



Rio Grande Sierran

Volume 56, Issue 3

News of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter: New Mexico and West Texas

July / August / September 2018

Against the wall

Environmental, human-rights groups unite to protect principles of United States. See Pages 4 & 9.



Phil Carter and Kristina Fisher at the All Against the Wall rally on June 2. Photo by Molly Molloy



Susan Herrera



Doreen Gallegos

How did our endorsed candidates do?

Rio Grande Chapter volunteers canvassed, called and spread the word for our endorsed candidates. Find out who won in the June 5 New Mexico primary. **Page 3.**



Wasted opportunity

New Mexico is receiving \$18 million from the settlement fund resulting from VW's emissions scandal. But rather than improve childhood health by retiring diesel school buses, the state Environment Department plans to buy newer diesel engines. **Page 5.**



1,000 stand up for wolves

After a rancher trapped and then bludgeoned an endangered Mexican wolf to death with a shovel, more than 1,000 stood up for accountability. Also: Eight captive wolf pups are released into wild litters. **Page 11.**

EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET



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More inside:

Sun may set on solar penalty

A Public Regulation Commission hearing examiner has recommended cancellation of a hefty monthly fee that Southwestern Public Service imposed on Eastern New Mexico solar customers. **Page 5.**

What's in Chaco's air?

A Health Impact Assessment committee, with a Sierra Club grant, installed air monitors on Navajo Nation Counselor Chapter. **Page 13.**

Bag-free is back

Students are taking up the cause of a bag-free Los Alamos. **Page 14**

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Volunteer opportunities

The Rio Grande Chapter needs a **membership chair** who can coordinate some member events and postcards and calls to welcome new chapter members. If you're interested, please contact Camilla Feibelman at camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org.

Volunteer Wednesdays: Come to our Albuquerque office at 2215 Lead Ave SE at 1 p.m. Wednesdays for a variety of volunteer activities and camaraderie!

Volunteer efforts won tight races

By Susan Martin
Chapter Political chair

You — one person — can make a difference in a political race. New Mexico needs you — to volunteer to support the election of environmental champions endorsed by Sierra Club.

Two races illustrate what can be done: one local race for county commissioner and a contentious race for New Mexico state representative in District 41.

In the county race, a Sierra Club volunteer got a list of Sierra Club members in the county commission district. She left messages on phones which said, "Hi, I'm a Sierra Club volunteer and want you to know about a local race that will shape how our region looks. We endorsed Rudy Garcia for commissioner and urge you to vote for him."

Rudy won 58% of the vote in a three-way race, and the volunteer never had to leave her home.

The second case involved Susan Herrera, a first-time candidate endorsed by the Sierra Club to represent state House District 41, in the Española area of Northern New Mexico. She ran against incumbent Debbie Rodella, who had only a 68% Conservation Voters New Mexico environmental voting record.

Rodella had represented the district for 25 years and had only one serious challenger during that quarter-century. Many individual Sierra Club members in Santa Fe made the weekend drive to Española to visit potential voters in their homes to tell them about Susan. In addition, the Albuquerque office of the Sierra Club has volunteer days



At the quarterly Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee meeting, held June 9-10 at the Black Range Lodge in Kingston, N.M., volunteer leaders discussed primary election results and were visited by candidates Xochitl Torres Small (front, in green) and Karen Whitlock (center, in yellow shirt).

every Wednesday from 1 to 4 p.m. During just one of those afternoons, volunteers called through a list of Sierra Club members and supporters in District 41. Susan won the district by a 56%-44% margin and will be bringing integrity and progressive values to the Roundhouse next January.

Political campaigns are an art, but successful ones make use of person-to-person contact to encourage supporters to actually cast their vote and to provide information to persuade undecided voters.

"I think the Sierra Club was instrumental in my victory for the 41st District," Herrera said. "Four to five members of the Sierra Club came each weekend for the last five weekends and helped walk precincts. We added another five or so from our campaign and together we had about 10 volunteers walking precincts. The Sierra Club not only helped walk precincts, they made 500 calls to Sierra

Club members in District 41 and sent each of them an email. The Sierra Club and its members will be remembered long after the primary vote count on June 5, 2018!"

Here's a rundown of how Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter-endorsed candidates did in the June 5 New Mexico primary (we endorsed only in contested races, so if your favorite candidate isn't there, he or she might be in the general):

Statewide races:

Governor: U.S. Rep. **Michelle Lujan-Grisham** won a three-way race and faces U.S. Rep. Steve Pearce in the general election.

Land Commission: **Garrett VeneKlasen** lost to Stephanie Garcia-Richard, who faces Public Regulation Commissioner Patrick Lyons in the general election.

Auditor: **Bill McCamley** lost to Brian Colon, who faces current appointed auditor Wayne Johnson in the general.

State Legislature

District 13: **Patricia Roybal Caballero** won and is unopposed in November.

District 5: **Doreen W. Johnson** won and is unopposed in November.

District 31: **Mark Boslough** lost the Republican primary to state Rep. William Rehm.

District 41: **Susan Herrera** won and is unopposed in November.

District 43: **Pete Sheehey** lost to Chris Chandler, who faces Lisa Shin in the general election.

District 52: **Doreen Gallegos** won and faces David Cheek in the general election.

Federal contested races:

U.S. Congressional District 1: **Antoinette Sedillo-Lopez** lost to Deb Haaland.

District 2: **Xochitl Torres Small** won and faces Yvette Herrell in the race to replace

U.S. Rep. Steve Pearce.

County races:

Margaret Cassidy-Baca came in second in a tight four-way race for Sandoval County Commission. Winner Katherine Bruch faces incumbent James Holden-Rhodes in November.

Rudy Martinez won and is unopposed in November.

Wherever you live in New Mexico, you can make a difference by committing an hour a week to elect a candidate who is an environmental champion. Don't like to make phone calls? Walk a neighborhood on behalf of a candidate. Have a stressful life and want to avoid all human contact? Write a letter to the editor of your local paper on behalf of that candidate and spread it around to your friends. Together we must make the vital human connections that elect leaders dedicated to environmental protection, equity and inclusion.

EPA rollbacks threaten New Mexicans' health

By David Baake

Every few weeks, we hear about a new scandal involving EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt: his habit of using EPA staff to run personal errands, like the time he sent his security detail to buy a used mattress from the Trump Hotel; his penchant for first-class air travel, which cost taxpayers more than \$100,000 in 2017; or his cozy relationships with fossil fuel-lobbyists — one of whom allowed him to rent a fancy D.C. condo for the roach-motel rate of \$50 a night.

Pruitt's brazen disregard for ethics and taxpayer money is almost comical. But there's nothing funny about his agenda of aggressively dismantling public-health safeguards. In fact, the Journal of American Medical Association recently reported that Pruitt's rollbacks to date will lead to 80,000 deaths over the next decade.

Of particular concern to New Mexicans in urban areas is Pruitt's work to weaken air-pollution standards for motor vehicles. In 2016, EPA closed a loophole that allowed heavy-duty truck manufacturers to avoid emission standards by installing a used engine and powertrain into an otherwise new truck. EPA scientists had found that these so-called "glider" trucks produced up to 40 times as much pollution as other new trucks, and that, if left unregulated, their emissions would cause as many as 1,600 premature deaths a year.

Despite heavy opposition from just about everyone — including states, public-health groups, and most of the trucking industry — Trump's administration has proposed to reopen the loophole for glider trucks. This would allow companies to produce an unlimited number of new trucks without

complying with pollution standards. Given the volume of heavy-duty truck traffic along Interstates 10, 25, and 40, this would mean more asthma attacks, sick days, heart attacks, and premature deaths across New Mexico.

The administration is also seeking to weaken fuel-economy standards for passenger cars and trucks. In 2012, EPA required vehicle manufacturers to increase their average fuel economy to nearly 55 miles per gallon by 2025. These standards were designed to cut carbon pollution, which contributes to global warming and to smog. The standards were also expected to reduce particulate pollution. The impact would have been to save hundreds of lives every year. And the standards would have saved the average vehicle-owner thousands of dollars in fuel costs. Ignoring these benefits, the administration is working to freeze the

fuel-economy rule.

These are just two of the many crucial safeguards that Pruitt has stalled, gutted, or otherwise tried to undermine. Luckily, some New Mexicans are fighting back. New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas deserves our thanks for repeatedly suing Pruitt to protect public-health safeguards. Sens. Udall and Heinrich are also fighting the good fight. But we need to elect more environmentally friendly candidates and raise our voices and organizing our communities to protect public health and the environment.

David Baake is an environmental attorney in Las Cruces.

Update: Just before press time, Pruitt resigned, leaving Andrew Wheeler, a climate denier and coal lobbyist, as interim secretary. Please urge your senators to demand an administrator who is committed to environmental protection!

Building a golden door, not a wall

Leaving my 2-year-old at preschool for the first time gave me just a tiny window into what it's like for a kid to be removed from his parent.

At preschool the idea of Mommy leaving is quickly replaced by breakfast together with other children, stories while on teacher's lap, outdoor play, nap time with a blankie and a stuffie from home, and then always, always, always Mommy comes back. She always comes back.

I can feel the emotional walls in my heart crack when I read stories of children's and parents' response to being forcibly separated. Child camps being built on contaminated military sites. In some cases families can't locate one another. Institutional caretakers are not allowed to physically comfort these children of a "tender" age. Even my tiny Rafael, who has just started to put together sentences, tells me what he needs most. He says "I wanna hug" and he clings to my body and is filled with confidence to take on the world.

I think about my own family's experience with child separation. My grandmother was sent to England to escape



Camilla Feibelman,
Rio Grande
Chapter
director

Hitler and then later made her way to the States. Her little brother was sent on the kindertransport, which England established to help Jewish parents get their children out of harm's way.

Parents and children were separated, terribly worried, and suffered, but the underlying idea was that eventually parents and their children would be reunited. The separation was a way to get kids out of harm's way, not a punishment for their parents for trying to protect them from danger.

We must take a stand. Not just on forced separation when families come to the border, but we need to recognize that ICE raids have long led to deportations where children are left behind with no means. We must take a stand. Not just on the border wall, which is a

monstrous symbol of inhumanity and impacts landscapes and wildlife, but also on border militarization, which leaves so many victim to racial profiling.

We must take a stand. Not just in supporting our youth as the foundation to lead but in not allowing Dreamers from being used as political pawns.

We have to take a stand to say that we are not our nationalities, we are not our race, we are not our language, we are human beings striving to do our best for the people we love.

In these last few months we've had the pleasure of working with the Chihuahuan Desert Border Coalition that unites environmental and immigrant-rights groups in the work of protecting our border communities, the families and the kids who belong there. Check out Page 9 to learn how border-community residents are raising their voices. We'll soon be hiring a Southern New Mexico organizer to play an even deeper role in this group.

In the meantime ... let's stand up, attend a community meeting, write a letter to the editor, call your local senators and representatives, and be the land that welcomes those in need.

What can I do?

Here are a few suggested actions to help support immigrant rights, according to Equal Justice Works' Rebeka Wolf:

- Organize a meeting/dinner party/cocktail hour and invite someone from an immigration organization to come and educate your friends and family about what's going on!

- Contact your congressional representatives (some in New Mexico are great but need our support) about legislation that does not further criminalize parents (and not a tradeoff where kids get more protection at the expense of their parents)

- If you're able, donate or organize a fundraiser to legal organizations like Equal Justice Works or the Santa Fe Dreamers Project.

- If you speak Spanish, volunteer at Equal Justice Works' project at the detention facility, where we are helping the dads of kids coming through El Paso.

Community leaders protest industry-packed DOI panel

By **Camilla Feibelman**
Rio Grande Chapter director

Community, religious, and tribal leaders rallied in Albuquerque June 6 outside of the Interior Department's industry-packed Royalty Policy Committee meeting to protest further attempts to reduce royalty rates for extraction of fossil fuels on public lands and the Trump Administration's prioritization of industry voices over the public good.

"Secretary Zinke has stacked the Royalties Policy Committee with industry executives and mining school 'yes men.' That may work in Washington, but here in New Mexico, we live every day with the consequences of federal leases sold for a pittance, royalties cut or wasted, public voices ignored. Mr. Zinke's hand-picked Royalties Policy Committee is not welcome here," Don Schreiber, a rancher from the Four Corners area, remarked.

Rally participants served coffee to attendees, calling attention to current leases held by oil and gas companies for rates less than the cost of a cup of coffee on public lands.

Our thousands of Sierra Club members throughout New Mexico and the country have tried again and again to participate meaningfully in public processes to protect our public lands and make sure that private interests on those lands aren't favored over clean air and water. We participated in rule-making on royalties for coal extract from public lands — the rules were rolled back. We've participated in rulemaking to stop oil and gas waste and pollution on public lands — and those rules were dismantled. The message to the public is that only fossil-fuel voices count.

"Public lands belong to all Americans, and we deserve the opportunity to voice our concerns about protecting land, our health, and our climate. With global warming driving 99% of New Mexico into drought and wildfires burning 36,000 acres in Ute Park, the time has come to stop leasing our public lands for a pittance to the oil and gas companies whose dirty energy development is ruining the climate, the land, the water and our local

communities," said Tom Solomon and Jim Mackenzie of 350 New Mexico.

In its short history, the committee has proposed rock-bottom royalty rates and leasing our public lands for absurdly low prices. At the same time, Zinke has fulfilled the wishes of industry leaders by overseeing the largest-ever elimination of public-lands protections in American history and revoking requirements aimed at cutting methane pollution. Zinke and his committee have consistently shut out the American public's voice and prioritized the profits of industry executives above all else.

"Secretary Zinke is not only selling off our public lands, but also selling our future by lowering the royalties they must pay. It is encouraging the rest of us to burn our future and keep us addicted to fossil fuels," said Retired US Navy Commander, environmental engineer and local mom Athena Christodoulou.

"The Royalty Policy Committee should listen to the voices of the people who are not at this table, both in considering policies that would exclude the public from decisions about oil and gas development on our public lands and in their process for deliberating," said Pamela Pride Eaton of the Wilderness Society's Energy and Climate Campaign. "Our public lands are more than colonies for resource development."

"We hope the committee understood our message and that they listened to really understand [the issues] and not simply respond back. We continue to tell the U.S. Government and the oil and gas industry that they simply take resources from our communities and give nothing back. We reject the current proposal for reducing royalties," said Sam Sage of Counselor Chapter House of the Navajo Nation.

Attendees concluded the event by walking silently in to the public-comment session of the meeting wearing shirts that read "Not An Industry Insider." The Committee had only set aside 30 minutes for the public. However, due to the number of community members interested in speaking, the public comment period was extended by an hour.



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Meet the new bus; same as the old bus

By Donna Griffin
Chapter Climate Team

For seven years, carmaker Volkswagen sold its turbocharged direct injection as a “clean diesel” that met U.S. vehicle emissions standards. But Volkswagen had a dirty secret — it had intentionally programmed the computer systems in this engine to disable emission controls under normal use and to turn on emission controls only when the vehicle was being tested. Without pollution control, these vehicles belched out up to 40 times the standard for oxides of nitrogen (NOx) as they cruised New Mexico highways.

In 2015, the EPA sued VW. In 2016, the Department of Justice settled the EPA claims against the German automaker, requiring VW to invest \$2.9 billion in a trust to fund projects that

reduce diesel emissions. New Mexico’s share of the fund is \$18 million.

The consent decree required each state to get a “Beneficiary Mitigation Plan” approved. The New Mexico Environment Department prepared the draft plan in April and provided a comment period.

The draft plan called for 15% of the funds to be spent on electric-vehicle infrastructure and 70% to be spent on replacing or retrofitting older diesel heavy-duty vehicles such as solid-waste trucks and school buses with new diesel engines. The Environment Department reasoned that the EPA-revised emission standards for diesel after 2007 ensured that newer diesel engines will be less polluting. The plan calls for 44 new diesel school buses and 4 electric school buses.

The Rio Grande Chapter commented on the draft plan, noting that the fund

was intended to support programs that mitigate and reduce emissions of NOx. To maximize the effect of the fund, the Chapter strongly recommended that the Environment Department shift its goal in the draft plan to focus on funding projects that replace older diesel-fueled engines with electric powertrains. Diesel engines should not be replaced with diesel engines as the draft plan proposed, because, though “cleaner,” the new diesels still emit NOx and other pollutants and burn climate-damaging fossil fuels.

The Rio Grande Chapter joined a number of organizations asking that the Environment Department focus on projects that further electrification of transportation in New Mexico and suggested that the fund should prioritize the purchase of electric buses, focusing on school buses to protect the health of New Mexico’s children.



Providence Business Journal/providencejournal.com

Instead of health-improving purchases such as electric school buses, the Environment Department plans to use the bulk of New Mexico’s share of VW clean-air settlement funds to replace diesel engines with ... more diesel engines.

San Juan’s legacy still to be decided

By Miya King-Flaherty

The San Juan Basin in northwestern New Mexico has long been considered an energy sacrifice zone, where coal, gas, and oil have been extracted for decades, plaguing the community with air, climate and water pollution.

The Four Corners area is home to the nation’s largest methane cloud, created largely from the continuous release of methane gas through oil and gas production. We know methane is a greenhouse gas 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period. However, coal extraction, through the process of mining, burning, and disposing of waste, is our country’s dirtiest energy source.

In May, I had the opportunity to see the San Juan Generating Station and mine, as well as the Four Corners Power Plant on the Navajo Nation. It deepened my understanding of the complexities we face to transition to 100% renewables while ensuring that communities and economies that are reliant on them are buffered from the consequences of closing down coal-fired power plants.

Other consequences include impacts to community public health and safety. Coal extraction is linked to asthma, cancer, lung and heart ailments and other illnesses — all the more reason it is imperative we transition justly away from fossil fuels to a clean, renewable-energy future.

The lands around the San Juan plant are vast and are an ideal location for solar farms or other potential renewable-energy sources that can create jobs, advance environmental justice, and lead to alternatives for prosperity in the region. Coal still accounts for more than 30 percent of the nation’s electricity, but at a great cost to Americans and citizens everywhere. Carbon-dioxide pollution from coal-fired power plants are a main contributor to climate disruption, resulting in the intense changes we experience today but unfortunately likely to do much worse harm in the coming years.

The San Juan plant is slated for closure in 2022 as coal has become uncompetitive with other energy sources, including wind and solar. It is incumbent on the companies that have profited for so long from this pollution, as well as public officials, to ensure that our communities and workforces are comprehensively considered and planned for as we move forward.



Photo courtesy San Juan College

Solar jobs have suffered in Eastern New Mexico, where Southwestern Public Service places a hefty charge on ratepayers who install rooftop solar — only 110 residents in SPS territory have it. The Public Regulation Commission’s upcoming decision on the fee will be precedent-setting.

PRC could revoke solar penalty

By Mona Blaber
Communications director

A fee that could threaten residential solar across New Mexico faces a big decision soon at the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission.

Right now, if families in Eastern New Mexico want to go solar, they have to pay their electric utility, Southwestern Public Service, an average of \$28 monthly in fees that other customers don’t have to pay.

SPS has been making solar customers pay this solar penalty since 2011, and now the company wants to significantly raise the charge.

This tactic has been employed increasingly by utilities nationwide to kill competition from rooftop solar, which is getting cheaper every day.

Rate 59, as SPS has discreetly named the solar fee, is the reason there are only 110 solar customers in all of SPS’s territory — a tiny fraction of the number in the territories served by PNM and El Paso Electric.

Earlier this year, SPS filed with the

Take Action

Go to [riograndesierraclub.org/SPS-solar-fee](https://www.sierraclub.org/SPS-solar-fee) to write to your PRC commissioner and ask him or her to take the hearing examiner’s recommendation and cancel SPS’s solar penalty.

Public Regulation Commission to raise Rate 59 once again as part of its newest rate case. The Coalition for Clean, Affordable Energy, of which the Sierra Club is a member, and Vote Solar are opposing Rate 59 at the commission.

This case doesn’t just affect customers in Eastern New Mexico. If the commission approves the increase to the already exorbitant Rate 59, or even if the increase is disapproved but Rate 59 is left in place, a precedent is set for New Mexico that PNM and El Paso Electric could soon follow.

In fact, both of New Mexico’s other large investor-owned utilities have attempted similar fees or charges on solar customers, with-

drawing them before they reached commissioners, so PNM and EPE are likely watching the commission’s decision closely.

In late June, a Public Regulation Commission hearing examiner recommended that Rate 59 be cancelled, along with another charge that discourages residential and business solar. She identified many reasons, chiefly that the fees are not cost-based, that SPS is collecting costs not authorized by law, and that SPS isn’t considering all the cost benefits solar customers bring.

Here’s where you come in. While the PRC hearing examiner has recommended cancellation of the solar penalty, commissioners have the final say. Commissioners do listen to their constituents. Studies have shown that solar ratepayers lower costs for everyone because they add power to the grid at peak hours, when it’s needed most. Please write to your commissioner (see box) and tell him or her that solar customers shouldn’t have to pay penalties for protecting the planet.

Public outcry on methane leaks ignored

By Camilla Feibelman
Chapter director

More than 400,000 people had registered overwhelming opposition to the Trump Administration's evisceration of the BLM methane rules that would have drastically cut pollution from oil and gas drilling.

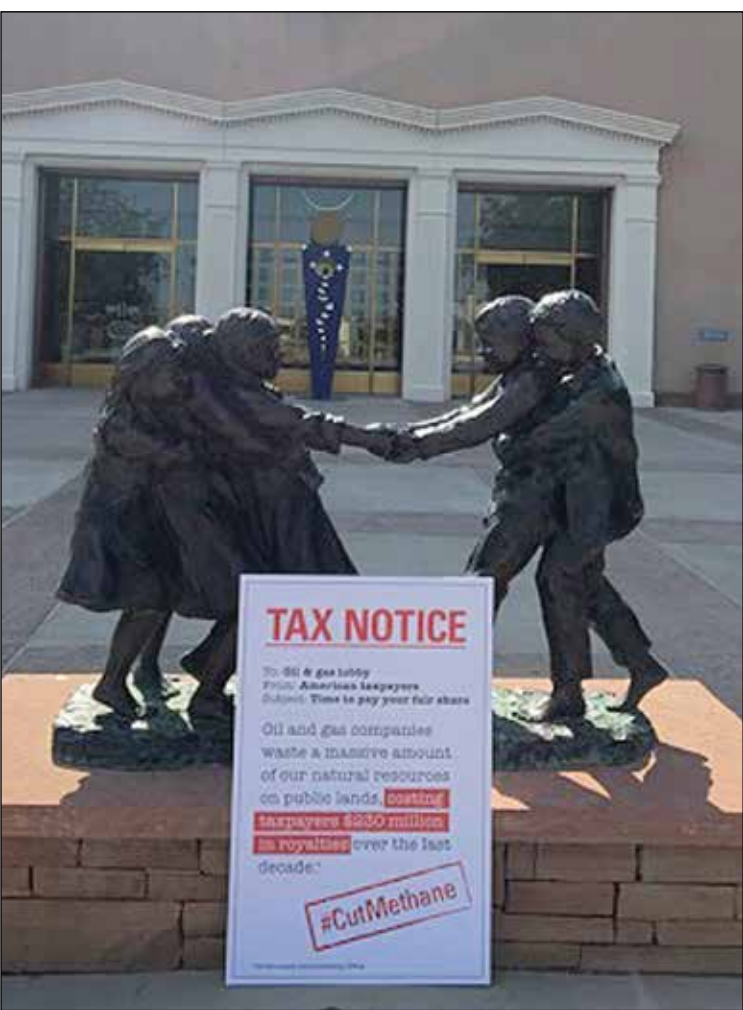
New Mexicans participated in national listening sessions in support of these safeguards, then testified at hearings and then commented in support of the final rule. After Trump took office, thousands again commented against a proposed stay of the rule and have now, once again, called on the Trump Administration to protect community health and taxpayer pocketbooks by leaving these protections in place.

Our members, friends and neighbors in New Mexico have stood up time and again to call on the Trump Administration and industry to do right by our state. Industry has used its insider access to upend common-sense, good-neighbor rules that are health-improving, job-creating, and royalty increasing. This state produces half of all of the wasted methane in the country and we're

losing out on \$27 million per year of royalty income for our state. That is unacceptable, but once again private profits ahead of the public interest under this Administration.

And now New Mexicans will be faced with two other methane related comment periods as the EPA works to roll back its methane rules. They have a first action to simply remove the "Leak Detection and Repair" aspect of their rule which, as is obvious from the name, is the essence of how the rule would work to stop methane waste and pollution. Following in the pipeline then is EPA's full roll back of its rule.

If you're like many Sierra Club members, you've written more comments on methane than you can keep track of. Once the rules are finally and fully rolled back, which is likely to happen over the summer and into early fall, our organizations will likely sue to show that there isn't good technical evidence to justify changing the rules. But we don't know how quickly the courts will rule or if they'll decide for us. So the obvious solution is to do what states like Colorado, California, Wyoming and Pennsylvania are likely to do and that is make our own state rules. And even more clearly, to do that, we'll need to



Lucas Herndon

Methane is the main component of natural gas and a potent greenhouse gas. Oil and gas drilling wastes enough methane yearly to heat every New Mexico home. In June, Progress Now and Sierra Club gave a "tax bill" to N.M. Oil and Gas Association.

elect candidates to office who recognize the climate, health and fiscal impacts of managing oil and gas waste and pollution.

So make sure to attend forums, talk with candidates, and ask: "What are you planning to do about methane pollution?"

Oil and gas drillers get unwelcome tax bill

By Lucas Herndon
Progress Now New Mexico

In June, ProgressNow New Mexico joined the Rio Grande Chapter Sierra Club to deliver (literally) a past-due tax notice to NMOGA, the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association. Progress Now Political Director Lucas Herndon and Rio Grande Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman walked in the oversize tax bill to NMOGA's office and were lucky enough to encounter NMOGA Executive Director Ryan Flynn. Flynn has been pushing for more extraction and less regulation for his industry, going so far as to tell his members last year that he intended to make NMOGA "the most powerful group in the state."

NMOGA's extraction based members waste millions of dollars in methane every single year through venting and flaring the toxic greenhouse gas. Rather than implementing common-sense reforms that would help capture that lost methane to fund New Mexico's schools, Big Oil keeps fighting against those reforms, wasting New Mexico's natural resources and under-funding the state.

Feibelman and Herndon joined activists who delivered similar messages to industry groups in Colorado and Pennsylvania. States across the country are dealing with the pollution and lost revenue caused by methane emissions, but none more so than New Mexico.

The fight for common-sense methane safeguards continues at every level of government, but it feels good knowing that Flynn and NMOGA are on notice from the hard-working families of New Mexico to at least pay their fair share when it comes to the natural resources they extract and profit from.

View video of the delivery at <https://www.facebook.com/progressnownm>.

What we can do about climate change

The Trump presidency will bring us no progress on climate issues. In fact, the administration is working overtime to resurrect coal and nuclear power through federal actions. This puts the burden on states, tribes and pueblos, cities and counties.

New Mexicans have a responsibility, at every level of government, to move forward while the federal government goes backward. To quickly summarize, the control of methane emissions is probably the one action New Mexico can take with the most global effect, and the Sierra Club is all out on our campaign to clean up these emissions.

We are also addressing natural gas, transportation (see "Meet the new bus," Page 5) and meat consumption (an ongoing topic at the national and state level). And, as we know, we are still getting most of our electricity from coal, whether from PNM, a municipal utility, or a rural electric co-op. Legislation to increase the requirements of the Renewable Portfolio Standard will be a major focus of our work in the 2019 session, along with legislation to allow community solar (facilities that are owned by entities, rather than by a central utility).

One step that Sierra Club members can pursue immediately is to urge local governments and schools to ask for capital funding for solar installations and efficiency improvements. Every year the legislature provides millions of dollars in severance-tax funding for local and statewide projects, which range from large water projects to senior-citizen centers. County governments often respond to small communities that seek help with



Denise Fort
Denise is an emerita professor of Law at UNM and a former secretary of the NM Department of Finance and Administration

road paving or other local priorities. As counties and municipalities look at their energy bills, seeking state funding for solar is a way to offset operational expenses associated with wastewater treatment, jails, fire stations and other county buildings. And it is a way for us, as citizens, to reduce our output of greenhouse gases.

This is a modest but effective path to real progress. If you want to help, call, or better yet, meet with members of the school board, and your elected city and county officials. They are preparing lists of capital projects, to be funded at either the local level, likely through general obligation bonds, or to be given to state legislators as part of the "wish list" for the next legislative session. Staffers can assist in providing estimates of the cost of solarizing specific buildings, which makes a request more appealing ("all politics is local.") But even if you don't have costs for specific buildings, it is useful to explain why solar should be investigated.

The other important step is to speak to your legislators, from both the state House and Senate, to explain why you'd like to see capital funding spent on clean energy. Solar installations are a new concept for some, but a perfectly legitimate outlay for capital funding. Of course, this is a political process and we must be respectful of

the competing demands on legislators. The compelling point for solar and efficiency investments is that it reduces operating costs for schools and governments, which is in everyone's interest. Don't wait too long, because officials are already getting ready for the 2019 session.

There's plenty of information about capital funding on the Legislative Finance Committee's website, for those who want to dig deeper. Our severance-tax bonds are issued against revenue from oil and gas, and other mineral taxes. See <https://bit.ly/2NmMiY>.

You can get an idea of what was requested by counties in the past at <https://bit.ly/2KMLhbm>

Or go to riograndesierraclub.org/solar-funding to access any of these links.

The total severance-tax authorization for agencies was about \$164 million in the last session. Schools, libraries, senior centers and other popular projects are funded by general obligation bonds (assessed through property taxes after approval by the voters) for a total of another \$165 million.

Finally, the Legislature sometimes funds capital items through "nonrecurring revenues," that is, revenues that were not projected as part of the prior year's General Fund revenues.

Perhaps this all seems complicated, but it really isn't. The capital budgeting process is a very local process, from the gathering of requests from local governments to discussions with state legislators. As we seek to reduce greenhouse gases for the sake of our state and humanity, speeding up the transition to solar is a way that we can all help.

Join the Rio Grande Chapter

You can join the Sierra Club now for only \$15! Just go to **riograndesierraclub.org/join** or send a \$15 check with your name, address and the code 1700 to
Sierra Club
Attn: Member Services
2101 Webster St #1300
Oakland, CA 94612

You can help keep Gila wild

By Allyson Siwik
GRIP/Gila Conservation Coalition

Flowing out of America’s first Wilderness Area, the Gila River is New Mexico’s last major undammed river. It’s home to seven threatened or endangered species and is proposed for long-term protection under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

But the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission are preparing an Environmental Impact Statement for a Gila River diversion project proposed by the New Mexico Central Arizona Project Entity. The agencies are requesting public comment through July 20 on the issues that should be analyzed in the Environmental Impact Statement, and your input can help prevent a harmful Gila River diversion.

In 2004, Congress passed the Arizona Water Settlements Act that authorized diversion of the Gila River if New Mexico agreed to pay for delivery of Central Arizona Project water to downstream users in Arizona to replace what we take out of the river in New Mexico. \$100 million was made available through the act for diversion, or \$66 million of that would be available to meet water needs in southwest New Mexico without diverting the river.

For more than a decade and after spending more than \$15 million on planning, the ISC and NM CAP Entity have failed to identify a feasible project.

In November 2014, the ISC announced its intention to construct a



Allyson Siwik

Opponents of diverting New Mexico’s last undammed river gathered at a July 2 public hearing in Albuquerque. See sidebar to learn how to weigh in to protect the Gila.

diversion. The agency based its decision on planning and analyses for a large-scale structure that would have diverted and stored Gila River water for unidentified uses, cost more than \$1 billion, and harmed seven threatened and endangered species.

Although planning has now shifted away from that billion-dollar boondoggle, the current diversion proposal could significantly harm threatened and endangered species and habitat along the Gila and San Francisco rivers, cost several times more than the subsidy provided, and would unfairly withhold NM Unit Fund dollars from community water projects that could meet the water needs of 60,000 people in southwest New Mexico. The inten-

tion to divert the full 14,000 acre-feet per year is speculative and unnecessary.

Please help us advocate for local water-conservation alternatives.

The Bureau of Reclamation must assess alternatives to diversion to ensure that threatened and endangered species and habitat are not adversely impacted. Water needs can be met cost-effectively by implementing water-conservation alternatives. We can immediately spend the \$66 million provided on priority community projects that will meet our water needs far into the future without building a costly diversion requiring massive public subsidy to benefit very few. Please make these points using any of the comment methods in the sidebar at right, and let’s keep the Gila wild.

Impact statement on F-16 training delayed

By New Mexico News Connection

Opponents of a U.S. Air Force plan to send thousands of test flights over the Gila National Forest will likely wait months longer for a draft environmental statement.

Public comment is being taken during a scoping process by the Air Force under the National Environmental Policy Act. Residents of Silver City and Grant County were not included in public meetings last year, and some worried that it seemed the flights already had begun. Since then, retired Air Force Col. Susan Beck, a Silver City resident, has stepped in to get as much information as possible from the Air Force and bring it back to community leaders and residents.

“One of the things to

know is that, whereas we thought the draft environmental impact statement would be coming out this fall, we’ve just been told that it may be on at least a three-month delay,” Beck said.

She added she was assured the state’s Holloman Air Force Base is not currently conducting flyovers of the Gila area. Comments about the proposed expanded flyover zone can be submitted at HollomanAFBAirspace.com.

Silver City officials worry the flyovers could have negative impacts on the town’s tourism economy, visitors’ experience in the Gila National Forest, and on Native American ruins, including the Gila Cliff Dwellings. Beck said she encourages New Mexico residents to educate the

Air Force about all that exists in the southwestern part of the state.

“Let’s give the Air Force all the information they need. And possibly the Air Force may decide that this is not the right place to do training,” she said. “So, we know that they need to do training, but this may not be the place for it.”

The Air Force is considering two alternatives to expand its area of military operations in New Mexico. The first would expand an existing area near Carlsbad. The second would modify the Silver City location or create a new, larger area there with the size to be determined at a later date.

Public meetings — not likely before 2019 — will be held after the draft environmental impact statement is released.

How to comment on the Gila diversion

Public meetings will take place in New Mexico and Arizona:

July 9: Silver City 4-7pm, Rally at 3 p.m. Grant Co. Business and Conference Center

July 10: Cliff/Gila. 4-7 p.m. at Cliff High School, Old Gymnasium, 622 St Hwy 211, Cliff, NM, 88028

July 11: Glenwood, NM, 4-7 p.m. at Glenwood Community Center and Library, 14 Menges Lane, Glenwood, 88039

July 12: Virden. 4-7 p.m. at Virden Community Center, 110 Richmond Ave., Virden, NM, 88045.

How to submit your comments:

Online: www.nmuniteis.com

Via U.S. Mail: Phoenix Area Office, Bureau of Reclamation, ATTN: NM UNIT EIS, 6150 West Thunderbird Road, Glendale, AZ 85306

Via email: NMUnitEIS@empci.com (if emailing comments, please use “NM Unit EIS” as the subject of your email)

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Photo courtesy Derek Wallentinsen

Lifetime member Derek Wallentinsen having fun on a New Mexico mesa this year. Derek grew up taking Sierra Club trips.

Celebrating 55 years as a chapter Lifetime member Derek Wallentinsen

For the Rio Grande Chapter's 55th anniversary, we've asked some of our lifetime members to talk about their relationship with the Sierra Club and the environment.

I was born in California to parents who were both Sierra Club members and who knew Club legends such as Ansel Adams and Eliot Porter.

Outings and being told to get outside and explore arroyos until dinner (thanks, Mom!) were a big part of my young life and profoundly influential into adulthood.

I grew up taking Sierra Club trips, including a memorable one to Glen Canyon before it was flooded by Lake Powell. You could still safely drink unfiltered water right out of the Colorado

in those days, just letting the mud settle in your Sierra cup.

Later, I helped draft Rio Grande Chapter Energy Committee stances on WIPP, did trail maintenance in college with the Atlantic Chapter and helped the Angeles Chapter build a new website.

While I have been a member since childhood, a personal windfall some years back allowed me to fund my Life membership in the Club.

Adding Life to a lifetime in the Sierra Club. :-))

Salud y felicidad,
— Derek Wallentinsen

If you're a lifetime or longtime Rio Grande Chapter member, shoot us an email at riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org to tell us why!

Global Warming Express: Meet the mayors

By Genie Stevens
Global Warming Express

School is out. The final part of the school year saw the Global Warming Expressers hitting their typical stride by arranging meetings with their mayors in all three cities!

In February 2018, GWEers from Montessori on the Rio Grande School told **Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller** that he should ban plastic straws in the city. He agreed to immediately make all Albuquerque city buildings straw-free if they could research alternatives to plastic straws.

They did, and on May 14, they dressed in their GWE T-shirts and gave their PowerPoint presentation of the results to Mayor Keller in his conference room on the 11th floor of City Hall.

They agreed to meet again, when the GWE program starts up again this fall.

Mayor Keller told them, "Once we are ready to move on this, you GWEers and I will create a partnership."

GWEers at Central Elementary in Las Cruces were super-excited to walk to City Hall to meet **Las Cruces Mayor Ken Miyagishima**. The GWEers told him what they'd learned about fossil fuels, greenhouse gases, global warming and its effects, melting ice, rising seas and animal extinction and global food security, and then gave him their ideas to stop it, which included using more solar and wind power and using water more efficiently. Mayor Miyagishima praised them for being "very well informed" and then explained to them his Clean Power Plan, including use of electric city buses, and why he signed the Climate Mayor's Agreement. (They already knew that he had signed it and also knew about the U.N. Paris Climate Agreement). Then the kids gave him a copy of the *Global Warming Express* book, signed by the author and by each of



When Santa Fe Mayor Alan Webber met with Acequia Madre Global Warming Express students, they all took a test on climate change and renewables in the library. Then they had fun outside near the solar shade structure.

Photos by Mike Hopkins

them. The city photographer took lots of pictures and posted them on the city Facebook page and in an article about the city!

The Las Cruces GWEers proved to the mayor and to the city that they are kids who will change the world!

On April 11, **Santa Fe Mayor Alan Webber** met with the Global Warming Expressers at Acequia Madre Elementary school to ask their advice about getting solar installed, as he just signed on with 176 other mayors nationwide to commit to a solar-powered city.

When he arrived at GWE headquarters (the school library), he and the GWEers took a test on climate change and renewable energy.

GWEer Sufyan read *The*

Story of Solar at Acequia Madre to the Mayor, to explain to him how the GWEers had to fight hard, but how, after two years, they got their solar installed at the school.

Then the kids took him outside to see their solar shade structure and GWEer Winder told him all the facts and figures about how much electricity it provides (a lot! About 50% on an average day), what it cost, and how much money it saves.

We think he learned a lot. The GWEers took some great photos with him on the school grounds and in their photo-op art mural! And he asked us to come to City Hall next school year, to continue to consult with him!

As their Small Goal (part of

the Global Warming Express program is to create a big and a small goal), GWEers at Reginald Chavez and Kirtland Elementary Schools in Albuquerque wanted to plant

trees.

Mayor Keller's office coordinated with the City of Albuquerque's master arborist, Joran Viers, to do tree plantings near their schools. Both programs learned a lot from Viers and helped him to plant trees in honor of the Global Warming Express at parks near their schools!

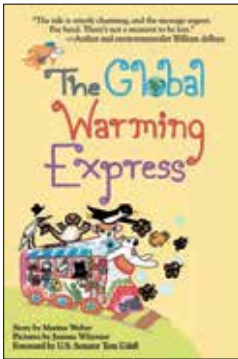
Next year's GWE plans are very ambitious!

The GWE has plans to expand from five schools with six programs to 15 schools with a combination of 18 programs. (Reginald Chavez School in Albuquerque is now hosting one GWE after school program for grades 3-5, one GWE in-school program for fifth grade and one new, GWE pilot program for K-2, combined with a school garden.) Highlights of GWE's schools in New Mexico for 2018-19 include:

- a new program near Datil, NM
- a new program at Painted Sky Elementary in Albuquerque, with 40% Navajo population and
- a fourth-grade program with the New Mexico School for the Deaf.

All told, the GWE Sierra Club programs will span Los Alamos, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Catron County and Las Cruces!

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



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

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

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

—Author and environmentalist William deBuys

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

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

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By Joseph Yaroch
Hundreds of people gathered along the border to protest the newest portion of the wall at Santa Teresa, just west of El Paso.

Border communities rise up to resist newest wall

By Sonya Kumpuckal
Southwest Environmental Center

Even a girl from Chicago like me can appreciate the uniqueness of the American Southwest. And it's also very clear to me that border walls forever damage these places — places that so eloquently represent a diverse mix of people and wildlife.

To protect the communities and environment of the border Southwest, more than 400 people gathered at All Against the Wall on Saturday, June 2. It was at the construction site of Donald Trump's newest wall — a 20-mile, \$73 million monstrosity at Santa Teresa just west of El Paso. We built love and stronger communities through song, spoken word, marching, dance and of course, voter registration!

Trump's Department of Homeland Security waived 25 laws along the 20-mile project area at Santa Teresa. DHS used a Bush-era loophole to exempt itself from laws that protect clean air, clean water, public participation, Native American graves, religious freedom and much, much more. It is unfair that border residents, be they wildlife or people, don't get the same protections that the rest of America can count on for health, safety, freedom of religion and environmental protection.

Each time I see wall construction happening in Santa Teresa, I am frightened. I'm met with bulldozers, trash and the building of an eye-sore fence-like structure, the very concrete beginnings of Donald Trump's border wall. If you try to visit a border-wall construction site, you may be met by a masked private security guard carrying an AR-15, as we were a few weeks ago,

or by the army of Border Patrol vehicles, cameras, checkpoints and armed agents that borderlands residents have to deal with every day.

That is not the kind of militarized environment that any of us want our children and future generations to grow up in. Saying Southwest lands are special is an understatement. They are cultural, ecological and historical havens. Wildlife like the Mexican gray wolf depend on international connectivity with our Mexican neighbors as well as corridors to roam and increase their range. The same applies to the jaguar and ocelot — critically endangered species living in our region who would suffer in the face of a border wall. Even worse, the people — our neighbors and own communities — would be the ones paying the highest price for this wall.

The way Trump and his supporters paint the borderlands is incorrect, offensive and could have irreversible effects on the spaces so many people and creatures depend on. We've seen the damage of border walls before Trump, but his motivation to expand it in such a big way will prove detrimental. What started as racist and inflammatory sound bites of an "America first" campaign has somehow convinced Congress to allot nearly \$2 billion in taxpayer money to this dangerous reality. We must hold leadership — both right and left — accountable for the damage they're inflicting on people and places in the borderland states.

The enthusiastic crowd at the All Against the Wall event demonstrated that border residents are united in opposition to the militarization of our border. Yet over the last two decades, the United States has militarized the southern border region with little regard to

its negative impact on our communities, wildlife, and environment.

With increased flooding and damage caused from walls that already exist, Americans and Mexicans are still paying the costs — some that can never be truly repaired or forgotten. It's clear we are being subjected to blatant disregard and disrespect for human life and sacred lands. The barriers that separate us physically and metaphorically warrant the need for all communities to come together in resistance to this destructive and divisive border wall.

I urge you to contact your U.S. senators — be they independent, Democrat or Republican, and tell them the wall is not the answer. It's a waste of money and an insult to American values. Contact information for your two U.S. senators and U.S. representative is posted on govtrack.us and more information about Southwest Environmental Center is at wildmesquite.org.

Sonya is the Border Campaign Coordinator for the Southwest Environmental Center in Las Cruces.

Southern N.M. Group

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Kurt Anderson, kurt@nmsu.edu, 575-646-1032

Nate Cote

Amanda Munro, amanda-munro31@gmail.com

Copper Flat Mine hearings in September

By Max Yeh
Percha/Animas Watershed Association

For the past eight years, an extended and growing coalition of individuals and organizations in Southern New Mexico and Texas — including the Sierra Club — has been resisting the attempt of an Australian-owned Canadian company (New Mexico Copper Corporation) to reopen a defunct, marginal, open-pit copper mine near Hillsboro, in the foothills of the Black Range Mountains.

As with most projects of this kind, unwanted by-products are many: groundwater pollution, dust storms, permanent habitat damage (the eastern-most stand of Arizona sycamores is threatened), round-the-clock blasting, and heavy, pavement-damaging truck traffic.

But the biggest issue is water. The Copper Flat Mine wants to use as much water as would support a city of 50,000 people, and that withdrawal puts all of Southern New Mexico, Texas and Mexico at risk because the production wells are only a few miles from the Rio Grande. The Elephant Butte Irrigation District has said that a break in the mine's containment system would bring catastrophe to the river. The Rio Grande Compact Committee has said that pumping this much water from near the river violates and increases New Mexico's liabilities in the suit Texas and the U.S. have filed in the Supreme Court against New Mexico. The New Mexico State Engineer's Office joined with Turner Properties, whose Ladder Ranch borders the mine, and a group of locals to contest the mine's claim of water rights and succeeded in reducing that claim, but the litigation continues in the appellate court.

Meanwhile, New Mexico Copper Corp. continues advancing toward mining. It leased a large amount of water from the Jicarilla Apache Nation to offset damage to the Rio Grande, though the Elephant Butte Irrigation District contests the feasibility of that offset. It asked NMSU to lease them water rights for production. It applied for a new appropriation of waters from the state engineer.

Sierra Club members who want to help preserve the waters of Southern New Mexico can attend public hearings on the federal and state permits needed for mining. Members already submitted hundreds of signatures to the New Mexico Environment Department on the mine's permit to discharge wastewater. The New Mexico Environment Department has responded by scheduling the week of Sept. 24-28 for hearings in Truth or Consequences.

The BLM will announce a hearing on its final Environmental Impact Statement and mining permit later this year. The New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division is completing final assessment of mining information and will be issuing a hearing date soon.

Write to riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org if you'd like alerts when meetings happen.

El Paso Executive Committee

elpasosierraclub.org

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Chapter Volunteer Spotlight: Shannon Romeling

By Mona Blaber

Shannon Romeling is the newest member of our chapter Executive Committee and an active part of Water Sentinels — Rios de Taos

What do you do for a living?

I am Projects and Foundations coordinator at Amigos Bravos. Amigos Bravos is a non-profit water-conservation organization whose mission is to protect and restore the waters of New Mexico. My title means that I split my time between project work and foundation work. Foundation work involves searching for grants, writing grant proposals and writing grant reports. As a biologist, my project work includes water quality sampling, river otter monitoring, and outreach/education for the community.

How did you get interested in protecting the environment/water?

I grew up in rural upstate

New York at the base of a small mountain. My parents owned 150 acres of the mountain behind our house that I could call my backyard. Growing up I always wanted to help animals but I wasn't quite sure how. I knew I didn't want to be a vet, and as I grew older I saw that biology was a perfect fit for me. I focused on mammals and habitat protection at first. Now that my focus is water, I really enjoy it because instead of working to protect one mammal or a certain mammal's habitat, I get to protect water for ALL of the organisms that rely on it – so everything!

How did you get involved with the Sierra Club?

I was involved a little bit with the Sierra Club in college but became involved again through the Sierra Club program Water Sentinels. Amigos Bravos' yearly sampling in partnership with the Sierra Club was one of the first proj-

ects I got to work on.

What was your first Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee meeting like?

It was so illuminating! It made me feel motivated and enthusiastic about being a part of such an important and influential organization. I also felt very welcomed and valued as a new member, and I appreciated that very much.

What are some of your hobbies?

Walking/hiking with my dogs, yoga, music and reading fantasy books.

What's the most rewarding experience you've had as an activist?

Recently I have become more politically active locally here in Taos and try to participate in any pro-rights and pro-environment rallies or marches that I can. My most memorable activist experience would have been when a bunch of us in college took buses down to



Washington D.C. to participate in the protests against drilling in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge going on at the time. At that time in my life, it was very impactful for me to see so many people fighting for what they thought was important, and to get to be a part of it!

What do you think is most important to be doing now?

I think the most important thing at this time of immense divide in our country is for environmental groups to make sure that they are working TOGETHER to accomplish the same goals.

If someone wants to volunteer to protect the environment but doesn't know how, what would you tell them?

I would tell them that it is the best way they could spend their time! And that it is the best way to teach your children how to be stewards for their environment. Find a local river cleanup to join, for example, and bring the kiddos!

What's your favorite activity this summer?

My favorite thing this summer is getting out of town to explore new places. I think I can safely say that is my favorite thing every summer!

Most commenters oppose new nuclear dump

By John Buchser

Chapter Water Team chair

Public outcry in response to the news that Holtec International is planning to site a high-level nuclear-waste dump in south-east New Mexico — and transport 10,000 train cars worth of radioactive waste there by train — prompted the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to hold two more public-comment sessions in New Mexico.

Participation at the two last-minute hearings in Albuquerque and Gallup was better than expected.

Comments in opposition to Holtec's application to the NRC ran as high as 10 to 1 in Albuquerque.

Even in Hobbs, commenters were 3 to 1 in expressing concern about the risk to New Mexicans and West Texans. Roswell's attendance was so high, the fire marshal would not allow all members of the public to attend, due to capacity of the room being exceeded.

Holtec has a controversial plan to store up to 100,000 tons of the nation's most dangerous nuclear-reactor waste for as long as 120 years in the ground between Hobbs and Carlsbad.

The dump is meant for supposedly "interim" storage of the radioactive waste. But the waste is unlikely to move again since there would no longer be political will to create a permanent repository or to find funding to do so. Holtec plans to transport 10,000 canisters of irradiated reactor fuel rods from around the country and store them slightly underground and partly above the surface in New Mexico. This is more waste than all U.S. nuclear reactors have produced to date.

The risks of storage in casks are low, but the risks of transport are higher; in either case the failure of a single cask, whether through natural degradation



Patricia Cardona

This photo of a radioactive-waste cask on a truck was featured at public meetings about Holtec International's plan to store high-level nuclear waste in southeastern New Mexico. The waste would likely be transported through New Mexico on rail cars.

processes or terrorism, could release more radiation than did the accidents at Chernobyl or Fukushima.

"This high-level nuclear waste dump is capable of ruining the water, land and crops and wildlife that provide food to New Mexicans," said Patricia Cardona, another volunteer leader with the Rio Grande Chapter organizing on this issue. "The waste can cause cancer, birth defects and deaths. Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter does not support the proposal because of its impact on people and the inappropriate location near "karst" formations, which are caverns, bottomless lakes, and brine wells that have already proven to be problematic in storing hazardous waste and create conditions for possible collapse."

The legislative interim committee on Radioactive and Hazardous Materials, chaired by Las Cruces Senator Jeff Steinborn, will meet July 19 in Hobbs,

Aug. 15 in Los Alamos and Nov. 20 in Santa Fe.

There is always time at these meetings for the public to speak. There is the opportunity to swing the positions of some of the members on this committee to oppose Holtec's proposal until a more comprehensive, integrated strategy is developed.

Several counties and cities in New Mexico have passed resolutions expressing concern about us 'hosting' this temporary waste dump.

Comments may be submitted to Holtec-CISFEIS@nrc.gov until July 30, or watch your email for a Sierra Club action alert.

The Sierra Club's effort is completely volunteer-based (Well, almost. Chapter staff does pitch in!). You can donate to assist in our legal intervention at www.riograndesierraclub.org/holtec.

Anniversary of uranium spill observed

The Red Water Pond Road Community will commemorate 39 Years Since North East Church Rock Uranium Legacy on Saturday, July 14, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., according to a news release

Location: 12 miles North of Red Rock State Park on N.M. 566 near Church Rock, N.M.

The Red Water Pond Road Community on Navajo Nation hosts their 39th annual commemoration of the 1979 Uranium Tailings Spill that is the largest spill of uranium tailings in the United States.

On July 16, 1979, an earthen dam that held liquid uranium waste broke, releasing 1,000 tons of solid radioactive mill waste and more than 90 million gallons of acidic and radioactive liquids into the Rio Puerco. The contaminants flowed downstream through Gallup and across nine Navajo chapters. Several days afterward, United Nuclear Corp. sent a handful of people out with shovels and buckets to remediate the mess, according to the Red Water Pond Road Community's news release. There has been no reclamation, no study to see how far the contamination went and its impacts on local water systems and public health, the release said. United Nuclear Corp. has not been held accountable.

"Let us come together again and share these issues and concerns, collaborate and strategize, to push cleanup of these contaminated environments among our Diné people, to restore, preserve and protect our Mother Earth," said Edith Hood, Red Water Pond Road Community resident. "It is time for our state and tribal governments to stand up and help these impacted communities on Dinétah. There has been enough talk. It is time to take action on behalf of the people."

What is an endangered wolf worth?

By Mary Katherine Ray
Chapter Wildlife chair

In May, the Department of Justice put out a press release revealing that public-land rancher Craig Thiessen had pleaded guilty to trapping and killing an endangered Mexican wolf with a shovel.

The incident took place in 2015 in New Mexico’s Gila National Forest. Thiessen was sentenced to pay a meager fine of \$2,300 and sentenced to a year’s probation.

The crime happened on public land that Thiessen leases to graze his cattle. The penalty for this brutal act on a yearling wolf pup in which so many resources have been invested is so paltry that it is no deterrence at all, especially considering that illegal poaching is one

of the major obstacles to wolf recovery. Forest Service regulations provide that a grazing permit may be revoked if the permittee violates wildlife-protection or other laws. Last month, we asked our members and supporters to contact the Gila National Forest Supervisor and urge that Thiessen lose his grazing privileges for such a horrific act. Nearly a thousand of you responded to the call and did just that!

The Forest supervisor has made a statement that they are reviewing the case. If the Forest Service does decide to revoke the permit, Thiessen has the right to appeal the decision. There is no deadline for any decision. Regardless of the outcome, thank you to everyone who responded for elevating the awareness of this problem.

Eight is not enough

In other wolf news, eight wolf pups were cross-fostered from captive litters into wild ones this past spring. In late April, two pups were placed into a wild den in Arizona and two into a wild den in New Mexico. In May, four more were placed with another New Mexico pack. The purpose is to increase the genetic diversity of the wild population. By translocating very young pups, the hope is their wild families will teach them what they need to know about avoiding humans.

But eight is not enough. The wolf-recovery plan approved last year calls for the cross fostering of 12 wolf pups for this year and every year for the next 15 years. In order to work, a wild litter must be born within a week’s time of

the captive litter so the pups are the same age. The window of opportunity is very narrow and, because wolves are born in spring, it is over for this year. Thus, the recovery plan in its first year is already behind schedule.

The Fish and Wildlife Service could alleviate the genetic bottleneck by releasing an entire pack of well-bonded wolf parents and their pups. But so far, the political maneuverings of wolf opponents, including state wildlife agencies, have prevented this.

As with so many issues surrounding wildlife conservation, habitat protection and even the larger health of the entire planet, the outcome of elections makes such a difference. One of the most important actions you can take this year to help the environment and our wildlife is to vote this November.



This mockup shows what the bosque mural at Tortuga Gallery will look like once finished.

Bosque is part of MuralFest

By Richard Barish

A bosque mural is going to be created as part of Albuquerque’s MuralFest 2018.

MuralFest creates dozens of mural in locations around Albuquerque. It brings the community together through a celebration of art, culture, music, and food and envisions a path to a more sustainable

future.

The preliminary design for the bosque mural shows the diversity of life to be found in the bosque. The mural will be at Tortuga Gallery on South Edith.

The mural is being funded by a GoFundMe campaign, and MuralFest and Tortuga have generously agreed to donated 15% of everything that is raised to the Bosque

Action Team!

Please contribute at <https://www.gofundme.com/tortuga-gallery-mural-fest-project> to allow this beautiful mural to be created!

Please see the list of events at right that will take place at Tortuga Gallery in support of the Bosque Mural before, during and after MuralFest, and please join us there!

Folk Art Festival gets bosque theme

By Cecilia Chavez Beltran

Seventeen years ago, I brought 20 preschoolers to OFFCenter. Located in a space cozier than today, the children (who were part of a program for unhoused/homeless families) felt immediately at ease, and with the caring help of the two women in charge, they dove right into art. Without having to “draw inside the lines,” my kids enjoyed their newly presented creative freedom. Since then, I have been following OFFCenter’s amazing work.

Two months ago, addressing a proposal from the latest Bosque Action Team retreat, Ray Shortridge and I presented Janine Al-Bayati, the puppet master, with the idea of working together to bring awareness about the current state of our dying bosque (please read Richard Barish’s article in the April/May/June Sierran). OFFCenter immediately embraced “Bosque Life” as this year’s Folk Art Festival theme.

The OFFCenter Folk Art Festival is one of Albuquerque’s most anticipated family events, a celebration of art, music, food, dance, and puppets. On Sunday, Sept. 30, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., downtown Robinson Park will come

alive with local musicians, more 100 artist vendors, face-painting, fortune-telling, kids entertainment, and the Giant Puppet Parade for all to participate in.

The pre-festival puppet and mask-making workshops Saturday, Aug. 25, and Saturday, Sept. 8, from 3 to 5 p.m., are free to the public. For more information, call OffCenter at 505-247-1172.

“OffCenter’s mission is to promote positive self-identity and resilience through artmaking by providing a safe environment for creative social interaction with an emphasis on enhancing the lives of those most marginalized in our community,” Al-Bayati said. “Our open art-studio setting is free to the public five days a week, welcoming artists of diverse talents and backgrounds.”

To my little artists of 17 years ago: I hope you are well, safe, and have positive opportunities, including creating and enjoying art and nature.

And to Sierra Club members: you are invited to support the community in this fun opportunity to spread the word for the good of the bosque and the Rio Grande.

Central New Mexico Group events

First Friday Art

The Sierra Club’s Central Group office (2215 Lead Ave SE, Albuquerque) will be hosting a bimonthly First Friday art event on August 3 from 6-8 pm, showcasing the paintings and photography of John Boedeker. Refreshments provided. June’s featured artist Eliza Schmid’s paintings are still on display through July. For questions or artists interested in showing work, contact Heather Kline (505-577-2798, heather9387@yahoo.com).

Folk Art Festival calendar

Calendar of events for Albuquerque Mural Fest and 16th annual OFFCenter Folk Art Festival

Saturday, July 21: Closing for Bosque Mural Artists and Artful Saturday Bosque Mural Fundraising Extravaganza at Tortuga Gallery, 901 Edith Blvd SE, Albuquerque, NM 87102. 1-5 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 25: 3-5 p.m.:

Workshop for families that want to help make large puppets for “Bosque Life” themes Folk Arts Festival at OffCenter, 808 Park Ave SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102.

Sept. 22–Oct. 13: Albuquerque Mural Fest. Featuring Bosque Mural at Tortuga Gallery

Friday, Sept. 7: First Friday Art. Transformation — Recycled Art Show at Tortuga Gallery. 6-8 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 8: Workshop for families who want to help make large puppets for “Bosque Life” themes. Folk Arts Festival at OffCenter, 3-5 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 30: OffCenter’s Annual Folk Arts Festival. Theme: “Bosque Life.” Robinson Park, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 5: First Friday Art with Sierra Club: Individual show for Denise Weaver Ross, Bosque mural artist, at Tortuga Gallery. 6-8 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 20: Bosque Bash and Artful Saturday at Tortuga Gallery.

Central New Mexico contacts

Chair: Fred Houdek, fhoudek@gmail.com, 630.809.4234

Vice Chair: Ray Shortridge, rshortridge@gmail.com

Treasurer: David Ther, grelbik@gmail.com

Secretary: Heather Kline, heatherjkline78@gmail.com, 505.577.2798

Outings: Odile de La Beaujardiere, odile@pitot.org, 505.433.469

Carol Chamberland, pictografix@comcast.net

Mark Rudd, mark@markrudd.com

Peter Kelling, cloudsandwater@juno.com

Other Responsibilities

Political and Bosque Chair: Richard Barish, richardbarish@gmail.com

Art showings: Heather Kline

Volunteer coordinator: Lauren Komnick, sierrclubbriogrande@gmail.com, 315-272-7317, tabling. Patty Duncan, pgnm@comcast.com, Volunteer Wednesdays

Wildlife: Leslie Chavez, chavezles99@gmail.com

Military Outings: Terry Owen, teowen@q.com, 505-301-4349

UNM Sierra Student Coalition Co-presidents: Tom Bottomly, tbottomly@unm.edu; Keely Scheffler, kscheffler99@unm.edu

Rulings leave Chaco in limbo

By Miya King-Flaherty
Our Wild New Mexico

A mixed bag of recent court decisions are key for determining the fate of fracking and drilling in New Mexico hot spots.

In April, U.S. District Judge James Browning, a George W. Bush appointee presiding over a 2015 lawsuit against the Bureau of Land Management Farmington Field Office, ruled that the BLM did not violate the National Historic Preservation Act and National Environmental Policy Act by opening Greater Chaco to horizontal fracking under a 2003 management plan that doesn't analyze the impacts of fracking.

This was a real surprise, given Browning's earlier preliminary ruling that the BLM did violate the National Environmental Policy Act.

Western Environmental Law Center, representing Diné CARE and San Juan Citizens Alliance, has appealed to the 10th Circuit Court in Denver, where plaintiffs hope for an outcome similar to another big ruling in June.

Environmentalists won their legal challenge against the BLM Farmington Office's attempt to lease minerals on 19,788 acres of Santa Fe National Forest land, which also encompasses the Greater Chaco region. The groups involved in the lawsuit include the San Juan

How you can help

- Write a letter to the editor calling for real protections for the sacred Greater Chaco landscape, asking for regulations on oil and gas operators in the region to be enforced, for community public health and safety issues to be addressed, and that the remaining 9% of public lands in the region not be leased for oil and gas development.
- Help us collect signatures for our coalition petition. We need people power and numbers to communicate the public's outcry. Contact miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org to help.
- Please stay engaged; when the draft Environmental Impact Statement is released, your comments to the BLM will be essential.

Citizens Alliance, Diné C.A.R.E (Citizens Against Ruining Our Environment), Amigos Bravos, WildEarth Guardians and the Sierra Club.

The court agreed that the BLM failed to adequately analyze the full life cycle of oil and gas emissions, including their indirect and cumulative effects on people and the environment. Additionally, the BLM failed to analyze the water-quantity impacts from horizontal fracking in the region. This is significant, especially when the state is experiencing drought conditions. The BLM and U.S. Forest Service must now perform a true analysis of fracking impacts on the Santa Fe National Forest.

As you may remember, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke deferred the auction of thousands of acres of land in Greater Chaco to oil and gas drilling in March. The Sierra Club and the Protect Greater

Chaco Coalition anticipate those parcels of land to resurface during the December 2018 lease period.

Through a Freedom of Information Act request, WildEarth Guardians revealed that the oil and gas industry has submitted more than 200 "Expressions of Interest" for drilling in Greater Chaco since January, including 24 parcels within 10 miles of Chaco Culture National Historical Park and 125 parcels within 20 miles. Initial estimates are that industry has requested for the BLM to lease more than 55,000 acres of additional Greater Chaco public land, which is already 91 percent leased out to oil and gas.

Under the current policy, the BLM must process Expressions of Interest within six months of receipt so they can be offered for leasing as soon as possible. This means we may see more parcels up for auction later this

year than were in the March lease sale.

We can still do something about this. The BLM received 459 protest comments opposing the March 2018 lease sale, more than any oil and gas lease the state has received. That prompted the current administration to delay the lease sale, and supported our congressional delegates' efforts to protect the region.

There will be a 10-day comment period to protest any upcoming parcels. Please watch for emails from Rio Grande Chapter for updates on how you can participate.

In spite of the obstacles we face, this will be a critical year for addressing the existing and future impacts of oil and gas development in Greater Chaco. The BLM Farmington Field Office is expected to publicly release its draft Environmental Impact Assessment as an amendment to the 2003 Resource Management Plan later this summer.

It is likely that the proposed management alternatives will prioritize oil and gas leasing, and there likely won't be a "no leasing" option. However, there will then be a 90-public comment period, and you can participate. We will continue to call for an immediate moratorium and for strong environmental and public health safeguards.

Witnessing the fracking boom take over

In our April/May/June issue, Samuel Sage, a Greater Chaco activist and former president of Navajo Nation's Counselor Chapter, described some of the damage caused by oil and gas development in his community. His column left off during a tense meeting in the early 2000s between the BLM and three Navajo chapters over a management plan — still in place now — that the BLM was about to approve without consultation with Navajo citizens.

Steve Henke, manager for BLM Farmington, took a deep breath and began talking.

"We called you all here to meet with us to find out how we can come together on this Resources Management Plan," he said. "We know you have concerns about certain areas in the RMP."

I went over to my uncle and told him in Navajo what Steve Henke said. My brother, Ray Wilson, Huerfano Chapter president, asked why we as chapter governments were never informed about the RMP. This began the episode of BLM telling us (Huerfano, Pueblo Pintado and Counselor Chapters) "we did inform you through letters."

After several meetings with BLM, Steve Henke would inform us that he had pulled certain parcels from being developed. We always met with BLM on their terms in the Farmington Field Office. After so many



Samuel Sage
Navajo Counselor Chapter community leader

meetings, it just seemed like we were not getting anywhere. Later, we were asked if we wanted to join a lawsuit against BLM and the US Department of Interior. I informed my Chapter community membership about it and explained why we needed to do it.

At the same time, we were working with Dine CARE/Donna House in identifying various cultural properties and sites and actually went on hiking trips to identify areas.

At that time, the chapter had a Senior Citizen Center. Most of the elderly men were very knowledgeable of traditional teachings and places. We mapped as much as we could. Some areas the elderly men stated that "we will show, but you must not share them with anyone. We want those areas protected and undisturbed." Some of the areas are still used in ceremonies, and they are very sacred.

BLM did not understand that, wanting to know the locations. The men stated that "we know someone will get a hold of it and it will be published in a book." So we did not share the information.

The outcome of the lawsuit against BLM/Department of Interior was not in our favor. Later, BLM came back with an agreement stating they were willing to do some things, but none has been done to this date.

After the lawsuit, things got quiet with no activity. Until 2013, when the exploratory drilling turned into full fracking. Even then, BLM would not say that it was fracking. The increase in vehicle traffic, noise, lights, odor of gas/oil, vehicles/trucks blocking the main dirt roads, and community members began to complain to the Chapter officials. The Chapter officials held community meetings and just heard complaints from community members with no answers. I had lost my seat as a Chapter president by one vote. Then I was hired for the chapter as Community Services coordinator. I just stood by and watched everyone running around trying to get answers. The thing I was telling my community members 10 years earlier would happen -- an increase in oil and gas development -- was happening.

Northern New Mexico Group Contacts

Executive Committee

- Chair: **Teresa Seamster**, 505-466-8964, ctc.seamster@gmail.com
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- Chair: Tom Gorman
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Zero Waste: Joe Eigner, 505-570-0583, joseigner@gmail.com; Karen Sweeney, 505-466-9797, ksweeney99@comcast.net

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- Chapter Representative: Tom Gorman
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Taos: Eric Patterson, 575-776-2833, eepatt@gmail.com



Teresa Seamster
Members of the Health Impact Assessment Committee install an air monitor at a residence near an oil well in the Counselor Chapter on the Navajo Nation. The monitors have been removed and sent to laboratories for analysis.

What’s in Chaco’s air?

By Teresa Seamster
Counselor HIA-HNDA
Committee

At the Navajo Counselor Chapter, sitting at the intersection of Highway 550 and the county road to Chaco Culture National Historical Park, the air looks clean and the wind often blows strongly across the mesas and through the valleys. But for the past three years, residents have complained of chest pain, headaches, coughing, wheezing, sinus problems and skin and eye irritation.

Air is usually invisible and its elements unidentified — until it goes into an EPA analysis lab and gets tagged as ground-level ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, and particle pollution — also known as PM, or particulate matter.

A look into a clear tube of air sampled outside the Counselor Chapter House shows a swarm of invisible gases that could be sources for the health complaints:

Volatile organic compounds: Sources are well pads, compressor stations, processing facilities
Symptoms: headache, dizziness/chronic illness: leukemia
BTEX: Sources are well pads, compressor stations, processing facilities
Symptoms: headache, irritation eyes & throat/chronic illness: cancer, neurological.

Formaldehyde: Sources are oil wells, compressors and processing facilities
Symptoms: asthma, ear, nose and throat irritation, memory loss/chronic illness: asthma, eczema, throat cancer

Diesel exhaust: Sources are truck traffic, oil wells, compressors
Symptoms: Ear, nose and throat irritation, headaches, dizziness, nausea/chronic illness: lung cancer
Ozone: created by reactions between VOCs and nitrogen oxides, causing chest pain, coughing, ear, nose

Residents agreed to have two monitors to record minute-by-minute concentrations of PM 2.5 inside and outside their houses for a minimum of 32 days.

and throat irritation, and leading to chronic lung disease and asthma.
PM2.5: Sources are well pads, compressor stations, processing facilities
Symptoms: asthma attacks, acute bronchitis, heart attacks/chronic illness: reduced lung function, chronic bronchitis, fatal heart attack.

What is PM2.5 ?
PM2.5 is a microscopic particle — 2.5 microns in width and almost 30 times smaller than the diameter of a human hair. When levels are high, PM2.5 particles form a haze in the sky, making their way into people’s respiratory tracts and reaching the lungs. Often dubbed a silent killer, it is only in the past decade that we have begun to understand PM2.5, its sources and the long-term impacts on lung and heart diseases better.
Measuring the concentration of PM2.5 and understanding its sources is key to designing policies to control its presence in the air we breathe. Scientists believe there is no substitute for ground-level monitoring, but on-ground monitoring of PM2.5 requires sophisticated equipment, sustained funding, technical know-how, and regulatory support that are still absent in most places.
Starting in April, the Counselor Chapter Health Impact Assessment/Hozhogoo’na’ada Committee received a \$10,000 grant from Sierra Club and deployed 16 indoor-outdoor monitors to eight residential locations in the most heavily concentrated oil-well portions within the

chapter boundary. Every location was within .25 to 1 mile of an active well.
The residents agreed to have two monitors to record minute-by-minute concentrations of PM 2.5 inside and outside their houses for a minimum of 32 days. In addition, four locations were selected to take 24-hour Summa canister samples of outdoor air in the community and test for 15 different toxins and any tentatively identified compounds.
Results and final reports are expected in August, but one clear result was already recorded on May 2. The monitor screen at one location went red sometime during the night, and the family woke up to a hazardous level of PM 2.5 and called the Chapter House, as instructed. Kendra Pinto and I went to the home about two hours later, and the monitor had returned to a normal green, but the residents were experiencing shortness of breath, sore throats and a choking feeling. We had advised them to leave the house for a few hours until the air inversion lifted, but it was cold and sleeting that day, so they remained at home, even though the indoor levels were hazardous.
The impacts of such “peak” exposures over years of well operations next to homes is increasingly well documented. Residents suffer a range of respiratory, neurological, neonatal, and dermatological symptoms that can escalate into chronic illnesses and birth defects over time. The economic impact on those with symptoms in terms of personal debilitation, lost work hours, health costs, trips to the doctor, inability to concentrate and remember, and loss of school days is cumulative and severe.
In this context, the health committee and Counselor residents are working to inform other chapters and the Navajo Tribal Council, BLM, BIA and New Mexico Oil Conservation Division of the harm caused by their decisions to continue leasing more parcels for oil drilling near rural residential communities.

Northern N.M. Group News

Walking and fundraising for our candidates

Susan Martin and Tom Gorman have worked diligently canvassing with Pat Cardona, Ken Hughes, John Buchser, David Coss and others garnering support and educating voters on several close primary races. Even more group members have attended the numerous fundraisers on behalf of our choices who, whether they won or lost, all ran highly credible and effective campaigns.
Contact: tdgorman@gmail.com and patricia-cardona24@yahoo.com

Counselor Chapter Air Monitoring completed

Counselor Chapter is a gateway community to Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Due to health impacts from oil drilling in the area, 16 indoor and outdoor air monitors were deployed in mid-April and collected in May and shipped to labs and the Southwest Environmental Health Project in Connecticut for analysis.
Particulate matter is fine dust, vapor and gas emissions that are a growing source of many symptomatic and chronic respiratory illnesses, heart problems, cancers and asthma. Community results will be part of an Health Impact Assessment report to NTC, BLM, Bureau of Indian Affairs and Energy, Mining and Natural Resources Department..
Contact ctc.seamster@gmail.com
Santa Fe National Forest plan taking comments
Santa Fe National Forest recently released its draft Forest Revision Plan with four land-management alternatives: no change; a balance of some new wilderness and new development; an emphasis on new energy development and recreation; and an emphasis on new wilderness.
SFNF has held meetings and open houses to collect public input in revising the alternatives.
Contact tdgorman@gmail.com and ctc.seamster@gmail.com
Working with Santa Fe County to install more solar
At the urging of Denise Fort, our Northern New Mexico Group and Commission Chair Anna Hansen, the county has proposed several fire stations and county facilities as best locations for installing solar panels to help reduce the county’s climate impact and save on utility costs. The next step is to get enough public support to get these projects (\$1.5 million) on the Capital Improvement Projects list for 2019.
Contact: sandrine.gaillard@gmail.com
Committee Updates
Water Committee: The committee wrote to legislative leaders Brian Egolf and Peter Wirth regarding legislative emphasis on climate change and water scarcity. The committee will meet with both legislators and with the county on resiliency maps. (Contact: Paul Paryski)
Public Lands Committee: Committee members attend meetings and actions to protect Santa Fe National Forest, Carson National Forest, Pecos Wilderness and Rio Grande del Norte National Monument (Contact Tom Gorman & Teresa Seamster)
Energy Committee: Several Executive Committee members are participating in Green Fusion actions with Rabbi Neil Amswych to bring collaboration between faith and environmental groups. Pat Cardona and John Buchser testified in Socorro on Sun Zia Line.
(Contact Shane Woolbright)

Just a measly 10-cent fee

By Zoe Hemez
Los Alamos High School Eco Club

I belong outside. Born and raised in Los Alamos by two trail-loving parents, I've been exploring the canyons, mesas and mountains surrounding me for as long as I can remember.

The sunshine, clear air, and sense of absolute freedom keep drawing me back to the trails no matter how exhausted, busy or sunburnt I may be. One of my favorite aspects of the outdoors, however, is the people I find there. Nothing seems to give me more satisfaction than smiling hello to an unknown passerby on a trail and being greeted with the same warmth in return. Nowhere else in the world have I encountered so many people in one town who shared the same level of appreciation for the outdoors as Los Alamos residents do.

Which is why, when my friend Kevin Parkinson and I decided to advocate for a plastic-bag fee in Los Alamos County, I wasn't too worried. Who could be opposed to such legislation? The consequences of trash pollution in Los Alamos couldn't be more obvious. Even in areas miles away from roads and buildings, evidence of human presence can be found. In fact, much of my time outdoors today is spent picking up aluminum cans, candy wrappers, and broken glass bottles. In a community where so many residents feel strongly about the preservation of their trails, rallying public support couldn't be difficult. Or so we thought.

Our bag-fee initiative began in late April, when we attended a forum organized by the League of Women Voters to allow community members to meet candidates for the County Council election. By taking this measure, we hoped to be better informed on how the county government would respond to our demands, allowing us to organize our movement to be as efficient as possible.

Later, we created an online petition in support of a 10-cent plastic-bag fee in Los Alamos stores, on which we need 1,000 signatures. Now, we're continuing to make our demands known by attending Environmental Sustainability Board meetings, collaborating with the Zero Waste Board and spreading the word of our cause.

Although our petition is steadily accumulating signatures, I am struck every day by how difficult it has been to gain support within the community. When we discussed the initiative with County Council candidates, for instance, many still offered the same response: "Los Alamos isn't ready for a bag fee, so for now we should focus on educating the town."

However, time has shown that education simply isn't effective in reducing the consumption of single-use plastic bags. In 2014, a similar initiative to ours was presented to County Council, but, in the end, did not pass. Since then, activists have been working hard to promote a more sustainable lifestyle within the community to no avail. In the five years since the last movement against plastic bags, consumption of disposable items such as straws, cups, and, of course, bags has remained unchanged.



The contradiction between what people believe and how they act has proved to be very frustrating to me and the other students I am working with.

While so many people in Los Alamos are outwardly appreciative of the environment that surrounds them, at their core they are far more devoted to the plastic bags they use to carry their groceries home. Even though the consequences of disposable plastic items are glaring and undeniable, the town is reluctant to forgo the convenience they provide. I believe that this period of hesitation is over, and people must make a change now if they want to have any chance of reaping the benefits later.

Over the past few weeks, it has become all too apparent that implementing a plastic-bag fee in Los Alamos will be far more difficult than I expected. Many of my community members are skeptical that such a policy is worth the effort, and I can understand why. After all, in a world where 240,000 plastic bags are consumed every 10 seconds, what difference will it make for one small town to introduce a measly 10-cent fee?

What so many people don't realize is that the successful implementation of such a fee does not represent the end of a campaign by a handful of high-school students, but rather the beginning of an environmental movement in which the entire community can partake. When shoppers realize how little effort is required to bring reusable bags to the store, they will start making other small changes in their lifestyles. Eventually,

Los Alamos High School students, including author Zoe Hemez, left, have taken up the campaign for a bag-free Los Alamos. You can sign the petition by going to change.org and searching for "Los Alamos bag fee."

Photo courtesy Zoe Hemez

Los Alamos residents will become more conscious of the trash they produce, the energy they consume, and the impact their lifestyles have on the planet. Our clean water will become cleaner, our crisp air crisper, and our wonderful trails even more wonderful.

In a few months, I will be starting a new life in college. Despite being nervous about leaving home, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to continue voicing my opinion in an entirely new location.

My experience in Los Alamos and everything I've learned from it have shaped me into a more efficient and determined activist. I can't wait to get to work, and, most importantly, to discover all the trails the world has to offer and the people I will meet on them.

Zoe Hemez is outgoing co-president of the Los Alamos High School EcoClub. She serves the Zero Waste Subcommittee of Los Alamos County until she leaves for college.

Meetings and events

Please Note: July and September presentations will be at different venues and times. In July, we are partnering with the League of Women Voters to present the program at Lunch with a Leader in Mesa Public Library. In September, the Library's Authors Speak Program will cohost at Fuller Lodge.

Tuesday, July 17: Jorge Rodriguez presents "The Border Wall" at 11:45 a.m. at Mesa Public Library. ACLU-NM is currently partnering with environmental and social-justice groups, including the Sierra Club, to protect our borderlands and their ecologically rich landscapes, critical wildlife habitat, and communities with connections with the land and water that date back centuries. Rodriguez will talk about efforts to protect these elements against the pending Border Wall. The League of Women Voters offers the opportunity to purchase a lunch from the LA Co-op. For information on ordering a lunch, please email Karyl Ann Armbruster, atkaskacayman@gmail.com, by July 12, and join us at Mesa Public Library.

Wednesday, Sept. 5: Scott Einberger presents "With Distance in His Eyes: The Environmental Life and Legacy of Stewart Udall" at 7 p.m. at Fuller Lodge. Einberger, an environmental historian, will discuss his new book about Stewart Udall, who, as a highly successful U.S. Secretary of the Interior under presidents Kennedy and Johnson, helped establish dozens of new national parks and wildlife refuges, the Wilderness Act, Endangered Species Preservation Act, and Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Udall also spent significant time in the 1980s and '90s defending Navajo uranium miners. He spent his later years in Northern New Mexico, where he was active in the conservation community. Please join us at Fuller Lodge to hear about one of our environmental heroes, and to get some tips about furthering our current activism.

Pajarito Group Directory

<http://pajarito.riograndesierraclub.org/node/13>

Executive Committee

Chair/Secretary: Jody Benson, echidanaejb@gmail.com, 505/662-4782
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Newsletter Editor, Publicity, Sprawl, Transportation, Endangered Species/
Wildlife: Jody Benson, echidnaejb@gmail.com, 505/662-4782
Open Spaces, Caldera Issues: Howard Barnum, hnbarnun@aol.com
Political, Cool Cities, Membership: Mark Jones, jonesmm1@comcast.net, 505/662-9443
Water Issues: Barbara Calef, bcalef@yahoo.com, 505/662-3825



Photo courtesy Cecilia Chavez Beltrán

In March, an Excursiones group visited Kasha Katuwe/Tent Rocks National Monument.

Happy Birthday, Excursiones!

By Cecilia Chávez Beltrán
Excursiones coordinator

Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico is a year old! And what have we been doing all this time? Exploring various nearby amazing natural areas with members of the (mostly but not exclusively) Spanish-speaking community.

In these 12 months, we have hiked and walked several trails in the Sandia Mountains and different areas of the bosque of the Río Grande, as well as the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge just south of Albuquerque.

In addition to these excursions, we have had two “special” outings where transportation and entrance fees were covered by the Rio Grande Chapter. This past March we visited Kasha Katuwe/Tent Rocks National Monument, where upon reaching the top and with

the amazing landscape as background, our most enthusiastic excursionistas danced a Bachata Rueda (popular Latin American music very expressive of joy, and feelings in general).

It was the most festive outing all together, with much laughter and appreciation for being able to spend leisure time in the outdoors.

In December, we visited the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. Thanks to Friends of Bosque del Apache’s invitation and to the many volunteers who came with us: birders, interpreters and photographers. This was an extraordinary educational outing for all involved.

Our participant’s ages span from 3 to 84 years old. Ninety-seven percent of our excursionistas have expressed that they had never had a chance to visit any of these natural places before. Most of our participants are women, and lately their teenage chil-

dren are joining their moms on the outings!

The Rio Grande Chapter has a new enthusiastic bilingual (Spanish-English) volunteer outings leader.

Paulina and her two children came with us on a couple of excursions to the Sandia Mountains. After becoming certified with the Sierra Club, Paulina led her first outing to the Bosque a couple of weeks ago. Paulina is a graduated Promotora with Enlace Comunitario, one of the nonprofit groups Excursiones has invited since the beginning of our program.

After one year of Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico, it continues to be a delight to explore, admire and “translate” enjoyment and love for nature with those who come with us.

¡Feliz cumpleaños, Excursiones!

Wilderness first-aid training

Patrick Noble of Outside Medicine will be holding a three-day intensive wilderness first-aid training in August.

When: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Aug. 3-5 (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)

Certifications:

Wilderness First Aid good for three years.

Adult and child CPR good for three years.

Curriculum:

Appropriate for all levels of experience (no previous training required — “we find that everyone from ER doctors to hikers finds this course worthwhile,” according to Noble). A majority of course time will be spent in hands-on learning through labs and simulations.

Cost: \$300 per participant, or \$275 for Sierra Club members.

To claim the discount, Sierra Club members should use coupon code Sierra when you fill out the registration form.

The price includes the course, the two certifications listed above, all course supplies/materials and a comprehensive waterproof Wilderness Medicine Handbook to keep.

Location: Santa Fe Waldorf School, 26 Puesta Del Sol, Santa Fe, NM 87508.

The Santa Fe Waldorf School is 13 acres and immediately adjoins another 40 acres of wild land.

For more information or to register, visit www.outsidemed.com

Hikes and Events

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by Saturday July 28: 505-433-4692; odile@pitot.org.

Saturday Sept. 8: Mountain yoga outing. Easy 2.5-mile hike that incorporates a one-hour outdoor yoga and mindfulness break midway. Hike includes 200 feet of elevation gain and amazing views of the mountains. Limited to 15 participants. Certified service dogs only. Sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome. Contact by Sept. 6 to RSVP and obtain additional information; Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@q.com.

Saturday, Sept. 8: Easy local hike in Northern New Mexico; details to be determined due to forest closures. Updates on our Meetup site or contact Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Sunday, Sept. 9: Monica Canyon, San Mateo Mountains.

The Monica Canyon trail ascends into the San Mateos at some distance from FR 549, which carries wheeled traffic up to the saddle. It also forks off onto an old, closed road that can be seen occasionally from FR 549. We’ll take one of these routes up to the Mount Withington forest road. 1,700-

foot elevation gain, 6–8 miles round trip. Trailhead is accessible by car. Difficulty: intermediate. Contact Jim Nelson at jcnelson@gilanet.com or 575-854-2259.

Saturday, September 22: Walk in the Bosque on the fall equinox. Meet at the tree sculpture garden south of the Montano Bridge and walk south to check on the Oxbow and then down to the Rio Grande. It is an easy walk on even ground. 8 a.m. (two-hour walk). Contact: Margaret, mardel18@aol.com

Sunday, Sept. 23: Annual Monuments to Main Street Hike, Picacho Peak. We will hike the new Western Ridge trail to the top of Picacho Peak. At the top of Picacho Peak you will enjoy 360 degree views of the entire National Monument as well of views into Texas and Mexico. We will return via the original trail route. 3–4 miles round trip. 700 feet of elevation gain. Call Howie Dash for meeting time and place. Hike limited to 15 people. 575-652-7550 or howiedash@aol.com.

Saturday, Sept. 29: Easy hike in Northern New Mexico; details TBD due to forest closures. Updates on Meetup or contact Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com.



By Mary Katherine Ray

Summer is the season of baby animals. This little pronghorn fawn is probably just over a week old. Her legs are spring-loaded for speed, and even though her mom was nearby, after her first week, there is no predator alive on the continent today that can outrun her. Don’t let the season go by without taking your chance to see young animals like these in the wild! But don’t get too close; let your binoculars or zoom lens bridge the distance for you.

Outings updates

Northern New Mexico outings Meetup site: www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/.

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

Know before you go: Fire restrictions are now up to Stage 3 in many places in New Mexico. For status of fire restrictions and local burn bans across New Mexico, visit firerestrictions.us/nm. Updates are also in our weekly email. To get those, send an email to Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS.



Photo by Olivia Li

This is the lunchtime view on the second day of a strenuous three-day backpack led by Larry Hughes in the Weminuche Wilderness in southwest Colorado. The Rio Grande Chapter offers hikes of all different levels — difficulty is listed in the descriptions.

July-August-September hikes

Monday, July 16: Strenuous five-day backpack around the Maroon Bells near Aspen, Colo. Starting from the northern Maroon-Snowmass trailhead, we hike along Maroon-Snowmass trail to Snowmass Lake. Then we switch to the Geneva Lake trail, go over Trail Rider Pass and continue toward Geneva Lake. A mile or so before Geneva Lake, we will take the North Fork Cutoff Trail and then the North Fork Trail into Fravert Basin, over Frigid Air Pass to the Junction with the West Maroon Creek trail. Next it's up and over West Maroon Pass toward Crater Lake. At the far end of Crater Lake, we'll get back on the Maroon-Snowmass trail toward Buckskin Pass. About a mile before Buckskin, we take Willow Lake trail to Willow Lake. Finally we take East Snowmass trail over East Snowmass Pass back to Maroon-Snowmass trailhead. This a strenuous high-altitude trip; we go over five passes above 12,400 feet, about 38 miles with 10,500 feet of elevation gain and 10,500 feet of loss.

- Day 1: 8.25 miles, 2,500-foot gain, camping at Snowmass Lake.
- Day 2: 8.75 miles, 3100 feet gain, 2,100-foot loss, camping in Fravert Basin.
- Day 3: 7miles, 1,200-foot gain, 3,500-foot loss, camping near Crater Lake.
- Day 4: 5 miles, 2,600-foot gain, 800-foot loss, camping at Willow Lake.
- Day 5: 9 miles, 900-foot gain, 4,300-foot loss.

Contact Larry Hughes, lorenz.hughes@gmail.com, or the Northern Group's Meetup page.

Saturday, July 21: Easy local hike in Northern New Mexico, details to be determined due to forest closures, updates on our Meetup site or contact Alan Shapiro at nm5s@yahoo.com.

Sunday, July 22: Hop Canyon trails, Magdalena Mountains. We will hike to the ridge of the Magdalena Mountains on either of two trails leading up from Hop Canyon. The round-trip distance is about 4 miles and elevation gain is 1,800 to 2,000 feet. If participants are game, we'll continue along the ridge and down the other trail, for a total of 7.5 miles and 2450 feet of elevation gain; otherwise just retrace our steps. Good trail, nice views in all directions, often sign or sight of wildlife. Trailhead is accessible by car. Difficulty: intermediate. Contact Jim Nelson at jcnelson@gilanet.com or 575-854-2259.

Saturday, July 28: Easy local hike in



By Mary Katherine Ray

Baby birds like these little Kingbirds make a lot of noise when they are hungry. Listen for them and you may spot the nest. Even after leaving the nest, the parents often continue to offer food to offspring. Baby birds have a fleshy area on the sides of their bill called the 'baby gape' that helps direct the parents on where to put the food. You can see this in these two. As they age, the "gape" will slowly disappear.

Northern New Mexico, details to be determined due to forest closures. Updates on our Meetup site or contact Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Saturday, July 28: Moderate hike at 8 a.m. on the 10K Trail. Sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome. Start north on the 10K trail. About 5 miles round-trip and 750 foot elevation gain (9,400 to 10,100 feet). The trail goes to the summit of Sandia Crest where there are views of the city, and the continental divide. Return on the same trail. To RSVP and for additional information, contact Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@q.com.

Sunday, July 29: Moderate to strenuous hike to the TWA crash site; about 10 miles. 9:45 a.m. Call or email Odile de La Beaujardiere for details by Saturday, July 28: 505-433 4692; odile@pitot.org.

Saturday, Aug. 11, Easy local hike in Northern New Mexico, details to be determined due to forest closures. Updates on our Meetup site or contact Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Sunday, Aug. 12: Toolbox Spring trail, San Mateo Mountains. This trail connects

East and West Red Canyons, disconnected canyons that descend in opposite directions out of the San Mateos. We start at the east end of FR 478, which is reached from NM 52. Don't try to drive this FR in a passenger car; you need clearance to get across several incised streambeds, and four-wheel-drive or all-wheel-drive is advised on a couple of steep sections. It's best to camp at the trailhead the night before the hike, as it's a two-hour-plus drive from almost anywhere populated. The trail goes up and over a ridge at 7,800 feet and then descends to the east and eventually debouches in East Red. Round trip is 9 miles, 1,700-foot elevation gain. Difficulty: intermediate. Contact Jim Nelson at jcnelson@gilanet.com or 575-854-2259.

Saturday, Aug. 18, Easy local hike in Northern New Mexico; details to be determined due to forest closures. Updates on our Meetup site or contact Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Saturday, Sept. 1: Strenuous hike in the Sandias. Up Pinot trail, reach South-Peak, hike down Embudito Trail. Call or email Odile de La Beaujardiere for details

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About these hikes

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

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

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

Dogs permitted only if noted in write-up.

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

Our **weekly outings e-mail**, Sierra Trail Mix, provides outings updates plus useful outdoor information such as trail conditions. Send an email to Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS. You can also visit the Northern New Mexico Group Meetup page for updated outings: www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/.