Kick the Oil Habit

We realize that American lives, the stability of our climate, economic security, and the preservation of our environment are worth a major national commitment to energy efficiency and secure, renewable resources. As consumers and as citizens, we urge the Congress and the President to:

- Establish aggressive programs to improve the energy efficiency of the nation’s buildings, utilities, and appliances.
- Move towards an economy based on safe, clean and renewable energy sources like solar power and wind—not nuclear.
- Require automobiles to average 45 mpg by the year 2000.
- Protect our national crown jewels, such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and our fragile coastal areas, from destructive oil and gas drilling.

RIOGRANDE SIERRAN
NEWS OF THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB • SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1991 • $1.00

Sierra Club files Lawsuit Over Trade Negotiations

WASHINGTON, D.C. The Sierra Club filed a lawsuit in August against the office of the United States Trade Representative for failing to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in trade negotiations. Under the Act, U.S. agencies are required to prepare Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) which are detailed assessments of impact on the environment before major actions are taken.

"It is disappointing that the U.S. Trade Negotiator has not chosen to recognize the wisdom of this law. The U.S. Trade office has not prepared Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) on proposed trade agreements with Mexico, Canada and proposals under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade," said Michael McNerney, Chairman of the Sierra Club.

"The Trade office is preparing a new report called an ‘environmental review’ on the proposed agreement with Mexico. But environmentalists and consumer groups believe the review falls far short of what is required and is now demanding compliance (Continued on page 22)
Letter to the Editor

Friends of the Petroglyphs

No Obstructionists

Dear Editor:

The letter by Earl Hobbs about the Friends of the Albuquerque Petroglyphs (FOP) in your June/July 1991 issue is so full of misinformation that it demands a strong rebuttal.

FICTION: Mr. Hobbs says that "some archaeologists and historians" have said that the petroglyphs are suitable for extensive preservation while "others of equal reputation and qualification say no."

FACT: The fact of the matter is that not a single archaeologist or historian that I know of ever suggested the petroglyphs were unsuitable for preservation. Not one. I know this because I am in frequent contact with the professional archaeological and historical communities. I invite Mr. Hobbs to provide the names of his so-called experts so that all of us can evaluate their "reputation and qualification." (Mr. Hobbs apparently believes that many of the petroglyphs were made by Boy Scouts, another piece of totally ridiculous and erroneous fiction.)

FICTION: Mr. Hobbs says that FOP has "steadfastly argued against every planned development on the Westside that could possibly impact the Monument."

FACT: FOP has steadfastly argued for controlled, quality growth all across the Westside. Several hundred new homes have been built and related developments have occurred with no objection away from FOP because their impacts on the Monument were minimal. Mr. Hobbs can argue "facts," but a project that disrupts the Monument directly, FOP will do what it can to stop their highest quality and lowest impact (Union Pacific, BNSF, Double Eagle II Airport) come to mind.

To state that FOP is a cover for the "conspiracy of obstruction of any meaningful development on the Westside or the West Age" is a total falsehood. Just look at how much growth has occurred on the West Side since FOP was formed in 1986 to get the real story on whether it is not "trustworthy" or "obstructionist."

FOP's position has been "robust" in support of plans for Vulcan Bank, Rainbow Bank, Montano Bridge, Bridge, and Paradise Blvd. FOP has never submitted any negative comments about plans for any of the roads Mr. Hobbs mentions. In particular, FOTAP has never spoken out, pro or con, about Proposition 70. FOTAP has actually supported the expansion of some facilities if they can act as relievers for the choking traffic and some of the other needed facilities. FOTAP has encouraged the system of statewide transportation planning (as expressed in the single project plan) and it supports the development of alternatives such as para-taxi and ride-sharing to reduce dependency on the single-occupant vehicle.

Finally, I would like to offer a suggestion to Mr. Hobbs and others like him. Get educated. Become informed. Look before you go off perpetuating misinformation and reducing the importance of Petroglyph National Monument and planning on the West Side to a name-calling contest. In the mean time, I would expect that the Sierra Club, FOTAP, and at least a dozen other groups will continue to try to sacrifice for rational growth and to try to spread some more knowledge and a lot less hysteria.

Matthew F. Schmader
Albuquerque

George Grossman Wins National Sierra Club Award

George Grossman of Santa Fe has been honored as chair of Sierra Club and as one of 10 Environmental Heroes across the nation. Grossman is the Rio Grande Chapter's Co- chairman of the New Mexico Sierra Club, a life member of the Sierra Club. He received the award in recognition of his efforts for the last 20 years to protect New Mexico's wilderness. "If you don't have wilderness, you don't have a real western experience," says Grossman. "There's a real urgency to protect those lands before the character is destroyed."

Much of New Mexico's wilderness is unprotected and threatened by potential development. The BLM recommends preserving less than a million acres of its vast holdings statewide, while Grossman and members of the Sierra Club Chapter have proposed a wilderness bill that will protect most of it.

As part of the New Mexico Wilderness Coalition, Grossman and his fellow activists have been educating the public on the importance of preserving these natural areas. The Sierra Club helped fund and assemble Walden's book, a book on New Mexico's wilderness. Coalition members have held educational workshops, explain and promote an Adopt-a-Wilderness program that encourages people to adopt a wilderness study area to watch over and ensure that illegal development occurs before it is considered for wilderness designation.

Grossman's efforts also extend to the political arena, where he has worked on state and federal campaigns to get New Mexico's pro-wilderness candidates elected.

Letter (continued)

Dear Editor:

The last few months have seen a series of posts on environmentalists for their "re- sponsibility" for eliminating jobs in the industry, (northern Oregon's Pole, and others such as mining (asking for mining law reform), oil and gas industry (asking for increased "public review of potential federal, and state expense and regulatory and economic aid policies.

Economic concerns are cited in the back- lash. Industrial and manufacturing groups argue that the new legislation will drive the energy costs the end consumer of their products if the environmentalists have their way. They really want to say is that they


Nominees Sought for Rio Grande Chapter Awards

The Awards Committee of the Chapter Executive Committee is now soliciting nominations for awards. The awards program offers the opportunity to give chapter-wide recognition to exceptional achievements. The Executive Committee has established the following awards. Any member of the chapter may nominate someone for an award. The number of nominees indicate the number of each award to be given.

Environmental Steward of the Year (1): Member who has shown dynamic leadership and excellence in organizing and administering the outings program of the club. (Designated principally from regional groups).

The names of all nominees will be forwarded to the Chapter chairperson for final selection and announcement. The Chairperson will make the final selection and announce the winners at the chapter retreat.

Nominations should include the name and address of the nominee, the award for which the nominee is being nominated, the accomplishment / services which qualify the nominee for the Chapter award (1 or 2) and any other pertinent materials that may be pertinent.

Nominations should be sent to the chairperson of Awards Committee: Don Jones, 1209 Vista Dr., Socorro, NM 87801.
Oil and Gas Wastes: Closing the Loophole
by Heidi Fleischmann

Oilfield waste has been responsible for widespread death of birds and other wildlife, including over 500,000 migratory birds in New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma, in 1989 alone. Particularly in arid regions, birds and wildlife are attracted to oilfield pits containing wastes that they mistake for water.

Currently there are no federal requirements applicable to the treatment, storage, and disposal of oil and gas wastes. Some states have adopted limited requirements but minimum federal requirements are necessary to prevent further environmental damage and to protect human health and the environment.

A comprehensive RCRA program for oilfield wastes should address three principal discharge pathways: discharges to surface sites, discharges to rivers and watercourses, and underground injection. Such a program minimally should:

1. Lift the statutory exemption for the low-volume, high toxicity "associated wastes" and regulate those wastes as hazardous wastes;
2. Ban storage or disposal of "produced water" (i.e., oilfield water) in pits, unless those pits have multiple liners, leak detection and collection systems, and underground water monitoring;
3. Prohibit the storage or disposal of drilling fluids that exhibit a characteristic of hazardous waste in unlined surface impoundments or pits;
4. Require EPA to adopt regulations governing the treatment, disposal, and control of oilfield wastes; and
5. Require EPA and the states to identify and remediate abandoned oilfield facilities, such as unplugged wells and abandoned pits;
6. Require all pits and tanks to be enclosed or jacketed to protect wildlife from exposure to oilfield wastes;
7. Prohibit discharges to rivers and watercourses unless those discharges are subject to Clean Water Act permits that contain limits for the organic, radioactive, and salt-forming constituents of produced water; and
8. Substantially strengthen existing regulations for underground injection of produced water and other oilfield wastes to prevent contamination of underground sources of drinking water.

What You Can Do

Write your Senators and Representatives and urge them to support stricter regulation of waste disposal by the oil and gas industry. Urge them to close the loophole in RCRA that allows for the unregulated disposal of oilfield wastes.

Heidi Fleischmann is Chair of the Albuquerque Group of the Audubon Society. Materials for this article were adapted from the Audubon Advocate and materials of the National Citizens' Network on Oil and Gas Wastes.

Environmental Groups File Lawsuit to Protect Goshawks, Biological Diversity

On August 12, environmentalists filed suit in U.S. District Court in Phoenix to require the U.S. Forest Service to protect biological diversity in six Southwestern national forests.

The lawsuit asks that an approximately one quarter of the 3.5 million acres of commercial and national forest timber lands in Arizona and New Mexico not be logged until a thorough environmental study can be completed on the impacts of logging on biological diversity. In addition, an injunction will be sought to immediately halt logging on timber sales areas, 24 in Arizona and 13 in New Mexico.

The lawsuit focuses on the northern goshawk, a wide-ranging forest raptor whose population can affect the diversity of biological diversity in older ponderosa pine forests. Research by a Forest Service goshawk expert has documented a precipitous decline in the goshawk population as a result of logging and fire suppression on the Kaibab National Forest in Arizona. Of the approximately 250 nesting pairs of goshawks found in 1940 on the Kaibab plateau, only 27 remain today. An Arizona Game and Fish survey found that these goshawks produced only 1 young last year.

The lawsuit alleges that the Forest Service has violated the requirements of the National Forest Management Act to provide for biological diversity on national forests. Several species of birds, salamanders, and plants in the Kaibab's unique older forests are also declining in population. The failure of the Forest Service to prevent the loss of species is a violation of the National Forest Management Act.

The Forest Service plans to log over one-third of the remaining goshawk habitat in the Southwest in the Kaibab, Coconino, and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests in Arizona, and in the Gila, Santa Fe and Carson National Forests in New Mexico.

“This is a last-ditch effort to save the few remaining big pines left in the Southwest,” said Don Hite, director of the Santa Fe-based Forest Guardians. “The biological diversity of a unique ecosystem hangs in the balance.”

Environmentalists first wrote a letter in February 1990 asking the Forest Service to halt logging in the last of the older forests. Instead, the Forest Service convened a task force to make recommendations concerning logging in goshawk habitat. The two environmental representatives on the task force quit over the failure by the Forest Service to prepare an environmental impact statement.

The goshawk is not listed under the Endangered Species Act. However, several environmental groups petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on July 12 for emergency listing of the Southwestern goshawk population. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has until September 12 to determine whether listing the goshawk in the Southwest is warranted.

This lawsuit will not likely affect the many small loggers in the South- west because they don’t generally utilize the larger trees needed for biological diversity and goshawk habitat.

The lawsuit was filed by attorneys with the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund on behalf of Forest Guardians, the Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, and several local chapters of the Audubon Society.

Help Clean Up the Environment. Starting Here.

The 1992 elections present a once in a lifetime opportunity to change the way Congress deals with environmental issues. In recession could cause at least 30 empty House seats and far more contested races than usual. In January, 1993, there could be as many as 10 new faces in Congress.

For 100 years, Sierra Club members have been at the forefront of environmental action. When you join, you add your voice to a grass roots membership of over 650,000 members and over 300,000 members working on behalf of environmental candidates. Get involved. Help make a difference this Congress—and the world. Join us today!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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People for the West! Flexes Political Muscles

"Grassroots" Organization Bankrolled by Mining Industry

by Esteban Watson

What group is letting the streets with with a petition drive reminiscent of that to remove Watt from office?

What group has highly organized phone trees and gets huge turnouts at environmental hearings?

What group can make the New Mexico delegation change course 180 degrees on environmental issues, due to sustained grass-roots and media pressure?

If you angrily answered "the Sierra Club", not only were you wrong, you were probably caught in a 15 year time warp. The correct answer is "People for the West!

"People for the West!" (PFWI) is a front group for the hardrock mining industry, which is desperately trying to hang on to its approximately $800 million per year subsidy (according to the Mineral Policy Center) under the 1872 Mining Law. The implications for mishandling by PFWI are much broader than merely thwarting reform of 1872, however.

In essence, the 1872 Mining Law allows any U.S. citizen who discovers a valuable hardrock mineral (gold, silver copper, lead, pumice, etc.) on publicly owned land to the right of mine without having to pay any royalty and without adequate reclamation. On top of this injury is the result that the miner is able to purchase clear title to the land for the princely sum of $2.50 to $5.00 per acre. The federal land agency has no choice but to allow the mining and/or sale (the Copper Pine mine in the Jenks being a splendid local example).

Such "third world" fiscal and environmental laxity is hard to get folks to rally around. In fact, a poll commissioned by the mining industry found that 82 percent of the respondents thought that miners should pay royalties and be forced to reclaim mining sites on federal land (Rolling Stone Magazine, June 10, 1993). The pollsters cautioned the industry not to carry on the debate in a public forum. Really!

When faced with such an untenable question, what is the mining industry to do? Its response has been to go cynical in the extreme—to rely on Orwellian double-speak, exploitation and distortion. Of this scenario was born "People for the West!"

PFWI is funded to the tune of almost $1 million, almost exclusively by mining companies, in an attempt to give a grassroots appearance to efforts by a corporate elite to hang on to its subsidy. This strategy seems unamazingly similar to several efforts by special interests to conjure up grassroots as described by Hedrick Smith in his book The Power Game. He describes them as having the same relationship to grassroots that "assort" does to grass. Very apt to PFWI as well.

When PFWI even mentions the mining law, it is often in the context of jobs lost and rural communities devastated because of impending reform. Even if such assertions were true, it is hugely ironic because this is the industry that has victimized (through pollution, union busting, unsafe working conditions, pay and benefit cuts, etc.) the same people that its program is trying to organize. The truth of the matter is that proposed reform is not retroactive and that more jobs will be created through reclamation efforts, if the experience in the coal industry is any indicator.

Never mind the facts; placards at PFWI rallies equate paying royalties on mineral extracted and reclamation with "dichardship," and free access to public resources as synonymous with the "strength of the family". Orwell was only off by a few years!

The only other context in which PFWI polemics elevate the 1872 Mining Law is to say that it is the keystone of "multiple use". The message is that if the 1872 Mining Law is reformed, all of public lands—logging, grazing and ORVing—will be restricted or eliminated.

This is the heart of their strategy. The mining industry knows that there is no way its status can remain alone. The only way that they can protect their peregrinage is to enlist the help of others who feel threatened or aggrieved, either by environmental regulation, shifting values or economics. The industry is applying the ancient Mid-Eastern organizing strategy: "give my enemy is my friend." Those inuding under the PFWI umbrella can then scapegoat "anti-human" elitist, especially the Sierra Club, for myriad problems.

This is the industry that has victimized—through pollution, union busting, unsafe working conditions, pay and benefit cuts, etc.—the same people that People for the West is trying to organize.

Go add to the "slag heap" of loci surrounding PFWI, the term "multiple-use" was first institutionalized in the "Multiple-Use, Sustained Yield Act" passed to try to end abusive logging practices on federal lands. This is indicative of its penchant to pervert symbols to its own ends.

PFWI field tactics are vintage environmental and civil right movement. While the means may be grassroots, the ends certainly are not. In fact, the 1960s civil rights Revolue for Sakl Alamy is very much in evidence on literature tables at conferences hosted by sister organizations. PFWI is even counting organized labor, minorities, city and county governments in rural areas where people are economically vulnerable, anxious and susceptible to its propaganda.

In spirit if not Reagan-era cynicism, or may be because of it, PFWI has been amazimgly successful in getting the most enviromentally and resource advocates to oppose raising grazing fees, oppose reform of the 1872 Mining Law, stall BLM Wilderness legislation, etc. Elsewhere in the West, PFWI has been successful in championing the vision of the greater Yellowstone Coalition.

PFWI factions at Congressional hearings on mining reform in Santa Fe last May give a good overview of its modus operandi. PFWI (claim) that if it had 1,000 people protesting against reform, it was probably close to 2,000 or 500. Not a bad representation, especially compared to the 50-60 environmentalists present.

It turns out that many of the mining interests were employees of Phelps-Dodge and McAndrock and busied in by those companies from far corners of the state. Also, there were density number of non-sponsoring reformers in from the Gallina School District to decremistract and hold placards. (Amazingly enough, Gallina is the school district where former Land Commissioner, PFWI Field director, NMSU employee and potentiak U.S. Senate candidate, Bill Humphries, used to teach.)

The crowd in the hearing room looked environmentalists and pro-reform witnesses, including every state official who testified. They turned in a performance worthy of the Earth First of the right.

PFWI has been able to storm cence the fact because the environmental movement has created a vacuum by letting its grassroots atrophy. (As was pointed out in the Jan/Feb issue of the Rio Grande Sierran, 24 of 25 Sierra Club dues dollars go to San Francisco or D.C.) Increasingly, environmentalists have not wanted to "get their hands dirty" going to town hall and county commission meetings, calling, courtling the media and reaching out to building alliances with those who should be our allies.

PFWI will probably metamorphose after the 1872 issue is resolved. How 1872 is resolved will be crucial to the direction of most environmental issues. If there is no significant reform, alliances on the anti-environmental right will coalesce with the Farm Bureau, the National Association of Realtors and others and press their advantage going of the Endangered Species Act and wetland preservation, as well as issues just entering the stage.

Also, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to predict that if environmentalists don't seriously address the issues of environmentally sustainable economic activity, particularly in rural areas, the fears and anxieties partially fuelling PFWI will be greatly exacerbated and exploited even more.

On the positive side, "People for the West!" could be the best thing that ever happened to the environmental movement, much better than even James Watt and the Sargent Rebellio. To quote G. Gordon Liddy, quoting the philosopher Nietzsche, "That which does not kill me, makes me stronger."

[Esteban Watson is a member of the Rio Grande Chapter.]

Western State Land Commissioners

Call for Reform of 1872 Mining Law

HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK, The Western States Land Commissioners Association, representing 22 states, has announced its support for efforts to reform the 1872 Mining Law. In a resolution adopted by the group at its summer meeting in Hot Springs, the Association calls for fiscal and environmental reforms to the 1872 law.

"As state land managers, we see the situation up close," said New Mexico's Jim Baca, the chairman of WSLCA's mining subcommittee. "We support mining, but right now these large companies are taking the public's minerals for nothing. That's bad for the taxpayer, and bad for the Western states, from both a fiscal and environmental point of view."

The WSLCA resolution criticizes current federal mining law, saying it does not provide for adequate environmental protection and places state lands as "a competitive disadvantage." It calls on Congress to require mining companies to pay for development, and to guarantee a state share. In addition, the resolution urges reform which "does not establish the primacy of mineral extraction above all other potential uses of public land."

The action by the Western officials marks a significant step forward in support of comprehensive mining reform. "The time has come for Congress to take long-overdue action to reform this 1872 Law," Baca said. "We're just asking for a little common sense. Mining companies should pay for the minerals and no state should be required to clean up after themselves, just like anyone else."
Project Gasbuggy

Atomic Blast in the Carson National Forest

by Patricia Wolff

A few weeks ago I received a very strange telephone call. "Have you heard about the nuclear explosion in the Carson National Forest?" the caller asked.

At first I thought the man on the phone must be confused. I had certainly never heard of a nuclear explosion in the Carson National Forest, just one county away from Santa Fe.

The caller identified himself as Vernon Brechen. He said he was doing some research at U.S. Geological Survey Laboratory in California and had some documents that might be of interest to me and others who were planning to hold a forest issues conference in the Carson. I asked him to send the documents and he did.

The information he sent was fascinating and inspired further research.

An underground nuclear detonation code-named "Project Gasbuggy" did indeed occur in Rio Arriba County, New Mexico within the Jicarilla Apache Ranger District of the Carson National Forest on December 10, 1967. Its sponsors were the El Paso Natural Gas Co., the U.S. Bureau of Mines, Lawrence Radiation Laboratory and the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (now known as the Department of Energy).

Project Gasbuggy was part of the Atomic Energy Commission's Operation Plowshare, a program that sought to harness nuclear explosives for peaceful use. Nevertheless underground nuclear tests were conducted under the Plowshare name. Most took place in Nevada but others were conducted in New Mexico, Colorado, Alaska and Mississippi in the 1960s.

The Gasbuggy experiment was designed to liberate natural gas from an unyielding sandstone formation just half a mile from the Jicarilla Apache Indian Reservation. The nuclear explosion was supposed to create a massive network of cracks around the blast cavity so that the gas-bearing rock would release natural gas trapped within its pores.

The nuclear explosive, detonated at a depth of 4,240 feet, yielded an energy equivalent to 26,000 tons of TNT or about twice the energy of the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima.

Public opposition to Project Gasbuggy, to the extent it existed, was not reported in the New Mexico press. On the contrary, press coverage of the experiment was extremely positive and would be considered blatant boosterism by today's standards.

"BLAST GOOD FOR HUNTERS, FOREST SERVICE SAYS," was the headline on the November 7, 1967 Albuquerque Tribune. The article reported that the Forest Service was promising a better deer hunt next season, thanks to an eight-mile-paved road constructed that would provide hunters greater accessibility to the Gasbuggy area.

A Forest Service official interviewed also said the blast would benefit ranchers grazing their cows there, since the land affected by the project would be reseded, thus providing better forage.

The December 3, 1967 edition of The New Mexican reported that "Jiul Dule, New Mexico, captor of the Jicarilla Apache Indian, the only apparent concern over an upcoming underground nuclear test is that it might cause another earthquake." An earthquake hit the area in January 1966.

"A BANG-UP GASBUGGY TODAY COULD DOUBLE U.S. NATURAL GAS," proclaimed the headline in the Dec. 10, 1967 New Mexican. Two days later, an editorial heralded the Gasbuggy experiment as an historic event that "...holds promise for a new era of economic development in the United States."

"Knowledge gained from this experiment should establish the pattern for many new programs in the accelerated application of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes," the editorial stated.

Project Gasbuggy was declared "highly successful" by atomic advocates of the day, but it also demonstrated a fatal flaw with nuclear-stimulated gas production. The gas produced was radioactively contaminated with both tritium and krypton-85, according to a report published in the June 1970 issue of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists.

The Plowshare program spawned numerous government-industry projects to use nuclear explosives in civilian construction projects. Costs for many large mining and construction jobs could be reduced dramatically, the architects of these ambitious projects claimed, if nuclear dynamic was used.

One of the more preposterous proposals was advanced by physicist Edward Teller. Project Peace, as it was called, would have involved the explosion of nuclear devices in an underground cavern partially filled with water in order to generate high pressure steam to run turbines to produce geothermal energy. The generation of 2000 megawatts of electricity under this scenario would have required two 26 kilometer nuclear explosions per day, according to a Los Alamos National Laboratory analysis of the proposal.

The promise of the Atomic Energy Commission's Plowshare program never was fulfilled. Instead, the program was phased out, due to a combination of budgetary, environmental and political factors.

The legacy of Project Gasbuggy and other Plowshare experiments is still with us today. Even though these tests have been forgotten by area residents, thousands of tons of plutonium-tainted radioactive fission gas still resides at the test sites. The Environmental Protection Agency continues to monitor water samples at these test sites to determine if the radioactive contamination has migrated. A 1989 EPA report on radiation monitoring at U.S. nuclear test sites claimed that "Regardless of the finding of detectable amounts of radioactivity in some water samples, the exposure to the public is negligible."

After finding out what Project Gasbuggy was all about, I asked many others, including anti-nuclear activists, reporters and Los Alamos National Laboratory employees if they were familiar with the event. Ninety-nine percent had never heard of it.

Project Gasbuggy has been virtually erased from public consciousness after only 22 years, but the test site itself will be radioactive for thousands of years.

[Patricia Wolff is a freelance journalist and past-time employee of Forest Guardians, a San Fe environmental organization.]

Acceptable Risk?

Federal agencies often use the concept of "acceptable risk" to determine the permissible level of public exposure to a chemical or radioactive substance. But agency definitions of "acceptable risk" vary dramatically.

Bombs or Power Plants—It's the Same Poison

Maurice Weitzberg, M.D.

The problems of nuclear waste are intricately tied to the production of nuclear bombs, and it is the public health consequences of this technology that make it unacceptable to the public.

No matter how efficiently the DOE reconfigures the bomb plants or how the design is changed, they can't change the laws of physics. These nuclear plants will continue to pile up astronomical quantities of Sr90, Co60 and Pu239 for which we have no safe, permanent storage facility.

And while storage of these poisons is an important issue, it tends to obscure the more relevant matter of the loss of radioactive poisons into the environment during mining, milling, transportation, and fabrication of the uranium fuel.

The world's worst nuclear accidents were the 500 bombs exploded in the atmosphere over Nevada. Billions of curies of radioactive iodine, Sr90, Co60 and Pu239 were loosed into the atmosphere to descend later throughout the Northern Hemisphere to contaminate the crops, land, and water.

The big lie

The nuclear industry continues to dupe the public into believing it can safely dispose of the accumulating poisonous radioactive wastes. For 45 years we have had confident assurances and vague assurances from the DOE and the Nuclear Regulatory Committee (NRC) that radioactive waste problems will be solved, are about to be solved, could be solved if only the critics and the media were less emotional and less inclined to propaganda.

But the truth remains, as it always has, that there is no earthually safe, tested disposal system, and these wastes are a lethal threat to future generations and a public health menace.

Suppose that nuclear plants had been operating in Christ's time? Assume that their operation had stored the radioactive wastes in shielded drums. We would have been guarding these wastes for less than 1 percent of the time that they need to be isolated from the environment.

Due to the absence of a permanent waste repository, the amount of highly toxic, long-lived radioactive waste being stored at the nation's plants has tripled since 1980.

Short-term effects—especially with accidents—are unwelcome suffering from diseases such as leukemia.

Long term effects—degradation of the genetic pool with mutations leading to premature aging, immune system alterations, heart disease, diabetes, and mental and physical disabilities.

You don't need a PhD in physics to understand the technical issues. In fact, the big debate is not about technology, but about the real issues of long-term threats to public health and the environment, and of a military-industrial complex that contaminates our drinking water, our air, and our (Continued on page 22)
Sunland Park Residents Fight Medical Waste Incinerator

by Marianne Thaeler

There is an incinerator, owned by Nu-Mex JOAB Inc., located 1800 feet from the city limits of Sunland Park (a community of 6,500 people in southern Doña Ana County.) The incinerator is situated 3000 feet from one school and 4400 feet from another. This incinerator now burns approximately 5 tons per day of hospital waste.

To comply with 1990 Solid Waste Management Regulations, Nu-Mex JOAB Inc. has applied for a permit from the New Mexico Environment Department to operate this incinerator, as well as a land fill for incinerator ash and a recycling operation.

At hearings held by the Environment Department in Sunland Park on August 15-18 and in Santa Fe on August 28-29, members of Concerned Citizens of Sunland Park Association testified that the stack emits plastic and food odors that cause nausea. The neighbors testified that their area "smells like burning plastic and burning meat."

Testimony was given that the emissions from the Nu-Mex JOAB Inc. stack have not been analyzed or monitored. Testimony was given based on analysis of "typical hospital waste." These analyses presumed the presence of cadmium, a heavy metal, found in batteries and disposal containers, i.e., red paper bags.

Analysis also presumed the presence of hydrogen chloride and dioxins. The Environment Department's expert on incinerators, Gail Harmes, testified that the odors coming near the incinerator are of risk.

The application to operate a land fill was incomplete. There are insufficient test holes to analyze potential pollution of ground water. This area of Sunland Park is near the Rio Grande and has a high water table. It has been suggested that the land fill should be lined with clay or plaster, although there are no guarantees these will prevent leaks.

The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club's position is that the Environment Department should deny the application for both the incinerator and the land fill if the permit is approved it should be for a duration of one year or less. There is no position on the recycle operation at this time.

The Rio Grande Chapter supports the Concerned Citizens of Sunland Park Association. Forty Concerned Citizens took time away from work (mostly farm labor), held local goon sales, hired a bus, and slept in a church gymnasium in Santa Fe in order to attend and testify at the hearings in Santa Fe. The address for the Concerned Citizens of Sunland Park Assoc. is P. O. Box 755, Sunland Park, New Mexico 88063.

Also supporting the Sunland Park Concerned Citizens is the New Mexico Environmental Law Center (attorney Doug Melnikoff is representing the Concerned Citizens), the Southwest Research and Information Center, the Southwest Organizing Project, and the Catholic Diocese of Las Cruces.

A decision on these matters must be made by the New Mexico Environmental Law Center, Secretary for the Environment, by October 15, 1991.

If you agree with the Rio Grande Chap ter of the Sierra Club's position against the Nu-Mex JOAB, Inc. application for a permit to operate the incinerator and the land fill at Sunland Park, feel free to write as an individual to the Governor, since hospitals may feel threatened. There are alternatives to incineration--aerobic and microwave technologies are available.

Teresa Sadler (Marianne Thaeler is a member of the Sierra Club Southern New Mexico Group.)

Riparian Protection on Rio Bonito Needs Support

by Roger Peterson

Acquisition of 1400 acres along the Rio Bonito by the Bureau of Land Management is a project to praise and support. BLM plans to improve stream and streamside habitat, retain for wildlife the water rights that have irrigated 2000 acres of cultivated land.

The acreage--four parcels between BLM-managed Fort Stanton and the town of Lincoln -- belongs to the Lincoln County Land Company. The company will receive in trade equally valuable parcels in Doña Ana and Valencia Counties and in Pinal County.

Tres Roswell Resource Area of BLM is a-sent Management Framework Plan Amendment (available from the Bureau at 505-624-1790) to accommodate this trade and possible future opportunities to protect the river corridor. Little opposition developed during the comment period: keeping that land undeveloped and the water in the east-flowing watershed was attractive to community consensus. The strong "no" from the New Mexico Cattle Growers was withdrawn when some of its more prominent members expressed their interest in keeping water in the Rio.

But at a hearing in Carrizozo in early July, right-wing opposition succeeded in putting a hold on the federal endeavor. The Environmental Protection Agency was asked by BLM to defer the deal until county concerns were addressed. Most concerns were from disafforestation, displacement of landowners, commodification of property, and decrease in county income were felt. But acquisition of land and especially of water rights by the feds are sound to the New Mexico Land Use Alliance, People for the West, and Representative Joe (Continued on page 23)

Unser Lawsuit Goes to Appeal

As this issue goes to print, the Sierra Club lawsuit challenging the design of Unser Boulevard as it would impact Petrified National Monument is heard before the State Court of Appeals. In a devastating judgment from the lower District Court, Judge Art Encinias had ruled that, not only didn't conservation groups have any standing to review the actions of the City, but the City had "done enough" on Unser and shouldn't be held to the impossible standard of "using all possible planning to minimize harm " to the National Monument.

Judge Encinias ruled that only the State Historic Preservation Officer had standing to challenge the city's construction of Unser under the NM Prehistoric and Historic Sites Preservation Act, and that since only city funds were used, no environmental impact laws or regulations applied.

This decision essentially gives the City, and all other local government entities, carte blanche authority to do as they please with the public's money, even when projects would damage values like Petrified National Monument of great public concern. Clearly, we need a mini-NHPA (National Environmental Policy Act) here in New Mexico to close this giant, irrational loophole that allows local governments to simply separate project funding in order to avoid any judicial review of their project's environmental impacts.

The Judge also ruled that the City Council Resolution R-455 mandating that Unser be built as a four-lane parkway is unreviewable. Merely another Council Resolution is required to completely wipe out the four-lane project guidelines in essence, the City can do whatever it wants with its Council Resolutions, even when they embody essential environmental mitigation measures allowing adoption of a PONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact).

We need a freight train of letters and phone calls to our State legislators demanding legislation to create a NM Environmental Quality Act which mimics NEPA. The loophole allowing us our tax dollars to be used arbitrarily and capriciously makes us all hold pretence must be closed by providing statutory judicial review of local government projects like Unser, regardless of whether Federal, State, or local monies are used.

But we also need to write to Governor Bruce King and Attorney General Tom Morris, urging their strongest support for a private right of action to enforce the NM Prehistoric and Historic Sites Preservation Act for the following reasons:

1) Politically unrealistic to expect that a State official subject to all kinds of pressures, including threats of budget cuts for his Department, can be the only person with standing to enforce the Sites Preservation Act. Albuquerque's West Side State Senator, Martin Chavez, succeeded during the last legislative session in getting State staff position from the Historic Preservation Division in vindictive retaliation for enforcement of the Sites Preservation Act on the Montano Bridge issue, for example.

2) Both the Sites Preservation Act and its implementing regulations specify that the law can be enforced through injunctive relief, and the regulations, which have the force of law, further specify that enforcement can be by private citizens, i.e., conservation groups like the Sierra Club.

Mail your letters to the Governor and Attorney General to the State Capitol, Santa Fe, NM 87503. Switchboard phone is 984-9300.

Petroglyphs Appropriation Needs Support

Different Senate and House of Representatives bills will need to go to conference committee when Congress reconvenes after Labor Day to decide on the 1992 Interior Department appropriations.

In regards to Petrified National Monument funds for land acquisition, the House bill recommends only $4 million, while the Senate is recommending the full amount requested by the administration, i.e., $8 million.

We need an avalanche of letters to our House representatives urging that they use their influence with the conference committee members to restore the full $8 million for the following reasons:

The National Park Service now has a fully approved Land Protection Plan in hand which will permit them to swiftly proceed with appraisals, negotiations, and acquisition. House members voting to cut Petrified's appropriation had expressed concern that $3 million already appropriated from past years wasn't spent.

The value of land is rising since the Monument is on the path of Albuquerque's most intense development pressures. Drilling off the $8 million needed for the Federal government's "share of land acquisition is "worse than nothing.

Local government has already appropriated and spent more on land acquisition for the Monument than the Federal government: the City of Albuquerque has spent $14 million from its quarter cent gross receipts tax, and the State has authorized issuance of $3 million of its $6 million commitments in leverage tax bonds.

Transportation Bill — an
"Environmental Nightmare"
by Stefan Verchinski

The Surface Transportation Act, due to come up for a vote in Congress this fall, is an environmental nightmare and deserves membership phone calls and letters into your congressional offices. The primary reason is that the current bill as proposed H.R. 2950 asks for a new National Highway System, weakening of wilderness protections and vehicle miles on public lands.

The environmental elements we need to ask for in a new transportation vision are:
- Preserve the Existing Infrastructure. The present legislation on both the Senate and House side calls for a doubling of the size of the Interstate Highway system. The New Vision calls for high occupancy vehicle programs, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. In New Mexico, where we need alternatives such as the Santa Fe to Albuquerque Rail Trail instead of a sinuous I-25. In major city areas, let’s reduce the waste of space or jobs that need to be purchased and set aside.
- Enhance National Energy Security. Per capita gas use is nearly 4.5 times higher than in Europe with oil imports threatening our economy. Cheaper oil and gas is underwritten by the tax laws here to $14 billion a year. In major city areas long term right of ways need to be purchased and set aside.

Bush Reverses Earlier Pledge, Erases Wetland Protection
from the Sierra Club National News Report

Under pressure from Vice President Dan Quayle and White House Chief of Staff John Sununu, EPA Chief William Reilly agreed to a new definition of "wetlands" that could remove protection for millions of acres of critical wetlands habitat.

Environmentalists charge that by forcing this change in the bill that outlines the criteria for what can be defined as protected as a wetland, President Bush has gone back on his "no net loss" of wetlands campaign pledge.

"Simply changing the way wetlands are defined, the Bush administration has pulled the plug on federal protection for millions of acres of wetlands," said Jerry Paulson, Chair of the Sierra Club’s Wetlands Committee.

The original 1999 government manual on wetlands, developed for the Clean Water Act by an interagency task force of scientists, granted protection to lands saturated down to 12 inches for at least seven consecutive days a year. Though Reilly offered to raise the limit to 15 straight days of saturated soil at the surface, the White House pushed for a minimum of 21 days of surface saturation.

The compromise, offered by Quayle, settled on 15 straight days of standing water and 21 days of surface saturation. Conservationists say this new definition is short-sighted and unfair.

"If we’re not sure an area is a wetland and perform wetland functions, then we’ll say it’s not a wetland and allow it to be destroyed without any consideration or study," said Kathy Gregg, chair of the Sierra Club’s Regional Vice President for New Mexico. "To protect areas that we think are performing important wetlands function until we are sure that they aren’t.

The proposed definition will now go into the federal register for public comment. If approved, millions of acres of land that are dry most of the year will be left unprotected, including bottomland swamps, wet meadows, vernal pools, and seasonal wetlands.

Congress has carried the assault on wetlands protection a step further with two bills that would completely eliminate the Clean Water Act’s wetlands protection program and turn over wetlands regulation to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.


What you can do
Write to President Bush and urge him to change the established wetlands definition.

Urge President Bush to appoint a scientific review panel to evaluate the proposed changes to the wetlands manual. Also, ask your senators and representative to oppose S.1463 and H.R.1330.

For more information, contact Jerry Paulson at (815) 338-0393. Call the toll-free, EPA Hotline, 1-800-832-7628, for up-to-the-minute information on wetlands issues.
Fate of Ancient Forests at Stake

There's good news and bad news from Congress. The bad news has serious ramifications for all our national forests, not just those in the Northwest. It is especially important to evolutionary activists across the country to realize how devastating newly introduced legislation would be for forests everywhere.

The bad news comes in the form of bills sponsored by the timber industry and introduced by Sen. Packwood of Oregon and Rep. Haskell of Louisiana. Their bills (S.1156 and H.R.2463) would effectively make commodity production i.e., timber and grazing, the primary and unattainable use for public forests nationwide, overrides portions of the Endangered Species Act, the National Forest Management Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and the entire concept of multiple-use. Judicial review of agency management would also be severely restricted.

Attached to this complete reversal of forest management laws are some meager "protections" for ancient forests in the Northwest. Small ancient forest reserves would be created, but they would be subject to change with each forest plan revision. This would mean that areas initially designated as "reserves" could face the saw chain only 10-15 years later in the next plan revision.

For this bogus ancient forest protection in the Northwest, national forests across the country would be turned over to timber industry chainsaws with greatly diminished environmental safeguards and public involvement.

The good news is that an excellent ancient forest bill has been introduced in the Senate by Senator Brock Adams of Washington. The "Pacitic Northwest Forest Community Recovery and Ecosystem Conservation Act" (S.1156) is the first national forests bill in the Senate that conservationists can enthusiastically support. It is a comprehensive bill that is based on a scientifically credible, ecosystem-based approach to ancient forest protection.

The bill also includes significant and responsible provisions to assist timber-dependent communities through the economic transition they face, including giving states the right to restrict raw-material export of whole logs.

The Adams legislation creates Ecosystem Natural Areas, using the mapped recommendations recently completed by a highly respected group of forestry professionals under the auspices of the House Agriculture Committee. (This group's findings strongly corroborated what environmentalists have been arguing all along—that ancient forest ecosystems cannot survive if cuttings continue at the present rate.)

The Ecosystem Natural Areas would bring permanent protection from logging to significant stands of ancient forest as well as watersheds that provide important salmon habitat. Many remaining stands of ancient forests and salmon habitat become Wassertlered Study Areas and receive interim protection for 3 years while a 9-member panel of scientists considers further actions needed to restore and maintain the Pacific Northwest forest ecosystem. Remaining areas are managed in accordance with the spotted owl protection plan outlined in the Thomas Interagency Scientific Committee, with no changes to existing environmental laws. Senator Adams bill deserves our strong and vocal support!

Incredible action on ancient forest bills, both good and bad, will be at its peak in September and October. Now is a critical time to make your voice heard about the impact these bills could have nationwide!

What You Can Do

Letters and meetings with members of congress in every district are critical now that both good and very bad ancient forest legislation is actively being considered.
Mexican Wolf Update

Despite high expectations for this year’s captive breeding potential, the Mexican wolf captive breeding program has suffered serious setbacks over the past several months. According to Dave Parsons, Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator, the U.S. population now stands at 34 and the Mexican population at 10 (no reports yet on 1991 breeding). In the U.S., 8 pairs were matched for the 1991 reproductive season; 6 of these were presumed to be capable of reproducing.

At the Rio Grande Zoological Park in Albuquerque, one litter of 7 pups (5 females, 2 males) was born and one of the females has died. Concurrently, one litter was aborted prematurely at the Wild Canid Survival and Research Center in Eureka, Missouri and the remaining four pairs apparently failed to conceive.

Although the reasons for these failures are not completely clear, the captive breeding team is relatively certain that genetic atrophy is not to blame. A recent study of the captive population’s genetic viability conducted by scientists from Washington University, St. Louis and the UCLA concluded that there have been “no apparent decreases in heterozygosity in the sample captive population.”

To help minimize the devastating impact the program suffers from the loss of even one litter, the recovery team has requested that Congress fund additional captive breeding facilities. Sadly, neither the House nor Senate has included the requested $400,000 in their respective FY92 Interior Appropriations bills.

While there is little probability of acquiring the funding from Congress at this late date, the possibility of forming a strong base of regional Congressional support over the course of the coming year seems good. This year, we were pleased to hear that Senate Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Representative Bill Richardson (D-NM) both made requests to their respective Appropriations Chairs for the complete Mexican wolf funding. Meanwhile, Senators Domenici (R-NM) and DeConcini (D-AZ) seem poised to move off the “fence.”

Letters of support are also needed to Sena Domenici and DeConcini who will be pivotal players in struggle to get funding for FY93. Importantly, they need to recognize that there is a national interest in seeing Mexican wolves reintroduced to the wild. Letters to these members should be addressed as on page 15.

Defenders Sues Interior Over Yellowstone Wolves

On August 8, Defenders of Wildlife filed suit in U.S. District court in Washington, D.C., calling on the U.S. Department of the Interior to restore wolves to Yellowstone National Park, as called for by the Interior’s own wolf recovery plan.

Conservationists have been urging the Interior Department to move forward with Yellowstone wolf recovery for more than a decade. But the Interior Department has consistently bent to political pressure applied by western livestock interests and their supporters in Congress.

Defenders’ legal basis for this suit is simple. The Endangered Species Act doesn’t call on agencies to restore threatened and endangered species only when it’s easy or popular. Rather, the language of the law calls on the Interior Department to use “all methods and procedures necessary” to bring species to the point of delisting.

In the 1987 Rocky Mountains Wolf Recovery Plan, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) makes it plain that restoration of wolves to the Yellowstone area is essential for recovery. Further, the plan points out that reintroduction is necessary in order to achieve recovery. Defenders’ suit charges that the Interior Department has failed to implement its own recovery plan.

The Interior Department has continuously dragged its feet on wolf recovery for more than a decade. While controversial recovery programs may take more time to implement, we believe federal agencies have allowed political concerns to override legal and biological responsibilities.

In a letter to Secretary of the Interior Lujan, Defenders made it clear that it is not too late to resolve this dispute, and that we stand ready to discuss ways to move recovery forward outside of the courts.
Alter the Landscape of American Politics

by Reid Wilson
Sierra Club Political Director

In 1992, the Sierra Club faces the biggest challenge and opportunity yet to affect the outcomes of important elections. The 1992 elections could profoundly alter the landscape of American politics for years to come. There is a confluence of circumstances that only occurs "once in a blue moon," and it guarantees that come January, 1993, there will be a lot of new faces on Capitol Hill.

Our job is to see to it that these new faces are ones we can use.

The most obvious factor in the fall of 1992 is the presidential election. Under any circumstances, this will provide a national forum for discussion of environmental issues and offer the Sierra Club a chance to present our issues to the candidates, the media and voters.

Another factor is the so-called "volatility" United States Senate class. This is the group of Senators whose seats were last up in 1986, and prior to that 1980. Both years saw a switch in the majority party of the Senate, with an unusually high number of races won with less than 55% of the vote. Many of these senators are true environmental champions whom we must defend.

The biggest impact on the Congress will be the effect of the redistricting process following the 1990 Census. Lopsided population growth and migrations mean that a number of seats in Congress, and several will gain. The politics of redistricting means that in some places there will be open seats, in others incumbents will face re-elections that will be running against incumbents, and others will see their districts moving to whole new areas where they are less well known. There could be more than 100 new members of Congress—imagine if a great majority were pro-environment. This holds true for state legislatures as well.

The opportunities for the Sierra Club's electoral programs are enormous. The payoffs for our success this year will be felt for many years, even decades, to come. The dangers are just as real, for some of our best leaders in the Senate and House may face the toughest challenges of their careers.

The Sierra Club has a unique advantage to influence this election. We already have the largest environmental political action committee (PAC) in the U.S. in terms of contributions we make to candidates. But we bring more than just money. We bring armies of skilled volunteers, and an endorsement that is prized with almost no other.

This success depends on achieving a level of activity many times greater than in the past. It will require many more training workshops to educate our volunteers in electoral campaigning. It will require advance planning and budgeting by chapters and groups as a part of their overall conservation program. It will require a larger financial commitment by the Sierra Club Political Committee. It will require increased activity on behalf of our endorsed candidates—press events, fund-raisers, get-out-the-vote—and organizing of many more Club activists into campaigns.

The larger the role we play, the more visible our issues will be, in campaign. This, and the election of environmental candidates around the country, could usher in a Congress the likes of which has never been seen—a Congress where environment takes precedence over expediency, where pork-barrel is replaced by park-pal, and where our children's future is more important than oilman's pocketbooks.

House Slows Grazing Fee Hikes

After voting in June to quadruple the fees charged to ranchers who graze their livestock on government-owned land, the House of Representatives voted July 23 to raise the fees in smaller and slower increments. The provision was approved in order to avoid a possible presidential veto.

The measure was attached to a bill directing the Bureau of Land Management to make environmental protection a priority in managing public lands. Environmentalists believe the legislation means federal grazing fees will contribute to over-grazing of the West's rangelands, and are supporting the increase.

The provision, approved as part of the House Interior Appropriations bill, would have raised the present $1.97-per-annual animal unit month—the amount of land needed to sustain one cow or five sheep—to $8.70 over the next few years. The revised provision would limit the increases to 33 percent a year.

Bennett Johnston III Calls for Defeat of D. L. A's Fee Bill

The son of the U.S. Senator who is leading the fight for one of the most environmentally threatening pieces of legislation in decades has called upon his father to stop indulging special interests and pass a comprehensive national energy strategy that protects the environment.

Bennett Johnston III, son of Senator Bennett Johnston (D-LA), called off his father at a Sierra Club-sponsored rally held in San Francisco, August 6 to kick the oil habit and stop poisoning the environment with a bad energy bill.

Johnston III said a blown up poster of the Sierra Club's "Kick the Oil Habit" petition that opposes the Johnston/Wallop Energy Bill S 1220. "Dad, I love you, but we've sickened of this disgraceful legislation. Our national energy strategy which hails the poisoning of our environment," Johnston said to the crowd at the rally.

Johnston, who is running for Representative Barbara Boxer's congressional seat, signed the Sierra Club petition demanding automobiles average 45 miles per gallon by the year 2000, protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil drills, transition to safe, clean and renewable energy sources and aggressive programs to improve energy efficiency.

Phillip Berry New Sierra Club President

Phillip S. Berry, longtime environmental activist and Bay Area trial and environmental lawyer, is the new President of the 600,000-member Sierra Club.

"It is a privilege and great responsibility to serve as President of the Sierra Club," said Berry, who has been a director of the Sierra Club for some 23 years and served once before as the organization's President (1969-71). "The environmental problems facing this nation and world have never been greater. Fortunately, they can be matched by the people's desire to find lasting solutions. The Sierra Club is a strong influence in this cause and moral force.

As President Berry says he will lead the Club to know its traditional principles and continue its independence and firmness with purpose.

Berry lives in Lafayette, California and his law firm, Berry and Berry is located in Oakland. A graduate of Stanford University.

Zuni Mt. Classic Mountain Bike Tour

Get to know the wonderful Zuni Mountains and support the local environmental groups working to fight against the unnecessary PNM Zuni Power Line. This tour, September 29, 1991, is sponsored by the Wilderness Center in Albuquerque and the Zuni Mountain Bike Coalition.

The tour will include both a 15 and 27 mile loop beginning and ending in Bonita Canyon. Entrance fee is $15 with a T-shirt for the first 100 entrants. Raffles will be held for a bike, local jewelry, etc.

Contact: The Wilderness Center, 4900 Lomas Blvd, NE, Albuquerque, 87110, 268-6767.

BLM Backs Off on Drilling in Utah Wilds

Faced with a legal challenge, the federal Bureau of Land Management in Utah has withdrawn a permit that would have allowed the Coors Energy Company to drill an exploratory oil and gas well in an area environmentalists were trying to stop a federally protected wilderness.

The Bureau of Land Management said the action was taken "in the interest of the public and for the benefit of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, represented by the Sierra Club/Legal Defense Fund, which had earlier obtained a temporary restraining order to stop the drilling. The environmental groups cited multiple negative impacts on the geology and the proposed Behind-the-Rocks Wilderness in southeastern Utah, which is home to Utah's only self-sustaining herd of desert bighorn sheep."

"The BLM completely ignored the valid concerns raised about drilling," said Lawson LeGate, the Sierra Club's Associate Southwest Representative. "They continue to dogmatically pretend that our wilderness proposal doesn't exist."

The Utah Wilderness Coalition, of which the Sierra Club is a founding member, is pushing for wilderness designation for the Goldbar area. Rep. Wayne Owens (D-Utah) has introduced a bill in Congress, HR 1500, to grant federal protection to 5.4 million acres of Utah wilderness, including the Goldbar lands.

LeGate said environmentalists continue to battle other proposals to drill in ecologically sensitive areas of Utah, such as the proposed Labyrinth Canyon Wilderness north of Cuyamans National Park.

Sustainable City Design Seminar Planned

A number of planners, politicians, and local thinkers are planning to put on a day long seminar focusing on rebuilding and redesigning the city. It is sensitively scheduled for February of 1992. Sierra Club members interested in attending as participants or audience should contact Stefan Vechchini, 200 Esplana de NE Albuquerque, NM 87110.
Ohio Polluters Ordered to Join Sierra Club

An Ohio wire service reported in early July that Stark County Judge Harry E. Klode ordered two local rubber manufacturing employees to become "active" members of Sierra Club in Ohio. The judge had for some time been seeking two local employees to become members of the Club at $50 a year. In addition to their mandated memberships, the two were sentenced to perform two years of hard labor when they were convicted of income tax evasion.

Contributing to the EPA and local park conservation projects.

The court ruling was a result of Runk and Knapp's admission that they had been found guilty of income tax evasion. In an earlier sentence the common pleas court judge ordered Joseph Rush to become a contributing member of Sierra Club at $100 a year, and Larry Keplar to become a supporting member of the Club at $50 a year.

For everyone's well-being, leaders reserve the right to turn away anyone whose clothing or equipment appears unsuitable for the particular trip. Swimming is usually arranged at the meeting place. Happy holidays!

- Norma McCallan

Chapter Outing Chair

El Paso Group

Administration

The El Paso Group continues to work towards the willingness of its members to volunteer their time. Anna Bilotis will arrange volunteer days for the group's newsletter. Plans include publishing on 100 percent recycled newspaper using non-toxic ink. Also, the group will expand its network of additional cost.

The Environmental Center continues to expand its operations. Aside from serving as a recycling center and group office, it will also serve as an environmental resource and educational center for El Paso. Lisa Olivas has volunteered to develop both a library and educational programs on xeriscaping, recycling, etc.

Under John Greaves' able guidance, the Center has been landscaped with native plants and trees. Finally, Carolina Greenfield has agreed to be the center's membership chairman as so to assist in the development of new membership and member volunteer base.

Conservation

"Recycling, Member John A. Duncan has succeeded in convincing El Paso's new mayor Bill Tullney to introduce new programs for citywide residential recycling originally developed by John A. Although a few changes have been made by city council it appears likely that some type of citywide program will be implemented this year.

"Hazardous Waste. The group is supporting a plan which would require disposing of hazardous waste around El Paso using existing and proposed roadways. Implementation of this plan becomes especially important given existing problems, anticipated changes from free trade, etc.

"Timber Sales. Ted Metting and other volunteers continue to monitor developments in the Lincoln National Forest. Issues to be planned for include and conducted so as to give members a chance to get a first-hand look at different areas of interest.

"Franklin Mountains. The group continues to prepare for a trip to the Franklin Mountains in Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's development of a comprehensive master plan for Franklin Mountains State Park, the nation's largest urban park. A series of workshops will begin in September and October in order to get public input. A range of alternative plans will then be developed and a document to be released in the spring of 1992.

This process is crucial to the future of the park which has operated without a plan since its inception in the late 1970s. A push toward a park with minimal development will serve as a guide for the group's efforts.

"Clean Air. The El Paso group has requested that the Environmental Protection Control board conduct public hearings related to Ascaro's request to do $81 million worth of improvements to their plant and its air technology. We want to ensure that this significant effort will be far enough in protecting our already diminished air quality.

Meetings

Recent and upcoming general meeting programs include:

- Don Crouch's excellent presentation on the Cooke's Range area, with a special look at the significant historical cultural-tural features.
- Bob Cordon of the Forest Service on the Black Range District on the Continental Divide Trail.
- Larry Henderson and Jan Wobanhead of the National Park Service on Guadalupe Mountains National Park.

We look to finish the year with programs on the Gray Ranch, Uvalde, and to have a visit from El Paso's Marcia Perrella.

Ongoing meetings are being held with local groups on conservation centers on the option for introducing a city-wide recycling program this fall, development of a master plan for Franklin Mountains State Park, a plan for routing hazardous waste around rather than through El Paso, and air quality, through El Paso.

A meeting will be held with Congressman Joe Columba on Maugus 6th, and its successful, passing of the 1782 Mining Law, Franklin Mountains, federal recycling initiatives, and Guadalupe Mountains National Park. More meetings planned with Congressman Columba on mental groups were ruled to have no standing in their suit to make certain the construction of Unser Black Pave toll roads be conducted so as to give members a chance to get a first-hand view of different areas of interest.

A lawsuit has been filed to make sure the Forest Service addresses deficiencies in its EIS concerning the paving of the Las Huertas Canyon Road. Our September meeting will also be on this issue.

Stefan Verchinski has been successful in getting a resolution passed by the City Council and the Rio Grande Council of Governments which supports the construction of a bikeway along I-40. This would be included in the upcoming I-40 widening project. Hopefully this concept will be included in 1992 transportation improvement plans.

Damping of low level radioactivity waste is attracting attention along the Rio Grande and ultimately into the El Paso Group as being addressed by a coalition of environmental groups. Though this type of low level discharge is currently permitted for hospitals and medical facilities, local groups are concerned that permitting releases from San Juan, and the lab for their self-monitoring releases may get a bad precedent.

Some provisions of the city's solid waste management plan are being implemented by the formation of a waste to energy task force and in public hearings recycling options. More public input is needed.

El Paso Group Programs and Activities

Our June program was devoted to Sierra Club Conservation Opportunities. We had speakers from the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management discussing potential activities in the Petrified Forest National Monument and other nearby public lands. At our July meeting, we were given a comprehensive overview of Bandelier National Monument with an introduction to a five year ongoing study of bats in that park. In August we look forward to our group's picnic. We recently participated in Mountain Discovery Days along with many other environmental groups. It was sponsored by the Cibola Ranger District and was well-attended by the public.

Conservation

Transportation for the west side was dealt a blow when the Sierra Club and other environmental groups were declared as non-tax exempt, thus preventing the Club from funding for parkway standards and caused the least harm to the Petrified National Monument.

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Southern NM Group

No report received.

Albuquerque Group Programs and Activities

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Southern NM Group

No report received.
Trade Lawsuit (continued from front page)

under NEPA.
"The administration should not complain that this demand is a surprise. It is really a question of expanding the scope to constitute an actual EIS. Any delay that this suit might cause would be unnecessary if the President simply agreed to expand the review into a full EIS," said McCloskey.
"This suit cannot compel the Administration to negotiate a good agreement which protects the environment. However, without an EIS, the Administration may never even know which options would best equip it to do so — and the public, won't ever know either," added McCloskey.

The Sierra Club believes Environmental Impact Statements help to make an informed decision, and the administration should not complain about developing them. "This is precisely what the Bush Administration is insisting upon with respect to global warming. There it keeps saying it wants to delay action until all the facts are in hand. The administration believes it can study, study, study for global warming...but full speed ahead without environmental impact statements on trade issues," he said.

The lawsuit is being filed by the Sierra Club, Public Citizen and Friends of the Earth.

Bombs and Power Plants (continued from page 9)

land.

Citizens need only common sense to be aware that the risks of low-dose radiation have to be added to all the other cumulative risks of industrial-agricultural products such as heavy metals, pesticides, dioxins, chemicals, etc. There are renowned scientists who predict that 10,000 pollutants, each of unknown toxicity, could destroy the population in ten years if each pollutant turned out to impart a small risk of one death per 100,000 infants or children per year.

Breaking the rules of radioactivity:

The national labs and bomb plants have persistently ignored the cardinal rules of radioactivity:

- Absolute containment of nuclear materials from the environment.
- Records show that there has been indiscriminate dumping and massive contamination.
- Dilution is not the solution to pollution. All of the DOE facilities have spread these long-lived poisons to larger populations and throughout the biosphere. The radioactivity has concentrated as it moved up the food chain. By diluting, we're just spreading the poisons to more citizens and increasing the collective dose.

There is no safe dose of radiation. Even so-called background radiation does cause excess cancer, leukemia, and genetic effects. The health effects are proportional to the dose.

We already have convincing evidence that background radiation alone causes excess cancer and genetic effects. Why expose the public, and especially children, to additional doses? These so-called "acceptable" doses benefit the nuclear industry and their promoters by allowing nuclear production to continue, and are given a blanket of respectability by the prestigious agencies such as ICRP and the NCRP.

Nobody in the agencies had the foggiest idea what the health effects of the allowable doses would be, but it is obvious that their original standards were too high, since they have been lowered almost 100-fold by new evidence. We have considerable human evidence that there is no threshold dose for radiation and that the repair mechanisms for damage to chromosomes is minimal or absent.

National security depends to a large extent on public health integrity. Because public health is threatened by the radioactive and chemical contamination of the nuclear bomb plants, these facilities should be terminated with all deliberate speed. There should be no further production of radioactive weapons by the DOE until the mess of contamination is cleaned up.

Letters

(continued from page 3)

warp's etc. They are stronger so it takes fewer per house and less time to install so builders can be more productive and lower costs to the consumer.

This is one example: substitutions providing both jobs and savings for both the consumer and the environment are seen in the use of rice and wheat straw "plywood" laminates (uses a formerly burnt and wasted agricultural product that caused local health and pollution problems), and cellulose insulation (uses recycled newspaper and cardboard and lowers health risks and higher energy consumption of fiberglass insulation).

Stefan Verchinski
Albuquerque

Rio Bonito (continued from page 10)

Skeen, Sterling Spencer, chairman of the Lincoln County Commission, is the fellow commissioner of this persuasion, but his two fellow commissioners are reluctant to overlook him.

If the transaction falls through, the water rights will no doubt be sold to Alamogordo or another town that would take the water from near the headwaters. The environmental interest is a live river. Opening the land to the public and improvement of riparian vegetation are also welcome benefits. George Grossman, Chaparral Conservation Co-Chair, spoke for the trade in a letter to the BLM District Manager: "Improvement of wildlife habitat, protection of sensitive species, and your proposed use of water rights for these purposes are the plan's main attractions to us. We will look to carefully at any proposals for developed recreation facilities on the lands to be acquired.

Persons who wish to support the Rio Bonito exchange should send their reasons to Francis R. Cherry, Jr., District Manager, BLM, POB 1397, Roswell 88201. Lincoln County members can be most effective by contacting their commissioners.

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September 27 Silent Spring published
September 28 Chapter Conservation Committee Meeting, Socorro
October 2 Aldo Leopold proposes 1 million acre Gila Wilderness
October 16 William O. Douglas born, 1898
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