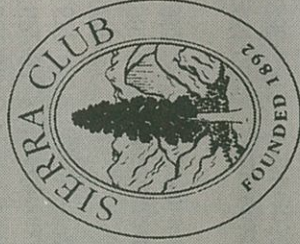


Inside this Issue



<i>Cerrillos Hills Call for Help</i>	Page 3
<i>Building a Strawbale Home</i>	Page 3
<i>Local Company Producing Tree-Free Paper</i>	Page 3
<i>Final Political Endorsements</i>	Page 5
<i>Fire and Ponderosa Pines</i>	Page 6
<i>ExCom Candidates</i>	Page 8
<i>Deadline for Petition Candidate Entries</i>	Page 8

An update from the Wild Side....

Wilderness Rap

by Martin Heinrich, Wilderness Chair

It's been an exciting and hair-raising couple of months for wilderness activists. Legislation affecting some of the most remote and pristine lands in the nation has come to the floor of the U.S. House and Senate. In addition, two candidates for state-wide office in New Mexico have endorsed the 2.5 million acre Citizens Proposal for New Mexico Wilderness, bringing the issue into the news again.

The big national news has been regarding Utah's San Rafael Swell. Representative Hansen (R-UT) pushed hard to get a vote on his proposal to designate a small portion of the swell as wilderness and to release the rest to development. Hansen's bill would have removed protection from tens of thousands of acres in Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), not to mention acreage identified as wilderness quality by the Utah Wilderness Coalition. When it became clear that he didn't have the votes to pass this sad piece of legislation, the esteemed representative from the Yellowstone State attached it as a rider to an omnibus parks bill. After all, if you can't win fair and square, it's time to try less scrupulous methods, right? Fortunately Representative Hansen was wrong. 107 republicans crossed party lines to vote against the omnibus parks bill largely because of the Utah anti-wilderness rider. It was a true bipartisan victory for the future of Utah's wildlands. The bad news for New Mexicans is a

see *Wild Side*, page 8

Election Fever!

Redmond Ups the Ante: No Longer Just Abusing Public Lands, It's About Liquidating Public Lands

by Abe Jacobson

In the Third Congressional District, the Sierra Club endorses challenger Tom Udall over incumbent Bill Redmond. The good news: this is perhaps the most important congressional race that we as conservationists can affect this year. The bad news: if Udall loses, then we are looking at the most strategically significant defeat for conservation in a decade.

Udall is a solid environmentalist who has demonstrated consistent sympathy with, and support for, conservation and the environmental movement. This did not happen in a vacuum; rather, Udall continues a family tradition. Stewart, his father, is a founder of the Mineral Policy Center, which is committed to reforming the outrageous 1872 Mining Act and to assuring cleanup, at industry expense, of existing mining-related messes throughout America.

Mo Udall, Tom's uncle, is responsible for Arizona having more wilderness acreage than any other state in the lower 48. Tom's tenure as Attorney General (AG) has given conservationists a trustworthy "honest broker" in state government. The AG's office, unlike the Departments, is not under the political control of the governor. Udall has been a breath of fresh air in the polluted atmosphere of the Johnson era. Udall will support a New Mexico wilder-

see *Redmond*, page 4

Market Approaches to Grazing Reform: The End of Public Lands?

by Susan Schock

Environmental lawsuits are slowly forcing federal land management agencies to reduce and remove cattle from sensitive national forest ecosystems, and it is only a matter of time before more cows are permanently removed from public lands. These legal victories—along with a decline in America's beef consumption, competition with Mexican beef since the advent of the North American Free Trade Agreement and water conflicts with urban areas—have resulted in the growing instability of public lands grazing loans and of the public lands livestock industry itself. Although ranchers have gone to Congress with various grazing legislation designed to lock in livestock numbers on federal lands, gain control over water and establish vested rights in livestock grazing permits, they have been unable to attain their goals.

The public is now in a unique position to break the livestock and banking industries' grip on federal lands, precisely because of the instability in public lands grazing. For decades, banks have been the stealth players in the subsidized destruction of western public lands. In a twisted system of federal government/banking industry pacts, public lands ranchers have been allowed to borrow huge sums of money using their federal grazing permits as collateral, first from government-backed Farm Credit Loan associations and later from private banks—essentially mortgaging America's public lands for private profit.

Because federal grazing permits are always attached to a parcel of private land, or base property, the value of the private land and the federal land have intimately co-mingled. In the mild climate of the Southwest, where cattle graze year-round on federal lands, base properties have often dwindled to a mere forty acres, positing almost the entire value of the ranch in federal land. On the one hand, the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) adamantly deny that grazing permits have a monetary value; on the other hand, these agencies actually broker mortgages on federal graz-

see *Grazing*, page 7

Phil Maloof: Why You Should Vote For Him

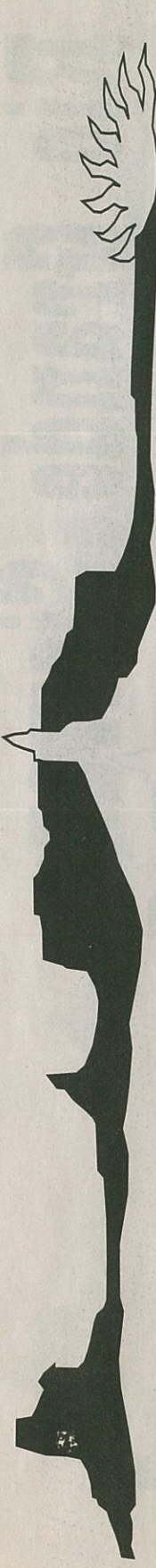
by Richard Barish

Phil Maloof has made strong commitments to the Sierra Club on a wide range of environmental issues. He has agreed to introduce the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance's bill to designate new wilderness areas in New Mexico—a Club priority. He has agreed to sponsor appropriate legislation to provide federal assistance for Rio Grande restoration efforts—another priority for the Club. Maloof also supports the "good" Utah wilderness bill and designation of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as wilderness.

Maloof has committed to co-sponsoring the Endangered Species Recovery Act, the environmentalists' preferred Endangered Species Act reauthorization. He supports full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which provides funding for the purchase of lands like the Baca Ranch; reform of the anachronistic 1872 Mining Act as well as grazing reform that would keep cows out of sensitive areas; and an end to subsidies that support destructive logging on our national forests.

Other policies Maloof supports include the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, significant increases in vehicle fuel economy standards (the CAFE standards) and increased funding for international family planning. He opposes fast track authority for the president and all international trade agreements that do not

see *Maloof*, page 5



Rio Grande Chapter Directory

Executive Committee

John Buchser, Chair
(505) 820-0201 jbuchser@ni.net

Ted Mertig, Vice Chair
(915) 852-3011 TMertig@aol.com

Barbara Leonard, Secretary
(505) 862-7915 Barbara.Leonard@sierraclub.org

Blair Brown, Treasurer, Central NM Rep.
(505) 265-3231 BBlairB@aol.com

David Farrell
(505) 895-3365 dafarelli@hotmail.com

Doug Fraser, Santa Fe Rep.
(505) 662-5204

Abe Jacobson
(505) 672-9579 jacobson@ni.net

Barbara Johnson
(505) 466-4935 Lunah3@aol.com

Jennifer Johnson, Pajarito Rep.
(505) 662-3023 yomi@roadrunner.com

Norma McCallan
(505) 471-0005 Norma.McCallan@sierraclub.org

Van Perkins
(505) 983-8801 Van.Perkins@sierraclub.org

Jamie Newlin, El Paso Rep.
(915) 747-5421 EWalsh@utep.edu

Elizabeth Walsh
(915) 747-5421 EWalsh@utep.edu

Margot Wilson, Southern Rep.
(505) 744-5860 hshs2@riolink.com

Issue Committees (Chairs in *italics*)

Conservation *Marianne Thaeler* (505) 522-3421 marianne.thaeler@sierraclub.org
Energy & Trans. *Ken Hughes* (505) 474-0550 khughes@igc.apc.org
Fundraising *OPEN*

Inner City Outings *Ted Mertig* (915) 852-3011 tmertig@aol.com
Military Issues *Marianne Thaeler* (505) 522-3421 marianne.thaeler@sierraclub.org
Mining *Abe Jacobson* (505) 672-9579 jacobson@ni.net
National Parks *Cliff Larsen*, Sally Smith, Margot Wilson
Newsletter *Courtney White* (505) 982-5502 wldwst@rt66.com
Karen Smith (505) 992-2977 KaoSmith@aol.com
Sally Savage, Kay Carlson
Outings *Norma McCallan* (505) 471-0005 Norma.McCallan@sierraclub.org
Political *Jim Hannan* (505) 986-0218 Jhannan505@aol.com
Ned Sudborough, Dutch Salmon, Jim Bell
Rangelands *Gary Simpson* (505) 298-3315
Roger Peterson
Water *John Buchser* (505) 820-0201 jbuchser@ni.net
Steve Harris, Edy Pierpoint, Gary Simpson
Wilderness *Martin Heinrich* (505) 232-7151 mtheinrich@aol.com
Van Perkins, Marianne Thaeler, Michael Smith
Wildlife *Liz Walsh* (915) 747-5421 EWalsh@utep.edu
Martin Heinrich, Roger Peterson, Gary Simpson, Bryan Byrd

**Printed on 100% post-consumer waste
newsprint by Printworld in El Paso.**

Sierra Club Addresses

Central NM Group
207 San Pedro Ave. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87108
(505) 265-5506

Southwestern NM Group
P.O. Box 3705 UPB
Las Cruces, NM 88003
(505) 522-3421

El Paso Group
800 S. Piedras
P.O. Box 9191
El Paso, TX 79983
(915) 532-9645

Pajarito Group
P.O. Box 945
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Santa Fe Group
621 Old Santa Fe Trail, #10
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 983-2703

Sierra Club National
85 Second St., 2nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 977-5500

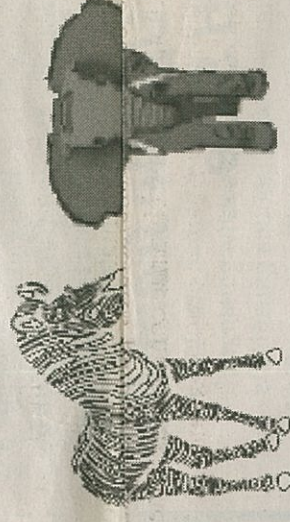
Southwest Regional Ofc.
516 E. Portland St.
Phoenix, AZ 85004
(602) 254-9330
FAX: 258-6533

The *Rio Grande Sierran* is published six times a year by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club as a benefit for Sierra Club members living in New Mexico and West Texas. (Make address changes by calling Membership Services at 415-977-5649.)

Non-member subscriptions at \$10.00 per year are available from the Treasurer, Blair Brown. Send checks to 2226B Wyoming NE, #272, Albuquerque, NM 87112. Please allow 8 weeks for processing.

The opinions expressed in signed articles in the *Rio Grande Sierran* are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club. Articles may be freely reprinted for nonprofit purposes, provided that credit is given to the author and the *Rio Grande Sierran*. Please let us know. Products and services advertised in the *Rio Grande Sierran* are not endorsed by the Sierra Club.

Contributions are welcome from members. Send to **Editor, Rio Grande Sierran, Karen Smith, 120 West Santa Fe Ave., Apt. H, Santa Fe, NM 87105** or by e-mail to **KaoSmith@aol.com**. Articles should be submitted by the 15th of the month prior to publication. (The *Rio Grande Sierran* is published in odd-numbered months.) Photos, artwork and poems are also welcome. Most computer formats should be compatible—check with the Editor. Letters and articles are subject to abridgement.



Help the environment, go to Africa!

The Southwest Environmental Center is now taking reservations for a spectacular, one-of-a-kind wildlife safari to Tanzania next July/August. The 13-day trip includes walking and driving forays to some of the world's greatest wildlife viewing areas, including Serengeti National Park and the Ngorongoro Crater. Our guide will be the extremely knowledgeable Peter Jones, a 20-year resident of Tanzania, who spent many years and traversed hundreds of miles doing archaeological research in the region.

The trip will take us where other travel companies seldom venture. We'll spend several days exploring the Maasailand west of Mount Kilimanjaro, including the wild and remote South Maasai Steppe featured in Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa*. The wildlife viewing is excellent, as the animals are surprisingly approachable by people on foot. We'll encounter local Maasai and Dorobo tribespeople living in traditional ways, many of whom are old friends of Peter's.

The cost for the trip is \$5900 per person, which may seem high but is extremely reasonable considering it includes airfare from Albuquerque or El Paso and all accommodations, meals and guide services. And, since this is a fundraiser for the nonprofit Southwest Environmental Center, \$1000 is tax-deductible!

Space is limited, so don't wait long to take advantage of this unique opportunity to help one of New Mexico's leading grassroots conservation groups and take a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Africa! For reservations and more information, call the Center at (505) 522-5552.

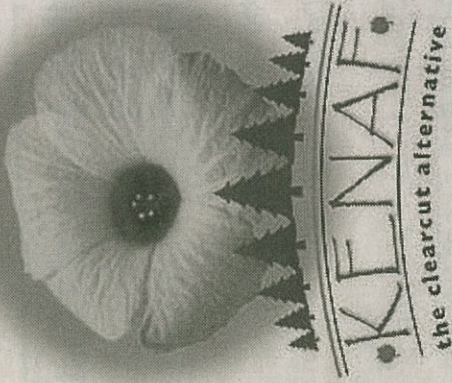


Illustration by Heidi Smith, All Art

Local Company Offers Alternative to Clearcut

by Tom Rymzsa

Albuquerque-based Vision Paper is a small, innovative company that has taken a clearly unique approach to paper. Its mission is to make the most environmentally positive products possible.

What Vision Paper Does

Vision Paper works with U.S. farmers to grow an annual row crop called kenaf. It uses the kenaf as its raw material instead of paper, without using any chlorine compounds and sells the paper to printers, companies and organizations nationally.

On the Farms

Low input sustainable agricultural practices like crop rotations are promoted to reduce or eliminate the use of fertilizers and

see *Kenaf*, page 6

Cerrillos Hills Needs Your Help!

Driving south toward Interstate 25, you encounter the pristine and majestic view of the Cerrillos Hills. Only twenty miles from Santa Fe, along the Turquoise Trail, the gently rounded yet rugged hills hold a precious history and everlasting beauty. Los Cerrillos means "the little hills," and their vista is a cherished landmark of Santa Fe County. Amidst these hills are the oldest known prehistoric Indian and Spanish mining sites in North America.

Substantial acreage in the Cerrillos Hills is now on the market. Once these lands are sold, the opportunity to save these vistas will be gone forever. Now is the time to acquire the land for either a formal preserve or some form of public trust, before it is too late. Local residents hoping to safeguard this wilderness area and preserve its timeless history have formed the Cerrillos Hills Preservation Society (CHPS).

There is a growing need for a recreational area for residents of southern Santa Fe County. Currently, there are no parks south of Santa Fe. This privately owned area has long been used informally as a recreation site for hiking, biking and horseback riding, along with historic site visits.

The CHPS is working with local planners and members of land trusts who are familiar with conservation strategies. The Santa Fe County Commission unanimously adopted a resolution in favor of the Cerrillos Hills Park Preserve and has given staff support to the CHPS. Non-profit organizations helping CHPS include the Trust for Public Land and the Santa Fe Conservation Trust. The Santa Fe branch of the National Park Service has also offered guidance. The Santa Fe County November bond issue to set aside \$12 million to acquire open space in Santa Fe County will help obtain funds for this purchase.

YOU CAN HELP by voting **YES** on the open-lands bond issue in November, by keeping informed, by becoming a CHPS member, by signing and distributing the petition, and by making a donation.

Please call Ross Lockridge or Ann Murray at (505) 471-918, or write Las Candelas de Los Cerrillos, P.O. Box 554, Cerrillos, NM 87010 for details.

Building A Strawbale Home

by Susan Gorman

On a warm New Mexico blue-sky morning in May, fifteen folks gathered at the site of a new home just north of Los Lunas. We stood under the open rafters looking at a huge stack of straw bales and listening to Joe Matesi, a designer and builder, as he explained what we would be doing for the next three days.

We had come to learn about building a strawbale home by doing it—hands-on. (Actually, because a bale of barley straw weighs 45 to 50 pounds, moving one involves much more than hands-on contact, particularly for a person like me who weighs just over 100 pounds.) We listened as Joe described the various tasks we would be doing and suggested we form small teams of two to four folks, because most of the tasks would be easier if we worked as teams.

During the three days, we learned to place bales, cut them to fit special places, notch them to fit around the support posts and hold them in place by pounding pieces of rebar down through the growing wall. We also learned the associated preparatory tasks, such as covering the support posts with black tar paper and the footers and headers with black plastic to isolate the bales from wood, foam insulation and concrete.

Describing the scene of hefting, pounding, stapling, cutting, measuring, tying, skewering, sawing, drilling, stuffing, leaning and gasping for breath is impossible. You had to be there! It's dusty, hot, sweaty, heavy, awkward, muscle-straining work. And yet we all felt an incredible feeling of the walls rise and the skeleton of posts and rafters become a house.

Perhaps more essential was the process that enabled 15 people, who gathered as strangers, to learn and work together. The first teams were folks who knew each other; however, as we worked, the teams were in a constant flux. Everyone found tasks that fit their skills and comfort level and team mates whose skills complemented their own (not everyone wants to learn to notch

bales with a chain saw or cut metal lath pieces with a skill saw). The array of tasks to be done and the varied skills, abilities and physical strengths of the group members created a dynamic movement, which could not have been orchestrated. We encouraged each other, made suggestions, jumped to bring a tool or a drink, experimented with different ways and tools and enlisted each other's aid.

Everyone shared stories as we worked and later rested. Many of the folks plan strawbale home building projects of their own, while others work in home construction and want to expand their skills. Some sought a change from computer-bound work, but all wanted to experience what is really involved in this innovative building technique.

It's amazing how much talk occurred, because we worked persistently with only breaks for snacks, drinks and lunch. During lunch, as we munched sandwiches under a giant cottonwood tree and listened to the squawk of pheasants, Joe answered questions and explained details about the construction and the merits of the finished home. (See Joe's story in the March/April Sierran.)

We gathered again two weeks later on another blue-sky day. This group of builders included some of the folks who had attended the first workshop and several newcomers.

The walls were complete and the home had a roof. Again, as we were introduced to a new set of skills, the phenomenon of team-building repeated itself. We learned to cut and place metal lath—a strange metal mesh with very sharp edges—around the windows and the edges of the bales to give them shape. We then attached stucco wire (which looks like fancy chicken wire) over the walls, both inside and out. The lathe and stucco wire are then "sewed" in place by threading lengths of wire through the walls and connecting the wire to the stucco wire. These operations meld the walls into the structure onto which the stucco and plaster are applied.

The contrasts between strawbale home-building and conventional home-building are quite dramatic. While the cost of the straw is less than the materials used for conventional walls, the labor required for building a strawbale house is greater than that of the conventional tract house. Because the economic system places high value on efficiency and productivity and labor is expensive, strawbale building would not seem to be competitive with conventional building. And yet, in a world suffering from a lack of fulfilling work opportunities and depending on use of resources at an unsustainable rate, strawbale building offers an incredibly appealing alternative.

Another benefit is the replacement of wood with straw. Growing barley for straw may have a lower impact on environmental resources and natural habitat than growing trees or cutting forests for lumber; this should be analyzed carefully to determine if it is true. Additionally, growing barley for beer and straw might be a good alternative for Middle Rio Grande Valley farmers to growing alfalfa, but this should also be analyzed to determine if growing barley is feasible in New Mexico and if it is less water-intensive than alfalfa.

The workshops taught us some valuable skills, provided some wonderful lessons in working together, brought people together, gave us all a sense of accomplishment and raised some intriguing questions. I wouldn't have missed it for anything!



Elections 1998

Redmond, cont. from cover

ness bill, will oppose Animas-La Plata, will support a good Utah wilderness bill and will support clean air, clean water and mining reform.

But here's the clincher: Tom Udall is the only candidate who can beat Bill Redmond.

The last time around, I was under the impression that the only thing wrong with the Green candidate was that she could not beat Redmond. That was an instrumental, not substantive, argument. This time around, after hearing Carole Miller make glowing praise for both Redmond and Ronald Reagan (in whose administration she worked) a staple of her campaign speech—I've now heard it four separate times—I see that the problem with Miller is not just instrumental, but substantive. She uses a word connotation ("Green") to convey that she is a pro-environment candidate. Sadly, the reality appears to be more like that of the word "American" in that canny advertising invention, "American Toyota." Many other folks, not just myself, are beginning to see that Miller wraps her candidacy in a green mantle that lacks substance. Over the years, we as Club activists and conservationists have sweated blood at countless public hearings and commission meetings on topics ranging from mining reform to endangered species to wilderness. I've never seen Miller at these forums for activism.

So, where's the tofu?

Seriously? Because Redmond is an effective leader, a skilled campaigner, and a gifted public speaker, promoting a radical agenda that even his colleagues in the Republican Right would not have the imagination or the gall to pursue on their own. In his brief tenure in Congress, he has risen to the top of the anti-environmental movement there.

There are not many politicians whose dynamism, commitment and effectiveness at promoting anti-environment legislation, as well as sheer personal ambition, match Redmond's. I would rate him as exceeding even Helen Chenoweth (R/ID) and Don Young (R/AK) in terms of anti-environment results and effectiveness. If returned to Congress, Redmond's effect on the environment, altogether negative, will be profound and irremediable, in a way that Helen and Don can only envy. Should he win in November, Redmond will also be in Congress for as long as he wants, because he plays the PAC-subsidized financial advantages of incumbency like Liberace played the piano. I have heard from sources close to him that if Redmond is reaffirmed in Congress, he looks forward to, as his next goal (after another term), either taking Jeff Bingaman's Senate seat or serving in President Lott's cabinet. We can then look forward to the final Interior Secretary, who liquidates our public lands and thus makes the office unnecessary.

Even before going to Washington, while cobbling-together a living as an evangelical preacher and manager of a roller-skating rink in his church, Bill Redmond received a firm philosophical grounding in conservation issues from People for the West! (PFW!), which he joined and from which he enthusiastically borrowed policy positions. At the time, Redmond spoke frankly and revealingly on these and other matters. Redmond was not taken seriously in those days, either by the public or by his political opponents.

Redmond and the National Political Awareness Test

In his answers to the National Political Awareness Test in 1996, when he was running against then-incumbent Bill Richardson, Redmond presented a remarkably coherent and well-documented statement of his anti-environmental agenda.

Question:

Indicate what changes you support (if any) concerning levels of federal funding for the following categories (in this case, environmental programs).

Indicate which principles or programs you support regarding America's environment and natural resources.

Redmond's Response:

Greatly Decrease

a) Transfer public lands, such as federal forests and range lands, to the jurisdiction of state and local governments.

b) Require the federal government to reimburse citizens when environmental regulations limit use of privately owned lands.

Redmond also has indicated his complete opposition to environmentally-based government interference in the pursuit of business profit. He called for the abolition of the Environmental Protection Agency. He commented: "Eliminate government regulations of the private sector in order to encourage investment and economic expansion."

You can find the National Political Awareness Test on the Web at <http://www.vote-smart.org/congress/104/nm/3/bc03095-npat.html>.

He would parallel-blade-skate around Santa Fe and promote Miller's candidacy with effectiveness and apparent sincerity. Redmond was regarded as not quite serious. Not until April 1997 did the Republican Party and GOPAC leadership arrive here to re-package Redmond as a (surface) quasi-moderate and a sober, serious person.

When asked whether he wanted to reform, or even just to tinker with, the 1872 Mining Act, Redmond chose to retain the Act in its entirety, showing his close alignment with the multinational mining corporations, which contribute financial support both to his own campaign and to PFW! For those corporate interests, the 1872 Mining Act is manna from the taxpayer.

Redmond's Republican pre-primary convention speech dated March 1996 again stated his strong commitment to the comprehensive liquidation of national monuments, national parks, national forests, and Bureau of Land Management lands:

"For property owners I will vote for... the transfer of federal lands to the states."

Redmond has also called for the outright elimination of the Endangered Species Act, characterizing it as a protection measure for "cockroaches and rats." He has asserted that no spotted owls have ever been sighted in New Mexico. Redmond is the co-sponsor (with Don Young) of a bill that prescribes massive industrial crop-cutting of forests, with sequestration of the harvested biomass, to suck carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere—and thus fight global warming!

True to his PFW! philosophical grounding, now-Congressman Redmond has systematically and effectively worked not just for the misuse, but for the very liquidation, of this country's public lands. In this respect, he actually leads his colleagues into a far more radical agenda than even they would otherwise follow.

This is exemplified in the Valle Grande acquisition. Redmond fought like a cornered rat against Bingaman's bill, because, of course, if you're for liquidating existing public lands, then you're certainly not for increasing public lands.

(Duh!) At this point in time, it is still an even bet that Redmond's delaying, attachment of irrelevant and rogue conditions and parliamentary maneuvering against the Valle purchase will win the day, and we will even see houses, businesses, resorts and casinos metastasizing across the volcano floor. What is perhaps even worse, Redmond has poisoned the future by setting the precedent that this purchase, if it takes place, will do so only on condition of outright disposal of federal lands elsewhere. Redmond has pulled his senior colleague Senator Domenici far to the right on this.

Redmond has enthusiastically supported the construction of a multi-lane highway through the Petroglyphs, not so much in terms of the West Side development interests (which is bad enough), but far more strategically, as setting a precedent for the dismantlement of national monuments and parks all over the America. This typifies the strategic orientation that Bill Redmond brings to his work. If we do not recognize this strategy and if we do not take Bill Redmond seriously, then we are heading for a stunning, long-term setback in conservation.

Similarly, Redmond's underlying strategy in the land grants issue is less about social justice than about establishing a precedent: that public lands can be given away and that political patronage, once based on cash handouts, has now discovered a New Frontier. Redmond has been brilliantly successful in disguising the underlying agenda while at the same time winning votes and the adulation of a pliant print media.

In an ironic way, though, Bill Redmond could probably subscribe to the Club's policy, "No Commercial Logging on National Public Lands." There will be no commercial logging on public lands if there will be no public lands. Duh.

I'm voting for Tom Udall. I want out of this nightmare.





Elections 1998

Malooof, cont. from cover

tain strong environmental protections.

There is little more that the we could ask from Malooof in terms of commitments on environmental matters. The bottom line on Phil Malooof is that at those moments we really care about—the moments when the votes are cast—Malooof could push the right button.

Heather Wilson

We really want to get rid of Heather Wilson. Wilson is bad news for the environment. In a few, long months in Congress, Wilson has voted against the environment at virtually every opportunity. She has voted against everything from protecting children from the effects of pesticides in foods to cleaning up toxic mercury from power plants to finding ways to halt global warming. She had voted in favor of subsidizing logging in Alaska's Tongass National Forest, allowing a road to be built through the most important borebird habitat in the western hemisphere without compliance with our environmental laws, and slashing funding for energy-efficiency programs. If she is re-elected, we can expect two more years of consistent anti-environmental votes.

Although it doesn't get much coverage in the mainstream media, lots of nasty, anti-environmental stuff has happened since the Republicans took control of Congress. Many of the votes on these environmental matters have been extremely close. At least two House votes in this Congress—funding for logging roads and funding for energy-efficiency—were lost by a single vote. Wilson voted the wrong way on the energy-efficiency funding vote. We are suffering concrete, on-the-ground losses of wild places and continuing degradation of our environment for want of a few—sometimes only one—vote. It is imperative that we do what we can to get rid of Heather Wilson and to get another pro-environment vote in the House.

Bob Anderson

Anderson is not a viable candidate. Although he got 15 percent of the vote in the June special election, that is nowhere near enough to win. Moreover, Anderson could not win even if the Sierra Club and every other progressive organization in New Mexico got behind him. Several facts prompt that conclusion.

First, Anderson's tally in the special election was inflated because of two extraordinarily inept campaigns run by Malooof and Wilson. These candidates have abandoned the negative advertising that turned voters off in the special election, and Anderson will likely have a hard time holding onto his votes, much less increasing his total.

Second, the Green Party has a minuscule base of support to draw on. There are less than 1,000 registered Green voters in the first congressional district, about 1 percent of the registered voters in the district. This is in part the result of the "top-down" approach of the Greens. Rather than focusing on building the party by running candidates in more winnable, local races and gaining the trust of voters through service in lower offices, they have chosen to start at the top. As a result, the Greens must rely on voters who already identify with other parties and candidates—a difficult proposition.

Third, the Greens have next to no money. Anderson does not even have enough money to pay a campaign manager. While it is a matter that many of us regret, the sad fact is that you need a lot of money to attract the necessary votes to get elected to a major office today.

Fourth, the first congressional district is basically a conservative place. For the past quarter century, this district has been represented in Congress by conservative Republicans. Even in more local offices such as city councilors, county commissioners and state legislators, there are few progressives from this district. It seems highly unlikely that a Green candidate could attract enough votes to win in this district, even in a three-way race where fewer votes are needed to come out on top.

Finally, in last fifty years, there have been very few members of congress around the country who did not belong to the major parties. From that fact alone, Anderson faces very long odds. He will not be able to help the Club's environmental agenda, because he will never get the opportunity to cast a vote in congress.

The next question to be asked, then, is whether his candidacy serves some other purpose that might benefit the environment. A rationale that is offered for running Green candidates is that it keeps the Democrats honest. It makes the party run better candidates and forces candidates to make commitments on issues such as the environment in order to hang onto environmental voters.

This rationale doesn't hold water. Greens continue to run candidates, even in races with Democratic candidates who are acknowledged to be good, like Tom Udall in the third congressional district. When Democratic candidates, like Phil Malooof, turn out to have strong environmental positions, Greens refuse to withdraw. It does no good to make Democratic candidates commit to supporting strong environmental protection if those candidates aren't going to win because Green candidates continue to run and take votes away from the Democrats.

Green supporters also argue that it doesn't matter if Heather Wilson gets elected instead of Phil Malooof, because there is no difference between Democrats and Republicans. Representative George Miller (D-CA), one of the leading environmentalists in Congress over the last quarter century and, most recently, the sponsor of the Endangered Species Recovery Act, debunked that theory in an op-ed piece published in the Albuquerque Tribune on September 22:

"Some may argue Democrats aren't much better than their Republican counterparts and, in some cases, that is undoubtedly true. But on the critical environmental votes noted above, over 75 percent of House Democrats (and frequently more than 90 percent) voted pro-environment, while House Republicans voted less than 20 percent of the time for the pro-green position."

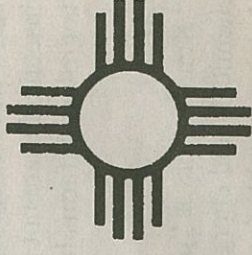
Miller concluded:

"We need to craft grassroots strategies that will elect dedicated people and keep pressure on them to vote correctly once in office. As one who fights those battles daily, I don't think those goals are served by electoral strategies that result in the election of vigorous opponents of environmental legislation and cost us important victories that, with the addition of a few votes, are winnable..."

In summary, a vote for Bob Anderson would not help the environment. The best thing for the environment is a vote for Phil Malooof.

Feedback from Club members on this endorsement is welcome. To submit feedback, send a letter to the Editor, Rio Grande Sierran, 120 West Santa Fe Ave., Apt. H, Santa Fe, NM 87501 (e-mail: KaoSmith@aol.com), or to communicate directly with the author, e-mail him at rdbarish@aol.com or call at 247-8079.

Countdown to Election Time...



Final Endorsements!

Steven Baca

District 20

Pauline Gubbels

District 30

Fred Luna

District 8

Rick Miera

District 11

Rocio Vargas-Brimhall

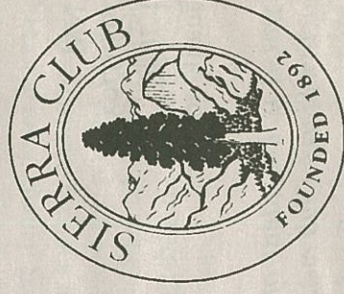
District 28

Sheryl Williams

District 19

For earlier endorsements, see previous issue of the *Sierran*.

Remember to Vote!



November 3, 1998

Fire: Best Prescription for Forest



An Old-Growth Ponderosa Pine Forest in New Mexico

Kenaf, cont. from page 3
chemicals. Because kenaf is grown for the fibrous stalk, and not the fruit or flower of the plant, insecticides are not required. All of the kenaf is grown on farms here in the U.S.

At the Mill

Kenaf offers a "pollution solution." Less chemicals and energy are required, and the pulp is totally chlorine free (TCF). No dioxins or other chlorine compounds are created or released in the manufacturing process. All of Vision Paper's pulp and paper is manufactured in the U.S. in strict compliance with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations.

Why Kenaf?

Growing world population rates indicate a growing demand for paper. Recycling alone cannot satisfy this demand. Unless paper begins to be produced from something other than trees, deforestation will become a bigger and bigger problem. Kenaf offers a clearcut alternative. Rural economies are in need of clean, sustainable and high quality job creation. Kenaf provides opportunities for new business development in an environmentally sound manner. Farmers need new crops to diversify the rotation options and to reduce the level of surpluses. Surplus crops drive prices down and hurt the smaller farmers. By increasing the number of crop options, surpluses will be reduced.

How to Contact Vision Paper

If you'd like to receive more information about Vision Paper's products, please contact:

Vision Paper
P.O. Box 20399
Albuquerque, NM
Phone: (505) 295-0293
Fax: (505) 294-7040
E-mail: Kenafman@aol.com

Tom Rymzsa is President of Vision Paper and an active Sierra Club member.

west in the restoration of presettlement forest structure, but the right formula for restoration has not yet been found. A broad ecological research base, however, can help in the best management of wildlands. Recent ecological study of large-scale landscapes and the role of natural processes is directly relevant to management of wildlands. Research suggests that no southwestern landscape can be restored to a functioning forest without the recreation of natural processes, including disturbances such as fire.

Commercial logging of dense thickets of young ponderosa pines is often suggested as a way to prevent the intense fires that can cause high mortality. But the effect of logging on fire frequency and severity is poorly understood. Studies show that logging often leaves so much slash—the residue from timber cutting—that later fires are highly destructive. Even where logging slash is minimized, the forest that regenerates on the site will be more homogeneous and even-aged, and subsequent fires are likely to destroy the stand. Logging also brings a range of disabilities to the forest, from soil compaction to the exportation of nutrients from the site.

Small-scale prescribed fires have been the primary strategy for the restoration of forest mosaics like those produced by natural fire regimes and for the prevention of intense, stand-destroying fires. These controlled burns have been very successful in mimicking the patchy, low-intensity characteristics of natural fires. They are often carried out off-season to remove fuels, standing trees, and

panied by tree thinning to reduce fire intensity.

Prescribed fires have ecological unknowns, however. We do not usually know, for example, how many live trees to leave or the ecological consequences of cool season burning.

It may be that letting natural wildfires burn can successfully recreate presuppression forest structure. Geographic Information System (GIS)-based simulation models developed by Dr. William Baker of the University of Wyoming have shown that even in the highly altered forests that have been created by a century of fire suppression, the natural forest structure can be recreated within 50 to 75 years. This was not the result of small-scale fires—those similar to prescribed fires—but by large, landscape-scale fires of the kind now occurring in ponderosa pine forests. Mechanical preparation of the site, fuel removal or thinning was not necessary to produce a restoration of presettlement structure in the model. Some portion of the ponderosa forest, in cooler, moister locales or slopes, may have always been naturally denser and lacked frequent fires and needs no restoration at all.

We will need real large-scale landscape restoration trials in the end to know how best to restore ponderosa forests. It may be that the end of several decades of recent wet weather will bring more intense, large-scale fires no matter what our efforts. Our understanding of the natural functioning of forests is limited even in forests that have been as intensely studied as ponderosa pine. We do know that these forests will only remain healthy if natural variability and natural processes, such as fire, continue to be part of the dynamic landscape.

The acrid smell of smoke floats on the air, a crackle sounds in the dry needles as a fire creeps along the understory of a ponderosa pine forest, occasionally flaring up in tongues of flame as a snag or a clump of seedlings burn. The landscape of southwestern ponderosa pine forests was once shaped by these frequent, light surface fires. Early military expeditions, finding that they could gallop their horses through the forests, were reminded of parks by the open stands of large old pines.

Ponderosa pine forests co-evolved with fire in a warm, dry environment for thousands of years. Fires prepared a seedbed for seedling germination, killed insects and pathogens, returned nutrients to the soil, thinned excess germination and created a patchy spatial structure that helped maintain biological diversity. Such "patchy" forests are often described as mosaics—heterogeneous landscapes that support several kinds of age structure and composition, depending on the time since the last burn.

Human Impacts in the 20th Century

Ponderosa pine forests in the Southwest began a dramatic change with the completion of the railroad at the end of the last century. With ready access to a market, raising large herds of sheep and cattle became economically feasible. Grazing by domestic livestock was directly responsible for the reduction of fires in these forests. Grazing away the grasses removed the fine fuels that carried surface fires. Studies of historical fire return interval established by dating scars in the tree rings suggest that fire commonly burned every 10 to 40 years on average. With grazing, fires simply stopped in most places. Moreover, pine seedlings, no longer killed by fire, began to colonize in vast numbers under mature trees and to invade meadows. Aided by an extremely warm and wet climate in this century, these seedlings flourished. Tree-ring evidence suggests that this century has been the most climatically favorable for tree reproduction in 2,000 years.

Ponderosa pine forests are now familiar to us as extremely dense forests filled with young trees that were established in this century—the "doghair" stands that are choked and stagnant. These high fuel load pine forests now support large, intense fires instead of light, surface fires. Such forests are far from a dynamic steady-state representing a healthy, natural ecosystem.

Restoring Ponderosa Pine Forests

There is serious interest now in the South-

Reprinted with the author's permission from State of the Southern Rockies, a publication of Forest Guardians and The Wildlands Project.



Grazing, cont. from cover

ing permits through documents called "escrow waivers." Acting as escrow agents, the agencies hold the grazing permits—the bank's collateral—and abdicate to the banks their power to withhold the reissue of the permit in the event that a ranch's base property is sold.

Escrow Waiver System

This practice was formalized in a 1938 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and the Farm Credit Administration, which set up the escrow waiver system. It was reaffirmed in a 1990 MOU to assuage the banks' growing concerns as destructive grazing practices and the subsidies underpinning the public lands livestock industry came under increasing public scrutiny. Although the new MOU reworked some of the original language (replacing grazing "preference" with grazing "privilege" in an attempt to reassert government control of federal grazing), it also made a commitment to give ranchers with escrow waivers "at least one full year advance notice of a permit modification because of resource conditions," promised not to "schedule a reduction because of unsatisfactory resource conditions or to comply with Forest Plans, laws, regulations or policy, of more than 20% per year" and agreed to advise the lender of any potential livestock reductions. More importantly, perhaps, it extended the escrow waiver system to all lending institutions, not just federal banks.

As a result, ranchers were even more insulated from regulations governing federal lands secure. Because the Forest Service and the BLM brokered the deals and held the permits in safekeeping until the ranchers' loans to the banks were paid, agency personnel felt an obligation to keep public lands cattle operations up and running. When agencies cracked down on errant permittees, the banks often intervened, through meetings with forest supervisors or calls to hip-pocket politicians.

By the early 1990s, the banking industry's investment in federal permits was an estimated \$2 billion, and banks played a large part in defeating higher grazing fees in the Rangeland Reform '94 initiative. While ranchers' bellowing about rural lifestyles captured the media's attention at public hearings, banking industry leaders were meeting with government officials to protect their stake in the system. At one point, Senator Domenici predicted that increased grazing fees would set off an S&L-type crisis, and Bob Armstrong, Undersecretary of the Interior, flatly told environmentalists, "You're not going to see a significant increase in grazing fees because we have too much money loaned out on those permits."

Pitfalls of Recognizing "Fair Market Value" in Federal Grazing Permits

Market advocates assume that opening federal grazing permits to the open market will result in the retirement of grazing allotments as conservation groups buy into the system. But considering that the value of bank loans on grazing allotments in the West is currently estimated at \$2 billion, it is highly unrealistic to suppose that environmentalists could purchase and retire more than a tiny fraction of grazing allotments. Open market proposals also discount the current trend toward corporate permittees and ignore the fact that property rights groups, off-road vehicle driv-

ers, corporations and land speculators would also quickly compete in the market, driving prices up and wedging open the door for expanded uses of federal lands and property rights claims.

Proposals that establish "market values" are even worse, because they keep ranching subsidies intact. In addition to getting to market their grazing permits, or portions of them, in an inflated market, ranchers would continue to get all their current government handouts-free fencing, animal damage control, reduced taxes and drought and flood relief. As permit values climb in an open market, ranchers could borrow more money on the permits, but would need to run more cattle to cover loan payments, thereby requiring more federal subsidies to mitigate overgrazing damage.

The worst of all possible alternatives in grazing reform is the payment to ranchers for partial reductions in livestock, because the existing publicly funded government support infrastructure stays in place and the rancher gets paid for having overstocked. The costs of fencing, water developments, monitoring and administering stay very nearly the same. This type of compensation is tantamount to handing ranchers big checks and increasing their security while they continue to destroy public lands—at a slower pace.

To postulate that any buy-out plan would decrease litigation and conflict over federal lands management is naive. Not only would there be endless haggling over the "value" of the permit, but the question of how much of the current bank loans are based on the federal land itself would open a Pandora's box of lawsuits by property rights groups ready to pounce on any chance at takings time economic transition payment, which is not based on permit value, when grazing permits are surrendered.

Falling Market Could Lead to Increased Use of Public Lands

The average age of family ranchers is rising and fewer and fewer children are opting to stay in the business. Although family ranching as a lifestyle is still alive, family ranchers clearly can't and are making the transition to other means of livelihood. As older ranchers bail out of the system, the issue of who buys into federal grazing permits, and why, becomes critical in determining the fate of America's public lands. Based on research on the Gila National Forest, about 40% of all grazing permits appear to be used as collateral for mortgages. Small ranchers whose grazing permits are not mortgaged tend to view their "permit value" as a nest egg for retirement. They're betting that new buyers will enter the scene and buy them out and that banks will continue to lend on the federal grazing permit/allotment, creating new mortgages for new owners and perpetuating the cycle of private parties using federal resources as mortgage collateral and increasing banks' interest in public lands.

New ranch owners intending to actually raise cattle in a falling market need to gobble up ever increasing federal subsidies to realize enough profits to make loan payments. New mortgages mean more debt pressure and the need to raise large numbers of cattle to cover payments—resulting in increased overgrazing. Federal agencies still caught in the middle by brokering permits continue to feel a responsibility to keep ranchers in business regardless of the ecological costs. This is reflected in National Environmental Policy Act documents, which state "choosing an alternative

which is economically acceptable to the permittee" as an objective.

Along with a few new permittees actually trying to make a go of ranching are an increasing number of corporate cowboys. Already, more than one third of Gila Forest permittees are absentee landlords. They include urban doctors and lawyers, The Nature Conservancy and other out-of-state corporations, Texas oil-drilling companies and a Mexican multimillionaire. In Montana, the largest federal lands permit holder is Zenchiku Corporation, a Japanese company.

Considering the host of corporate buyers, along with the push to privatize public lands by property rights groups and some banks, the probability of land speculation cannot be discounted. It is a simple equation: as timber, gas and oil, mineral deposits and open land disappear from the private sector, public lands represent the last reserves of natural resources in America. Corporations buy public lands ranching operations, which serve as tax shelters in the short run. The mortgages they hold are deeply embedded in the U.S. financial system. As the amount of money loaned on federal lands escalates, banks become more motivated to protect their collateral. As ranching becomes increasingly inviable as a business, corporate permittees with powerful lobbies and the banking lobby will seek to open public lands to other uses.

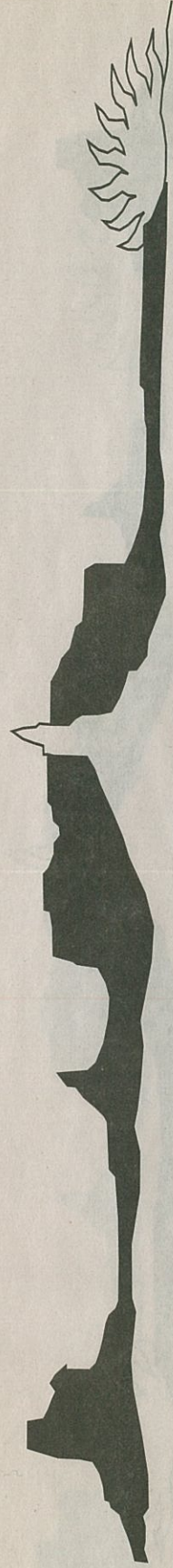
Alternative to Profit Motive?

It is apparent that the public lands livestock industry cannot reform. The vast majority of public lands ranches are not economically viable even with enormous subsidies. The banking industry is locked into the system and, with any opening in the market, will become even more deeply entrenched. If the current system continues, corporate buyers, higher mortgages and falling cattle prices will result in efforts to open federal lands to other extractive uses.

As long as the profit motive drives the management of federal lands, America's public lands cannot be adequately protected. The only ecologically and economically sound solution is to discontinue all livestock grazing on federal public lands and grant permittees who declare permanent non-use a one time economic transition grant.

The fact that there is absolutely no way to continue our current level of resource extraction without severe depletion and eventual elimination of our forests, water supplies and clean air is hard to face. Even harder to face is the fact that our entire economy is based on escalating consumption of our very finite and very fragile resources. Americans, for the most part, believe in the free market: supply and demand solve problems, and with 44% of American households currently invested in the stock market, the need to restructure our economic system seems like an impossible task. However, the consequences of not acting are even more daunting. While we can mitigate damage from deforestation and overgrazing for a while, at extreme public expense, we can only slow the process of destruction. Sooner or later—either while there are natural resources left, or after they are completely gone—the extraction must stop.

Susan Schock is Executive Director of Gila Watch, a grassroots citizens group working to protect and restore the Gila ecosystem.



Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee Elections

Candidates for the Chapter ExCom

The Chapter Nominating Committee nominates the following candidates for the Chapter Executive Committee:

Bryan Byrd, Santa Fe Group
David Farrell, Southern NM Group
Jennifer Johnson, Pajarito Group
Ted Mertig, El Paso Group
Tom Rymaza, Central NM Group
Karen Smith, Santa Fe Group
Charlotte Talberth, Santa Fe Group

Group Candidates*

**El Paso Group
Candidates**
Bill Addington
Steven Best
Laurence gibson
Ted Mertig
Jamie Newlin
Shirley Phillips
Frank Voris

**Central Group
Candidates**
Petra Hegger
Jeremy Kruger
Jon Maaske
Mike Norte

**Pajarito Group
Candidates**
David Bouquin
Abe Jacobson
Terry Phillips
Gordon Spingler

**Other groups will be publishing
their candidates in their local group
newsletter or through a mailing.*

It's still not too late to run for the Chapter ExCom!

To qualify as a petition candidate, you must receive 50 signatures from current Rio Grande Chapter members. The signatures will be verified against the membership list, so make sure that you gather a few extras.

Send petitions to **Barbara Leonard, Chapter Secretary, HC 32, Box 1, Navajo Lodge, Continental Divide, NM 87312.**



**Petition Entry Deadline:
November 12, 1998**

*Candidate statements will be published
in the ballot issue of the Sierran, coming
your way in mid-November.*

Wild Side, cont. from cover

that all three of our representatives voted for this horrible bill despite numerous phone calls from constituents urging them to vote against it. When you go to the polls on November 3, please remember how Bill Redmond, Heather Wilson and Joe Skeen let us down.

In more news about bad bills, Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska pushed a bill through the Senate to create the first ever federally mandated road in

through some of the most valuable wildlife habitat in Alaska and is inside the Izambek National Wildlife Refuge. Setting a very dangerous precedent for undesignating wilderness, this action would be akin to eliminating national parks! At this point, it looks like there was no companion bill in the House, so this issue may have died. What is most disturbing about this bill is that our senator, Jeff Bingaman, voted in favor of it. Senator Bingaman has become increasingly unpredictable on conservation issues, which is evidenced by his League of Conservation Voter (LCV) rating. This rating has dropped to the low sixties this year. Please call the Senator's office and let them know that his vote for the Izambek Road was a vote against his New Mexican constituents.

On the bright side, two major wilderness bills ended the session with record numbers of co-sponsors. The Morris K. Udall Wilderness Act would designate the whole Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as wilderness, and the Utah's Redrock Wilderness Act would designate 5.7 million acres in that state. With pressure building to pass these acts, more and more democrats and republicans are becoming co-sponsors. There is a good chance that as more republicans lend their support, the leadership of the House and Senate will have to allow these bills to move to floor for a vote. Stay tuned for developments.

Finally, 1st district candidate for congress, Phil Maloof, pledged to introduce the Citizens Proposal for New Mexico Wilderness should he be elected to the U.S. House. The event was well covered in the press and helped move forward the effort to designate New Mexico's remaining wilderness. In a related matter, gubernatorial candidate Martin Chavez has also pledged his support for this proposal. As support continues to build for our own wilderness bill, I will keep you apprised on how to get involved.

Keep fighting for all things wild and free.

☿

\$\$

Many, Many Thanks...

**To all of you who have contributed to the
Summer Annual Appeal. Your generosity is
much appreciated and will be put to good
use protecting the environment in New
Mexico and West Texas.**



Rio Grande Chapter
Sierra Club
P.O. Box 9191
El Paso, TX 79983

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
El Paso, TX
Permit No. 2370