Utility Deregulation Raises Clean Air Issues

Energy Coalition Proposes Guidelines for Restructuring Electric Utility Industry

By Charles J. Wigest

The New Mexico Legislature in its 1998 session will be considering legislation to restructure the electric utility industry. Yet, without certain safeguards, deregulation will cause more air pollution from the burning of coal, prohibit clean renewable energy technologies from ever coming to mainstream commercial use, and lead to higher electricity bills for residential ratepayers and small businesses. To prevent this from happening, several environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, have formed the Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy.

We assert that restructuring should not occur unless there are:

- Reductions in air emissions from coal-fired plants
- Programs for renewable energy technologies, like wind and solar
- Assurances that residential and small business consumers will benefit from lower electricity rates

The Coalition's mission is to ensure that competition in electricity markets improves the condition of New Mexico's environment, encourages renewable energy, and benefits residents and small businesses across the state with fair and affordable electric rates. Our Guiding Principles are:

1) Competition must improve New Mexico's air quality and environment. Because a market oriented to short term profits could encourage an increased amount of dirty, coal-fired energy, any legislation must include specific provisions to reduce emissions in New Mexico. Clean air is essential to New Mexico to preserve quality of life, health, and economic vitality.

2) Competition must encourage renewable energy and energy efficiency programs. A market oriented towards short-term marginal profit will not reward providers for energy efficiency or renewable energy programs. These programs give significant economic savings and pollution prevention benefits that are not sufficiently accounted for in the short term. Legislation must facilitate the development of renewable energy technologies, especially in a state where the potential for large-scale practical use of such resources is so high. Legislation must also promote pollution prevention through energy efficiency programs.

3) Competition must provide consumer protections. Universal service must be maintained and protection for low-income and rural consumers preserved. Protections must include access to competitive suppliers, bill assistance, reasonable payment policies, emergency service programs, and affordable rates. Competition must guarantee service quality and reliability. To ensure meaningful choice for electric customers, all wholesale and retail electric providers must be required to disclose their power sources and the approximate pollution impacts of their resource portfolio on customer bills.

4) Consumers must not shoulder the burden of bailing out the electric utilities. Granting full utility recovery of "stranded costs" would saddle the ratepayers with a burden that prevents many from realizing any benefits from competition. Consumers must not pay for utilities' bad Deregulation.

A Look at Immigration Policy

Editor's Note: In February, all Sierra Club members will be asked to vote on two alternatives regarding the Club's policy on immigration. As a service to our readers, two related pieces of information are reprinted here. The first is a brief statement regarding a recommendation by the Chapter. The second is an article from a recent issue of The Planet addressing the two alternatives.

Chapter Recommendation

The Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee voted December 7 to recommend to our membership that the existing policy on immigration be left in place.

Reprinted from The Planet, Dec. 97, Vol. 4, No. 10

The Pending Vote on Immigration Policy Within the Sierra Club

A petition drive has brought the Sierra Club's population policy to a vote of the membership. In a ballot mailed in February, you will be

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Logging Update

By Charlotte Talbert

On Friday, October 31, in Washington, Representative Cynthia McKinney (D-GA), Congressman Jim Leach (R-IA) and others introduced H.R. 2789, the National Forest Protection and Restoration Act (NFPRA) of 1997, a bill that would put an end to 100 years of commercial logging on national forest and other federal public lands. The bill would leave intact firewood collection and other traditional personal uses of the forest. The bill was introduced in response to the Sierra Club's call for an end to public lands logging.

Federal public lands affected by the Act are defined as lands in the National Forest System, the National Wildlife Refuge System and under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The definitions of "commercial logging" and "timber sales" includes the offering of standing, fallen, living, or dead timber for sale for any purpose, excluding permits under the personal use programs of the Forest Service or the BLM.

Upon enactment, no commercial logging shall occur and no timber sales shall be prepared, advertised, offered or awarded on Federal public lands. The gathering of wood for personal, non-commercial use under existing agency permit programs is not prohibited, provided that such gathering is consistent with environmental law. Nothing in the Act may be construed to affect any treaty with any Native American tribe.

With respect to all suspended timber sales, the Act directs the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to exercise contract provisions for early termination and payment of damages or to terminate contracts in order to protect the environment from adverse effects.

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Deregulation (continued from page 1)

business decisions. Relieving utilities of liability for their own decisions would penalize efficient utilities.

5) Competition must be full, fair, and equitable. Neither the environment nor consumers can benefit unless competition is fair. No single power supplier should have an unfair advantage over other power suppliers, thus creating an unregulated monopoly. Sufficient authority and funding must be given to the Attorney General to prevent aggressively competitive systems from harming the consumer as a result of monopolistic business practices. Additionally, competition must benefit all consumer classes, not just large industrial users of electricity. Unelectricity delivery benefits to all customer classes equally, a disproportionate cost burden will fall on average citizens and ratepayers.

In order to achieve the goals outlined in these principles, we need your help, to show our legislature that clean air, movement toward renewable energy, and lower electricity bills for residents and small businesses are basic requirements for deregulation to move forward in New Mexico.

Here are a few easy things you can do to help:

• Pass a resolution endorsing the Coalition's principles.
• Write a letter on behalf of your organization to all legislators in your area.
• Invite a representative from the Coalition to speak at your next meeting.
• Write an op-ed piece or letter to the editor using information from our principles or sample letter to legislators for your local newspapers.

If you have questions about deregulation contact the Sierra Club Energy Chair Ken Hughes at 505-247-0550. Thank you for your help in protecting the citizens and environment of New Mexico.

Coalition members:
Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter
NM Conservation Voters Alliance
NM Public Interest Research Group
NM Citizens for Clean Air & Water
NM Solar Energy Association
Southwest Research and Information Center
Land and Water Fund of the Rockies

Sample Letter to Legislators

Dear Senator/Representative,

I understand the New Mexico State Legislature is considering opening the electricity industry to competition through deregulation. Without greater safeguards in place, deregulation could result in serious harm for the environment and to residential consumers. Any restructuring of the industry must contain:

Reduction in air emissions from coal-fired plants

Programs for renewable energy technologies, like wind and solar

Assurances that residential and small business consumers will benefit from lower electricity rates.

Restructuring may encourage energy providers to increase their production of dirty, coal-fired electricity. With an increase in coal burning comes an increase in air pollutants such as sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide (which cause asthma, heart disease, and respiratory disease, especially in children and the elderly) and greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide (which contribute to global warming). New Mexico’s health must not suffer from increased air pollution because of deregulation. Increased emissions will also endanger one of our state’s most valuable resources—clean, clear skies and unparalled vistas. Clean air is essential to preserve our high quality of life and economic viability.

New Mexico has the potential to be the Saudi Arabia of renewable energy, yet solar and wind energy remains obscure and undervalized in the state. Any deregulation legislation must provide the necessary incentives to bring renewable energy technologies into mainstream commercial use. Any industry wishing to supply electricity to New Mexico should be required to show that it produces a certain percentage (increasing incrementally over time) of its total electricity using renewable resources. Beyond that which is required, customers should also have the option to receive energy produced from renewable sources.

An open market for electricity provides incentives for energy providers to seek aggressively those consumers who use the most electricity. This means that big business and industry will see dramatic rate decreases in a deregulated market. We must make sure that residential consumer’s rates do not rise to make up the difference. All consumer classes should benefit from competition, not just big business. In the same vein, residential consumers should not saddle the burden of bailing out the electric utilities. If we are all forced to pay the utilities “stranded costs” it is unlikely that any consumers will see benefit from restructuring.

When you consider legislation this session to deregulate the electricity industry, we will be counting on you to protect New Mexico’s consumers and environment. Please make sure any restructuring bill that passes includes competition responsibly with the environment and residents in mind. The status quo, while not perfect, is better than higher electricity rates for residents and small businesses, no movement toward renewable technology, and dirtier air.

Sincerely,

Your Name

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Washington Report

Extremists Twist Arms, Moderates Cry "Uncle"
by Richard Barish

Western extremists within the Republican party are playing hardball with their moderate colleagues from the East, threatening to withhold support for bills backed by the moderates. At the center of the debate is a collection of legislation of great concern to the environmental community.

Until the last few months of 1997, Republican moderates were able to prevent the worst anti-environmental bills introduced by Republican extremists from being passed in the House. The Hill reported Representative Wally Herger (R-CA; 1996 League of Conservation Voters (LCV) rating: 0%) as complaining that Republican moderates were "going to war on every issue of importance to us."

The tables have turned for the moment. Republican extremists have succeeded in passing a number of anti-environmental bills during the last several months of 1997, including:

- The Fonge Improvement Act of 1997, which maintains current grazing levels, gives ranchers a virtual veto power over actions that address resource damage, and creates a new bargain basement grazing fee formula.
- The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1997, which allows nuclear waste to be shipped to Yucca Mountain, Nevada, for temporary storage.
- The Private Property Protection Act of 1997, which permits takings claims to be asserted in the first instance in the federal Court of Claims, bypassing state courts and local boards and turning local zoning disputes into federal cases. (An aside: Apparently, Republicans have no qualms about decreasing state and local government authority and increasing the power of the federal government if it advances their interests of developers and big corporations; and the National Monument Fairness Act, which curtails the President's authority to designate national monuments under the Antiquities Act. President Clinton used this authority to designate the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument, and almost every president in this century has used this power to set aside deserving natural areas as national monuments, including Grand Canyon National Park, and the national parks of Alaska.

Representative Silvestre Reyes voted against the takings, nuclear waste and national monument bills, but voted in favor of the grazing bill. Representative Henry Bonilla (1996 LCV rating: 4%) voted against the nuclear waste bill but otherwise voted in favor of these bills. Representatives Joe Skeen (1996 LCV rating: 4%) and Bill Redmond voted in favor of all of these bills. Representative Steve Schiff (1996 LCV rating: 23%) is still recovering from skin cancer and did not vote, but he did cosponsor the Private Property Protection Act.

Generally, in the 105th Congress, the House has been the more moderate chamber on environmental matters. However, if moderate Republicans continue to cave in to the extremists, environmentalists could have a difficult time in 1998 reauthorizing The Endangered Species Act and forwarding public lands and natural resource conservation legislation.

Fast Track Trade Authority

Failing to get enough votes for passage in spite of heavy lobbying and dealing, President Clinton has temporarily withdrawn his request for fast track trade authority. The Fast Track bill prohibits trade negotiators from addressing environmental protection issues.

Quincy Library Group Bill

Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA; 1996 LCV rating: 96%) has withdrawn her support for the Quincy Library Group bill, which sets a dangerous precedent by replacing science-based management of forests with a management plan developed by local interest groups in the Sierra Nevadas. Without the support of Senator Boxer, the bill's chances of passage in the Senate are diminished.

Interior Appropriations Bill

Despite considerable veto pressure from environmentalists, the President signed the Interior Appropriations bill into law. The bill contains numerous anti-environmental provisions, including a rider added by Senator Pete Domenici that delays implementation of a court order restricting environmentally damaging grazing on national forests in New Mexico and Arizona, a provision increasing subsidies for logging roads; and an unprecedented provision allowing Land and Water Conservation Fund proceeds to be spent on maintenance, rather than on acquisition, of land. Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison (1996 LCV rating: 7%), Jeff Bingaman (1996 LCV rating: 78%), and Domenici (1996 LCV rating: 7%) and Representatives Reyes, Bonilla, Redmond, and Sweeney all voted in favor of this bill. Curiously, Senator Phil Gramm (1996 LCV rating: 7%) voted against the bill.

International Family Planning Assistance

Republican extremists succeeded in weakening International Family Planning Assistance, allotting $50 million less than President Clinton requested and the Senate initially approved and including a punitive $500 million in cuts to the Peace Corps. In addition, the Senate added a rider to the bill that hinders international activities to improve girls' education.

The House Agriculture Forest Subcommitte passed legislation creating a five-year program in which a team of scientists will identify national forest areas damaged by disease or insects for various treatments, including logging. The bill is likened to the 1995 salage logging rider and is criticized as an excuse to log dead or less than perfectly healthy trees, which are important components of forest ecosystems.

Chipping Away At Wilderness

Two bills awaiting floor action set dangerous precedents by undoing the protections afforded by wilderness designation. One bill allows the use of trucks and motorboats in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota. The other bill removes critical elk, grouse and grouse habitat from Hells Canyon Wilderness in Idaho and Oregon to allow vehicles into a seven-mile area of the wilderness. Another bill also awaiting floor action allows year-round use of motorized river craft in Hells Canyon National Recreation Area.

Please contact your representatives in Congress regarding the above matters.
Immigration

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asked whether you support the petitioners' position or a reaffirmation of current policy.

Questions/Answers

What is the issue on which the Club will vote?

Club members will vote on whether the Club should take a position on U.S. immigration policy, or remain neutral on the top.

What is the present Club position?

In February 1996, the Board of Directors voted unanimously (with one abstention and two absences) that the Club should not take a position on U.S. immigration policy. Members of the Board expressed concerns that the issue was being discussed in ways that were polarizing the Club and that were unproductive and detrimental to our efforts to reduce global population growth. After three years of discussion, the Club had failed to develop a policy on immigration that commanded support across the spectrum of Club leaders, activists and members. With a consensus-based organization like the Club was not able to find a policy with such broad support, the Board concluded it should remain out of the issue.

Why is the Club voting if the Board does not believe the organization should take a position on immigration?

Under the Club's by-laws, any time a sufficient number of members (presently about 1,300 or 25% of total membership of 53,000) request a direct membership vote on an issue, such a vote is mandated. These members disagree with the Board's neutral position and believe that it is important for the Club to take a position on immigration because of its affect on U.S. population growth—Alternative A. Their ballot measure is printed below.

What is the Board's response position?

In September 1997, the Board of Directors voted unanimously (with two abstentions and two absences) to adopt an alternative ballot measure that restates their neutral position and urges the Club members to vote for it. The Board made the following statement:

"Alternative B — is printed below. At the Club's 1997 annual meeting, the delegates from the Club's 65 chapters and 12 regions also voted for the Board-adopted alternative."

When will the vote take place?

Members will receive ballots early next week and have until mid-April to return them.

How will members be informed about the vote and its implications?

The January/February issue of Sierra magazine will carry two essays, one representing each side of the issue. (Those arguments are reprinted below.) Each side will present a 400-word ballot statement in the ballot itself. Proponents of each position will also prepare a 750-word essay that chapter newsletters may run if they choose.

Can Club chapters and groups take a position on the issue?

Yes, chapters and groups can take positions on this issue internally, and publicize them through editorials in their chapter newsletters.

I'm a Sierra Club member and I want to get involved in this debate. What can I do?

The most effective thing individuals can do is get involved in the debate within their chapter and groups. Many Club members will be writing the dialogue and the position taken by their chapter or group in making up their minds how to vote. Can I write a letter to the editor of my chapter or group newsletter?

Yes, but the Club's rules request newsletter editors to publish a balanced mix of letters from both sides of the topic.

Logging

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The Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior are determined to direct the average annual amount appropriated from the General Fund for the commercial logging program and related activities over the 5 years preceding enactment. This amount is to be used to "log the logging subsidy." This provision provides for the imposition of fees necessary to implement its provisions in the years subsequent to enactment, in an amount not to exceed 1/3 of the logging subsidy described above.

The Secretaries are directed to establish a Natural Heritage Restoration Corps. This Corps will work to restore logged areas on Federal public lands through activities such as re-vegetation, prescribed burning, stabilizing soils, road removal, and removal of barriers to fish migration. The Act directs the Corps to give preference to dislocated timber workers when hiring.

A committee of independent scientists appointed in each Forest Service region will recommend an effective interdisciplinary approach to restoration on that region's Federal public lands. Advice from these scientists will guide the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior in establishing specific restoration goals for each region with a schedule for achieving these goals and in developing regional standards, guidelines, and procedures for restoration. While the Natural Heritage Restoration Plans are developed, the Act directs the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to implement prescribed burning and slash disposal wherever necessary to reduce fire risk and implement efforts to stabilize soils where necessary to prevent or reduce future landslides. All aspects of the Natural Heritage Restoration Plans are subject to the public participation requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Secretary of Labor is authorized to use grant funds to provide training, adjustment employment, services, and needed logistics to dislocated timber workers. Needed logistics payments include payments to assist with training or education programs.

After salvage, Knutson-Vandenbarg, and Purchaser-Electric Roads program funds are redirected toward implementation of the Act, including worker retraining. In addition to implementation of other provisions of the Act, these funds are directed toward continuing payments to counties.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) receives $13 million from the funds described above to investigate environmentally sound wood-free alternative materials for paper and construction. The EPA is following the same proposal under consideration for entities developing or producing such products and may distribute up to $30 million in grants during the 3 years subsequent to enactment.

As support for this Act, Congress finds that Americans do not support use of Federal public lands for timber growing and preferences for 30 times more jobs and income than commercial logging; and, timber from public lands accounts for less than 5% of U.S. annual timber consumption. A Sierra Club economic study published in September 1996 indicated that by fiscal year 1996 alone, the timber sales program operated at a loss to taxpayers of almost $600 million.

The Club's campaign to end the timber sales program on our federal public lands is underway. To find out more about how you can be involved, contact Charlotte Talbeth of the Sierra Fe Group at 202-982-3662, or the John Muir Project at 626-792-0109.

Alternative A

Why We Need a Comprehensive U.S. Population Policy

Shall the Sierra Club reverse its 1996 decision to "take no position on immigration levels or on policies governing immigration into the United States," and adopt a comprehensive population policy for the United States that continues to advocate an end to U.S. population growth at the earliest possible time through reduction in natural increase (births minus deaths), but now also through reduction in net immigration (immigration minus emigration)?

The Argument: Environmental degradation results from too many people using too many resources. For 30 years the Sierra Club demonstrated leadership in addressing the continuing growth of the human population—locally, nationally and globally. In 1979 the Club policy stated: "We must find, encourage, and implement at the earliest possible time the necessary policies that will bring about the stabilization of the population, first of the United States and then of the world.

But the 1996 Board of Directors effectively abandoned this policy and now continues to abandon it. The grassroots-sponsored petition gives members the opportunity to vote to return the Club to a responsible environmental goals, recreation and conservation stance.

Already the United States has lost 90 percent of its northwestern old-growth forests, 50 percent of its interior grasslands (93 percent in California), and 99 percent of its tallgrass prairie. Nearly ending population growth would not only protect every environmental value. This is especially true for land and habitat issues such as protecting forests and wilderness, halting urban sprawl and farmland conversion and saving endangered species. As the 1996 policy of The Wilderness Society states, "We must help to protect and sustain ecosystem values for future generations... To bring population growth to sustainable levels, both births and immigration rates need to be reduced."

The United States is the world's third most populous country. Its 270 million high-consuming Americans affect the global environment as more than 6 billion people in developing countries do. Why then not curb excessive American consumption vs. giving less developed countries priority. But were we to cut per capita resource use in half (itself an enormous task by 2050), our environmental impact would not diminish if our population doubled in the meantime. In 1996 the President's Council on Sustainable Development emphasized: "Stabilizing population without changing consumption and waste production rates would not be enough; neither would action on consumption and waste without efforts to stabilize population growth, which is neither sufficient." Unlike other industrialized countries, the United States is growing rapidly—by 3 million people per year. According to the Census Bureau, immigrants and their descendants will account for two-thirds of U.S. population growth between now and the mid-21st century. At present growth rates our population will approach 300 million by the year 2050—the population of India in the 1970s. No wonder the President's Council on Environmental Quality and the Environmental Protection Agency recommend that "reducing immigration levels is a necessary part of population stabilization efforts."

We urge the Sierra Club to develop, adopt and elect this policy to solve the problems of excessive immigration, mindful that the United States itself is creating an unsustainable debt on global resources, which in turn causes an unsustainable level of immigration. The solutions will require substantial financial, scientific and humane aid from the industrial nations, especially the United States, to enable people to achieve health and the pursuit of happiness in their native lands. But the solution to the problem of immigration growth, as the Board suggests, to pretend that the problem does not exist. The solution is to recognize that population growth, if unchecked, will doom our nation and the population growth must be addressed simultaneously.

In 1996 the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, chaired by the late Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, declared: "We disagree with those who would label efforts to control immigration as being inherently anti-immigrant. In 1996, it is both a right and a responsibility of a democratic society to manage immigration so that it serves the national interest.

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Immigration

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lation policy that necessarily addresses immigration. We agree with mainstream national commissions, with the majority of Americans of all major ethnic groups, The Wilderness Society, and environmental leaders including our supporters Dave Foreman and Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson. Stabilizing population is essential to protecting the environment. A vote for this ballot question will enable the Sierra Club to work realistically toward reducing U.S. population growth . . . for the environment . . . and for present and future generations of life everywhere.

The article above [Alt. A] was written by Dick Dickinson, Population Commission Chair of the Sierra Club's San Francisco Bay Chapter, and Alan Kagan, Population-Environment Committee chair of the Ohio Chapter.

Alternative B

Let's Focus on Underlying Causes, Not Symptoms

The Sierra Club reaffirms its commitment to addressing the root causes of global population problems and offers the following comprehensive approach: The Club will build upon its effective efforts to champion the right of all families to maternal and reproductive health care, and the empowerment and equity of women. The Sierra Club will continue to address the causes of population growth by encouraging sustainable, economic, human rights, and environmentally responsible consumption. The Sierra Club supports the decision of the Board of Directors to take no position on U.S. immigration quotas and policies.

The Argument:

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe. —John Muir

The Sierra Club stands at a historic crossroads. Two competing positions on the spring ballot will test our understanding of the words of our founder, Scottish immigrant John Muir.

One position says the Club must call for a "reduction in net immigration." The Sierra Club position, which we ask you to support, asks members to reaffirm and maintain the Club's strong commitment to addressing the root causes of global environmental problems. It recognizes that for the population and environment of the United States must be global in scope if we are to live peacefully, side-by-side, in a healthy environment. The Sierra Club's Board of Directors, Council of Club Leaders (representing local chapters), National Population Committee, and hundreds of Club leaders in each region support this position.

The 1997 United Nations Population Report reveals enormous progress toward reducing population growth worldwide through voluntary approaches consistent with universal human rights. The Sierra Club has successfully worked to reduce birthrates throughout the world by supporting improved educational and economic opportunities for women and by supporting the right of all peoples to reproductive and maternal health care. But this important work is not over. Extremists in Congress are still denying millions of people the critical right of access to family and reproductive health services. And here in the United States, there are more unwanted births than immigrants every year.

Working with activists worldwide, the Club has come to better understand the full range of factors that contribute to global population growth. Numerous studies have found that global birthrates and global migration across borders decrease when (1) people have full access to reproductive and family health services, including maternal and infant care; (2) women have full and equal access to education and employment, economic and political status; (3) governments protect comprehensive human and environmental rights; and (4) sustainable development preserves local communities and livelihoods.

With these important factors in place, women have healthier and smaller families. This holds true regardless of race, nationality and economic or citizenship status.

But population growth is only one of the many interconnected factors that influence the health of the environment. Much of our environmental degradation is a symptom of an unsustainable global economy, partly driven by government policies that exacerbate poverty and undermine laws protecting public health and human rights. Deeply entrenched government subsidies promote overconsumption, thus wasting natural resources. To protect the resources and global environment upon which we all depend, we must find positive alternatives to overconsumption both here in the United States and around the globe. Overconsumption anywhere is a threat to the environment everywhere.

To address the environmental consequences of migration, we must seriously consider the root causes of migration. Migrant workers are not the enemy; they are the solution. Their contributions are essential to the economy. And they help stabilize the environment. Without them, our planet would be much worse off.

Cougars

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population health and the implementation of quotas on females and total cougars killed.

B. B. redaction of mule deer hunt permits in areas of desert bighorns. This would increase the number of mule deer and thus the prey base for cougars, reducing the number of desert bighorn taken by cougars (cougars prefer the more easily taken deer to wild sheep).

C. Consider the geology of public and wildlife enthusiasts. Such actions do not kill wildlife can have a greater participation in the formulation of wildlife policy in New Mexico.

If cougars are to continue to be part of the New Mexico landscape, it is imperative that the Game Commission hear from the majority of the public who want stronger protection for the cougar.
Update on Military Use of McGregor Range

by Marianne Thealer

Well, finally the Army has put the McGregor Range in the Federal Register for the Scoping Hearings for the Congressionally mandated Legislative Environmental Impact Statement (LEIS) for Otero Mesa/Range, 60,000 acres of New Mexico southeast of Alamogordo, New Mexico, abutting El Paso, Texas. McGregor Range is where New Mexicans made their last stand against the forced condemnation of 7,000 square miles of ranch lands and homes for military use to weapons testing and training for the World War II war effort against the Germans and Japanese. Although the families on McGregor were evicted and their homes were bulldozed down in front of their eyes, the lands went from BLM management, to temporary withdrawal for military use, to permanent withdrawal for military use, to abandonment, to Mexican land ownership, to the current situation of being an undeclared military reservation.

In 1986 Congress passed a law (P.L. 99-606) temporarily withdrawing McGregor for 15 years, under joint management by the BLM and US Army Ft. Bliss, during which time the Army was to clean up McGregor and get off of it by year 2001, and then to manage McGregor for multiple use. P.L. 99-606 requires a Draft Legislative EIS be submitted to Congress by Nov 9, 1998. One portion of McGregor is Otero Mesa and the foothills which include Culp Canyon Wilderness Study Area.

For years ago the Sierra Club, Rio Grande Chapter, adopted a position opposing the use of Otero Mesa and the foothills for military uses and stated that the military should use the land already set aside for training, i.e. over 7,000 square miles in New Mexico. Following this the Sierra Club, Southwest Regional Conservation Committee, adopted the same position, and opposed low level military overflights. Then, the National Board of the Sierra Club adopted a position on military issues.

Now the US Army Ft. Bliss is advertising hearings as Re-Withdrawal Hearings. As you may all remember from my articles, the Otero Mesa portion of McGregor, around 300,000 acres, is presently managed by BLM for multiple use. The Southern New Mexico Group leads an annual field trip to Otero Mesa grasslands, or the uplands, or Culp Canyon Wilderness Study Area. With the help of Audubon, Native Plant Society, 34 Hunter Groups, National Park Conservation Assoc., Cattlegrowers, Otero County chapter of Sierra Club (of the West, and members of the Sierra Club’s Rio Grande Chapter, Southern New Mexico Group over 1,700 people, who have signed access permits from the Army to use BLM lands on the Otero Mesa portion of McGregor Range (as in live-

stock grazing range, not shooting range, not military range) for picnicking, camping, hiking, hunting, bird watching, wildlife watching, and livestock grazing. Otero Mesa is pristine grasslands, perhaps the last example of what southern New Mexico was like before overgrazing at the turn of the century. It is prime nesting habitat for the endangered aplomado falcon. It has a herd of trophy pronghorns, and eagles soar over head looking for food. New Mexico’s State Department of Game and Fish manages McGregor hunting seasons including deer in the foothills and canyons, and only antique muzzle-loaded gun and archery hunts are allowed on the pronghorns. Game and Fish also manages the hunt on the DOD Personnel Only hunting areas. Otero Mesa has prairie dog towns many threatened cacti, at least 3 sites which qualify for designation to the National List of Historic Places, and a world recognized archaeological site. It is special!

Now, also, the US Air Force, as sponsors of the German Air Force, want Otero Mesa to construct a bombing range complex to train their Tornado jet pilots on autopilots at low level, right in the heart of the Mesa grasslands an grazing units. Tornado jets have been banned in Germany because of frequent crashes and the health effects of the noise. (The first Tornado crash in the US occurred this June east of Tulareo, New Mexico.) So the Army wants McGregor Range for Precision Missile practice by the Japanese and multi national tank training, while the US Air Force/GAF wants it for a bombing range complex.

Some of the New Mexico ranch families have worked with the Rio Grande Chapter and the Southern New Mexico Group informally (don’t want to be seen with enivros and loose their “good ol’ boy status,”) to assure that grazing on Otero Mesa will not be displaced by a bombing range complex, and that those ranchers east of Otero will not loose their private property again as a result of low level overflights (120 decibles of noise, 80-88 causes deafness) entering and exiting the bombing range complex.

So, for over 5 years now there has been an informal coalition of environmentalists, hunters, and ranchers fighting to save Otero Mesa and the foothills. We have testified at all Hearings, written formal Comments at every opportunity, attended County Commission Meetings (the Army County Commission controls the use of Otero Mesa and the foothills for military uses), met with Senators and Congressmen, traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with representatives of the Department of Defense and met with them again at their invitation in New Mexico, written articles, given interviews to members of the press, and spread the word about Otero Mesa throughout all 50 states. The BLM Resource Advisory Council voted to oppose the use of Otero Mesa for military uses, and specifically to oppose the bombing range complex. Sierra Club members in Alpine, Texas, have formed a new Group and are fighting the low level overflights in Texas along with the ranchers there. Residents, some Sierra Club members, in and around the Gila National Forest and Lincoln NF have already experienced low level overflights and are registering complaints.

The Rio Grande Chapter’s position has been expressed at all hearings and meetings to date, use what you already have. There are three existing bombing ranges, 2 on White Sands Missile Range used by Holloman AFB, and one south of Clovis, NM, used by Cannon AFB, which are NOT used from noon Friday through noon Monday. But in statement to the Alamogordo newspaper the German Air Force representative said unequivocally, Germans do not train on weekends. Side note: after presenting testimony at USAF/ GAF Hearings in Alamogordo last spring (standing room only with more outside who could not get in), the People for the West, much to my surprise, cheered my presentation and thanked me to show the solidarity of New Mexicans on these matters.

Over the years the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies in Colorado allowed their attorney, Ted Zulaski, to help when an attorney was necessary. The Sierra Club clearly has Standing to bring suit. This year, when we were told by the military and the BLM that a suit may be the only way to proceed, I approached the Southwest Center for Biological Diversity, because of their excellent record of success in bringing environmental suits, and their access to pro bono attorneys in New Mexico, about bringing a suit and the Sierra Club joining, (UNM enviro law students have volunteered to help with research.) The Southwest Center agreed and filed a Notice of Intent to sue. A DOD Decision on the bombing range and low level overflights is expected in December. The low level overflights, down to 100 feet above ground level will go from eastern Arizona, across the Gila NF, around the Lincoln NF, and south along Alpine, Texas near Big Bend National Park.

So, everyone wants McGregor Range. As we await a Decision on the proposed bombing range complex by the Air Force, the Army has held hearings in Alamogordo, Nov 18, Las Cruces, Nov 19, and El Paso, Nov 20, on their desire to have McGregor Range and the Otero Mesa and foothills portions Re-withdrawn for use by the US Army and multinational forces.

As we proceed with the suit against the bombing range complex and low level overflights, I am asking all of you to help our efforts by writing Scoping Comments, what should be included in the mandated Legislative EIS on the withdrawal of McGregor being prepared by the Army. The deadline for Comments is January 9, 1997.

There is an Alternative which we should ask the Army and BLM to consider in the LEIS. It is: consider Otero Mesa and the foothills for National Conservation Area status. I have materials, which I can send you, defining what a National Conservation Area is, and I ask you to write requesting that the LEIS consider, as an one Alternative, the designation of Otero Mesa and the foothills as an NCA. And, oppose the re-withdrawal of McGregor Range.

Comments should be addresses as McGregor LEIS COMMENTS, and should be sent to:
Dr. Andy Vliet
Program Manager
McGregor Withdrawal
US Army Air Defense Center
Fort Bliss
ATTN/ATZC-CSA
P.O. Box 6000
Fort Bliss, Texas 79905

If time is short, send your comments by email to: mthaler@ehio.bliss.army.mil

Marianne Thealer is Military Issues Chair, Rio Grande Chapter, Sierra Club
Water Defines the Future of the Middle Rio Grande Basin
by Susan Gorman

"Seeking always to lower, the running waters of the land struggles to fulfill its blinding purpose - to find a way over, around or through earth's fantastic obstacles back to the element which gave it origin, the sea."

"And in that arid land, any tree, much less a scattered few, or a bounteous grove, meant good things - water somewhere near, and shade, and shelter from the beating sun, and talk from trilling leaves."
— Paul Horgan, Great River, The Rio Grande in North American History, Volume 1, 1894

When the first people came to the river to settle, build pit houses and then pueblo cities, plant corn and beans watered by the river and the occasional rain, they found a place to call home, the green ribbon of the Rio Grande. Since those early times, more people have come and others are born here. Albuquerque and the other communities of the Middle Valley have expanded into sprawling settlements with networks of roads, tall buildings, industrial complexes, malls, schools, apartments, houses with yards, parks, parking lots. Water managers labor to develop and implement strategies to assure that the people living in the Middle Valley have a sustainable supply of water for all our uses.

The result is that the green ribbon is traversed by canals, ditches, drains, wasteways and aqueducts, and the river's flow is defined by releases from upstream reservoirs. The water of the river must now find a way through not only the "earth's fantastic obstacles" but also through man's.

The San Juan-Chama Project is a pipeline to move water over the Continental Divide to replenish the Rio Grande. Soon the City of Albuquerque will build a system to lift this water from the river, purify it and send it to our homes, yards, businesses and parks. Meanwhile, New Mexico Utilities has applied to the State Engineer for rights to more water which it proposes to pump from 69 new wells to supply 20,000 new homes in the Black Ranch development on the west mesa. Other plans call for drilling more wells and diverting more surface water as the population of Bernallillo, Valencia, Sandoval and Torrance Counties grows from 650,000 today to a whopping 1,550,000 folks in 2050.

Imagine the impact of another 900,000 humans on the other criteria, the land, air, energy, and especially, the water resources of these four counties. What deeply held values must we surrender to enable all those folks to live here? Do we have the collective energy, creativity, vision and will to plan for this growth and to develop the sustainable water, transportation, energy and waste handling systems that will be needed?

The development of a viable Middle Rio Grande water plan which can be implemented effectively is at the heart of the sustainability initiative, since ensuring a sustainable water supply for the region is essential for the health and well being of future generations.

Last August, the First Assembly for Water Planning in the Middle Rio Grande provided the opportunity for people to share ideas and insights on values, challenges and competing interests relating to water in the Middle Basin. During the open mike sessions, folks spoke with passion of their values relating to water. In smaller groups, we shared our thoughts about the boundaries of the MRG Basin, the special qualities and unique characteristics of the MRG Region, the key issues, concerns and problems. We discussed ways to identify the stakeholders and to insure that all stakeholders participate. We struggled with ways to fund this process, define next steps and who should be responsible.

At the conclusion of the Assembly, participants passed a resolution:

The participants of the 1st Assembly for Water Planning in the Middle Rio Grande call for the development of a regional water plan

Special Topics Forum

Regional Transit for the Albuquerque Area:
Let's Just Do It!

January 19, 7:30 PM
Friends Meeting House 1600 5th Street NW

A regional transit system for the Middle Rio Grande Valley is critical to preserve the high quality of life residents have come to enjoy. Fast, convenient and safe transit service will give people travel choices they do not have today. If we want clean air and less congestion, we must decide to build a transportation infrastructure which enables us to travel without getting into a car.

Anne Watkins, Director of the City of Albuquerque Transit Department and friends will give us the latest news on the Transit Service Plan and help us start a campaign to convince State Legislators to approve the RTA enabling legislation. Bring a friend and a cup for refreshments, too.

CALENDAR

Unless otherwise noted, meetings take place at the Albuquerque Group's Sierra Club office, 207 San Pedro NE

Jan 11 Chapter Excom Meeting, Socorro, NM
Jan 12 Group Excom Meeting, 7:00 PM
Jan 19 Forum on Regional Transit, 7:30PM, at the Friends Meeting House, 1600 5th NW. See notice above.
Jan 20 New Mexico Legislature begins
Jan 24 Winter Bird Festival, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM Rio Grande Nature Center
Feb 4 Deadline for agenda items for Group Excom Meeting E-mail to blairb@aol.com
Feb 9 Group Excom Meeting, 7:00 PM
Feb 15 Deadline for submission of Sierra articles

The Albuquerque Group of the Sierra Club depends entirely on the efforts of volunteers. To help, call any of us!

ADMINISTRATION
PETRA HEGGER
890-0531
Petra@habria.win.net

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Book/Calendar
Blair Brown
265-3321
blairb@aol.com

Information Technology
Julie Hicks
232-7151
mtheinrich@aol.com

Media Coordinator
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Political Chair
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Programs
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Sustainable Albuquerque Film
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Western New Mexico

Jack Humphrey
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wildness
John Wright
247-4563
wright@psic.org, aps.edu

Martin Heinrich
232-7151
mtheinrich@aol.com
**Sustainability Campaign: 37 Highlights**

**Water Customer Advisory Committee**

The committee provides advice on the City's Water Resources Management. It has been adopted and is under implementation, which will completely change the city's water supply system. The changes agreed in the Strategy include direct use of rainwater and recycling.

**Roxo Community Advisory Committee**

The committee is of interest to SIS Committee and is a set of 33 Community Sustainability Indicators for Albuquerque. The report which describes these indicators and makes recommendations for their use was submitted to the City Council and adopted in October 1997. SIS Gorman represents the Sierra Club on this committee and is its chair.

**Middle Rio Grande Regional Water Planning**

Members of the Albuquerque Group participated in the 1st and 2nd Assemblies for the Regional Water Planning. These events provided the opportunity for people to provide ideas and insights on values, challenges and competing interests relating to water in the Middle Basin. The participants at the 2nd Assembly agreed on a proposal for governance.
Upcoming Meetings

February 4: Inter City Outing: 6 PM at the Environmental Center, 800 South Fredars, El Paso. Contact Richard Rheber at (915) 544-5659 (H).

February 5: Executive/Conservation Committee: 6 PM at Jason’s 1135 Airway, El Paso. Contact Jim Bell at (915) 581-8864 (H).

Outings

Jan 15-19: Superstition Mountains Wilderness Backpack
Place: East of Phoenix, AZ
Class: Moderate+
Approximate length: 22 miles
Leader: Rollin Wickenden: 832-4023 (W)

Jan 17: Dripping Springs Day Hike
Place: Organ Mountains near Las Cruces
Class: Easy
Approximate length: 3 miles
Leader: Ann Falls: 855-2105 (W), 833-9162 (H)

Jan 21: Salt Basin Overlook Day Hike
Place: Guadalupe Mountains National Park
Class: Moderate
Approximate length: 10 miles
Leader: Jim Bell: 581-8864 (H)

Feb 7: Mayberry Canyon Day Hike
Place: White Sands Missile Range
Class: Moderate
Approximate Length: 8-10 miles
Limit: 15, reservations, leadership approval and citizenship required
Leader: Rollin Wickenden: 832-4023 (W)

Feb 8: Dog Canyon Day Hike
Place: Sacramento Mountains
Class: Moderate
Approximate length: 5 miles
Leader: Mark Post: 581-2696

Feb 14-15: Indian Hollow Backpack
Place: Organ Mountains
Class: Moderate
Approximate length: 5 miles
Leader: Alice Anderson: (505) 523-5179

Outing Report

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Place: Organ Mountains near Las Cruces
Class: Easy
Approximate length: 3 miles
Leader: Ann Falls: 855-2105 (W), 833-9162 (H)

Bring the kids on this almost level hike.

Jan 24: Salt Basin Overlook Day Hike
Place: Guadalupe Mountains National Park
Class: Moderate
Approximate length: 10 miles
Leader: Jim Bell: 581-8864 (H)

This hike begins at Pine Spring on a round trip to an overlook of the historically-famous salt flats. This hike is suitable for people who have been hiking locally and want to try a longer day hike. It’s also a particularly lovely hike that more experienced hikers will enjoy.

Jan 24-25: West Potrillo Cones Backpack
Place: West of El Paso
Class: Moderate+
Approximate length: 14 miles
Leader: John Walton: 747-5057 (W)

Spend a night in a cinder cone in one of the largest wilderness study areas in southern New Mexico. The altitude gain is about 1,000 feet. The hike is rated moderate+ because of the necessary to carry all the water you’ll need. There will be plenty of time for side trips.

Feb 7: Mayberry Canyon Day Hike
Place: White Sands Missile Range
Class: Moderate
Approximate Length: 8-10 miles
Limit: 15, reservations, leadership approval and citizenship required
Leader: Rollin Wickenden: 832-4023 (W)

This is our annual day hike to White Sands Missile Range. The outing is open to U.S. citizens only. Names and Social Security numbers must be provided two weeks in advance. We will depart from El Paso and meet at the Public Affairs Office at W.S.M.R. From there, Jim Edles, Public Affairs Officer at W.S.M.R. will lead us to the trailhead for Mayberry Canyon, a trail we have not hiked before. Mayberry Canyon has pools of water and cottonwood trees. As always, the outing is subject to cancellation if a missile test is scheduled for that day. Call Rollin early for details and reservations.

Feb 8: Dog Canyon Day Hike
Place: Sacramento Mountains
Class: Moderate
Approximate length: 5 miles
Leader: Mark Post: 581-2696

With an elevation gain of only 800 feet, the first 600 feet are steep and full of switchbacks.

Feb 14-15: Indian Hollow Backpack
Place: Organ Mountains
Class: Moderate
Approximate length: 5 miles
Leader: Alice Anderson: (505) 523-5179

Expect an excellent view of Sugarloaf from the campsite and water in the waterfall just below camp.

Most outings have a limit of 12. Call leader early to get further information and to sign up.

El Paso Group News

El Paso Group Directory

Executive Committee
Chair: Jim Bell, 581-8864
Vice Chair: OPEN
Treasurer: Lucy Sanford, 581-9301
ewwalsh@tep.edu
Membership
OPEN
Outings
Laurence Gibson, 594-7342
gibson@ecce.tep.edu
Political Action
Jim Bell, 581-8864
Population
Sally Savage, 833-6899
Programs
OPEN
Publicity
OPEN
LORAX
Sally Savage, 833-6899
ICU Chair
Richard Rheber, 544-5659
atD03@tep.edu
Secretary
Ann Falkner, 833-9162
Sierra Club Environmental Center
800 South Fredars @ Paseano
Phone: 532-9645
Fax: 532-4876

Feb 1: Hondo Pass Day Hike
Place: Franklin Mountains
Class: Easy - Dogs welcome
Leader: Laurence Gibson: 594-7342 (H)
Time to go from Fido and Fida some exercise. Let them romp while you enjoy the crisp late winter weather.

behind the mountains) ornamented the sky as we returned to camp for a warm fire and good conversation. The next morning, six people and two dogs walked up Sheridan Canyon in search of U-Bar Ridge. Since none of us had been there before, we didn’t find it. We did find a good lunch spot on a ridge with views on three sides, looking down on the way we should have gone. We returned to camp for another evening of good conversation by the fire. Some of us looked at the Andromeda Nebula, a million light years away, through binoculars. Sunday morning we drove to the north end of the range to explore briefly a canyon before returning home.

ICO Honored by Sanchez Middle School
by Richard Rheber

The Inner City Outing (ICO) club of the El Paso Sierra Club is honored by the Sanchez Middle School for its involvement at the school. Assistant Principal Mason Gray presented the ExCen plaque that reads, “Thank you for being a shining star in Socorro Independent School District.”

The ICO is the Sierra Club’s outreach program to provide environmental education through wilderness experiences and community service projects to young people who might not otherwise get to have them. Through the ICO, members of the Sanchez drama club were brought on several hiking and camping trips.

Other groups benefitting from ICO in 1997 included Gulf Middle School, the Children’s and Adolescents Mental Health Program Services unit of Life Management Center, the therapeutic foster care program of the El Paso Center for Children, and SW Keys’ Casa El Paso.

If you have equipment to share, or would like to donate time, please contact Richard Rheber at (915) 544-5659.

IMP to Increase Pollution Prevention Efforts

The Institute for Manufacturing & Materials Management (IMP) at the University of Texas at El Paso is increasing its pollution prevention efforts by adding a pollution prevention information coordinator. According to IMP’s Coastal Solter, the new staff person “will interact with multiple state agencies and educational institutions.” He says they are looking for someone with an environmental background with at least a bachelor’s degree. For more information, Mr. Solter can be reached at (915) 747-8622.

The deadline for the next El Paso LORAX is February 4th.

Submit your listings to editor Sally Savage: (915) 833-6899 (H)
Outings

Jennifer is no longer able to be our Outings Chair, so we are looking for a replacement. Many of you have joined the Sierra Club because you like to hike. If you might like to take this on, please call an Executive Committee member.

Cross-Country Ski Workshop:
Saturday, January 17

This workshop is for skiers with some limited experience who want to improve techniques and confidence for back-country touring. Call Gordon or Eve Spencer by January 13 for details - 672-3707.

Saturday hikes in January and February

Meet near the recycling bins in Sullivan Field parking lot at 9AM. The destination and difficulty of each hike will be determined by the group that shows up. Return will be about 1PM. Leader: Tinka Gammel (662-4856).

Birding walks for all abilities
January 24, 9AM

Additional walks on February 7 and 21

We will begin winter birding so that by spring we will be ready for the migrants. This will be fun and education. Any age able to focus on the purpose is welcome. Small children must be with an adult. Call the Leader, Jennifer Johnson (662-3023) for details and meeting place.

Upcoming Meetings

All meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. at Mesa Public Library, upstairs.

The Conservation Committee meets on the second Wednesday of each month, and the Executive Committee on the third Wednesday. Both meetings are open to all, and members are encouraged to attend.

General Meetings

General meetings take place on the first Wednesday of the month; upcoming topics follow:

Dr. Kathy Ramsey, of the Wildlife Center in Española

Dr. Ray Fowell, New Mexico Commissioner of Public Lands, will speak about "Mining Reform."

Take Note!
The deadline for the March/April issue of the *Rio Grande Sierran* is Feb. 15, 1998.

Guidelines for submissions appear on page 2
SANTA FE GROUP MEETINGS

BUY THE BACA!!
Tuesday, January 20, 7 PM

An all-out united effort is underway to get the privately-owned Valles Caldera/Baca Location No. 1, land, located in the Jemez Mountains above Los Alamos, into public hands. The 95,000-acre Baca is a diverse treasure and occupies the heart of the largest volcanic caldera in the nation. Three rivers rise within its boundaries, diverse wildlife populations abound, and recreational opportunities are plentiful. The Baca shelters over a dozen threatened and endangered species and serves as the wellspring for one of the largest elk herds in the state. Black bear, cougars, and numerous other animals roam freely through its woods and valleys.

Dennis McCaig of the U.S. Forest Service will speak to the Club about the Baca. A member of the environmental Valles Caldera Protection Coalition will speak about the struggle to get the Baca purchased and protected. A short videotape, produced by the Dunigan family, who have owned the Baca land for over 30 years, will be shown.

Senator Pete Domenici opposes the purchase! Come learn why and what you can do to help protect one of the last best places in New Mexico. HELP US BUY THE BACA!

All meetings, outings, and activities are FREE and open to the public.

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION IN OUR FORESTS, IS IT POSSIBLE?
Tuesday, February 17, 7 PM

The forests of Northern New Mexico are unhealthy by nearly every measure in the book. Old-growth is nearly gone, young trees are underdeveloped, and “dog’s hair” thickets are choking the forest. The forests need controlled thinning and burning, but how?

Jeremy Kruger, of the Southwest Forest Alliance (a new organization that has 55 environmental groups as members, including the Sierra Club), will speak about forest health and opportunities for ecological restoration. The Alliance has begun some innovative projects in the Southwest aimed at partnering ecological work with economic opportunity.

Be there to learn about an exciting new direction in the environmental movement. Jeremy is a dynamic speaker and has lots of great slides. Bring your questions!

The Membership Meetings are held at the Unitarian Church at 107 W. Barcelona Street (between Gallisteo and Don Gaspar).

Santa Fe Group of the Sierra Club
621 Old Santa Fe Trail · Salto 10 · Plaza Desira · Santa Fe · New Mexico · 87501
505 · 983-2703

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!!

ELECTION RESULTS

Congratulations to Eleanor Eisenmenger who has been elected to her first term on the Santa Fe Group Executive Committee. And congratulations also to John Bucher, Courtney White, Norma McCallan and Lionel Soracco on their reelection to the Committee. These are dedicated people who spend many hours working to keep the wildness for all of us. Sincere thanks go to Don Goldman, retiring EComm member, for his years of committed service on the Board, including a stint as Chair. (We note that, unfortunately, the ballot mistakenly asked people to vote for three, not five, candidates. Apologies for any confusion.)

PART-TIME JOB OPPORTUNITY!!

The Santa Fe Group is looking to hire someone to help in the office. The pay is $5.25 per hour, and the schedule is 10 hours per week. The work will focus on membership activities in the upcoming year. For more information, call Ned Sudborough, at 474-4055. The deadline for application is February 1, 1998.

SANTA FE GROUP OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Chair — Doug Fraser · 474-7615
Vice-Chair — Barbara Johnson · 456-4935
Secretary/Treas — Lionel Soracco* · 983-6715
Chapter Representative — TBD
Conservation — Courtney White* · 982-5502
National Parks — Courtney White* · 982-5502
Sustainability—Barbara Johnson* · 466-4935
SF National Forest—Greg Pollock · 986-7650
Carson National Forest—George Grossman · 983-4201
Mining—Ollie Larsen · 983-3928
Publicity — Kay Carlson · 983-3926
Phone Tree — Norma McCallan* · 471-0005
Outings — Norbert Speicher · 983-1962
*Norma McCallan* · 471-0005
Political Committee—Ned Sudborough*474-4055
Membership — Ned Sudborough* · 474-4055
National Parks—George Grossman · 982-5502
Sustainability—Barbara Johnson* · 466-4935
SF National Forest—Greg Pollock · 986-7650
Carson National Forest—George Grossman · 983-4201
Mining—Ollie Larsen · 983-3928
Publicity — Kay Carlson · 983-3926
Phone Tree — Norma McCallan* · 471-0005

OUTING LEADERS MEETING/WORKSHOP
Saturday, April 18
9 AM · 4 PM
Sierra Club Office

Leaders, please mark your calendars now. If you have been thinking about becoming a leader, this is the ideal time to come aboard. Call Norbert (983-1962) or Norma (471-0005) for more details.

CALL FIRST!!

Before planning a hike or X-country ski trip, be sure to call the outing leader. You want to know that you are capable of keeping up with the group and that you have the proper equipment and experience for the outing. Most especially, call the leader for the ski trips — our winter weather is volatile at best and we want you to enjoy yourself and not get in over your head.

IMPORTANT OUTING NOTES

ATTENTION: Local newspapers do not always provide information (accurate or otherwise) about upcoming hikes. If you intend to go on a Sierra Club outing, keep the facing page as reference.

Group Conservation Committee meetings:
Tuesday, January 27, 7 PM
Tuesday, February 24, 7 PM
Group Executive Committee meetings:
Tuesday, February 3, 7 PM
Tuesday, March 3, 7 PM
SANTA FE GROUP OUTINGS

**January 1998**

**January 2**
- Norbert Sperlich (983-962) **Moderate Hike** near La Bajada. Call if not familiar with area. Leave 8:30 AM.

**January 4**
- Lee Sullivan (662-6185) **Easy Hike** Embudo area, 7-8 miles. Call for details.

**January 10**
- Carolyn and Arnold Keskalla (982-9570) **Easy Hike** St. John’s arroyo. Leave 9 AM.

**January 11**
- Matt Gervase (466-3479) **Moderate/Strausen X-Country Ski Trip** Call for details and time.

**January 13**
- Norma McCallan (471-0005) **Easy/Moderate Hike** along the railroad tracks (newly acquired as a Public Trail). Leave 9:30 AM. Dogs allowed. Call for details.

**January 17**
- Jeff Jones (466-2389) **Easy Hike** Cañada de Los Alamons. Leave 9 AM. Children encouraged.

**January 18**
- Bob McKee (672-3420) **Moderate Hike** in White Rock area. Meet Sierra office in Santa Fe 8 AM to carpool, or meet Bob at Smith’s Market in White Rock at 9 AM.

**January 24**
- Jennifer Johnson (662-3023) **Winter Birding Field Trip**. How to tell the birds apart. Locations will depend on weather. Call for details.

**January 24**
- Bob McKee (672-3420) **Easy/Moderate Hike** on White Rock Canyon Rim Trail. Meet leader at 9:30 AM at Smith’s Supermarket parking lot in White Rock or carpool from Santa Fe office at 8:30 AM. Call leader if not familiar with area.

**January 25**
- Norma McCallan (471-0005) **Easy Hike** to Barrancas. Dogs allowed. Leave 9:30 AM.

**January 28**
- Jennifer Johnson (662-3023) **Winter Birding Field Trip**. How to tell the birds apart. Locations will depend on weather. Call for details.

**January 29**
- Bob McKee (672-3420) **Moderate/Strausen X-Country Ski Trip**. Leave 9 AM. Call leader for information.

**January (continued)**

**Saturday and Sunday, January 24 and 25**

**Margo Wilson (1-505-744-8680) Annual Get Together at T or C to enjoy warmer climes. "Camp" at Margo’s, enjoy a **moderate hike** in area on Sat, and a shorter hike Sun. to allow for drive home. May visit the Armandos Ranch. Pot luck supper at Margo’s Sat. night. Local contact Norma (471-0005). Drive down Friday PM.

**February 1998**

**February 1**
- Victor Ayala (438-9434) **Easy Hike** Diablo Canyon. Leave 9 AM.

**February 21**
- Sharon Evans (473-9632) **Moderate Snowshoe Trip** Call for details of destination and time.

**Here are a few key names and numbers to help in your environmental actions to protect our Santa Fe National Forest and other concerns:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senator Pete Domenici</th>
<th>Senator Jeff Bingaman</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States Senate</td>
<td>United States Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, DC 20510</td>
<td>Washington, DC 20510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(202) 224-6621 (DC)</td>
<td>(202) 224-5212 (DC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(202) 224-7371 (DC fax)</td>
<td>(202) 224-2852 (DC fax)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(505) 766-3481 (Abq)</td>
<td>(505) 988-6647 (SF)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(505) 766-1443 (Abq fax)</td>
<td>(505) 988-6596 (SF fax)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:senator_domenici@donaldjosephsenate.gov">senator_domenici@donaldjosephsenate.gov</a></td>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:senator_bingaman@bingaman.senate.gov">senator_bingaman@bingaman.senate.gov</a></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rep. Bill Redmond (3rd District)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. House of Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, DC 20515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(202) 225-6190 (DC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(202) 222-2131 (DC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(505) 988-7230 (SF fax)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-mail via US House of Representatives Web Site: <a href="http://www.house.gov/writerep/">http://www.house.gov/writerep/</a></td>
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**Outings Notes** — Unless otherwise noted, all outings leave from the Sierra office, 621 Old Santa Fe Trail, "Plaza Desierto," just south of Old SF Trail Bookstore & Coffee House. Carpooling will be arranged. Each hiker should come prepared to pay $5 a mile to the driver of the car in which s/he rides. Bring a lunch, water, sturdy hiking boots or shoes, and clothing suitable for the weather - leader reserves the right to turn away anyone whose equipment or experience appears unsuitable. Leader has right to alter destination of hike or cancel trip due to weather, unfavorable conditions, or insufficient numbers of participants. Unaccompanied minors must have written permission from parents or guardians to participate; permission forms are available at the Sierra Club office. Dogs not permitted on hikes unless noted otherwise. Telephone leader for details of the individual hike.
Group Directory
Executive Committee
P.O. Box 3705 UPB
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88011

Larry Hughes, Chair, 522-4600 ext 270(W)
Outings Co-Chair 521-1152(H)
larry@teisof.com

Cheryll Blevins, Vice Chair 526-6220(W)
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Mario Ruiz, Inc. City 589-4622(H)
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Margot Wilson, Warm 744-5860(H)
Springs Section, Chapter 894-7152(W)
Delegate hshs3@risslink.com

Marianne Thaeler, 522-3421
Military Affairs marianne.thaeler@ sierraclub.org

Outings

Saturday, January 17 - Baylor Massif Dayhike
Place: Organ Mountains
Class: Strenuous
Limit: 12, reservation and leader approval required
Leader: Larry Hughes 522-4600 ext. 270, larry@teisof.com or
Lolene Alvarez 521-1152, jalvare@nmsu.edu
We will hike the 522.1 Augustin Pass via Baylor Canyon. Call for more information.

Saturday, January 17 - Bosque del Apache Dayhike
Place: Bosque de Apache's Raptor Alley
Class: Moderate
Limit: 12, reservation and leader approval required
Leader: Margot Wilson 744-5860.
Call for more information.

Sat- Sun, Jan 23 - 24 Famous Annual Chapter Outing in Sierra County.
Place: Margot Wilson's house
Class: Easy
Leader: Margot Wilson 744-5860.
Call Margot or see Chapter Outings for more information.

Saturday, January 31 - Doña Ana Peak Dayhike
Place: Doña Ana Mountains.
Class: Easy/Moderate
Limit: 12, reservation and leader approval required
Leader: Larry Hughes 522-4600 ext. 270, larry@teisof.com or
Lolene Alvarez 521-1152, jalvare@nmsu.edu
We will hike at a lease rely pace to the top of Doña Ana Peak and then
find a nice place for lunch. Call for more info.

Saturday February 14 Anthony's Nose Dayhike
Place: Franklin Mountains
Class: Strenuous
Limit: 12, reservation and leader approval required
Leader: Larry Hughes 522-4600 ext. 270, larry@teisof.com or
Lolene Alvarez 521-1152, jalvare@nmsu.edu.
This hike contains 4th class scrambling and exposure. Call for more info.

Party Timm!!!
The Southern New Mexico Group will hold its first Annual Wine and Cheese Party on Saturday, February 21 at 6:00 p.m.
Contact Larry or Lolene at 521-1152 or larry@teisof.com for more info.

Call for Nominations
If you are interested in running for a seat on the Executive Committee of the Southern New Mexico Group, contact Lolene at 521-1152 or jalvare@nmsu.edu, by Feb 10. The ballot will be printed in the March/April issue of the Rio Grande Sierran.

Getting Ready for Earth Day
If you would like to help with our Earth Day Program, contact Larry or Lolene at 521-1152(H), 522-4600 ext.270(W), jalvare@nmsu.edu or larry@teisof.com. Help us make this year's Earth Day program successful as last year's.

Warm Springs Section Report
Our Changing Climate
By Margot Wilson

The Earth and its atmosphere absorb energy radiating from the sun. In turn the Earth releases some of this energy back into its atmosphere in the form of infrared light. Some of this infrared light will pass through the atmosphere into space and some of it will be absorbed and re-radiated back to the Earth by carbon dioxide and other gases. This is the "greenhouse effect" and it is responsible for keeping the Earth's temperature about 30°F warmer than it would be without "greenhouse gases" in the atmosphere.

What is the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere a concern? Excessive amounts of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere cause too much infrared light to be re-radiated back to the Earth, increasing its temperature and disturbing the delicate balance which enables life to exist on the Earth. As an extreme example, the atmosphere of Venus consists almost entirely of carbon dioxide. The surface temperature of Venus is more than 750°F. The use of fossil fuel by humans has already resulted in doubling the amount of carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere. At the current rate of emission, the amount of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere will double again in 50 years.

Oil companies, the Manufacturers' Association, the Cattlemen's Association and others have fiercely denied these facts. However, the accumulated data and a better understanding of our climate, have convinced most climatologists that our climate is indeed changing. Moreover it is recognized that change is due to the effects of our industrialized societies.

The good news is that we can slow down and eventually stop global warming, but we must begin to act today. The most important step we can take to curb global warming is to improve our nation's energy efficiency. Our cars and trucks, lighting, home appliances, and power plants could be made much more efficient by simply installing the best current technology. Energy efficiency is the cleanest, safest, most economical way we can begin to deal with global warming.

No global warming solution will succeed unless we can control carbon dioxide emissions from cars. More carbon dioxide pollution comes from America's cars and trucks than from the entire nation of Japan. If we are to make any progress in slowing down global warming, we must make our cars go further on a gallon of gas.

While there is no technology known to remove carbon dioxide from our cars' exhausts, we can make them pollute less by making them more fuel-efficient. By using today's best technology, car makers could dramatically increase the fuel economy of cars and trucks. In fact, vehicles such as the 1994 Honda Civic VX have shown that with only minor changes today's cars could get over 50 miles per gallon.

We also need to clean up our electric power plants. Most electric utilities still use coal to produce electricity, spewing millions of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year. Converting these plants to burn cleaner natural gas could solve part of the problem.

We could do much more to save energy in our homes and office buildings. More energy efficient lighting, heating, and air-conditioning could keep millions of tons of carbon dioxide out of our air each year.

Southwestern states in particular hold enormous potential as sources of renewable energy. States like Arizona, New Mexico and Texas have the potential of becoming the Saudi Arabia of solar energy.
Sierra Club Policy: Grazing On The Public Lands

A Note from the Chapter Chair

There has been discussion on grazing policy both on the list server and at the last ExCom meeting in Kingston. Following is the current Club Policy.

The following policy on Grazing On The Public Lands has been adopted by the Sierra Club Board of Directors:

Grazing On The Public Lands

The goal of the management of grazing on the public lands is to restore and maintain fully functioning natural ecosystems, with their full complements of native species. Federal and provincial resource agency management emphasis shall be on the restoration of native biodiversity and rehabilitation of all public lands, especially riparian areas, damaged by grazing. Such restoration shall be accomplished through the development and implementation, with full public participation, of land-use plans and integrated management plans that are based on ecological units, such as watersheds, rather than on grazing allotments, and that are fully monitored for compliance and effectiveness.

To minimize environmental costs, livestock grazing shall be permitted only on public lands in satisfactory condition, except under agency approved rehabilitation plans. The criteria for satisfactory condition include lands in good and excellent condition with static or upward trends, with healthy riparian areas and wildlife habitat, and with grazing practices in compliance with land-use plan objectives, standards and guidelines, and with permit requirements.

To minimize economic costs as well as environmental costs, livestock grazing must be permitted at a land use value than fair market value established on a regional basis.

Livestock grazing is not an appropriate use for every acre of public lands. Livestock use shall be prohibited on National Wildlife Refuges and National Parks unless it is currently allowed, if necessary for achieving Refuge or Park purposes, and is not causing environmental damage. Other lands that should be withdrawn from livestock grazing include critical habitats for threatened or endangered species, lands that are actively desertifying or on which grazing is not ecologically sustainable, sensitive cultural resource areas, and lands on which monitoring by public land agencies is inadequate to establish whether grazing practices are in compliance with planning objectives and permit requirements. On those geographically limited areas where wild horses are causing environmental problems, their impacts shall be controlled.

The Sierra Club reaffirms its policy that public range should be retained under public ownership. Further, the Sierra Club urges the public acquisition of private lands by the federal government that are critical to carrying out its public land management responsibilities.

Adopted September 12, 1990 Policy Code 10.5

Upcoming Outings

January 24/25
Saturday/Sunday
Contact: Margot Wilson 505-744-5860
Truth or Consequences Area “Camp” & Day Hikes
Head for the balmy air of Sierra County, camping in at Margot’s house, sharing a pot luck supper Saturday evening, and exploring the nearby countryside, with a longer day hike on Sat. (possibly to Armendaris Ranch) & shorter one on Sun. Dogs allowed. Call for details.

Jan. 24, Feb. 7 & Feb. 21
Three Saturdays
Contact: Jennifer Jones 505-662-3023
Los Alamos Winter Birding
Learn how to recognize the winter birds. Location of field trips will depend upon weather conditions. Call for details.

March 7
Saturday
Contact: Gary Williams 915-593-3624
Cowboy Springs WSA
Possible day hike to this small, isolated wilderness study area north of the Big Hatchets in the Boot Heel of NM. Call Gary to see if trip is on, & get details.

Feeling Depressed?

Take a Hike!

I was feeling pretty depressed the last week or two after some discordant issues/voices had been raised at recent meetings, which indicated some serious disunity within the Chapter. I went out on a SF Group snowshoe trip this past weekend. A rather short trip into the snowy woods, but the brilliant blue sky, fresh snow, and the enthusiasm & camaraderie of the 9 participants were a wonderful tonic for my low spirits. And I remembered my Thanksgiving weekend trip to the Big Hatchets - a window of clear weather, all sorts of unusual, spiny desert plants I don’t see up north, tantalizing vistas into Mexico, and, most importantly, the sense of community which came from sharing the hike & evening fire with the others - we were 2 from Santa Fe, 1 from Los Alamos, 2 from Las Cruces (including the leader, Alice Anderson), 1 from Silver City & 3 from El Paso (as well as assorted dogs). I recommend to everyone, first to go out on a few of your Group outings, if you haven’t already, and get to know some of your fellow Sierrans in the refreshing atmosphere of our wonderful outdoors. Secondly, pick an outing led by another group (you’ll be surprised how wide the territory that our leaders hike in), and get to know some of those folks. In part, I think the recent dissension has come about because we don’t know each other as people, don’t understand each other as people, even though we all share a love for this land and concern for its environment.

Outings Chairs to Gather at Retreat

Saturday/Sunday March 7/8, Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge. It has been some time since the group outings chairs have gotten together, and at this retreat we will endeavor to share ideas re improving our outings programs & discuss some changing policies from National, plus have fun exploring nearby countryside. Outing leaders/those interested in outings administration are welcome to attend. Call me (Norma) for details, 505-471-0005

Chapter Outings Notes from Norma

by Norma McCallan
Chapter Proposes Separate E-Mail Lists
One for Information, One for Discussion

by John Buchser, Chapter Chair

Over the last year, lively discussion on the Río Grande Chapter's list server (sierra@conchas.nm.org) has sometimes become so lively that we have lost a number of members on this list. The Chapter is creating a new list for discussion of issues. I think it is important for our members to get information (without discussion) such as timely announcements of meetings and other environmental alerts. Sometimes just a few more voices on environmental issues can make a difference. The existing list will remain for this purpose. I propose as the starting point for rules on the two lists:

Information list
sierra@conchas.nm.org

Intended for announcements of meetings, environmental alerts, legislative alerts, and anything else which is informative in nature and in some way relates to informing the general environmental community in New Mexico and El Paso about what’s happening, particularly in our part of the Southwest.

Not intended for discussion. If someone posts a message which can be interpreted as discussion, then the moderator will send a private message pointing this out. If it happens again, a message will be posted to the entire list. The third time, the offending person will be removed from the list.

Water
(Albuquerque Group News, continued from page 8) through an open, inclusive, and participatory process. We asked that the Assembly Coordinating Committee make a recommendation for governance of the planning process.

The 2nd Assembly was held in November. Our mission was to agree on the governance proposal and to select the delegates who will serve on the Action Committee (AC), the governing and coordinating body for MRG water planning.

The Action Committee will develop and implement a public education and participation campaign. The AC will include public meetings and future Water Assemblies. The AC will develop a strategic plan which includes a proposed organizational structure and planning process, provides for collection of data and information and identifies sources of funds for cregling water planning. In order to select the AC delegates, the participants in the 2nd Assembly were asked to join one of three groups:

- Advocates - for example, pueblos, irrigators, environmental advocates, advocates for critical, domestic well owners, residential, industrial, commercial & institutional water users, development interests, young people, neighborhoods...
- Managers - for example, pueblos, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, county and municipal water systems, mutual domestics, private water companies, flood control districts...
- Specialists - for example, bosque & ecosystem specialists, geologists, hydrologists, surface flow specialists, water quality and quantity specialists, regulators.

Each large group selected delegates to the Action Committee including the author and Sierran Steve Harris. The AC has 3S members, a large and perhaps unwieldy number. We met in Nov. and Dec. and are struggling to decide how we will operate and develop and implement a plan. Steve and I would welcome your thoughts, ideas, suggestions and help as we work with the other AC members. We urge you to contact us and get involved!

The Proceedings of the 1st Assembly can be found at http://www.mrg.com/abouc.

Contact Susan Gorman, TEL: 505-246-3231, FAX: 505-235-0373, EMAIL: bilar@msn.com and Steve Harris, Rio Grande Restoritons, TEL: 505-751-1269, EMAIL: unlclerg@fplx.org, Web: http://www.forearth.org.

Activities Go 4th for the Petroglyphs

On January 4, 1998, Sierra Club activists and Albuquerque West Side neighbors took to the streets to spread the word about the impact the proposed Paseo extension through Petroglyph National Monument will have on West Side neighborhoods. Though many see the road as a solution to traffic congestion, the real issue is development and the out-of-control sprawl west of the Monument which the road would help to create. This would compound traffic problems, not solve them, and further stress infrastructure needs for people on the West Side. For more information on this educational effort, contact the Sierra Club’s Petroglyph Protection Project, 505-842-0238.

Enviro/Lobby Day: February 5th

Mark this date — Thursday, February 5, 1998 — and be a part of Enviro/ Lobby Day at the Roundhouse. The day’s events will include a press conference in the Rotunda at noon, followed by a Lobbying 101 workshop at 1pm for those who need to learn or brush up on lobbying fundamentals. The workshop will also include a briefing on the key environmental issues of the session. The afternoon is a time for meeting with your legislators to discuss environmental concerns and specific legislation. And, the finale, beginning at 6pm, is a reception for legislators and environmental activists. This event got rave reviews last session...don’t miss it! For further info, call 505-963-4254.

Election Results

The winners of the election for Excom of the Río Grande Chapter are:

John Buchser
Barbara Leonard
Liz Walsh

Full results of the election, including Group election results will appear in the March/April issue of the Río Grande Sierran.

What is a Regional Water Plan?

A Regional Water Plan must answer three questions: What is the region’s available water supply? What is the region’s future water demand? How will the region meet future demand with available supply?

Planners should focus on the following:
- Location, quality and extent of the current water resource supply
- Current water use by category
- Projections of future water use (quantified)
- Projections of the effect of conservation initiatives on future water use
- Source and quality of future water supply considering cost, technical feasibility, social and political issues, risks of contamination
- Status of current water rights
- Public involvement in the planning process

Water planning should embody democracy in action! Planners must listen to the people, the stakeholders who live in the region and depend on the water supply for their health, livelihood and life.