ads were later revealed to be funded by a developer behind Santolina, a proposed wide-scale development project that wants to secure the rights for huge amounts of water.

Borrego has expressed enthusiastic support for preserving the bosque in its original state and for the Green Building Code. She would replace Lewis, giving the environment an additional vote on the City Council.

Let’s go out for the Nov. 14! Please contact Camilla Feibelman at 505-715-8388 to join our efforts to get two environmental advocates elected.

NM utilities and renewable energy

New Mexico’s Renewable Energy Act requires investor-owned utilities to provide 15% of their electricity from renewable resources. That number rises to 20% in 2020 (electric co-ops have lower requirements). Every year, utilities must present a plan for compliance. A cost threshold allows utilities to provide less renewable energy if the cost would exceed 3% of ratepayers’ bills. Large customers’ cost cap is lower and therefore restricts renewables production more.

PNM (Albuquerque, Santa Fe, elsewhere in NM)

- Total generation in 2016: 8,142,652 MWh
- Total obligation after large-customer adjustment: 1,078,430 MWh (13.3%)
- PNM’s actual renewable generation: 1,063,303 MWh (13.1%)
- PNM met the 13.3% requirement by purchasing 13,127 renewable energy certificates in 2016.
- PNM’s renewable costs are lower than the threshold of 1%.

Southwestern Public Service (southeastern NM)

- Total generation in 2016: 5,279,147 MWh
- Total renewables obligation after large-customer adjustment: 594,842 MWh (11.5%)
- Actual renewable generation: 846,943 MWh (21.2%)
- EPE exceeds the 3% threshold.

El Paso Electric (Las Cruces, southern NM)

- Total generation in 2016: 1,653,465 MWh
- Obligation after large-customer adjustment: 241,434 MWh (14.6%)
- Actual renewable generation: 228,533 MWh (13.8%)
- EPE exceeds its 3% threshold and is not required to acquire additional renewable energy certificates.

Central New Mexico Executive Committee

Chair: Fred Houdeke, fhoudoloke@gmail.com, 505-867-6283
Treasurer: David Ther, treasurer, geld-bike@gmail.com
Secretary: Heather Kline, heather9876@yahoo.com, 505-577-2798
Outgoing: Odile de La Beaujardiere, odilee@pntop.org, 505-433-4602
Political chair: Richard Barish, richard.barish@gmail.com
Ray Shorrtridge, rshorrtridge@gmail.com

Central New Mexico Group events

The Central New Mexico Group is now hosting “Sierra Club and Root Beer” at the Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard Drive SE, Albuquerque. The next Sierra Club and Root Beer will be from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 1. RSVP: Fred Houdeke at fhoudoloke@gmail.com or 505-478-5619
We also hold First Friday Art events every other month at our Albuquerque office, 2215 Lead Ave. SE. 30% of sales support the Rio Grande Chapter’s work.

Volunteer Wednesday
We have volunteers in our Albuquerque office on Wednesdays to do data input, make calls and help with other projects. If you can join us, contact miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org.

El Paso Group update
The El Paso Group once again has its own website, thanks to Executive Committee member Rick LoBello — check it out at elpasosierraclub.org. Sierra Student Coalition leader Neya Hardin took the active group from Americas High School to see the solar eclipse on Aug. 21 at Huaco Tanks State Park.

The city is not providing proper support for its glass-recycling program. We are working to keep the program going.
If you’d like to volunteer to promote glass-recycling or to become more active with the El Paso Group, please contact Laurence Gibson at laurencighiston@gmail.com.

Executive Committee
elpasosierraclub.org

The Rio Grande Chapter is one of only a few Sierra Club chapters with groups in more than one state. While most of Texas belong to the Lone Star Chapter, the El Paso Group belongs to us!
Laurence Gibson, Chair, 309-5419 laurencighiston@gmail.com
Ann Falknor, Secretary, 833-9162 afalknor@bignetlab.net
Kathy Sunday, Treasurer, 584-9301 sundays@zianet.com
Rick Ladin, 474-1436, rickelobello@gmail.com
Liz Walsh, 342-7630 ewלש@ustep.edu
John Walton, 539-5797, walton@ustep.edu

Central New Mexico Group/Clean Energy
Zero Waste compost tour

By Joseph Eigner
Zero Waste co-chair

Northern New Mexico Group

Collaborating on Caja del Rio public use

Five federal, state and local groups of New Mexico Wildlife Federation and Northern New Mexico Group of Sierra Club have collaborated on a public-use brochure for Caja del Rio, the huge 107,000-acre stretch of mesa land west of Santa Fe.

The brochure invites all members of the public to come and recreate safely on this natural treasure rich in both history and opportunities to hike, camp, bike, watch wildlife, trail ride, hunt and target-shoot. The message of the brochure is simple: Always respect the land and the laws that protect it as you enjoy your time visiting.

Due to increased public awareness and more law enforcement presence from BLM, Santa Fe National Forest and Department of Game and Fish officers, illegal activities such as chemical dumping and disturbance of wildlife habitat have been reported by visitors and swiftly been mitigated.

You can join the team

Join the Rio Grande Chapter’s Zero Waste Team to promote reducing, reusing, recycling and composting.

To join or learn more, contact Joe Eigner at joseigner@gmail.com.

curbside recycling to customers living in the urbanizing area around the city. Rates for the combined service range from $26 to $54 a month depending on the hauler and location. Curbside compost is a long way down the road.

Visitors reported that chemicals were dumped in Caja del Rio (above). The site was cleaned up the next week by the Taos BLM office (above right).

Meade Martin (left), Compost Santo owner and Sierra Club member, looks on as Nina Felch-Torrez (right) shows a handful of finished compost to tour leader Karen Sweeney. Windrows of composting material can be seen in the background.
Beaver-treating water in Santa Fe River

By Teresa Seamster
Northern New Mexico Group chair

W
hen beavers are allowed to build dams across the braided streams and channels of New Mexico’s rivers, a transformation of water storage and abundance of vegetation and wildlife rapidly occurs.

Photographs of the Santa Fe River from the 1930s show a wide, meandering river with many side channels — created by beavers — flowing down a rural valley with the little city of Santa Fe in the distance.

Today, the river is severely constricted through the city with concrete banks, unable to meander and water the wetlands and lush vegetation that once defined the river corridor and surrounding farmlands. The four dams that impound the water reduce the river to a dusty arroyo many months out of the year, and diversions at Cochiti Dam prevent the river from flowing into the Rio Grande.

However, in the stretches of river between the dams, in areas where there are public lands bordering the river, as in La Cieneguilla, beavers have returned to restore some of the river’s natural functions.

When beavers hear running water, their instinct is to place a check dam and reduce the water until a pond forms. As aquatic animals that depend on bark for food, and with many predators ready to pounce when this ungainly animal comes on land to cut trees, the beaver prefers the water level to reach as close to its food source as possible.

Creating beaver ponds and connecting them with water channels helps the beaver stay safely in the water and creates perfect wetlands next to the river. These wetlands attract ducks, large mammals and multiple bird and amphibian species along with rich low vegetation that allows sunlight to break down contaminants and bacteria in the water and put down roots to filter the sediments. The wetlands act as flood control during the monsoon and spring runoff seasons, absorbing the high flows and preventing erosion and silting up of the river. The resulting rich soil and sparkling water are the natural products the beaver wetlands provide.

Solutions for meeting Santa Fe’s future water needs

By Mona Blaber
Chapter communications coordinator

Last winter, the city of Santa Fe released a study of how to meet the projected demand of water in the Santa Fe city/county area through 2055.

The preferred alternative was to send about 70% of the city’s treated wastewater to the Rio Grande via a pipeline, and draw an equal amount from the Rio Grande just upstream of the wastewater release. The city recently made a request to the Bureau of Reclamation for $5 million to do a full engineering design of the wastewater pipeline.

The River Commission, chaired by Rio Grande Chapter Water Chair John Bucher, has said it believes that new laws for current study should be done before exporting our water out of the Santa Fe basin.

In particular, aquifer storage and recovery may be the most valuable “savings account” for the community.

The big unknown is how impacted all of the region’s wells will be from Los Alamos radioactive groundwater pollution, as a chromium plume has started spreading to deep groundwater and is now threatening nearby San Elizobalo Pueblo water.

Please ask your city councilors for more study before committing to a solution.

utable wetlands on the grounds of Santa Fe Girls School filter Santa Fe River water.

Valles Caldera hosts Wildlife Workshop

By Teresa Seamster
Northern New Mexico Group chair

The Valles Caldera National Preserve in the Jemez Mountains was the location for our Wildlife Workshop in late September, sponsored by the Sierra Club Northern New Mexico Group and Audubon New Mexico.

The workshop filled up quickly, with 30 biologists from around the country coming to the Wildlife Society Conference in Albuquerque and to visit several unique habitat and restoration sites throughout northern and central New Mexico.

Science and Resource Stewardship Division Chief Dr. Robert Parmenter, and Dr. James Cain of the U.S. Geological Survey, New Mexico Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Unit, conducted outdoor presentations at the History Grove, Jaramillo Creek, Rio San Antonio, Valle San Antonio, and Valle Seco/Sulphur Canyon during their daylong workshop, “Valles Caldera National Preserve as a Natural Laboratory on habitat management, restoration, and wildlife reproduction.”

The Northern group and Audubon NM provided the workshop transportation and food, and the wonderful presenters: Dr. Parmenter and Dr. Cain, along with Valles Caldera National Preserve biologist Mark Parmenter and Dr. Cain, and Dr. James Cain of the U.S. Geological Survey, New Mexico Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Unit.

The speakers are also members of the Sierra Club Northern New Mexico Group and Audubon New Mexico.

Call for volunteers

The Northern New Mexico Group needs you to help the current volunteers with distribution of the Sierra to coffee shops, libraries, etc., in the area. If you have a few hours to spare once every three months and would like to help, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Pat Carlson at 505-988-1596 or carlton505@comcast.net. Thank you!

Meetings

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

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

Fall Talks

You are invited to the last in a series of presentations and discussions related to the Northern New Mexico Group’s priority issues — our “Fall Talks.”

The last of our Fall Talks is an Energy Talk from 6 to 8 p.m. on Oct. 11 at Unitarian Universalist Church, 107 W. Barcelona Road in Santa Fe.

The speakers will address the complexities of utility regulation, energy conservation and solar energy’s great potential in New Mexico.

Our speakers are Shane Woolbright, former general manager of the municipal electrical systems and a private energy consultant, and Sandrine Gaillard, a plasma physicist and scientific consultant formerly at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Both speakers are also members of the Sierra Club Northern New Mexico Group!

Holiday party

All Northern New Mexico Group members and families are invited to our annual Northern New Mexico Sierra Club Holiday Party.

Where: Santa Fe Women’s Club, 1616 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe.

When: 5-8 p.m. Sunday, December 10.

Who: You!

Reservations required. RSVP by Nov, 30 to Pat Carlson at 505-780-5122.

See you there!
Setting up a National Park from scratch

By Jody Benson

Pajarito Group Chair

When we visit National Parks, America’s most treasured natural and cultural resources, we expect to show up, learn about the park’s core mission and then that the park, use the restroom, fill our water bottles before we cruise the paths or hike into the wilderness, hear a ranger talk, maybe camp in a designated spot near a water spigot. … Our visit is supported from interpretation to infrastructure.

But how did all that infrastructure get there? What has to happen to transform the nothingness into location into buildings, water, restrooms, roads, trails, staff, programs? Somebody had to figure out how to build the infrastructure to tell the story of the park for the human visitor while preserving the natural and culture resources for everything else.

In 1955, Los Alamos got two brand-new neighborhood National Parks that need to be transformed from no-infrastructure to full visitor support: the Manhattan Project National Historical Park and the Valles Caldera National Preserve. The Manhattan Project Los Alamos Unit is run jointly by the National Park Service and the Department of Energy.

The Valles Caldera National Preserve, on the other hand, with its 89,216 acres of valleys and mountains, has few areas established for visitors. This article addresses the multiple complex challenges for infrastructure development in the vast landscape that has become Valles Caldera National Preserve.

Valles Caldera land was remapped into a single tract in 1965. Los Alamos got its first ranger district and its initial infrastructure. This is the place where private-landowner structures, and even landowner housing, were restricted to designated parking areas. In addition, this location isn’t where it is critically important to reduce traffic impacts on the visitor experience.

The ranch buildings and grounds that remain are key to the history of these buildings. The Trust did have the energy system with self-sustaining renewables.

What needs to be done now is: Develop new power sources for increased electricity to support staff and thousands of visitors. Current technology, of course, and the power required to run it is an unexpected burden by ranch residents 20 years ago. Silva-Batiaulos’ plans to upgrade the energy system with self-sustaining renewables.

Create a new water system to replace and upgrade the one destroyed by flooding after the Thompson Ridge Fire. Repair and upgrade buildings for visitors (including ADA accessibility, restrooms, water), and locate and upgrade structures for suitable housing (especially seasonal) staff in the Caldera.

Renote the current vehicle road and redesign it as a walking path, recognizing the fundamental purpose of the park as visitors circumlate through the Valles Caldera and to the History Grove of old growth ponderosa pines just beyond the ranch structures.

After decades of limited access, the Valles Caldera was opened to the public it belongs to, and all the complex infrastructure will be developed to focus on why our Caldera deserves recognition. Silva-Batiaulos envisions visitors standing on the deck of the bunkhouse and looking across to the vast landscape that was bounded by the mountains of the east rim of the Caldera. This, he says, is the essence of thousands of years of human experience, from the first people, we’ll say, to the geology, vistas, fragrance, vegetation, and wildlife. When we leave the VCNP, if we leave with nothing else, we have the memory of this, the story-telling view.
'Excursiones' program taking off

By Cecilia Chávez Beltrán
Spanish-language outings

Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo México (Spanish-Language Outings — literally, Excursions into Nature in New Mexico) is four months old!

We are having a delightful time connecting with not-for-profit organizations and groups working with Spanish-speaking who respond enthusiastically to Excursiones’ invitation to caminar (walks) in the Bosque.

At the start, some participants might be wary of the overgrown vegetation on the path or the mud after an unusually heavy rain, or the quiet surroundings without urban noises.

After a short time, however, we are checking out the snails on the ground or the critters that hang acrobatically from reeds above our heads. We start sharing information on the alfalfa infusions Grandma used to prepare and admiring birds on the sandy banks of the river with the two sets of binoculars donated by Sierra Club member Connie. (Thanks Connie!)

Excursions is walking with a diversity of groups working on an array of issues that are a reality in our community: social justice, immigrant’s rights and women’s rights to name a few. The walks allow us to relax and enjoy sharing en convivio, learning about our diverse knowledge and actively doing something positive with our minds and hearts. Here are some comments from participants:

“It is good to take the time to disconnect from the world and the routine.”

“It gave me peace and made me remember when a child I would walk in the fields.”

See more at our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/ExcursionesNaturalezaNM/

* Convivio: beautiful word meaning “to coexist”

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Hikes and Events, continued from Page 16

Barbara Divide, 1,600 feet elevation gain, 9 or 4 miles; Mark Dunham, medunham2@msn.com or 505-795-0199.

Thursday, Oct. 26: Recurring Thursday hike, see Oct 5 description.

November

Thursday, Nov. 2: Recurring Thursday hike, see Oct. 5 description.

Saturday, Nov. 4: Bosquitos presentation by Wildlife Rescue including meeting rehabilitated wildlife; 10 a.m. or 11:15 a.m. session at the Sierra Club: 2215 Lead Ave. SE, Albuquerque, interesting and heart-warming presentation requires an RSVP. Only 20 attendees are allowed per session. If more than 40 RSVP, we will try to set up an additional session. RSVP Julie Hudson, jhjcybermesa.com. See Oct. 7 for a Bosquitos description.

Saturday, Nov. 4: Easy outing out of Kingston. Meet at the Forest Service office or Trailhead Concession at 8 a.m. We will have breakfast in Hillsboro. I am a slow walker these days. Interested? Call Margot at 575-748-5860. Bring snacks and lunch.

Sunday, Nov. 5: Cibola National Forest. Easy 5 miles hike. Meet at 9 a.m. in the Smiths parking lot close to the intersection of Tramway and Central, (on the West side parallel to the store entry façade) or at 09:45 at the Tijeras Sandia Ranger station on Rd 337. End with optional potluck at Odile and Jim’s house. Contact Odile by Nov 3, h: 505-433-4692, or c: 505-933-1630, Odile@pilot.org. Please specify: (1) cell-phone number; (2) if coming to the potluck; and (3) where you can meet the group.

Wednesday, Nov. 8: Pueblo Canyon Geology Walk. 12:30 p.m., Los Alamos East Park Dog Park. Geologist Elaine Jacobs will lead us along the south rim Pueblo Canyon trail from East Park to learn about volcanism and landscape evolution in the Jemez Volcanic Field. This geologic landscape provides a window into what was happening on the Pajarito Plateau between two catastrophic supervolcanic eruptions. On this roughly one-hour excursion, we will walk on the paved trail on the canyon rim before joining the unpaved portion of the trail to the Los Alamos Airport Terminal. The first two-thirds is wheelchair/stroller accessible. All ages and abilities are welcome, Jody Benson, echidnaejb@gmail.com

Thursday, Nov. 7: Recurring Thursday hike, see Oct 5 description.

Friday, Nov. 10: Advanced-moderate hike; 2,400 feet elevation and 11 miles. Glocieta Baldy from Apache Canyon (see Day Hikes Page 14). A modification that shortens this hike is to leave from the lower trailhead by the Apache Canyon inholding, (removes 500 feet of elevation and 12 miles). Mark Dunham, medunham2@msn.com or 505-795-0199.

Saturday, Nov. 11 (Veterans Day), Outing for wheelchair users and others with impaired mobility. 9 a.m. to noon. We will explore the Bosque on the recently built cruiser-fines trails east of the Rio Grande and south of I40. Song birds, rabbits, road runnners, ducks, and geese are usually in residence. Hawks, marmots, hawks, egrets, owls, eagles, and porcupines may be observed. Trail and access to it were designed with wheelchair in mind. Contact Colston Chandler, cccentrscwp.com, (505) 343-9498 to register and obtain directions to the meeting place.

Thursday, Nov. 16 and following Thursdays through Dec. 21 moderate program for Thursdays in winter but still seeking aerobic hikes, we switch from the Santa Fe Ski Basin to afternoon hikes in the area, with a noon start. Drives of up to an hour will be considered, and we often go near the rivers, either in White Rock Canyon or along the Rio Chama near Abiquiú. Up to 2,000 feet of elevation and 10 miles. Each outing is proposed separately. See what is planned each time, up to a month in advance. Mark Dunham medunham2@msn.com or 505-795-0199.

Saturday, Nov. 25, (Thanksgiving Burn-off!): Sandia Crest Tunnel Spring Trail (see Day Hikes Page 348). Guided by our Albuquerque hikers, we will attempt to see as much of the awesome granite exposed under the Sandia Crest as possible. Route may change as we get closer, but the trailhead near Picatias will remain the same. Strenuous: 3,000 feet of elevation and 12 miles. Mark Dunham medunham2@msn.com or 505-795-0199.

Thursday, Nov. 30, program for Thursdays in winter (see Nov 16 description).

December

Saturday, Dec. 2, 9 a.m.: Carlos Springs Loop Trail; easy hike near Tijeras sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome. 350-foot elevation gain, 2 miles round trip, in under 1.5 hours. Dogs on leash, OK. Carpooling strongly encouraged due to limited parking. To register contact Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@com by Nov. 30.

Saturday, Dec. 2, easy hike around White Rock 6.5 miles to petroglyphs, lava tube, views, Alan Shapiro mm5@g@ yahoo.com 505-424-9242.

Thursday, Dec. 7, program for Thursdays in winter (see Nov 16 description).

Saturday, Dec. 9, hike or snowshoe, depending on weather. Visit www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/ for details or contact Aku, 505-577-2594.

Thursday, Dec. 14, program for Thursdays in winter (see November 16 description).

Saturday, Dec. 16, hike or snowshoe, depending on weather. Visit www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/ for details or contact Aku, 505-577-2594.

Thursday, Dec. 21, program for Thursdays in winter (see Nov 16 description).

Saturday, Dec. 23, strenuous snowshoe or hike depending on conditions; Larry Hughes, 505-983-8296, lorenz, hughes@gmail.com.

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By Cecilia Chávez Beltrán

Children exploring on a trip to Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge.

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For the latest

To find out about new hikes or updates to existing events: Northern New Mexico outings Meetup site: www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/.

Albuquerque Meetup site: www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club Rio-Grande-Chapter/.

To get weekly emails, send an email to Lisserv@lists.siera-club.org with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS.

Or go to riograndesiierracclub.org/
October
Thursday, Oct. 5: Trekking Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin: (recurring hike) this is a weekly burst of 90 minutes ascending 2,000 vertical feet, with a variety of scenic rewards at the top. Some weeks we will just go to Deception Peak, sometimes to Lake Peak. This is by far the quickest route above timberline in our area, passing by rushing water for almost the entire hike. 8:30 a.m. departure. Most times we will be back in time for a late lunch. Contact Mark Dunham, medunham2@msn.com, 505-795-0199 near event time.

Friday, Oct. 6, strenuous four-day backpack in Pecos Wilderness: About 32 miles and 5,000 feet elevation gain; Larry Hughes lounge@hughesgmail.com, 505-983-8296.

Saturday, Oct. 7, advanced-moderate hike to the Chama Headwaters: 2,500 feet elevation gain. 8-12 miles; Mark Dunham medunham2@msn.com or 505-795-0199

Saturday, Oct. 7: Easy hike to learn about Albuquerque history. The Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program and the Albuquerque Historical Society are teaming to offer an exclusive history tour of downtown Albuquerque. Wheelchair-accessible outing. Meet at 10 a.m. at the Alvarado Transportation Center, 100 1st St. SW, at the clock tower. We’ll proceed down Central Avenue from 1st Street to 8th Street and learn about the history, architecture and personalities that have made Albuquerque unique. Two-hour outing, 1 mile round trip. Service dogs only. Contact Terry Owsen by Oct. 1, 505-301-4349, ronenewq.com.

Saturday, Oct. 7: Bosquitos outing at 6,500 Coors NW, 1-3 p.m. West Side Open Space Visitor. Come explore the Open Space Visitor Center grounds and discover all it offers our smallest and busiest friends. Tour the pollinator garden full of flowers that hummingbirds, bees, and beetles like. The Bosquitos are the youth-centered group of the Bosque Action Team. Our mission is to learn about Albuquerque's Bosque, the animals and plants that live there, and ways to take care of the Bosque and our earth. Sara Streng, 505-288-8713 for more information. If you need special assistance, please let us know ahead and we will do our best to help. If you’d like to organize an event for our group or have suggestions for other outings/events, we would love ideas and more volunteers. Please contact Sara Streng at 505-204-9713 or Julie Hudson at jhcb@cybermesa.com.

Sunday, Oct. 8: Easy loop hike on top of Sandia Mountain, about 3 miles. Great views and fall colors. Meet 8:45 a.m. at intersection of Tramway and Central, in the Smith's parking lot west side, or at 9:45 a.m. at the antennas (at the south end of the lower parking lot). Hike starts below the crest on the Albuquerque

October-December hikes & events

October
Thursday, Oct. 5: Trekking Alpine Meadows above the Ski Basin: (recurring hike) this is a weekly burst of 90 minutes ascending 2,000 vertical feet, with a variety of scenic rewards at the top. Some weeks we will just go to Deception Peak, sometimes to Lake Peak. This is by far the quickest route above timberline in our area, passing by rushing water for almost the entire hike. 8:30 a.m. departure. Most times we will be back in time for a late lunch. Contact Mark Dunham, medunham2@msn.com, 505-795-0199 near event time.

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