



Jim Therrien, Lybrook Community Ministries



Allyson Siwik



David McGahey

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Santa Fe, NM 87505

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Our primary endorsements
Each election season, the Rio Grande Chapter endorses candidates we think will best protect our natural resources. See our picks on **Pages 8-9**

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Cover banner photo by Mary Katherine Ray

Publication information

The *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.

For extra copies, e-mail riogrande.chapter@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.

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

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

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Volunteer opportunities

The Rio Grande Chapter needs a treasurer to replace the great Ray Shortridge, who is taking a break. A volunteer treasurer provide quarterly financial statements to the board; monitor transactions in bank accounts and general ledger; monitor the process through which the contractor bookkeeper prepares year-end financial statements; coordinate with chapter director on financial matters.

'Our sacred land is not their pay toilet'

Residents across state speak out about proposed high-level nuclear dump in SE New Mexico

By John Buchser
Chapter Water chair

Thanks to citizen lobbying at the Roundhouse, 30 legislators signed on to letters objecting to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's inadequate public-comment period on a proposed dump for high-level nuclear fuel rods between Carlsbad and Hobbs.

The commission said the Legislature could comment on the full environmental-impact statement after it is released in a year or so. That makes it even more important for the public to comment during the 60-day scoping period that ends May 29.

The proposal to store spent fuel from all the nation's nuclear reactors has many problems. One of the most critical is that of poorly designed transport casks that are too heavy for most railroads in New Mexico. Another major issue is that the proposal to "temporarily" store this radioactive waste is contrary to current law.

In April, activists toured the state with a mock radioactive-waste canister to highlight how risky the shipment and storage of the nuclear waste is.



David McGahey

Residents toured with a mock waste canister to highlight the risks of transporting and storing high-level nuclear-waste in New Mexico. 'New Mexico has been targeted as a national sacrifice zone for too long,' said Leona Morgan, co-founder of Nuclear Issues Study Group.

"Our land is not the nation's dumping ground for dangerous high-level radioactive waste, with its risks for cancer, birth defects and deaths. Those who created the waste should take responsibility for it. Our sacred land is not their pay toilet," said Rose Gardner, a Eunice resident and founder of Alliance for Environmental Strategies.

"We ask people from New Mexico and around the country to support us in halting this dangerous plan, which not only creates risks for us at ground zero, but risks along transport routes nationwide."

High-level radioactive waste could end up being stored for up to 120 years, according to the application. The federal government has promised and failed for more than 35 years to develop a permanent under-

ground repository for high-level reactor wastes.

"What happens if the federal government breaks its promise to move this waste away or won't pay to clean it up?" asked Nick King, pastor at Carlsbad Mennonite Church. "This is an ethical and moral concern that affects communities and God's creation."

The Holtec facility once built is estimated to employ fewer than 40 employees and 15 security forces. These numbers pale in comparison to the job-creation potential of other industries that may not have a future in the event of nuclear-waste contamination.

More than 10,000 rail cars would haul this risky waste, rumbling on rails through or near major cities in New Mexico, in a process that would

take 20 years.

In the last three years, there have been seven train accidents in New Mexico, including trains derailing and/or wrecks.

Other issues with the proposal:

- In its environmental report, Holtec states that the federal government would pay for the transportation of the waste, but current federal law allows payment only for shipments to a permanent repository, not to a private storage site such as Holtec's.

- Radiation risks to workers in the facility and along transport routes are underestimated.

- Casks are welded closed. Repair processes to fix broken casks or leaking fuel have not been developed.

- The cask bracket system to hold used fuel rods immobile is failing.

Take action

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will host public meetings on the proposed nuclear-storage site 4-7 p.m. April 30 at Eastern New Mexico University Campus Union building in Roswell; 7-10 p.m. May 1 at the Lea County Event Center in Hobbs; and 7-10 p.m. May 3 at the Eddy County Fire Service in Carlsbad.

Deadline for comments is May 29. Go to riograndesierraclub.org for link to email comments. Or mail to: Reference NRC-2018-0052. May Ma, Office of Administration, Mail Stop: TWFN-7- A60M, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555- 0001.

- The excellent recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission were not followed.

- Fracking in the Permian Basin is booming. As the fracking is causing a considerable increase in tremors, the Holtec site is no longer at low risk for seismic activity.

- Only 60 days for the public to comment on a 600-page document is insufficient.

- Permanent storage should be developed before any "interim" location away from reactors.

See the box to learn how you can help put the brakes on this risky proposal.

F-16 flyovers threaten Gila; your action needed

Donna Stevens, Upper Gila Watershed Alliance

The Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness areas are known for their immense natural beauty and outstanding opportunities for solitude. Would the Gila still be beautiful if it were no longer quiet? Let's make sure we never have to find out.

Background: Last fall, conservationists learned that Holloman Air Force Base plans to expand its F-16 fighter-jet training airspace. Two alternative Military Operations Areas have been proposed: (1) Expand the existing Talon area east of the White Sands Missile Range, and (2) Expand the existing Cato/Smitty areas and create a new Lobo Military Operations Area near Silver City and over the Gila National Forest and Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness Areas.

Alternative 2 would have major effects on Southwest New Mexico, with 10,000 annual sorties — an average of 30 per day. Ten percent of flights will be supersonic, and 10 percent will occur at night. Flights can be as low as 500 feet above ground, and

Take action

Visit peacefulgilaskies.com to sign a petition opposing the military training over the Gila and to learn more. The official comment deadline is past, but Holloman is still accepting comments. When the draft Environmental Impact Statement is released this summer, there will be a second comment period.

some will drop air-defense flares and chaff, about 15,000 of each annually. A bundle of chaff consists of 5 million aluminum-coated plastic fibers that are released to form an electronic cloud and hide aircraft from radar detection. Flares are also released as part of air defense; dropped from 2,000 feet above ground level, they burn for about four seconds. Although the Air Force says the flares present no fire risk, there are documented cases of flares starting fires on the ground.

The proposed expansion in F-16 training missions over the Gila clearly puts the health of the national forest, Gila and Aldo Wilderness areas and nearby communities like Silver City at risk from extreme noise, wildfire and environmental contamination. Trying to wean itself off the boom-and-bust cycle of extractive industries, the Silver

City area has relied on natural amenities to attract tourism, outdoor recreation and retirees to diversify its rural economy. This strategy is severely threatened by Holloman's proposal.

Opposition to Holloman's proposal is much more than a not-in-my-backyard issue. The Gila River, the Gila National Forest, and the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wildernesses are part of our national heritage, which belongs to everyone.

Air Force Meetings

When the community found out about Holloman's proposal, residents of southwest New Mexico were outraged by the lack of public notice and failure to hold a scoping meeting in Silver City, the population center most affected by Alternative 2. The Grant County Commission requested a public meeting with the Air Force, and when this

took place last November, Air Force representative Alan Shafer declined to answer many questions, saying that the answers would be included in the draft Environmental Impact Statement, expected in 2018.

On March 8, Lt. Gov. John Sanchez's office convened a second public meeting with Shafer. Despite less than two days' notice, more than 400 residents attended the meeting and protest rally. Not one person spoke in favor of the Holloman proposal.

There is little doubt that the F-16 training at Holloman is going to happen as part of our country's military preparedness. But how Holloman will optimize its airspace to accommodate the training has yet to be determined.

The Air Force should use lands already impacted by military exercises, such as White Sands Missile Range (3,200 square miles), Fort Bliss Army Base (1,700 square miles) and other areas.

F-16 training over the Gila would change its fundamental character. It will take the proverbial village to respond to this threat; we urge you to do your part. Holler louder than an F-16!

Working together for justice, fair wages

Recently, we were pleased to be involved in an effort organized to increase coordination between organized labor and environmental groups in New Mexico.

The cooperation and mutual support of labor and environmentalists are essential to building a progressive Southwest. Working together, we can create communities that restore and protect our beautiful region while providing just wages, health care and education to all families.

In the first round of discussion, it was fairly straightforward to agree that our political priorities for labor and the environment this year are essentially the same. Both know that keeping and improving progressive majorities in the Legislature is critical. New Mexico also has the opportunity this year to elect



David Coss,
Rio Grande Chapter chair

a governor who will protect our air and water and our working families. So for unions and environmentalists, it is all hands on deck for the 2018 elections — but other priorities for collaboration also became apparent.

First, as the environmental community pushes for more renewable energy, economic opportunity is going to occur, yet we all must ensure the new jobs are better, not worse, than the jobs that will be ending as we adapt to technological change and face up to climate realities.

My friend Brian Condit,

president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, pointed out that members of his union typically receive over \$50 an hour in wages and benefits. The US has seen so many of our good jobs replaced by low-wage work with no benefits. It will benefit all of us to make sure we are fighting for better wages and working conditions as we fight for renewable energy and healthier communities.

A second area of common concern is southeastern New Mexico. Somos un Pueblo Unido representative Marina Piña has led organizing efforts among immigrant dairy workers and oil-field workers in places like Roswell, Hobbs, Carlsbad and Clovis. The Sierra Club understands that in addition to the concerns with water quality, air quality and animal welfare in these industries, there is also

grave concern for worker health, safety and wages. Immigrant-bashing and law-enforcement raids continue to disrupt these working families, while political representation from those same counties continues to be both anti-union and anti-environment.

Importantly, work done by Marina and Somos has shown that all the communities mentioned are “majority minority.” That is, the majority of the population in Eddy, Lea, Chaves and other southeast New Mexico counties is Latino. Somos has begun efforts to identify and register to vote all qualified workers and their family members. This work has the potential to change the type of representatives, senators and other elected officials from southeastern New Mexico. With organizing and voter registration, we

can replace politicians who are anti-union and anti-environment with representatives who support worker safety and water-quality protection; who show a concern for good wages and healthy communities.

Charles Goodmacher of the National Education Association brought up a third area for collaboration — renewable energy in our public schools. In many communities, the public schools own substantial land and buildings. Districts like Santa Fe have shown how to convert many facilities to renewable energy. Groups in all areas of the state could support this type of effort.

I am proud that the Sierra Club continues to be pro-union. The potential for new collaboration and projects with our union allies is real and happening right now.

Methane safeguards face biggest threat yet

By Camilla Feibelman
Rio Grande Chapter director

You’ve read it here more than once. Oil and gas operations throughout the state are wasting natural gas they extract from our public lands.

Methane — the key component of natural gas that also happens to be a powerful greenhouse gas — is leaked, vented or flared throughout the oil and gas drilling, transport and storage processes. As part of the Paris Climate Agreement, the Obama Administration passed rules at the EPA and BLM that would slow this waste, protect health, reduce climate change and brought more royalties into the state treasury.

That these methane rules (against all odds) are still in effect is thanks to you. The Trump Administration has done its best to turn these rules back

but so far has failed, in the courts and in Congress. But sadly, anti-environment forces in the administration have resorted to the route that is slower but is more likely to succeed.

In March, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke proposed to gut the Bureau of Land Management rules that would reduce methane pollution on public lands. So we once again ask you to stand up for these rules so important to our climate, our health, our state income and our public lands. The agency has given the public until April 23 to comment. You can do that on our website at <https://sierra.secure.force.com/actions/National?actionId=AR0106930>.

Late last year, when the comment period on Zinke’s proposed delay of the methane rule closed, the BLM received



In March, activists projected a count of lost methane revenues from oil and gas leaks and waste onto the building that houses New Mexico’s tax agency.

Camilla Feibelman

more than 150,000 comments — the vast majority in opposition to delaying the safeguards. That’s in addition to the hundreds of thousands of comments that citizens submitted in support of the original rule.

We sometimes hear that this administration is in chaos or is too disorganized to do too much harm. But the sad reality is that our environmental protections are being systematically dismantled. When we desperately need to take significant action to reduce climate pollution before it’s too late, Zinke’s revisions are a huge step backward.

The Zinke proposal would result in

the same amount of climate damage as 8.3 million cars driven over 10 years. Not to mention the fact that oil and gas operations also release dangerous toxins such as benzene and other ozone-forming pollutants that can trigger asthma attacks and worsen respiratory diseases such as emphysema.

More methane waste means more air pollution that will harm families, especially those living closest to oil and gas development. We hope you’ll join us in the fight to protect New Mexico, its people and its public lands by commenting by midnight April 23 — comment links available at riograndesierraclub.org.

Celebrating 55 years as a chapter

Throughout our 55th anniversary, the Rio Grande Chapter is looking back at past campaigns and asking for your memories. From lifetime member Jonathan Brinkerhoff:

Courtesy of my parents, I became active outdoors at an early age both in the woods behind our rural Massachusetts home and camping/hiking in Maine, where, when I got too tired, I was introduced to backpacking, of sorts, by my mom (see photo). Starting with one of the first VW vans imported to the U.S. in the early '50s, my family always had a van or motorhome that got heavy use during two years in Europe and throughout the U.S. After a family move to California in 1965, I started



backpacking in the San Gabriel and Sierra Nevada mountains. For high-school graduation, I asked to attend Northwest Outward Bound and spent three weeks backpacking in the Oregon Cascades. I majored in biology in college and became an elementary-school teacher on California’s central coast

focused on science education, while my camping trips expanded to cover the whole of the western U.S., Canada and Alaska as well as overseas.

Throughout all these experiences, the common thread was wonderment and valuing of the natural world.

I see humankind as intimately linked to planet Earth with a moral and spiritual obligation to respect and maintain its ecology. I’ve been a member of the Sierra Club since the late '70s except for a brief interlude when I earned a PhD and lacked the funds. With so much of what I hold dear under attack by the current administration, I decided it was time to become a Sierra Club life member.

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Chaco's surprise reprieve

By Miya King-Flaherty
Our Wild New Mexico

In an unanticipated move, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke cancelled a March lease auction of 4,454 acres in Greater Chaco to oil and gas companies. Thanks to the efforts of our New Mexico Congressional delegates, the Frack Off Chaco Coalition, the Navajo Nation and All Pueblo Council of Governors, National Congress of American Indians, 15 Navajo chapter houses, the Legislature and thousands of concerned citizens, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke instructed the Bureau of Land Management to defer the sale pending analysis of cultural resources in the lease area.

In response, the Frack Off Chaco Coalition held two events, one in Albuquerque and the other at the BLM New Mexico State office in Santa Fe. Organizers presented a large "Thank You" card to Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich's staff in Albuquerque to remind them that more work is needed to ensure protections for public health and cultural resources. Sen. Udall's state director, Greg Bloom, read a statement from the senator promising that he will continue to fight for impacted residents and our national heritage in and around Chaco.

At the BLM New Mexico State office, organizers delivered more than 200,000 public signatures calling for a moratorium on drilling in Greater Chaco and for meaningful public health, cultural and environmental protections.

Community members in Greater Chaco are also taking a stand against unchecked oil and gas leasing near their homes by planting signs along U.S. 550 in Counselor, N.M. The messages read: "Entering Energy Sacrifice Zone," "We Are Greater Chaco," "Violence Against Land is Violence Against Us," "Extraction Threatens Our Health and Safety," "Selloff Of Sacred Lands Dooda," and "Methane Gas: Odorless



Above: Daniel Tso and Sam Sage helped deliver 200,000 petition signatures to the BLM state office asking for a moratorium on drilling in Northwest New Mexico's Greater Chaco region.



At left: Kendra Pinto, Counselor Health Impact Assessment project manager, installs a monitor to measure indoor and outdoor air quality within 1 mile of an oil well in Navajo Nation Counselor Chapter, N.M. Sierra Club provided funds for the 20 monitors the team installed April 15 and will pay for lab analysis and reports to each household, church and chapter house being monitored, as well as air-quality reports when monitoring is complete in 32 days.

Top photo by David McGahey
Bottom photo by Teresa Seamster

Toxin in Our Air."
"One of the purposes of the signs is to get the community talking. The dangers associated with natural-resource extraction affect us in one way or another whether we want to believe it or not. Becoming aware of the so-called political ground we stand on is powerful, and we must stand against destruction

if we are to ensure there will be a future living with and on the land," said Kendra Pinto, Navajo Nation Twin Pines resident. Although the lease sale has been deferred, the BLM continues to approve drilling permits near homes and public spaces. This is a small victory, but the battle continues.

Sandoval citizens to draft drill ordinance

By Miya King-Flaherty

At the March 15 Sandoval County Commission meeting, the commission voted 4-1 to approve a Citizens Working Group composed of 11 voting members and three non-voting members led by geologist Don Phillips.

These members are responsible for developing a county oil and gas ordinance that includes protections for our drinking water and communities as well as meaningful tribal consultation.

Among the members are Mary Feldblum of Earthworks' Oil and Gas Accountability Project, former Planning and Zoning chair John Arango, state Rep. Derrick Lente, geologist Eddie Paulsgrove, and three Planning and Zoning commissioners — including chair Aparicio Herrera.

The Citizens Working Group will have the ability to invite legal, scientific and land-use experts as well as industry to present, along with the general public.

Based on testimonies and research, the working group will draft an ordinance to present to the Planning and Zoning commission for a public hearing and vote. The working group's first meeting is in April.

What drilling has done to my homeland

Samuel Sage is a leader in the effort to protect Greater Chaco communities from the impacts of fracking. Since fracking wells have emerged in and around Navajo Nation Counselor Chapter, residents are experiencing negative impacts to their health and social and cultural well-being as well as to their air and water. Here, Sage shares some of his experiences:

By Samuel Sage

My homeland, 18 miles south of Counselor Store, has been getting destroyed by the U.S. Government (BLM) and the companies it hires. Any form of consultations are unknown. One day, heavy equipment is there clearing roads for more heavy equipment. Three different pipelines and a large electrical transmission line made their way across the land from West to East. These destructions changed

the landscape. First, new kinds of weeds were transported by heavy equipment tires. Animals cannot eat them. Second, water flows in the washes/arroyos were changed or dammed. Certain earth dams down the way could not be refilled; they dried up. Third, ugly bright white poles and signs along pipeline routes and giant poles with cables between them took over the landscape. This occurred in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. Few pump jacks began showing up. They were very noisy. Few community members were receiving royalty monies. Alcohol abuse was/ is a big problem. People that received money spent their days drunk. Some bought vehicles, but some of these vehicles broke down before they made it home. There was a bar along Highway 44 (550). People



Photo copyright Evalyn Bemis
Samuel Sage, above, is a member of the Counselor Health Impacts Assessment Committee.

would go there day and night. So many of the community people died along the highway walking or in vehicle crashes. In the late 1990s, I

was working as a community organizer. We began working on closing the bar. There were five of us. We would walk along Highway 550 in protest against the bar. The first march a few people participated; later Counselor Mission students joined. During Red Ribbon week, we would post/place "white crosses" where people died. There were quite a number of crosses. Oil and gas development was very slow in the community; most of the activities were in the northern areas, around Navajo Dam. Still in the late 1990s, we were informed the bar was closing. A lot of people in the community were very upset with us because the bar was closing. In 2000, I was elected Counselor Chapter president. One of my first major challenges was learning that the BLM-Farmington field office was ready to approve a

Resource Management Plan without Counselor Chapter's knowledge. This information was brought to us by Diné CARE. They asked if BLM had come out to talk to us. No, no BLM people came to us. A meeting was set up with BLM and three Navajo chapters by Diné CARE, San Juan Citizens Alliance and Oil and Gas Accountability at BLM-Farmington field office. The first meeting was so tense that I thought we were all going to be involved in a giant fist fight, white men against Navajo men. BLM personnel would step in and disappear back out. Everyone, three Chapter officials and about seven BLM personnel, stone-cold faces without expressions. We sat very quiet without any movement.

(To be continued next issue.)

Copper mine endangers water, wildlife

By Michael Jensen
N.M. Environmental Law Center

New Mexico's Environment Department is pushing through a discharge permit for New Mexico Copper Corp.'s Copper Flat Mine that relies on incomplete and inaccurate information and does not account for impacts to surface and groundwater.

Contaminants in groundwater and surface water will pass under and across Ladder Ranch, impacting four perennial streams that cross Ladder Ranch on their way to the Rio Grande and that support wildlife restoration and ranching operations.

Potential contamination of surface and groundwater could negatively impact endangered and threatened species. Mexican gray wolves are housed at Turner Ranch Properties' Ladder Ranch before reintroduction. Ladder Ranch and the Hillsboro Pitchfork Ranch host mule-deer restoration efforts. Other habitat restorations and reintroductions involve Rio Grande cutthroat trout, Chiricahua leopard frog, Bolson tortoise, and two species under review for endangered listing: Rio Grande chub and Rio Grande sucker.

The Environment Department's draft permit does not include the recent conclusion by the Third Judicial District Court that the mine has only about 862 acre-feet per year of water rights, not the more than 20,000 it needs. The draft permit shows substantially higher production at the mine than the amount claimed in New Mexico Copper's permit application and supporting documents and has a smaller disturbed area, smaller waste rock piles and a lower depth in the planned pit lake.

Independent analysis indicates that the pit lake will function as a flow-through pit during rapid fill of the pit post-closure (not an evaporative sink as claimed by New Mexico Copper); this means that it must meet water-quality standards and/or that the corporation must pump it, most likely "in perpetuity," which violates the Mining Act's requirements for new mines.

The permit allows for the widespread use of "permit amendments," including changes in location, quantity and quality of discharges initially authorized. Permit conditions that went through a robust public-participation process could be removed immediately after the permit's effective date, undermining public participation in the draft-permit process and the purpose of including permit conditions.

Take action

The deadline to send comments objecting to Copper Flat Mine's discharge permit (DP-1840) is May 4. Email comments to brad.reid@state.nm.us. For mailing address and more information, go to riograndesierraclub.org.



Photo courtesy Gila Resources Information Project

Aerial view of part of Chino Mine's massive Santa Rita Pit and Reservoir 3A wastewater pond. New Mexico's Copper Rule, heavily influenced by copper-mining giant Freeport-McMoRan, was upheld by the state Supreme Court in March.

NM Supreme Court upholds water-sacrifice zones

NM Environmental Law Center,
Gila Resources Information
Project, Amigos Bravos

In March, the New Mexico Supreme Court issued a stunning and puzzling decision in its long-awaited review of the Copper Rule. The case could set precedent for how the State of New Mexico protects water at all industrial sites.

The Court's decision was clearly based on prioritizing copper mining in New Mexico, despite the fact – acknowledged by the industry, the New Mexico Environment Department, and the court – that copper mines will "inevitably" pollute large areas of groundwater that will become increasingly important in our arid climate.

This is especially important for permitting new copper mines where the groundwater is still "pristine," a term used by the court. The Copper Rule removes all the water beneath the massive area covered by an open-pit mine from any Water Quality Act standards. Standards would not apply until water pollution reached the so-called "point of compliance": monitoring wells set up beyond the mine's operational area, which can cover many square miles.

"We are very disappointed with the New Mexico Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Martinez

The Copper Rule removes all the water beneath the massive area covered by open-pit mines from any Water Quality Act standards.

Administration's rule to weaken New Mexico's Water Quality Act" stated Allyson Siwik, Executive Director of Silver City-based Gila Resources Information Project.

"The Supreme Court has effectively sanctioned the idea of groundwater sacrifice zones in the area of copper mines. In Grant County, we are 100% dependent upon our groundwater aquifer. Allowing Freeport-McMoRan, the world's largest publicly traded copper company that operates three copper mines in the Silver City area, to pollute rather than prevent groundwater contamination threatens our drinking-water supply over the long term."

"This decision does not recognize the importance of protecting the state's most important resource – clean water," said Rachel Conn, Projects Director for Amigos Bravos.

"The Court's idea of 'strategic containment' is in direct opposition to the State Water Quality Act's purpose of preventing and abating water pollution. It is never a good idea to allow polluters to write their own rules. This decision could pave

the way for other polluters to demand similar rollbacks in water-quality safeguards and allow the federal labs, wastewater-treatment plants, dairies, and other industries to pollute under their sites and further risk groundwater pollution of public water supplies."

"The Court's ruling only heightens our determination to protect New Mexico's groundwater," said Douglas Meiklejohn, Executive Director of the New Mexico Environmental Law Center, which is representing GRIP and Amigos Bravos in the case.

"We disagree with the Court on the law, and think that the Court has an unrealistic view of how pollution of groundwater spreads. We are very concerned because groundwater is the most precious resource in New Mexico. The Court made clear that it was considering the Copper Rule on its face and not as it is applied in individual mine permits. We intend to monitor situations in which the Rule is applied to determine whether it violates the Water Quality Act or other statutory provisions."



Celebrating 55 years: Bette Korber

Throughout our 55th anniversary, the Rio Grande Chapter is featuring past campaigns and lifetime chapter members. A note from lifetime member Bette Korber:

This week I'm stepping into 60 years on planet Earth, and have been with the Sierra Club since I was 16, when I first set out to hike the John Muir Trail and fell in love with the high wild places where granite and grace touch the sky.

Through my father, I learned to love wild places

for just being as they are: beautiful, perfect and complete. The most important work of our times is finding ways to leave our sweet Earth intact for the next generations. I'm grateful to be a small part of something as powerful as the Sierra Club, citizens together, working towards this goal.

Watch Bette's video about the Gila River at riograndesierraclub.org

NM approves 1,200 MW of wind energy

By Mona Blaber
Chapter communications
New Mexico's Public Regulation Commission on March 21 approved Southwestern Public Service's massive 1.2-gigawatt wind-energy project in New Mexico and west Texas.

Commissioners had expressed skepticism about a ratemaking mechanism the company proposed as part of the project, but our Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy attorney and other parties developed a compromise with SPS, and

Rio Grande Chapter activists called and emailed commissioners to urge passage. All five commissioners voted to accept the compromise. Your input makes a big difference in cases like this.

According to SPS, this project will bring the renewable portion of its New Mexico retail electricity sales to a whopping 49%, if the utility is required to retire the Renewable Energy Certificates associated with the production. This will be an issue in SPS's upcoming renewable-portfolio case, where your engagement may be needed again.

SPS, which serves southeastern New Mexico, proposed the wind projects last year, saying they will save ratepayers billions of dollars. The company didn't actually need the capacity; the facilities — two in New Mexico and one in West Texas — were proposed purely to save money. Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy (of which Sierra Club is a member), the attorney general and Western Resource Advocates struck a deal with SPS to prioritize New Mexico contractors and workers in the New Mexico project, so it will bring jobs and investment to New Mexico in addition

to climate progress. Unfortunately, outcomes haven't been as positive in efforts to get SPS to drop a fee imposed on ratepayers with solar rooftops. Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy and Vote Solar moved to dismiss the tariffs as being unlawful, but the hearing officer and commission denied the motion. The issue will now be considered in a pending SPS rate case. The ruling sets a bad precedent that could allow PNM and El Paso Electric to charge solar users more than other customers. CCAE may appeal.

Governor nixes solar credit

By Dan Lorimier and Mona Blaber
Rio Grande Chapter staff
Most of the progress made in the 2018 New Mexico legislative session stopped at the governor's desk. But some bright spots give hope for better outcomes under a new governor in 2019:

Solar tax credits: On the final night, the House passed Senate Bill 79, which renews the 10% tax credit for residents and small businesses who install solar panels. This credit, which had been in place in New Mexico but expired in 2016, would reduce the effect of the recent U.S. tariff on solar panels. Unfortunately, Gov. Susana Martinez failed to sign it by the deadline, killing it (also called a pocket veto). Martinez also vetoed the bill in 2016, but November's election will decide whether our next governor will see the value of solar in fighting climate change and developing our state's economic strengths. Thanks to Environment New Mexico for its leadership on this bill.

Bad Seed bill: HB161, an ALEC bill that would have stopped any local government from, for example, requiring labeling of genetically modified crops or imposing public-health restrictions like setbacks or pesticide-drift regulations, died in the House State Government, Indian Affairs and Veterans Committee. Thank you for writing and calling this committee's members. Thanks also to the New Mexico Food and Seed Sovereignty Alliance for its leadership in analyzing and opposing this bill and to the many traditional and indigenous farmers who testified against it.

Chaco memorials: SM42 and HM85 affirmed New Mexico's commitment to protecting and preserving the cultural and historical sites in the Greater Chaco landscape and were amended, thanks to efforts by the Chaco Coalition, to include protection for the people living in the region, not just archaeological treasures. Both memorials passed their committees but were not heard by their full chambers.

Study on workforce training for uranium cleanup: HB 208 and SB 251 would have appropriated \$250,000 to study programs needed to train New Mexicans for jobs created by recent funding for cleanup of uranium sites.



Photo copyright Evalyn Bemis

New Mexicans attended workshops, testified at committee meetings and talked to their representatives on Environment Day at the Legislature in February.

The budget that passed earmarked \$200,000 for this purpose, so the bills' purpose was fulfilled. Thanks for your calls and emails in support of this legislation that will help provide jobs for New Mexicans and make our state a safer place to live.

Keeping the Gila wild: HB330, which would have moved funds away from an ill-conceived Gila River diversion project to instead fund local water-conservation projects in Southwestern New Mexico, was pulled from the House floor and died. This important legislation will appear again next year.

Higher bonds for plugging oil and gas wells: SB 189 increases the cap of the amount of the surety bond a company must post for the plugging an inactive oil or gas well from \$50,000 to \$250,000. The increased amount is more in line with the cost of plugging a well and remediating a plugged well that leaks, blows out or otherwise fails. This bill was signed into law by Gov. Martinez!

PNM's securitization bills: HB80 and SB47 represented PNM's effort to sell bonds to recoup stranded costs if the company retires coal-fired San Juan Coal

Generating Station near Farmington in 2022. The original bill benefited only PNM, but environmental and Four Corners groups negotiated significant improvements, including commitments by PNM to build all replacement power in the same school district as the coal plant and to achieve 50% renewable generation by 2030. Concerns remained about removing Public Regulation Commission oversight and PNM's requirement that it own a large percentage of the replacement power, and Sierra Club and other environmental groups opposed the final version of the bill. But negotiations led to agreement among environmental and community groups on many important issues and promise progress going forward.

Once again, a gazillion thank-yous to all of you who wrote, called, attended meetings or met with your representatives. It was a thrill to watch in real time the impact your actions had. Please contact your legislators before the 2019 session to let them know what's important to you. Write to riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org to join our lobbying listserv or learn more about how you can help.

Las Cruces votes to go 100% clean by 2050

By Kurt Anderson
Southern New Mexico Group
On April 2, The Las Cruces City Council passed a resolution to obtain 25% of the city's electricity from renewable energy by 2022, 30% by 2030, and 100% by 2050.

The resolution passed unanimously following a presentation by city Sustainability Officer Lisa LaRocque, who outlined options available (from "go it alone" to public-private arrangements) and their projected costs and savings. She said all indicated that the goals could be met well before the proposed dates.

Councilors' discussion and presentations focussed on PV solar as the most promising power source.

Councilor Gill Sorg sponsored the resolution. Environment New Mexico led the effort to pass it. Residents testifying in favor of the goals noted that increased levels of solar energy use by the city would mean clean air, lower energy costs and meaningful action to protect future generations from climate disruption.

"Setting a strong solar goal for the City of Las Cruces will mean a more sustainable future for our residents, while the government can save on energy costs over time," LaRocque said.

Las Cruces currently gets about 7 percent of its electricity from renewables.

Southern N.M. Group

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2018 Primary Endorsements

Note: The endorsements on these pages represent only those made as of April 19; others will be decided later in election season. Check riograndesierraclub.org for updates. Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter endorses only in contested primaries. Rep. Ben R. Luján and Sen. Martin Heinrich have been endorsed but are unopposed in the primary.

New Mexico Legislature

District 13: Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero

Roybal Caballero has amassed an impressive 100% score from Conservation Voters New Mexico for always voting to protect our air, drinking water, climate, land and wildlife.

In 2017, Roybal Caballero, who represents an Albuquerque seat, sponsored a community-solar bill to allow those who don't own their residences or can't afford solar panels to obtain solar energy.

District 5: Doreen Wonda Johnson

Rep. Doreen Wonda Johnson, of Crownpoint, has become an environmental champion in her four years at the Legislature. She represents a San Juan-McKinley County district that is especially affected by extractive industries including mining, oil, natural gas and coal plants, and her record reflects a concern for the health and well-being of her constituents.

District 31: Mark Boslough

As a nonpartisan organization, the Sierra Club does not find many Republicans worthy of endorsement these days, but we are very pleased to have discovered Mark Boslough, whom we have endorsed in the Republican primary for House District 31 in far northeast Albuquerque. Mark is a retired Sandia National Laboratories scientist whose work focused on climate change.

He helped create Sandia's climate modeling group and authored many climate reports. He has also penned many articles and op-eds in both the scientific and popular press about global-warming issues. He has educated a new generation of scientists about climate change. Mark is a voice we need in the New Mexico Legislature to provide a strong, scientific voice on climate issues.



Rep. Doreen Wonda Johnson



Rep. Derrick Lente



Susan Herrera



Pete Sheehey



Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero



Mark Boslough

District 41: Susan Herrera

Susan Herrera is a longtime community advocate who sits on the boards of New Mexico Voices for Children, the Family Learning Center in Española and the Northwest First Born Program in Farmington and Gallup.

Herrera believes that relying on oil and gas to prop up the state budget is unsustainable and suggests creating a strong revenue stream for education, health and economic development by revamping the income tax, permanent fund and gross receipts tax.

District 43: Pete Sheehey

During his six years on the Los Alamos County Council, Pete Sheehey has led or supported efforts to promote environmental protection, including to ban trapping in Los Alamos County; imple-

ment curbside yard-waste pickup; meet Los Alamos' goal of 100% carbon-neutral electricity by 2040; and publish an extensive study on county water resources to aid in adopting a revised and more realistic 40-year water plan.

Sheehey has lobbied for stricter groundwater protections and holding polluters accountable (e.g., the Nacimiento copper mine near Cuba). He is running to replace Rep. Stephanie Garcia Richard and will be a worthy replacement in the Legislature.

District 65: Rep. Derrick Lente

Rep. Derrick Lente, serving Sandoval, Rio Arriba and San Juan counties, is a staunch advocate for his constituents. He prizes their input above that of lobbyists but listens to everyone and governs in a thoughtful, civil manner.

As a first-term legislator, he sponsored a memorial last year to support a moratorium on drilling leases in the Greater Chaco region until the BLM amends its management plan for the region to take into account the impacts of fracking.

Lente is also a member of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District board and boasts a 95% Conservation Voters New Mexico score. We urge District 65 voters to return him to the Legislature.

PRC 4: Janene Yazzie

By Miya King-Flaherty

Janene Yazzie's commitment toward protecting the public's interests, protecting environmental and human rights, and ability to advance indigenous rights is exemplified in her advocacy for social, economic and environmental justice.

Yazzie has been an active member of the Chaco Coalition working to help protect Greater Chaco residents and land from the negative impacts of the fracking boom.

She has a deep and high-level understanding of how best to represent, elevate and incorporate the public's concerns into meaningful policies that are good for all New Mexicans.

Yazzie demonstrated flexibility, clarity and openness in answering questions, as well as a thoughtful analysis of the energy-water nexus and the need to minimize the use of water in energy production. She also emphasized the need to carefully measure the economic impact on ratepayers when making decisions on energy issues.

She demonstrates a strong work ethic and advocates for thoroughly researching issues before deciding on them.

Yazzie worked at Pine Ridge to develop customized smart-energy solutions. She provides leadership in balancing the intersection of customer cost with energy solutions and economic development. It is for these reasons that Sierra Club endorses Janene Yazzie for Public Regulation Commissioner in District 4, which covers northwest and parts of central New Mexico.



State auditor: Bill McCamley

Sierra Club has endorsed Bill McCamley for state auditor, a position that has the authority to investigate the financial aspects of any activity of state government and can use that authority to help shape policy and protect the environment.

McCamley has stated that if elected, he will investigate the ill-conceived proposal to divert the Gila River. An investigation of Gila project will show that more benefit can be obtained for less money by much less environmentally harmful water projects, and such an

investigation could help to kill this disastrous project.

McCamley, a former state legislator with an excellent environmental record, also said he would do a cost-benefit analysis of money spent to kill coyotes, prairie dogs, and other animals, which would provide ammunition to end these practices.

He also noted that audits can inform communities of the financial risks that can be incurred from activities like fracking without proper regulation.

The Sierra Club is proud to endorse McCamley.

Chapter organizer Dan Lorimier retires

By Mona Blaber

Dan Lorimier, longtime Rio Grande Chapter organizer for Southern New Mexico, retired in April.

Dan was also the chapter's lobbyist during legislative sessions. He was known at the Roundhouse for his civility and ability to build a rapport with legislators on both sides of the aisle.

"Dan was an authoritative force for environmental advocacy at the Legislature for 14 years," said chap-

ter Legislative Committee co-chair Melinda Smith. "He mentored so many of our citizen lobbyists who depended on his judgment and guidance to be effective advocates for the chapter's land, water, energy and wildlife issues. Legislators on both sides of the aisle liked and respected him, and allies from our sister organizations counted on his expertise."

Dan plays in a folk band around his Truth or Consequences home and serenaded volunteers and staff at the chapter meetings he organized.

"We will all miss his good humor, comity, and especially his guitar playing and singing!" Smith said.

"Dan's kindness and patience are rare qualities in the legislature," said Rio Grande Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman. "He brought that gentle approach to his deep knowledge of New Mexico's environmental issues and how to make a real difference. From dairy groundwater rules to resource-management plans, Dan was our expert. We'll miss him so much."



Dan Lorimier and Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman at Dan's retirement party at Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge in April.

2018 Primary Endorsements

Governor: Lujan Grisham has strong record

By Camilla Feibelman

Michelle Lujan Grisham has served New Mexico's 1st District in Congress for six years and in that time she's earned a 91% League of Conservation Voters score, with 100% scores the last two years. The congresswoman's combination of high energy, visionary leadership, technical knowledge of highly complex issues, and array of experience make her our pick for governor.

Lujan Grisham has committed to developing state rules to control for oil and gas methane pollution and to a renewables standard for New Mexico's utilities of 80% by 2040. Her Renewable Energy plan is excellent and worth a read — see www.newmexicans-formichelle.com.

Rep. Lujan Grisham knows many of the state's environmental issues at a technical level. On the issue of transport of spent nuclear fuel rods to New Mexico, she demonstrated not only a



clear concern that this is not the proper economic-development vehicle for our state, but also a thorough knowledge about the geology of the proposed site and the science behind

the risks it poses. Lujan Grisham has also stood up on one of the country's most divisive issues when as Congressional Hispanic

Caucus Chair she introduced the "Build Bridges Not Walls Act" to prohibit implementation of President Trump's executive order to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Beyond her role as an environmental champion in Congress, Michelle has worked at all levels of government, from county and state to federal. It is our sense that her experience combined with her commitment to protecting our families makes her the best choice for governor of New Mexico.

Bernalillo Commission: Debbie O'Malley

By Richard Barish

The Sierra Club has endorsed Debbie O'Malley in her bid for re-election to the Bernalillo County Commission. Debbie served two terms on the Albuquerque City Council before being elected to the County Commission, and in both offices, she has been a staunch supporter of pro-environment legislation.

As a Bernalillo County commissioner, Debbie has been one of our go-to commissioners to oppose the proposed Santolina development. Santolina is a sprawl development project on the southwest side that would likely have to dry up farms in the valley to provide water for the development.

The new Commission will be considering the details of the Santolina development, and Debbie serves on the Water Utility Authority Board, which will be considering water for the subdivision, including a



water reclamation project. We need a strong environmentalist like Debbie to try to

prevent the worst effects of this project.

Another important issue that will be on the county agenda is fracking. Fracking has been proposed in Sandoval County, and it is only a matter of time before it comes to Bernalillo County. Unlike other parts of the state where there is considerable fracking — the San Juan Basin and the Permian Basin — the Albuquerque Basin contains numerous faults and is highly fractured. Fracking fluids and methane gas will inevitably find their way into the aquifer we depend on. We need Debbie to help to ensure that fracking does not happen in Bernalillo County!



Land Commission: VeneKlasen

By Teresa Seamster

When we heard Garrett VeneKlasen was running for state Land Commissioner, the image of him jumping in front of the microphones at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and opposing violent activist Ammon Bundy and his illegal occupiers was still fresh in the media. All of a sudden, new ethical energy was entering the Land Commission race.

The Sierra Club endorsement for Garrett is based on many aspects of his lifetime of experience, community involvement

and organizational leadership in New Mexico the past 15 years. His advocacy for public lands remaining in public hands has been exemplary and directly contributed to the designations of Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monuments and Valles Caldera's transition to the National Park Service.

Having spent much of his life working on land-based projects that involve watershed restoration and wildlife mitigation, Garrett understands land stewardship and best-management practices. He is committed to

science-driven wildlife management on state trust lands for all native species and opposes indiscriminate killing. He promises a moratorium on trapping until it there is scientific proof it meets a conservation need and to prohibit killing contests on State Trust land.

Sustainable growth is one of the biggest challenges ahead for the State Land Office, and Garrett has outlined several plans for future economic growth for educational beneficiaries, including renewable-energy development and leasing land for cultural and eco-tourism.

Sandoval Commission: Margaret Cassidy-Baca

By Richard Barish

So I called Margaret Cassidy-Baca to tell her that we had endorsed her, and I got about a minute into my standard spiel when she interrupted me to tell me about her concern that the Pueblos were not being adequately consulted about the new Sandoval County oil and gas ordinance being drafted that would regulate fracking. A long conversation ensued.

This is what Margaret is like. She is focused on the issues, and she is especially passionate about inclusion and cultural sensitivity in this very diverse county.

Regulation of fracking is the big environmental issue in Sandoval County. Companies are trying to frack there in the Albuquerque Basin, but the Albuquerque Basin is full of faults and fractures that will allow for the easy passage of



pollutants into the groundwater. If fracking is allowed, pollution of the groundwater is all but inevitable.

Fracking regulations are routinely challenged, so they need to be carefully drafted to discourage and withstand legal challenges. Margaret is not just an environmentalist. She is a smart, hard-working, detail-oriented attorney. She is the person we need on the Sandoval County Commission to help to ensure that we have enforceable fracking regulation. The Sierra Club is proud to endorse Margaret Cassidy Baca for Sandoval County Commission.

Congress (District 2): Torres-Small

By Mona Blaber

Xochitl Torres-Small works on environmental law for a firm in Las Cruces, where she grew up.

As a staffer for Sen. Tom Udall, she helped organize his first statewide water conference, which brought together conservationists, farmers, cities, and businesses to plan for future water needs. At UNM Law School, she worked for Audubon New Mexico to identify reservoir management strategies to keep water in the river to preserve vital riparian habitat. Now as

an attorney focusing on water law, she protects water rights for future use.

She expressed a commitment to healing our climate and moving toward renewable resources, as well as working with all stakeholders to share and sustain our natural resources.

Torres-Small is running for the Southern New Mexico seat vacated by Steve Pearce, one of the most polluter-friendly members of Congress. We believe she is the candidate best suited to change that legacy for the better.

Santa Fe Commission: Rudy Garcia

By Teresa Seamster

Long-time land-use manager Rudy Garcia is a dedicated local professional who is thoroughly familiar with all aspects of county planning and the need to carefully weigh all impacts of new developments on water, infrastructure and quality of life in Santa Fe County:

In his 26 years in local government,



Garcia has worked in land use and was a project manager in the former Project and Facilities Management Department's Open Space/Trails Division, identifying culturally and environmentally significant properties that were acquired to preserve their individual characteristics. He was also involved in the drafting of Santa Fe County's regulations for oil and gas.

Bosque action team back in action

By Richard Barish
Bosque Action Team

With the bosque-friendly Keller administration now running the City of Albuquerque, a re-energized Bosque Action Team has reconvened to see what it can do to positively influence the future of the bosque.

The bosque faces daunting challenges. The cottonwood forest that we all love is aging and declining. Cottonwoods generally live for about 75 to 120 years.

Cottonwood seeds need spring floods to germinate. Most of the cottonwoods in the Bernalillo County bosque germinated in a couple of floods in the early 1940s, so they are now about 75 years old. Many or most will die in the coming decades. They have not been replaced by new generations of cottonwoods, since spring floods in this reach are now rare.

The bosque also faces challenges from global warming. The prediction is that in the warmer future we are facing, there will be about 30% less

water in the Rio Grande on average. As a result, the water table will drop, and cottonwoods may lose contact with the water table and die. This has already happened in at least one location.

If nothing is done, exotic, weedy trees may replace cottonwoods, and there may be more dry, open areas that don't provide habitat for very many species.

The Bosque Action Team is planning a campaign to save and restore the Bosque.

We have a restoration working group exploring what we can do so that the

bosque will continue to provide good habitat for native plants and animals and will continue to be an attractive place for people to visit.

We also have a working group that brings people to the bosque to learn about it and another group that promotes environmental education in the public schools. We also have a website, Savethebosque.org, that needs a coordinator.

If you want to be a part of this campaign, please contact me at richard.barish@gmail.com.



Terry Owen

Military Outdoors Program participants stop to show their pride at the Sandia Tramway on a beautiful February day.

Military outings flourish

By Terrence Owen
Military Outdoors

The Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program offers active-duty military, veterans and their families the opportunity to enjoy the land they defended. This winter has been no exception, with monthly outings to experience high alpine hiking in the Sandia mountains.

Each quarter, hikes of varying difficulty are planned so virtually anyone of any fitness level can get outdoors with others in a welcoming environment. No experience is necessary, and the leaders provide information on remaining safe, warm and comfortable prior to and during each outing.

Numerous studies have

shown the therapeutic effects that time in nature produces, and not just for veterans. Typically, about half of those who join these outings are associated with the military, but everyone is welcome to join the fun.

Veterans and their families have a strong tie to the land they defended.

"This program and Sierra Club's focus on preserving U.S. wildlands are why I joined and why I support their efforts," Vietnam vet and Purple Heart recipient Harry Carpenter said on a recent four-mile hike of the Sandia crest to the Tram.

"I didn't know this program existed, and I wasn't familiar with Sierra Club but I'm glad I found out about it!" said Chris Gutierrez, a US Army

Afghanistan-Iraq-era veteran.

Regardless of background, participants often stay in contact after an outing because they enjoyed the camaraderie.

This program is only successful because of those who join us. To encourage more veterans to get involved or utilize the leadership skills they learned in the military, Sierra Club offers outings, clinics and training across the country, often free or at reduced cost for vets. To learn more, go to content.sierra-club.org/outings/military/featured-trips. For outings in the Central Rio Grande area, which are typically free, contact Terry Owen, teowen@q.com, 505-301-4349 or go to www.riograndesierraclub.org/outings.

Albuquerque votes for the coyotes

On March 5, the Albuquerque City Council passed a resolution to condemn coyote-killing contests. The resolution, sponsored by Councillors Diane Gibson and Cynthia Borrego, passed unanimously.

Bills to prohibit coyote contests have been introduced in the Legislature three times, and in 2017 passed the Senate but didn't get a vote on the House floor.

The resolution supports legislation prohib-

iting coyote-killing contests throughout New Mexico. Gibson encouraged other cities and counties to pass similar resolutions to push state lawmakers to address the issue again. The coalition advocating for the resolution plans to make that happen.

Our thanks to Sierra Club volunteers who helped and commented at city meetings, including Brenda McKenna, Peggy Norton, Leslie Chavez and Fred Houdek.

Central New Mexico Group events

Trainings for outings leaders

The Sierra Club Central New Mexico Group is seeking additional volunteer outings leaders for our hiking events.

Outings leader must be at least 18 years of age, have a basic first-aid/CPR certification and complete the free Sierra Outings Leaders Training (OLT) course.

We will offer the next OLT 101 course on May 12 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. To get your first-aid/CPR certification, we will have a basic American Red Cross course on April 28 or May 27.

There is a \$10 fee for the certification, which is valid for two years. If you enjoy sharing the outdoors with others, become a leader. You will learn from other leaders and meet folks who share appreciation of New Mexico and our Bosque. For more information, contact Fred Houdek, FJHoudek@gmail.com or (630) 809-4234.

Sierra Club and Root Beers

The Central Group hosts a general meeting, Sierra Club and Root Beer, at the Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard Drive SE, every other month on the first Friday at 6:30 p.m. We

serve light refreshments and have a guest speaker who discusses timely issues/topics. At our March meeting, Mark Rudd, retired CNM instructor and lifelong organizer, led a lively discussion on the relationship between the environmental movement and political power.

At the May 4 meeting our speaker will be Carlos A. Bustos, the Water Conservation Program manager for the Albuquerque-Bernalillo Water Authority. He will be addressing Albuquerque's successful water-conservation efforts and the recently adopted plan "Water 2120: Securing Our Water Future."

First Friday Art

The Sierra Club's Central Group office (2215 Lead Ave. SE, Albuquerque) will be hosting bimonthly First Friday art events on April 6 and June 8 from 6 to 8 pm. Refreshments are provided. April's featured artist, Peter Kelling, will show black & white nature photography, on display through May. June's First Friday will showcase landscape paintings by Eliza Schmid, on display through July. Please contact Heather Kline (505-577-2798, heather9387@yahoo.com) with questions or if you are an artist interested in showing your work.

Central New Mexico contacts

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Carol Chamberland, pictografix@comcast.net
Mark Rudd, mark@markrudd.com
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Military Outings: Terry Owen, teowen@q.com, 505-301-4349
UNM Sierra Student Coalition Co-presidents: Tom Bottomly, tbottomly@unm.edu; Keely Scheffler, kscheffler99@unm.edu

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El Paso students visit Trackways

By Lorenzo Gonzalez
and Carlos Chavez

El Paso Sierra Student Coalition

As members of the Americas High School Sierra Student Coalition, we have been delighted by the opportunity to participate in a multitude of environment-driven hikes in which we learn about the protection of the biome and the intricacy of the natural world.

Our passionate organization has also been involved in local community service projects such as the construction of a wheelchair-accessible trail within the Franklin Mountains State Park. One of the main goals of the Sierra Student Coalition is to cultivate appreciation for nature and to make it accessible for everyone. Our club sponsor, Ms. Hardin, has

opened the possibility of sharing outdoor experiences with members of the National Park Service, college science majors, and field experts.

In January, we visited the Prehistoric Trackways National Monument near Las Cruces. We were given the rare honor of sharing the hike with a paleontologist who had as much passion and admiration for nature as the members of our group.

From the rugged landscape of the Franklin Mountains to the developing wetlands of Rio Bosque, no previous hiking endeavors have so deeply captured my interests. Although nothing but positive memories have come from the outings provided by the Sierra Student Coalition, none have captivated us more than the remnants of prehistoric organ-

isms. From the bombardment of dates and eras of the geologic time scale, to the geology centered lectures, and finally to the main event being the impressions of beings that went extinct 250 million years ago. Observing the fossilized remains of these ancient creatures inspired our minds.

However, seeing this other portion of paleontology, being able to walk along similar paths as Dimetrodons, and learning about the possible behaviors of these organisms was an awe-inspiring experience of which I hope for more of in the coming months.

Lorenzo Gonzalez and Carlos Chavez are members of the Americas High Sierra Student Coalition in El Paso, led by El Paso Group Executive Committee member Neysa Hardin.



Photo by Eric Patterson

UNM-Taos students sample water from the Río Fernando de Taos watershed as part of a project for Amigos Bravos and Water Sentinels.

It's water-monitoring season; you can help

By Eric Patterson

Water Sentinels — Ríos de Taos will start the 2018 water-monitoring season with a training session and first monitoring shortly after Memorial Day, a second in early July and a third in early September.

Each requires a morning's effort and is usually finished by noon. If you are interested in helping out, contact Eric Patterson at eepatt@gmail.com.

We monitor the streams of Taos County. If you would like to monitor streams elsewhere in New Mexico, let us know — we can help set up a monitoring program. Water is one of the most precious resources in our state, and we need to keep it clean.

In the off-season, Sentinels have been helping our sister organization, Amigos Bravos, monitor the Río Fernando de Taos watershed. Amigos Bravos used our data to secure a grant from the New Mexico Environment Department to determine the sources of E. Coli contamination in the Río Fernando.

In other news, Water Sentinels has been awarded a grant to involve students in environmental activities. The Sentinels have been involved with Taos Academy students this year. Many of

these students have become Sierra Club members and are involved in community activities. They have held bake sales to raise money to preserve wildlife, gathered personal care products for the Taos Homeless Men's Shelter and organized a village cleanup.

Sprog workshops

The Student Sierra Coalition holds weeklong workshops in several locations each summer to give students the environmental and communication skills needed to actively make a difference in the environmental affairs of their communities. Our chapter director has participated in these workshops, both as a student and as a teacher.

This year, the Sprog workshops are being held in California, Wisconsin, Mississippi and Puerto Rico.

Water Sentinels are sending one student from Taos Academy, one from UNM-Taos and three students from Taos High School to Sprog workshops this summer. For more information about Sprog, Google "SSC sprog." If you know of an intelligent, environmentally aware student who could benefit from attendance at a Sprog workshop, contact Eric Patterson at eepatt@gmail.com.

Sierra Student Coalition leadership training

Calling all student leaders! Applications are now open for the Sierra Student Coalition's leadership training program, Sprog. Sprog equips young people with tools for environmental and social justice activism and supports students to become effective change-makers in their campuses or communities. The program is for youth ages 14 and up and includes trainings on climate justice, anti-oppression, campaign planning, effective communications and more.

Attendees don't have to be current students and don't need to have previous organizing experience. The only requirements are a passion for environmental and climate justice and an eagerness to make a difference.

Are you a young person excited to join Sprog this summer? Apply now at ssc.org/Sprog. Do you know a young person eager to make real change and learn the organizing and leadership skills? Nominate them to attend!

UNM Sierra Student Coalition ready for 100%

The Sierra Student Coalition has been making big moves toward our goal of a commitment from University of New Mexico to generate 100% of the energy it uses from renewables.

This semester is our first as a chartered student organization on campus. Having met with Lobo Energy, UNM's energy provider, and other departments involved with energy on campus, we feel confi-

dent in our goals. They all have expressed support for our efforts. We have also created a wonderful alliance with other environmental groups on and off campus.

The rest of the semester will be dedicated to passing a resolution for support from the faculty senate at the university, along with spreading the word and educating students on renewables and our campaign.

Global Warming Express kids taking action

In 2017-18, Global Warming Express, the science and civics education program by and for kids, has exceeded expectations in Las Cruces, Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

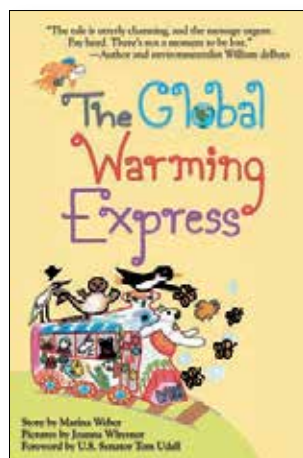
All of the Global Warming Expressers have engaged deeply with science and sustainability training and are moving into public speaking and community action in their neighborhoods.

In January, the GWE kids spoke at the New Mexico Legislature. In February,

some of the GWEers in Albuquerque met with newly elected Mayor Tim Keller, who promised them he would ban plastic straws from Albuquerque city buildings. In April and May, GWEers will be meeting with the mayors of La Cruces, Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

The new book by GWE founders Marina Weber and Joanna Whysner is now available at bookstores (see ad below). Proceeds benefit our program.

Praise for The Global Warming Express, a New Book About the Environmental Crisis, Written by Kids for Kids



The Global Warming Express is a wake-up call on the great challenge of climate change—and one that I hope we will all hear. Thank you, Marina, for a remarkable adventure story, and for reminding us, as my father did in his time, that we have to take care of our planet. We have to protect it for your generation, and for generations to come."

—Tom Udall, U.S. Senator for New Mexico

The tale is utterly charming, and the message urgent. Pay heed. There's not a moment to be lost.

—Author and environmentalist William deBuys

Marina is an incredibly talented author. I admire her and Joanna's passion for combatting climate change. Great writing comes from great thinking, and these girls have a great future ahead. We must all get onboard the Global Warming Express!

—Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives

A great gift for the children in your life!

Available now from your local bookseller or online • \$14.95 • ISBN 978-1-938288-93-7 • full-color paperback • 132 pages

Facts, dos and don'ts on bark beetles

By Sandrine Gaillard Ph.D.
Northern New Mexico
Group

Did you know?
1) Bark beetles are common pests of conifers (such as pines), and some attack broadleaf trees. Over 600 species occur in the United States and Canada. They are small, cylindrical, hard-bodied insects about the size of a grain of rice. Most species are dark red, brown, or black.

2) The natural role of bark beetles (Coleoptera: Curculionidae: Scolytinae) is canopy opening, thinning, and diversification of stand structure and composition.

3) Adult bark beetles can emerge anytime during the year, but most commonly in late spring and again in late summer to early fall.

4) Bark beetles feed on trees weakened by drought, disease, injuries, or other factors that may stress the tree. Bark beetles can contribute to the decline and eventual death of trees.

However, only a few aggressive species are known to be the sole cause of tree mortality.

More than 20 species of bark beetles feed on weakened, dying or dead spruce, fir and hemlock.

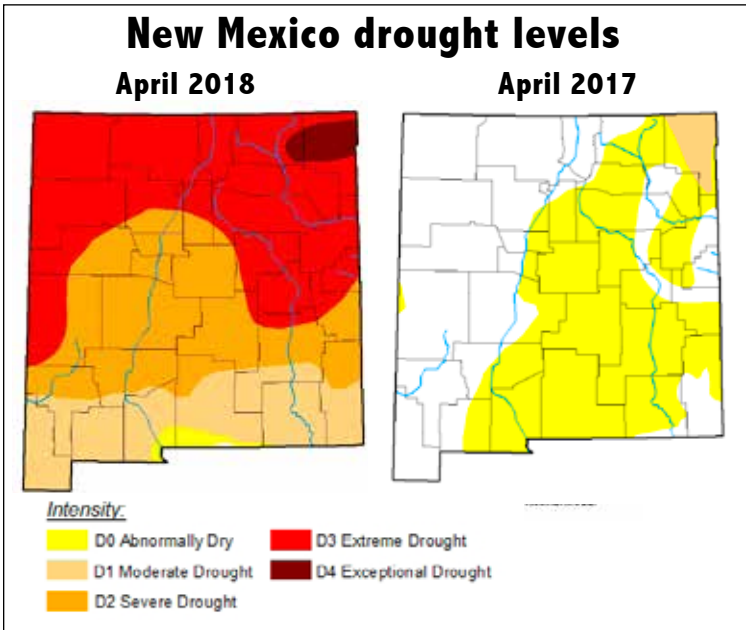
Piñon trees are attacked by a small bark beetle, the Ips confusus, called the piñon ips beetle.

Once present in pine trees, these bark beetles inoculate the tree with a blue stain fungus. This fungus is injected into the sapwood, which prevents the tree from controlling or exterminating the beetle larvae with sap. The introduction of this fungus blocks water and nutrient transportation within the xylem and phloem of the tree.

5) Bark beetles mine the inner bark (the phloem-cambial region) on twigs, branches or trunks of trees and shrubs.

Small emergence holes in the bark are a good indication that bark beetles were present.

Peeling off a portion of infested bark to reveal the winding pattern of the beetle galleries (tunnels chewed by



Information courtesy USDA

adults and larvae) is a good way to identify individual beetle species.

Ips beetles will leave a Y-shaped gallery under the bark.

Removal of the bark with the emergence holes often reveals dead and degraded inner bark and sometimes new adult beetles that have not yet emerged.

6) Healthy trees are less likely to be attacked and are better able to survive attacks from a few bark beetles.

7) Except for general maintenance practices that improve tree vigor (see 9), nothing can be done to control most bark beetles once trees have been attacked.

Because the beetles live in the protected habitat beneath the bark, it is extremely difficult to control them with insecticides. In fact, there are no longer any pesticides labeled for treating beetle infested trees.

In the case of the Ips beetle, prevention is the only available effective control to manage them.

8) As of Jan. 23, more than 93% of New Mexico is experiencing drought conditions, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's drought-monitor map.

9) Prevention methods:

a) A mixture of tree and shrub species in planted landscapes will reduce mortality from bark beetles and wood-borers.

b) Pay particular attention to old, slow-growing trees, crowded groups of trees, and newly planted trees in the landscape.

c) Dense stands of susceptible trees should be thinned (by completely removing some of the trees) to increase the remaining trees' vigor and ability to withstand an attack.

d) Tree pruning is also helpful, but timing of pruning is important.

Avoid creating fresh pruning wounds during the adult beetles' flight season.

Remove mistletoe infection. Do not prune elm trees from March to September or pines from February to mid-October.

Do not pile unseasoned, freshly cut green wood near woody landscape plants. Freshly cut wood and trees that are dying or have recently died provide an abundant breeding source for some wood-boring beetles.

e) Irrigation is crucial during dry summer months in drought years, especially with tree species that are native to regions where summer rains are common.

Irrigate when appropriate around the outer canopy, not near the trunk.

Avoid the frequent, shallow type of watering that is often used for lawns.

A general recommendation is to irrigate trees infrequently, such as twice a month during



Photo by Teresa Seamster

A trap that lures bark beetles away from piñon trees in Santa Fe. Once bark beetles have infested a tree, it can't be saved.

For more information:

pleaseucanr.edu/sites/sjcoeh/files/77067.pdf
www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stel-prdb5306142.pdf
forestry.nv.gov/forestry-resources/forest-health/pinon-ips-beetle/

drought periods, but a sufficient amount of water must be used so that it penetrates about 1 foot below the surface.

The specific amount and frequency of water needed varies greatly depending on the site, size of the tree, and whether the tree species is adapted to summer drought or regular rainfall.

f) Preventive treatments must be applied by professionals to the tree trunk or branches to kill adults before they can get into the tree and lay eggs.

Treatment following successful attacks and egg-laying will not be effective.

Insecticide products available to home users are generally not effective for bark-beetle control.

10) If the bark beetles have already emerged, a few tips can help save the trees that are still unattacked.

a) If a professional landscaper or gardener suggests that spraying a tree already showing

signs of infestation is the way to go, get a second opinion and most likely a new landscaper! Spraying is only preventative.

b) After emergence, adults may reinfest the same tree or, in most cases, disperse to attack susceptible trees elsewhere.

c) If trees or shrubs are infested, properly prune infested limbs and remove and dispose of dying trees so that bark- and wood-boring insects do not emerge and attack nearby trees.

Never pile infested material adjacent to a live tree or shrub.

If the main trunk is extensively attacked by bark beetles, the entire tree or shrub needs to be removed.

Unless infested trees are cut, and infested materials are quickly removed, burned, or chipped on site, large numbers of beetles can emerge and kill nearby host trees, especially if live, unattacked trees nearby are weakened or stressed by other factors.

Northern New Mexico Group campaigns in brief

S.F. National Forest Wild and Scenic Rivers Map

Santa Fe National Forest recently released the 2018 Wild and Scenic Rivers map showing nine designated rivers and the majority of formerly designated Wild and Scenic Rivers downgraded to either "recreational" or no status.

The group submitted comments identifying dozens of stream segments "worthy" of being considered as well as additional fish species and habitats of concern along with Amigos Bravos, The

Wilderness Society and other allies.

Contact ctc.seamster@gmail.com and tdgorman@gmail.com

Counselor health committee receives approval

Three years of work in community education and preparing health-impact reports to BLM, Bureau of Indian Affairs and Navajo Nation health agencies have resulted in Institutional Review Board approval of the Counselor Health Impact Assessment and Hozhoogo'na'ada Committee protocol to study cultural and health impacts of fracking in three

Chaco-area chapters.

Contact ctc.seamster@gmail.com.

Resolution for Zero Waste in Santa Fe County

Zero Waste efforts are gaining attention worldwide as the deluge of plastic and non-recycled trash threaten marine life and overwhelm landfills. REDUCE is the key word whether in packaging, product manufacture or shopping. Without massive public changes — as embodied in a new county resolution — plastic products dumped into the oceans from all sources will outnumber

fish by 2050.

Contact: joseigner@gmail.com

Jackalope Prairie Dog project

Prairie dogs are intrinsic to the culture of Santa Fe. The city has a statue of Saint Francis speaking to a prairie dog at his feet. These highly vocal and social animals are disappearing under construction, and the Northern Group is collaborating with PD Pals and others to relocate and save the small population of Jackalope "dogs" that have delighted visitors for 18 years.

Contact: tc.seamster@gmail.com and carlton505@comcast.net

Meadow Magic

A tool for water management and increased biodiversity

By Paul Paryski

Northern New Mexico Group
Executive Committee

In the arid Southwest, climate change and global warming are already impacting our natural resources, our environment and especially our water supply.

According to the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change, the American Southwest is predicted to be one of the regions in the world most affected. The region's ecosystems are slowly but inexorably migrating uphill and northward, decreasing biodiversity and unbalancing native plant and animal ecology. Wildfires and bark beetles are devastating montane forests and watersheds, particularly on Colorado's mountain slopes. Snowpacks are diminishing and melting much earlier. Since snowpacks are smaller and often covered with dust, more heat and energy are being absorbed due to the decreased reflectivity. Higher temperatures increase both evaporation and evapotranspiration, which in turn reduces infiltration into aquifers, streams and rivers.

As a result, less water will be available to meet increasing demand. Although population seems to be remaining stable in New Mexico, the population of cities such as Santa Fe is increasing, leading to more demand for water.

There are many possible solutions to better balance water supply and demand. Conservation and more effective management of water-supply systems have helped reduce per capita use in some cities. But the gap between supply and demand will continue to rise in northern New Mexico.

One often-overlooked technique to augment water supply from montane watersheds, the largest source of water in the West, is the creation of small meadows. When snow falls in the mountains, some of it lands on the branches of conifer and other trees. This snow sublimates (evaporates) into the dry, high, windy and sunny air of the Southwest and never reaches the ground.



Montane forests in the West often have unnaturally high tree densities, probably due to ill-conceived fire suppression. Forest fires have always been part of the natural regime and produce numerous meadows. Recently prescribed burns and forest thinning have become one of the dominant tools of forest management.

It would be relatively easy to create small meadows when thinning forests. Doing so allows snow and other forms of precipitation to fall directly on the ground or on small plants and infiltrate into the ground slowly. In *Hydrology and the Management of Watersheds*, the classic textbook on watershed hydrology, the authors quote studies that show that in small cleared areas in montane forest watersheds, snow water equivalents (absorption rates) were 15-35 percent higher. Other more recent studies confirm these findings.

Small meadows also dramatically increase floral and faunal biodiversity. Meadow ecotones (transition zones) provide greater food and shelter for animals.

It is relatively easy to create small meadows using machinery or by manual methods.

One of the most important and effective river-protection organizations, American Rivers, has initiated a large project with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to restore meadows in the Sierra Nevada. To

quote from American Rivers:

— *Meadows store spring floodwaters and release cool flows in late summer;*

— *Grasses and soil filter out sediment and pollutants; and*

— *flowers and plants provide high-quality forage and habitat for rare and threatened species.*

As it becomes clear what a healthy meadow can provide, private ranchers, foundations, utilities, government agencies, conservation groups and others are all investing in meadow restoration.

Meadows are also very effective in making watersheds more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Increased biodiversity allows montane watersheds to adapt more effectively. More diverse species means more can survive. Meadows also slow wildfire propagation.

Hopefully, federal and state agencies and environmental organizations will consider creating small meadows as a method of increasing water supply, adapting to climate change and increasing biodiversity.

Paryski is former chief technical adviser for United Nations Development Programme and served on Gov. Bill Richardson's Blue Ribbon Water Task Force, the Jemez y Sangre Water Planning Council and the State Engineer's Water Wise Development Committee.

Santa Fe considers truck-plaza plan

By Teresa Seamster and Tom Gorman
Northern New Mexico Group chair

Santa Fe's Planning Commission in March recommended against a Flying J proposal for a travel center/truck plaza with two restaurants and three hotels at the southern entrance to Santa Fe off I-25. The county commission will vote on the project in May.

The Cerrillos Road exit was recently redesigned in a double-diamond traffic pattern with narrow ramps, tight turns and traffic merging unconventionally into oncoming traffic from the left side. Santa Feans are almost universally opposed to the project, which threatens residential safety as well as local businesses. The Northern New Mexico Group sent the following letter to the commission:

Dear Santa Fe Board of County Commissioners,

The Northern Group of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club opposes the construction of the Pilot Flying J Travel Center/Truck Terminal at the junction of NM 14 and Rancho Viejo Blvd.

This project has numerous potential negative impacts on the surrounding local communities,

including threatening air, water and land quality for nearby residents. The increase in noise, light and air pollution will also significantly impact those who live and work in the area.

One of the greatest concerns is the traffic safety risk of having many large trucks exiting the interstate and attempting to merge onto southbound NM 14. The design of the exit, with the double diamond concept, makes it a very hazardous to merge without dedicated lanes and with poor visibility to see traffic on NM 14.

Further, a project of this scope and impact on the Gateway to Santa Fe and on public safety, should be listed as a Development of County-wide Impact and subject to all the conditions and requirements in the Santa Fe Sustainable Development Code.

Finally, no amount of design change or mitigation can remove the adverse impression of this huge development at the entrance to Santa Fe. Instead of the City Different full of culture and beauty, we become another 15-minute rest stop. Based on these concerns, the Northern Group of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly opposes this project.

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

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 meets 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.

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Bat education by Pajarito experts

By Jody Benson

Pajarito Group chair

Most of us have seen them flitting around streetlamps or dipping over streams or ponds as they hunt to consume half their body-weight in insects every night. But most of us have never seen one of New Mexico’s 29 species of bat up close — seen their wrinkly faces that look like Ewoks or aliens or those dolls made of shriveled apples, seen their furry little selves whose species are, in fact, closely related to primates.

It was for the purpose of introducing us to our Chiroptera cousins that Justin Stevenson, cofounder of R.D. Wildlife Management and Fightwns, brought five of his rescued bats to his Pajarito presentation in February.

Stevenson dispelled myths about bats: They are not blind; they do not mob you or fly into your hair; and they are not dirty. In fact, bats are so clean that when they’re not sleeping or hunting, they’re grooming themselves as they hang from wherever they are roosting. When a bat in a colony wakes up during sleep for voiding (a.k.a., to pee), he will extricate himself from the pile, and find a spot away from the group to relieve himself before crawling back into the colony.

But the most important dispel-able myth is that all bats have rabies. According to Stevenson, only half of 1 percent have rabies. The higher percent-age cited is because bats tested are usually only those found on the ground, and they’re often on the ground because they’re sick or injured. Bats express “dumb rabies” — they don’t foam at the mouth or attack, but lie glassy-eyed where they fell. If you find a bat on the ground (or anywhere), do not pick it up with your bare hands. If you do, the bat reacts to the threat by what Stevenson describes as “vocalizing a hideous screech-ing,” and when, as is the human reaction, you hold tighter rather than release it, it bites. Rabies is transmitted through saliva, and the teeth are the inoculator.

Except for big brown bats with sharp teeth powerful enough to crunch down on large, hard-bodied insects such as beetles, most New Mexico bats’ mouths and teeth are so small that you may feel a little scratch but see no wound. If you feel anything at all, the bat must be killed and its brain evaluated to ensure it doesn’t have rabies. If it does, you need the very expensive vaccine. Even baby bats can be infected with rabies transmitted through the mother. If you rescue a bat, use leather gloves. Also, be gentle. These little creatures are very fragile, and with their little hind legs, bats can’t escape by running and launching like a bird.

Because they can’t launch themselves, bats roost upside down. Bat wings are leathery membranes stretching between the elongated four fingers of their hands down to their hind legs. Their back feet have sharp claws that, as Stevenson describes it, act like Velcro. From this upside-down position they can drop and open their wings to launch like a hang glider.

When they sleep, bats go into a torpor in which their metabolic rate drops very



Photo courtesy Justin Stevenson

Long-legged myotis bats are a species of vesper bat that can be found in western Canada, Mexico, and New Mexico.

Meetings and Events

The Pajarito Group is partnering with PEEC, 2600 Canyon Road, for our Sierra Club presentations. Please watch your emails for announcements on future talks. Also, if you are interested in giving a presentation, contact Jody Benson at echidanaejb@gmail.com or 505-662-4782.

low. In torpor, they save energy. But on waking, bats need about an hour of shivering and shaking to bring their body temperature to active levels. A bat that falls off its roost is in extreme danger from injury or predation.

Nonmigrating bats usually mate before or even during hibernation. The sperm, however, is dormant within the female until hibernation ends. The birth takes place in spring or summer. After about 50 days of gestation, the female hangs head-up by her thumbs instead of her feet, gives birth to a baby that weighs one-fifth her own body weight, and catches that baby in her tail membrane. She licks the pup to free its naked wings and legs, and nudges it to a nipple under her wing where the baby clings to her fur as she goes hunting at night.

In only two or three weeks, when baby’s too heavy for mom to carry, mom weans it and leaves it home to wait for mom’s morning return to be fed on regurgitated food. Stevenson says that at this stage the pup spends a lot of time fluttering wings and practicing flight. A week later, it heads out to hunt on its own. In eight to 10 weeks, a bat is mature. Most species live from 10 to even 40 years, depending, of course, on luck. Stevenson says bats (without predation, accident, or disease) are more likely than other small species to live full life spans.

As for living out a lifespan, Stevenson warns about human/bat territorial conflicts. People don’t want bats in their buildings. Smaller bats can get through openings as narrow as 3/8 of an inch. Therefore, it is essential to seal all openings 1/4 inch or larger. Bats can’t dig, drill, or bite through material, so even a Kleenex can be used to stop up a hole. However, do not close up an entrance hole before mid-August. You may be killing the pups because the parents can’t get back inside to care for them. Do not

exclude them between May and August.

If you must call an exclusionist, make sure they’re bat experts. A non-bat expert can kill a lot of babies. Justin Stevenson is an expert. His company is RD Wildlife Management and Consulting, www.rdwildlife.com. Call RD.

Finally, the biggest threat to bats is white-nose syndrome, with 6 million to 7 million dying every year. This fungal infection originated in Europe, is human-transported, and was probably introduced to bats by cavers. It is 90 to 100 percent fatal. The fungus thrives in cold weather and grows on the nose, wings and ears of bats during hibernation. It kills the bats by waking them during hibernation, thus using up the bats’ fat reserves, killing them through starvation, dehydration and hypothermia. The syndrome was first identified in the eastern US in 2006. It hasn’t been found in New Mexico yet, but because the disease spreads through contact and most bats are extremely social, the fungus spreads quickly. There’s no cure. To slow it, humans need to protect bat habitat from our contamination by avoiding any area where bats might live.

Despite how amazing a species they are, despite that they’re our cousins (and definitely cute), Stevenson says bats make really bad pets. The single excep-tion in his entire career as bat rescuer is one pallid bat that he and wife and cofounder Holly rescued as an orphaned, bald baby fallen out of a chimney. To keep it protected, warm, and alive, Holly kept her under her collar as she worked. When that baby grew up to the age of release, the Stevensons took her with other rescues to the release site, and tossed them up to fly. The others launched without a thanks. Not little pallid. Stevenson said they were aston-ished, but also touched, that this wild thing wanted to stay. They put her back

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in the carrier, and brought her home.

Stevenson brought her and four other rescues: a silver-haired, western small-footed myotis, Mexican free-tailed, and a big brown bat — the one with sharp teeth — to awe the audience. Stevenson has been border to border in New Mexico to save bats. His email is contact@rdwildlife.com.



Mary Katherine Ray

Mary Katherine Ray's dog Greta got her foot caught in a trap while on a leash on public land in February. Ray knew how to open the trap and quickly freed Greta.

Land of entrapment?

By Mary Katherine Ray
Chapter Wildlife chair

The 2017-18 trapping season ended on March 15. Trappers set their traps for the purpose of profiteering from the pelts of the public's wildlife beginning on Nov. 1 each year. During the trapping season this year, TrapFreeNM.org received news of a non-target animal being trapped nearly every week.

In all, TrapFree New Mexico learned of nine dogs caught in hidden traps around the state mostly while hiking with their people on National Forest or BLM land. Undoubtedly there were more. Owners consistently describe their dog as "screaming" when a hidden trap slams shut on a paw. They note the difficulty of opening a trap to save a biting, pain-crazed animal and the shock that trapping is even legal. One human had to seek emergency care for numerous puncture wounds from being bitten as he tried to rescue his dog. A dog near Las Cruces was found in a culvert dragging a trap on his foot that had come loose from its mooring. Two toes and part of his foot pad had to be amputated because of infection.

A gray fox was rescued out of a trap near Placitas. Since gray foxes are legal for trappers to kill, the rescuers faced citations from New Mexico Game and Fish. It is not legal for the public to tamper with a trap except to rescue a dog. This illegality includes rendering aid to trapped wildlife.

Non-target wildlife species found in traps this year included a raven whose foot was mangled. The raven flew away to an uncertain fate before rescuers were able to get it veterinary help. Three highly endangered Mexican wolves were also trapped by mistake — all in New Mexico. One of the three, a first-year pup, had to be placed in captivity to treat her injury, which turned out to require a full leg amputation. She has been

Firsthand trap experience

By Mary Katherine Ray

My own dog was among those caught in a trap this winter while hiking on Cibola National Forest land. We were on a game trail that meanders up the bottom of a wide canyon. My dog was on a leash walking just a little ahead of me when she jumped and started screaming and biting at her foot. I couldn't even see the trap she was biting so frantically at and yelping in pain at the same time. Her cries were ear-piercing!

I knew at once it was a trap and took off my jacket to try to cover her head and protect my hands from her frantic biting. This was more difficult than I expected because I couldn't separate her muzzle from the trap. Finally, I just made a wedge with the cloth to feel for the levers. Luckily I was strong enough to make them go down so my dog could slip out. She was trapped for less than a minute.

At first, she wouldn't put weight on that foot, and then she limped for a little while.

returned to the wild in hopes her pack will help look after her. In the past, some wolves have died after being trapped by mistake.

Every year, traps impose horrible cruelty on wildlife and our companion animals. The rules protect trappers and place the public in harm's way. The State Game Commission, a seven-member board appointed by the governor, has never been inclined to act on behalf of the broader public interest. The current commission represents the narrow special interest of trappers and the livestock industry, which has a low tolerance for living wild carnivores. But 2018

She was OK the next day except for some swelling and a small cut on the back of her foot. I attribute her not being more severely injured to such a short time in the trap. As a wildlife advocate, I'm grateful I knew how to release her. But I was still not prepared for what a horrible experience it was. My heart breaks to think of wildlife caught and struggling in a trap's grip for hours on end only to be shot, strangled or bludgeoned to death when the trapper comes.

I pushed the record button on my camera to capture the horror as I worked. You will find a link to the audio and to a tutorial on freeing your animal (or yourself) from a trap at riograndesierraclub.org/trapping-season-beware.

The trap, it turns out, was legally set in every respect. It was set right in the path, but the path was not an official trail, so it doesn't fall under any regulation. The law protects trappers completely and puts hikers at risk from injury and trauma. I am even more resolved than before that this must change.

will see the election of a new governor.

The Legislature will convene for a new session in January 2019, during which the bill to ban traps and poisons from public land will be introduced. A third of Western states already ban or severely restrict trapping, including our neighbors, Arizona and Colorado. Let's add New Mexico to the list in 2019!

You can visit www.TrapFreeNM.org to learn more about current trapping rules and how to open a trap, submit your own trap story and sign the petition to show your support for making New Mexico trap-free.

Tobin

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more," Shapiro said. "We are all lucky to have had Tobin provide the energy and structure of the outing program for so long," said hike leader Mary Thompson. "It was a pleasure to work and hike with Tobin on Sierra Club outings. He once told me that serving as outings chair was his way of giving to his community. But it was also his way of connecting with friends. And connect he did, introducing many new hiking friends to local hikes as well as reuniting with old friends on a range of hiking adventures. Tobin also contributed

to several editions of *Day Hikes*, gave us the weekly hiking newsletter, Sierra Trail Mix, and always a stalwart Sierra Club supporter. Thanks, Tobin!"

"As an outings leader, I can only imagine how hard Tobin's job was: to ask, cajole, push, and wheedle hike listings each quarter from the hike leaders," said Daisy Levine. "But he did it year after year, always with good humor and good reasons to continue. He did an outstanding job, and will be missed by the Sierra Club hiking community. Thank you, Tobin."

Hikes and Events

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the river. We'll head south toward the Oxbow and then east toward the river. Contact Margaret, mardel18@aol.com for information.

Saturday, May 12: Easy walk by the bosque of the Rio Grande. Meet at Valle del Bosque Park (480 Sunset Road SW, 87105) at 8 a.m. Children welcome. Contact Cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org or Facebook page: Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico.

Saturday, May 12: Outings-leader training. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Sierra Club office, 2215 Lead Ave SE. Albuquerque. Contact Terrence Owen, teowen@q.com, 505-301-4349, for details.

Saturday, May 19: Strenuous four-peaks hike from the Aspen Vista parking lot. We will start hiking up the Aspen Vista Road to the Tesuque Creek trail up to Tesuque Peak, continue on to Deception Lake and Penitente. Return via Puerto Nambé and the Winsor trail. About 14 miles and 3,300-foot elevation change. Two or three dogs OK. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, 505 983 8296.

Sunday, May 20: Osso Corredor to Sulfur Canyon Trails, easy hike (about 2 miles, mostly downhill but slippery and steep at times). We will leave a car at the Sulfur trailhead. Meet at 10:30 a.m. on the east side of the Smiths parking lot, close to Central and I-40. Three dogs on leash OK. Contact Odile by May 19, home: 505-433-4692, or Odile@pitot.org. Please specify: (1) cell-phone number; (2) if coming to the potluck; and (3) where you can meet the group.

Saturday, May 26: Easy walk at the bosque of the Rio Grande, south of Bridge Boulevard. Meet at the NW area of the NHCC parking lot (1701 4th St SW,

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 Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS.

87102) at 8 a.m. Cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org or www.facebook.com/ExcursionesNaturalezaNM.

Saturday, June 2: strenuous hike to Thompson Peak. We will follow the Apache Canyon route to Glorieta Baldy and then continue north for about 2 miles to Thompson Peak. About 17 miles with 3,900 feet of elevation gain. Two or three dogs OK. Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, 505-983-8296.

Saturday, June 23: Colorado 14er Hike and Camp. Join the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program as we embark on a hike of Mount Elbert. This is Colorado's highest peak and the second-highest peak in the lower 48 at 14,433 feet. We'll climb on Saturday, June 23, with optional camping the night before and after. This is a challenging, high-altitude hike of approximately 10 miles round trip and 4,400 vertical feet of climbing in a span of eight hours. Participants must be in good physical condition. Veterans, active-duty military families and all others are welcome to join us. RSVP to Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@q.com no later than June 19 and obtain camping location, hike details and the recommended gear list.

April-May-June hikes & events

April

Saturday, April 21: Moderate shuttle hike up the Burn trail, across and up the Saddleback trail, then down the Chamisa trail; 4.5 miles with about 1,000 feet elevation gain. Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com, 505-424-9242.

Sunday, April 22: Celebrate Earth Day with the Ancients, sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome. Join us at 9 a.m. for a hike of the Mesa Prieta Trail to explore the south escarpment of Petroglyph National Monument and see a number of ancient petroglyphs. Hike is approximately 4 miles RT with 300 feet of elevation gain. Contact Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@q.com by April 20th to RSVP, obtain details and the meet-up location.

Saturday, April 21: Moderate hike to Eye of the Sandias. Meet at trailhead (15000 Copper Ave NE, 87123) at 9 a.m. Contact Cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org or Facebook page: Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico.

Sunday, April 22, (Earth Day): Moderate loop: about 3 miles, North on Ellis, Back on Crest Trails. Meet at 10:30 a.m. on the east side of the Smith's parking lot, close to Central and I-40. Three dogs on leash OK. End with optional potluck at Odile and Jim's house. Contact Odile by April 21, 505-433-4692, or Odile@pitot.org, specify: (1) cell-phone number; (2) if coming to the potluck; and (3) where you can meet the group.

Saturday, April 28: Moderate hike, Tent Rocks. No dogs allowed. Meet at 10 a.m. on the north side of the Target parking lot at the corner of I-25 and Paseo del Norte. End with optional potluck at Odile and Jim's house. Contact Odile by April 27, h: 505-433-4692, or Odile@pitot.org, specify: (1) cell-phone number; (2) if coming to the potluck; and (3) where you can meet the group.

Saturday, April 28 to Sunday April 29: Strenuous overnight backpack trip in Bandelier National Monument; about 22 miles starting and ending at the Visitor Center, with 4,100 feet of elevation change. We will camp in Capulin Canyon, near the Painted Cave. RSVP to Larry, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, 505-983-8296.

May

Saturday, May 5, moderate hike along the Continental Divide Trail, about 10 miles round trip with 1,800 feet of elevation gain. Hiking up from the Skull Bridge over the Rio Chama to the top of Mesa de los Viejos. Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com, 505-424-9242.

Saturday, May 11: Two-hour easy-paced walk with Margaret and Julie, easy paced. Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot adjacent to the tree sculpture garden, immediately south of the Montañito Bridge on the west side of

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Photo by Aku

Gustavo, Tom and Annette descend the dunes on UN Peak 7463 in the Santa Fe National Forest near Abiquiú. All of our hikes list difficulty rating — check them out; there's something for everyone!



John Roybal

Tobin Oruch, center, on a 2014 outing to Redondo Peak.

Tobin Oruch passes the outings torch

By Mona Blaber

Our excellent longtime Northern New Mexico Outings chair, Tobin Oruch, stepped down in March to take a well-deserved break.

Tobin started the Trail Mix email listserv that is essential to so many hikers around the state, and he grew the Northern New Mexico outings program immensely and introduced many New Mexicans to the outdoors and to the Sierra Club.

"Tobin has been leading hikes at least since 2005 when I started going on Sierra Club hikes," said Alan Shapiro, who has been co-chair for the last few

years and will take over as chair.

"I met Tobin when we formed a carpool up to Los Alamos. As might be expected from a group of guys, we didn't share a lot of our personal stories, but I did learn and appreciate Tobin's attention to detail and work ethic. Hey, he showed up every single day! I enjoyed Tobin's attitude and demeanor on the many outings I joined with him, and he sure had plenty of outings! I envied that long stride he had that kept a healthy pace. All seasons, all types of outings, he shared with regulars and

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About these hikes

Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter outings are free and open to the public. Level of difficulty is listed in hike descriptions. All mileages are round-trip.

Participants must sign a liability waiver. Bring water, lunch, sturdy hiking boots or shoes and clothing suitable for the weather. Leader reserves right to turn away anyone whose experience or equipment appears unsuitable.

Leader may alter destination or cancel trip due to weather, conditions, or insufficient number of participants. Unaccompanied minors need written permission from a parent or guardian. Ask leader for form.

Dogs permitted only if noted in write-up.

Always contact leader before the outing to confirm participation and details. Please see riograndesierraclub.org/outings for up-to-date hike information.

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