Sierra Club Political Endorsements

The Sierra Club has endorsed the following candidates in New Mexico:

**President**
- Al Gore (D)
**U.S. Senate**
- Jeff Bingaman (D)
**Congress NM 1**
- John Kelly (D)
**Congress NM 3**
- Tom Udall (D)

**State Senate**

(District number in parentheses)
- Carlos Cisneros (D) (6)
- Brad Hays (D) (9)
- Janice Faste (D) (10)
- Dede Feldman (D) (13)
- Chuck McSorley (D) (16)
- Shannon Robinson (D) (17)
- Leonard Tassie (D) (22)
- Nancy Rodriguez (D) (24)
- Roman Mas (D) (25)

**State House of Representatives**

(Party affiliation in parentheses)
- Patterson (D) (5)
- Fred Lumm (D) (5)
- Mike Miera (D) (11)
- Miguel Garcia (D) (14)
- Raymond Sanchez (D) (15)
- Gal Bean (D) (18)
- Sheryl Williams Stapleton (D) (19)
- Jimmy Marcial (D) (21)
- Nancy Peacock (D) (23)
- Pauline Gubbels (R) (30)
- J. Paul Taylor (D) (33)
- Nick Salazar (D) (40)
- Max Coll (D) (47)
- Inez Mendoza (D) (51)
- Jeni Flores Alexander (D) (56)
- James Moran (D) (60)
- James Madalea (D) (65)
- W. Ken Martinez (D) (69)

**Santa Fe County Commissioner**

Paul Campos (D) (4)
Jack Sullivan (D) (5)

Supreme Court Appointees Could Threaten the Environment

Our next President — either Al Gore or George W. Bush — will almost certainly appoint several justices to the Supreme Court. Governor George W. Bush has publicly stated, in “Meet the Press” (9/21/99), that current Justice Antonin Scalia is his model for a Supreme Court Justice. Leading legal scholars consider Justice Scalia the most anti-environmental Justice ever to sit on the Supreme Court. Even other conservative Justices, such as Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, often disagree with Justice Scalia in environmental cases because of his failure to acknowledge scientific progress.

Your vote for Al Gore could mean the difference between a Supreme Court that endorses

See Court on Back Page

**Board Adopts New Grazing Policy**

by Barbara Johnson,
Council Delegate
and Grazing Committee Chair

The Board of Directors of the Sierra Club, at their annual meeting with the Council of Club Leaders September 23-24 in San Francisco, adopted a new policy on grazing on public lands (which is printed below), superseding the 1992 policy which had been in effect.

This was the culmination of a year-long effort to revitalize the 1992 policy.

A Grazing Task Force, under the direction of then-Board member Betsy Caines, was constituted in the fall of 1999 by the Conservation Governance Committee. Three proposed policies were circulated to the Chapters and Groups for input. After all comments were reviewed and revised, the Board adopts the following:

See Grazing on Page 11

**Why Is It So Hard?**

by Constance Baker

In early August, after over a week of intense negotiations, representatives from local, state, and federal governments, and environmentalists were able to agree on a plan to save the silvery minnow. But all the parties were able to agree on was a two-year plan to save the minnow this year. No one was satisfied.

Our State Engineer, James Turner, was concerned that the amount released to help the minnow was an "exaggerated use of water." More importantly, he is concerned that there just isn't enough water to "repeat this experiment" next year. (New Mexico August 3, 2000).

Given these statements come from the State Engineer, who has statutory authority for the State's water, we should all be concerned. This is one of many signs that we face a limited water supply now, not at some time off in the future, and we only got through this year because we were willing to draw on water that will be needed next year if drought conditions continue.

See Water on Page 4

**The Path We'd Like to Take**

by Ken Hughes

You are invited to attend a two-day workshop on December 12 & 13, 2000, to discuss how to reorient state highway and transportation department priorities to think beyond the pavement and become more community-friendly. The event will be held at Plaza Resolana in downtown Santa Fe, NM.

Meeting environmental concerns is a major challenge for state highway and transportation departments. Decades of building new highways has become addictive; the environmental consequences of this obsession are too many to be ignored:

-- Sprawl created by new or "improved" highways; forcing stand-alone subdivisions in the woods of our cities;
-- Spending on mass transit, bikeways and sidewalks is marginal;
-- Many highway projects are built without adequate environmental reviews or investigation of alternatives;

See Path on Page 7

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Sierra Club Structure

The Club has three structural levels. The National Board of Directors determines the overall direction of the Club. The National Organization is subdivided into Chapters, and each Chapter is further divided into Groups. One representative from each Chapter reports to the National Board through the Council of Club Leaders.

The largest part of the Chapter’s budget goes to the salary and expenses for Jennifer and a part-time lobbyist, followed by the printing and mailing of club newsletters.

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Non-member subscriptions at $100 per year are available. Send checks to Blair Brown, Treasurer, 22265 Wyoming NE, PMB 272, Albuquerque, NM 87112. Please allow 6 weeks for processing.

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Contributions are welcome from members. Email contributions preferred. Send to jbuchser@earthlink.net or mail to John Buchser, 223 N. Guadalupe #419, Santa Fe, NM 87501.

All submissions MUST be received by the 10th of the month prior to publication. (The Rio Grande Sierra is published in early January, March, May, July, September, and November.) Photos, artwork and poems are also welcome. Letters and articles are subject to abridgment.

Editorial practices as developed by the Grand Canyon Chapter and adopted by the Rio Grande Chapter will be used in production of the Rio Grande Sierra. Letters to the editor over 500 words will be edited for length or returned to the author for editing. Submissions of Rio Grande Chapter members will take precedence over other submissions.

Content of Group pages are the responsibility of the editor for that group and any policies that are in place from the applicable Group.

Contact editor for advertising policy and rates.

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Real Facts Run Counter To Tripp's Anti-minnow Campaign

Laurence Gibson

I am a violinist, orchestra conductor, and music educator by profession, and outdoors person, nat. hist., naturalist by avocation. After initial club activities in the sixties I dropped out until 1984 while raising children and career-building. Up 'til a few years ago mainly a backcountry hiker, I figured it was time to rejoin some of the clubs and the wilderness had given me when I rejoined the El Paso Group ExCom and took on the chair position. To point this main contribution has probably been to restore fiscal integrity, encourage collegiality, and make a difference on water issues here in the desert.

I see our great challenge as remaining effective despite our size. We have seen many would-be villains go to work for the numerous single-issue groups that we have spawned. These are the young people we need to rejuvenate our ranks. It seems to me they want to work where they can make a difference right away without fighting bureaucracy. Can a large, powerful giant like our club move quickly? What can we agree on enough issues, without compromising into mediocrity, to be effective, exciting, or even brilliant?

At the risk of losing your vote I must point out that living in the desert has intensified my feelings about preserving our public lands. I feel that the "vines are a changing." The extractive industries must go elsewhere and we need to grow our beef somewhere where there's more water.

John Buchser

We are fortunate here to have many wild places. Wilderness supports a wide diversity of life, as well as drawing tourists that benefit our economy. While the battle to protect these wild places will probably never end, the real threat to our environs is rapid human growth. The availability of water will ultimately dictate what this land can support.

For the next decade, there is still choice. We can leave a legacy of a dead and dying urban environment, or we can make wise choices, managing what water we have. I believe we must increase outreach efforts to our members and the public. This outreach must create a greater awareness of the limits and availability of water. We need to know what water we have. I believe we must increase outreach efforts to our members and the public. This outreach must create a greater awareness of the limits and availability of water. We need to know what water we have.

Ted Merritt

Siera Club member since 1981, past chair of the El Paso regional group. Member of the El Paso regional group ExCom for several terms, served on the Rio Grande ExCom for several terms, chair of the El Paso and Rio Grande inner city outings programs. Served several terms on the Southwest Regional Conservation Committee of the Sierra Club. Currently the treasurer of SWRCC. Member of the Southwest border ecocorrelation task force.

My major field of interest has been in inner city outings and in planning for and organizing for logging issues. I plan to continue to invest my time in these same areas. There are many threats to the environment and we must keep a vigilant eye on them to protect it. As a candidate for the Rio Grande chapter ExCom I would like to ask for your vote and help in doing so.
Turn on the Faucet - Water Comes Out!

by Susan Gorman

Those of us who live in Albuquerque just expect that plenty of high quality water will always come out of our faucets. The folks at the Water Utility work hard to ensure this. Their mission is to provide sustainable, quality water service in a reliable, responsive, and efficient manner. They manage Albuquerque’s complex system of 92 wells, 45 storage reservoirs and 2000 miles of pipes so that water is always there for us to use.

The basic policies that have guided the City of Albuquerque’s decision making about water have evolved gradually over the past 50 years. Gradual evolution has been possible because although the system grew in size, it remained basically the same: ground water has been our sole source of supply and, despite growth, the system provided only one kind of service to all customers. Moreover, Albuquerque was able to operate independently from neighboring jurisdictions, which represented small and geographically separate populations.

The Water Utility is now entering a more complex and challenging environment that requires reconsideration of previous policies and practices and the development of a new approach appropriate for the coming decades. Some of the key changes and issues face them are summarized below.

The changes that are creating a break from the past

- Our water sources are changing
- Many more people live here and population growth is continuing
- Customers demand a higher level of service
- The issues that affect water policy planning:
  - How important is it to be regional?
  - What is the proper role and timing of water service decisions in land-use decision making?
  - How should water policy address resource limitations?

Clearly, the Water Utility needs a new policy blueprint for the 21st century. So Tom Shoemaker and his staff at the Water Utility began the process of drafting such a blueprint two years ago. An extensive outreach and listening process took place to assure that varied interests were heard and to include the ideas and opinions of stakeholders from the entire region and beyond. Since May, an ad hoc Working Group of citizens representing a broad range of interests has been meeting with Shoemaker to provide additional input.

The result is a document entitled as The Fundamental Water Policies Statement (FWPS). “It is designed to serve as a statement of fundamental policies governing water service provision by the Water Utility. It defines basic policies that guide decision making and identifies the general nature of the efforts that the Water Utility must perform to provide reliable, customer-focused service” says Shoemaker.

Why is a Fundamental Water Policies Statement needed?

The members of the Working Group strongly believe that the establishment of such a policy framework is essential for the following reasons:

- The policies specifically address water-related issues which are vital to our future; our water resources require protection and efficient use for generations to come.
- The policies and their implementation help avoid decisions made in a crisis mode or without the proper framework and understanding of all the key issues.
- The policies address the importance of connecting land use and water service planning.
- The policies interface with planning efforts currently being considered in terms of how our community grows in the future.
- The policies will guide the decision-making of key elected officials in an orderly manner.
- The policies will provide a secure framework to manage, construct, and maintain the water service.
- The policies will insure that past practices and decisions are consolidated in a more orderly, manageable, and predictable way.
- The policies will create an accountability structure for insuring that required implementation steps are carried out in a timely manner.

The FWPS document will be presented to the Albuquerque Metropolitan Water and Waste Water Board in September. This new Board, elected by a Joint Power Agreement between the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County and the Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque in 1999, has been granted the authority to create water service policy.

Once the FWPS has been approved, it will guide the managers of the Water Utility in the operation and administration of the water system. It will also provide our elected officials with the guidance they need to make those tough decisions about our future. Forth most importantly, it will enable us, as citizens, to demand that our elected officials consider the health of the environment and the limits of the water supply as they make those tough decisions.

Albuquerque’s water policy planning has major implications for the environmental health and sustainability of the whole Middle Rio Grande region. The relationships between water policy and sprawl; the health of the river, its bosque and the critters that live there; the preservation of the grasslands in the valley and the basic health of all of us water drinkers is as clear as the water in that glass I just filled from my faucet.

Water pollution from traffic congestion is getting into river waterways, where it can poison animal and other aquatic life, shows research presented in the current issue of the journal “Environmental Science & Technology.” The study blames increased traffic from urban sprawl for high levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, in lakes and reservoirs around six metropolitan areas, including Washington, DC; New York; New York; Newark, New Jersey; Minneapolis; Minnea-

Dallas, Texas; and Seattle, Washington. Effects due to vehicle traffic included PAH concentrations in reservoir sediments up to 100 times greater than pre-urban conditions, said Peter Von Dras, lead author of the study from the U.S. Geological Survey, http://tuus-news.com/content/

Real facts from Page 3

Under the Rio Grande Compact, New Mexico had a water delivery obligation to other irrigators below Elephant Butte of more than 170,000 acre feet in 2000. Although supplemental water will likely carry 2000 deliveries to exceed that amount, New Mexico will be credited with any over-delivers, up to 200,000 acre feet.

Minnows Focus 2000 says: “We have the answer, but we still have a big problem. That is: the rivers won’t accept the solution.” Fact: When enough occurs, everyone has a problem. When, one by one, the creatures that depend upon an ecosystem like the Rio Grande begin to blink out everyone, ultimately, has a problem. When our traditional responses to these critical problems no longer work to correct, bold new approaches are called for. The Minnow didn’t cause this problem; the minnow is just telling us about the problem. Neither did the farmer cause the problem. But, the farmer must participate in the search for a solution.

Those who dig in deep to preserve a status quo that manifestly will not hold any longer are making a self-fulfilling prophecy of their "fish versus farmers" mantra. Those who promote falsehood and equiv-
Water, Minnows
And Private Property
by Jim Bailey

The impending periodic desiccation of the middle Rio Grande in New Mexico has focused our attention primarily upon two issues: preservation of the endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow and private water rights. These two representatives of the conflict greatly oversimplify what is involved and what is at stake.

Four hundred vertebrate species, mostly birds, were native to riparian and riparian habitats between Coors Landing and Elephant Butte. Almost half of the native vertebrates of New Mexico have occurred here. Seventeen of these species, including 10 fishes, are already gone. Another 14 are threatened or endangered. Much more than the silvery minnow is at stake. But the minnow is gone from about 95% of its former range that extended from here to Brownsville. It is federally listed as endangered. As such, it is the legal handler under the Endangered Species Act for some of its habitat. But that is a riparian corridor within New Mexico’s most urbanized corridor. Still, the minnow’s legal prominence should not obscure the immense biological resource that it represents.

Most of the water needed to maintain the minnow is already in the river. Sometimes this water flows in spurs when there may be more than can be stored in reservoirs. More often, it falls, often in huge amounts, to feed the river. As water is needed for domestic, urban, industrial, and agricultural uses. Agriculture claims most of this water. However, the minnow must survive more than 12 months every year, not just when downstream users call for water. And the minnow seems to need a spring pulse of higher water to stimulate its reproduction.

Farmers, primarily members of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, claim most of the water taken from the middle Rio Grande as their privately owned resource. History, the law and the State Engineer are on their side. But just how private is this resource? It wouldn’t be there at useful times were it not for the dams, diversions, tunnels, canals, and diversion structures that have been built, rebuilt, maintained and operated largely with millions of dollars of public money. I presume farmers have been grateful for this subsidy. However, the current attitude seems to be, “I demand this publicly funded subsidy be continued, for I now own the water.” Gratitude seems to have turned to uncompromising ungratefulness. Does the public gain any rights from its investment of public funds?

The Endangered Species Act requires that federal resources and activities may not be used in ways that jeopardize the future of threatened or endangered species. The dams and other water structures along the Rio Grande are mostly federal resources and their operations are mostly federal activities. This is the handle of the Act that is being used to save, hopefully, the silvery minnow. Asserting that the Act is being used to “steal” private property greatly oversimplifies the situation.

Albuquerque’s Water Strategy

by John M. Stemp

(Editor’s Note: Blair Brown and Susan Gornon have expressed the concern of the Central New Mexico Group about the City of Albuquerque’s plan to use the water from the San Juan-Chama diversion project to provide water to Albuquerque rate payers. The letter that follows is the response from John Stemp, manager of the Water Resources Division, City of Albuquerque Public Works Department. Brown and Gornon intend to continue the dialog with the City on behalf of the Sierra Club to ensure that our environmental resources are preserved and protected.)

Thank you for your letter of June 29, 2000 and our subsequent meeting of August 14, 2000. I will address the issue of the City’s intention to continue the discussion related to implementation of the Drinking Water Project in the City Council adopted Water Resources Management Strategy (strategy). I would like to schedule future meetings to discuss the issues in your letter and others that may arise. Please consider this letter an initial response to your letter.

The first issue that was raised related to the decision regarding the selection of a preferred alternative for diversion of the City’s San Juan-Chama water from the river. Based on your comments and participation at the Alternatives Workshop, the City has narrowed the diversion alternatives to the following: 1. Use of the existing surface water diversion owned and operated by the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District at Angostura; 2. Construction of a subsurface diversion that would be located somewhere between San Juan Pueblo and Montano Road; and 3. Construction of new surface water diversion with fish passage and screens also to be located between San Juan Pueblo and Montano Road. These alternatives will be published in a report that summarizes the discussion and comments received at the Alternatives Workshop and other comments received since that time.

The three diversion alternatives were narrowed from a list of nine diversion alternatives that were previously narrowed from the 32 alternatives analyzed in the strategy. Each of the alternatives will be combined with the selected water treatment plant site and several transmission alternatives for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS will be a comprehensive evaluation of the alternatives including, but not limited to, construction and operation impacts in the river and basin, effects on local groundwater in the Bosque. This is a complex analysis, the City will be developing a mitigation strategy to mitigate these effects. We hope to work with the Sierra Club during this process and encourage your input.

I think it is vital that the City’s position on the use and impacts of diverting our San Juan-Chama water be clearly understood. The City has invested more than $40 million dollars on the construction, operation and maintenance of the San Juan-Chama project. A portion of New Mexico’s share of the Colorado and Upper Colorado River Basin Compact water into the Rio Grande basin. The San Juan-Chama water is non-native water that is added to the Rio Grande system at Heron reservoir. The San Juan-Chama project would not be operating today if not for the efforts and funding by the City.

The City will call for the release of our imported San Juan-Chama water into the Rio Grande at Heron or Albuquerque reservoir. The San Juan-Chama water added to the system will then be conveyed in the Chama River and Rio Grande to Albuquerque where we will divert it and fully consume it. Our ratepayers are paying to have the imported San Juan-Chama water added to the system so that we can divert and use this water in Albuquerque. This non-native water is the foundation of providing a sustainable supply and stop the large ground water level declines that are being experienced now. Our current practice of sole reliance on ground water is having a tremendous impact on the aquifer and will ultimately lead to larger environmental consequences. The addition of the non-native San Juan-Chama water into the Rio Grande system has many advantages. First, the San Juan-Chama water can be added to the system will provide indirect benefits to the ecosystem. Second, by utilizing this non-native water to provide a sustainable supply, the City doesn’t have to aggressively look towards the existing native Rio Grande as the solution. Third, the City can work regionally towards maintaining a ground water drought reserve that would allow the City to cooperate with others during times of drought.

Thanks for this opportunity to respond to some of your concerns. The City is committed to implementing the strategy, but that is also committed to preserving and protecting our valuable environmental resources. I look forward to continue working towards that goal.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any additional questions or comments.

John M. Stemp III, K.E., Manager
Water Resources Division, PWD
City of Albuquerque

Rio Grande Sierran—Page 5
Headwaters Residents Watching Downstream

El Paso, TX—“There needs to be a different approach. If we’re not on it, it’s a ‘what’,” says Deanna Chilán, Development Coordinator for the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust. The issue is water management in the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin. Chilán is one of twenty experts speaking at the Uniting the Basin 2000 Congress being held November 9th through 11th at the Centro Cultural Universitario in Cd. Juarez, Chih, MX. The theme of the conference is “Find the Balance: Water and Growth in the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin” and is sponsored by the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin Coalition. The Rio Grande/Rio Bravo originates in Colorado in an 8000 square mile area known as the San Luis Valley, approximately the size of the state of Connecticut. The source of the water for the Rio Grande is rain, snow melt, and run-off. “We’re seeing less water this year,” observes Chilán. “Some of the alfalfa farmers are not getting second and third crops due to lack of water.” She believes different systems need to be set up for water leasing, water banking, and compensation for farmers. “Most of the ‘heat’ seems to happen in the lower and middle Rio Grandes,” says Kate Booth-Doyle, one of the co-chairs of the Coalition and also a resident of the San Luis Valley. “Yet most of us here locally believe the health of the river, both quality and quantity, starts at the headwaters.” Booth-Doyle moved to the Headwaters 30 years ago, from Benbrook, TX. She remembers taking vacations with her family to the Rio Grandes, including a 1955 trip to the newly opened Big Bend National Park. “I want Congress participants to find common ground, common challenges, fears, hopes; to recognize that no matter where we live in the Basin, we are alike,” says Booth-Doyle. The Coalition plans to publish a booklet of recommendations based on the Congress sessions and disseminating the booklet to communities along the Basin. The Congress opens the evening of November 9th with keynote speaker Ambassador Alberto Saiz dela of the Mexican Foreign Service. Ambassador Saiz dela is a well-known legal consultant and educator specializing in areas such as water law, sustainable coastal development, and land use planning. The panel topics being on Friday, November 10th, with population growth and land use trends; agricultural conservation and water use efficiency; ecosystem water needs; municipal water supply strategies; and sustainable water use programs. The Congress concludes on Saturday morning with participant input. SIMON’S comment is valid for us all. Further information on the Congress agenda and registration is available at the Coalition’s website, www.rioweb.org, or by calling the Coalition office at 915-522-0399 or calling the Congress coordinator at 505-546-0886.

[As of press time, financial assistance to attend the Unitig the Basin Congress was still available. Visit www.rioweb.org for details or call Bess.]

Care To Drive Some Coffin Nails Into Gene Engineered Food?

Philip Morris is a household name, and the Marlboro man is more famous yet, but did you know that the cigarette company is also a major seller of genetically engineered (GE) food? Sierra Club’s Genetic Engineering Committee has chosen to target what turns out to be the biggest packaged food company in the US, demanding that Kraft produce GE free food, or label it as genetically engineered if it does. Surveys have found that a majority of us are leery of GE ingredients, and labels would allow us to vote with our dollars. Sierra Club isn’t opposed to genetic engineering, but the Club has asked for a moratorium on GE crops, which use gene splicing techniques to transfer genes from viruses, bacteria, unrelated plant species and animals into food crops.

This is just the very beginning, but already 100 million acres have been planted. Genetic engineering is a radical technology whereby genes from one or many species can be introduced into totally unrelated species, which are then called transgenic. The fundamental blueprints of the natural world are being manipulated in this way and, in the case of crops, are being released into the environment without any precautions.

The results can’t be predicted and there may be no remedies for the consequences. GE crops create polles which can blow in the wind. Many of the crops contain their own pesticide, and the pollen of GE corn has been shown to kill monarch butterflies. Cross-pollination of neighboring organic farms results in a huge loss for organic farmers since the crop can no longer be regarded as organic. Other crops are Roundup Ready, designed to tolerate Monsanto’s herbicide. The crops then get sprayed with more Roundup and both the active and the inert ingredients are a cause for concern. Europe, and also Canada, bans rBGH (cow growth hormone) to treat dairy cows (it doesn’t turn them into Olympic sprinters, it makes them produce more milk). This is also a genetically engineered product. The major human health concern is that rBGH causes the milk to contain increased levels of ICF, a growth factor for prostate and breast cancers.

WILL YOU CAN DO? If you think it’s time to stop this experiment for which the American people never volunteered, here’s how you can help: 1) Contact Betsy Holden, CEO of Kraft Foods, Inc, 3 Lakes Drive, Northfield IL 60093. See sample letter below. 2) Call 1-800-847-1997 to say NO to Kraft’s genetically manipulated foods. 3) Send an email to the Kraft web site: www.kraft.com/email/email.html 4) Contact Laurel Hopwood, Chair, for a supply of postcards to distribute to your friends, family, and colleagues, to send to Kraft. Sample letter: I’m writing to ask you to remove genetically engineered (GE) products from your foods, just as I’m trying to convince from my table. Transgenic crops - crops which have been genetically manipulated with viral, bacterial, and animal genes - pose environmental risks and I believe shouldn’t be in our food supply until adequately tested and clearly labeled. Dairy products made with milk from rBGH treated cows are banned in many countries as possibly contributing to cancer. For our health and the environment, I ask that you move to GE free production.

You can find the Sierra Club’s Policy (and much more) on agricultural biotech on our website: www.sierranet.org/biotech. To subscribe to our Biotech Forum listserv, contact Jim Diamond at jim.diamond@sierranet.org. For more information, contact Laurel Hopwood, Chair, Genetic Engineering Committee: jhopwood@wiziv.org or 216-371-9779.

Republican environmentalists?

Yeah... right.

The national grassroots organization of Republicans for Environmental Protection

Think we’re kidding? Check us out!

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Deerfield IL 60015
847-949-0320
Energy & Environmental Justice

The Cost of Driving
by Andy Korn

The typical statistic quoted here is a car costing $6000 per year for a small to average size car. Since so many people are now driving SUV’s, there are more accurate statistics:

- Car ownership comprises a major share of American families’ budgets. The American Automobile Association (AAA) estimates that owning and operating a 1996 2-Wheel Drive Chevrolet Blazer sport utility vehicle for the typical 15,030 miles per year costs $7,467 per year (or 49.9 cents per mile). (1) Add 4-Wheel Drive and the cost rises. Incorporate the true cost of this gas-guzzler to society and the environment and the cost skyrocket.

- The hidden costs of driving in the U.S. amount to at least $384 billion per year, including $40 billion for road costs not covered by fees and tolls and $56 billion for health damage due to air pollution. (2) American motor vehicles consume fuel at the highly unsustainable rate of 155 billion gallons per year (3) and the Union of Concerned Scientists recently reported that the manufacture and use of consumers’ vehicles cause more environmental damage than any other single consumer spending category. (4) Oh well for cheap gasoline!

Path from Page 1
- Having no other choice than to drive leads to uncompensated damage to human health and mortality, quality of life, trees, crops, building surfaces, materials, and wildlife.

The workshop can help you:
1. See how you can influence local and regional roadway planning processes;
2. Understand the role of regional planning organizations in transportation projects;
3. Find out where highway department money comes from and what laws they must follow;
4. Gain a better understanding of how you can put to use? Clean Air Act, Title VI of Civil Rights Act, National Environmental Policy Act, TEA-21;
5. Formulate a project proposal and making sure it gets funded.

Speakers coming from throughout the nation will shed light on how solutions can be crafted to meet the issues. Confirmed speakers to date:
- Michael Reople, Environmental Defense, Washington DC;
- John Holtsclaw, Transportation Committee, Sierra Club, San Francisco;
- Ken Ryan, Transportation Chair, California Chapter, Sierra Club; and
- Hank Dittrich, Las Vegas, NM, founder, Surface Transportation Policy Project.

To register: Rio Grande Chapter, Sierra Club, 202 Central Ave. SE #101, Albuquerque NM 87102; 505-243-7767, sumex.field@proflight.net.

To reserve a room: Plaza Rosana has rooms set aside for the workshop at $90/night for double occupancy, and $70 for 1. Contact them at 800-821-5145 or www.plazarosana.com for information plus a map of downtown Santa Fe.

For more information: Ken Hughes, Transportation Chair, Rio Grande Chapter Sierra Club, 474-0050; lissencar@netscape.net

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Environmental Justice and Sprawl
by Tim Frank

The National Neighborhood Coalition has spearheaded the development of a set of principles that address the social justice issues associated with sprawl and smart growth. They did so in consultation with a broad array of groups including the Sierra Club, The Sierra Club’s Challenge to Sprawl Campaign and Environmental Justice Committees are both extremely pleased with the product.

Our committees recommend that Groups and Chapters and other Sierra Club entities discuss these principles and pass resolutions in the form of the sample we have included at the bottom of this memo. Please ask the entities you are involved with to act on this at their next opportunity, and let us know the results of your discussions.

You can direct your correspondence to Tim Frank or Kirsten Rupple:
tim.frank@sierraclub.org
kirsten@life.edu

These are not intended as a comprehensive set of smart growth principles. Instead, they are intended as a complement to the principles already espoused by groups like the Sierra Club. As we promote things like infill development and redevelopment, it is important that we be mindful of the potential impacts on low income communities. Poorly managed gentrification, for instance, will simply displace the poor. At the same time, new economic development in blighted areas is critically important.

We also need to encourage wealthier communities to accept their fair share of affordable housing. The common practice of excluding affordable housing puts a considerable strain on those who work in wealthier areas but have to commute from areas of concentrated poverty. Per a variety of reasons, exclusionary practices put a strain on the environment too (more congestion, loss of open space...). Over the last 50 years, sprawl has undermined social justice by bit bit as much as it has degraded the environment. Therein lies a tremendous opportunity. The very best responses to both the social and environmental problems associated with sprawl are those that solve both problems at once. These are the solutions we call smart growth.

Our adopting the principles enumerated below will send an important signal that the Sierra Club is dedicated to combating sprawl in a manner that advances social justice.

For a thorough analysis of the principles enumerated below, the NNC has prepared a concept paper that you can find at: <www.neighborhoodcoalition.org/fit20review.pdf>

If you have any questions or comments, please direct them to Kirsten or Tim. You will find their email addresses below. Please let us know if you pass a resolution on this issue. In addition, if you could identify someone from your chapter or group who is interested in the social justice issues associated with sprawl, please send us their contact information (if you have several names, go ahead and send them, but please do this right now).

SAMPLE RESOLUTION:
- Whereas environmental justice is a critical issue for the Club; and
- Whereas Sprawl and Smart Growth are issues powerfully intertwined with social justice; The Chapter (or Group) joins the Sierra Club’s National Challenge to Sprawl Campaign and Environmental Justice Committee in recommending that the Board of Directors adopt the Neighborhood Principles for Smart Growth.

Neighborhood Principles
For Smart Growth

1. All neighborhoods should have a fair share of the benefits as well as responsibilities of growth.

2. Growth should meet the economic, environmental, and social needs of low-income and other communities.

3. Low-income neighborhoods and communities of color should have a strong voice in decisions about growth.

4. Growth should not displace low-income residents or people of color in urban or rural areas from their homes, livelihoods, or communities.

5. Growth strategies should promote racial, economic, and ethnic integration.

6. Growth strategies should make use of the human, economic, and physical assets within communities.
Sky Islands Wildlands Network — The Future of Habitat Protection
by Roseanna Hanson, Sky Island Alliance and Edward Sullivan, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

In recent years, conservation biologists have come to general agreement that traditional land protection schemes fail short of providing adequate habitat for many ecosystems. When we just protect small “islands” of wild land, we do not account for larger ecosystem needs like migration patterns of larger animals like wolves, jaguar and bear. For this reason, conservation groups are now looking to protect intact landscapes — landscapes like the Sky Islands.

The Sky Island region is located at the crossroads of two great mountain chains — the tempestuous Rocky Mountains and the tropical Sierra Madre Occidental — and two great deserts — the Sonoran Desert and the Chihuahuan Desert. This special land stretches south from the forested highlands of central Arizona and New Mexico, through rolling grasslands and deserts, to the foothills of Mexico’s Sierra Madre.

Rising from this striking landscape are 40 mountain ranges separated from one another by seas of desert and grassland. These mountains “island ecosystems” provide a globally rare range of habitats, from tropical to temperate, where parrots live with black bears and jaguars mingle with wolves. The region supports 4,000 plant species, more than half of all the breeding birds in North America, and one of the world’s most diverse populations of reptiles and mammals.

Scientists now recognize that protecting isolated tracts of land is not enough to ensure the long-term health of species and ecosystems, especially where these ecosystems depend on regulation by far-ranging predators like bears, wolves, and jaguars.

The Sky Islands Wildlands Network is the first science-based conservation plan based on the principles of “rewilding,” a new strategy for protecting and restoring lands suffering from ecological wounds such as loss of species, degradation of watersheds, and fragmentation of landscapes. The plan is a prescription for healing those wounds by linking important core wilderness areas with landscape connections. The resulting wildlands network will provide the foundation for restoration of species and ecosystems.

The Sky Islands Wildlands Network also includes broad-based networks of conservation-minded people as key elements of its success: citizens, scientists, land managers, ranchers, hunters, and outdoor recreationists. Just as connecting landscapes preserves ecosystems, connecting people is key to the success of a conservation plan.

Dozens of people in the U.S. and Mexico worked on researching, mapping, and writing the Sky Islands Wildlands Network plan, including four organizations: The Wildlands Project, which is sponsoring over two dozen such plans across North America; Sky Island Alliance; New Mexico Wilderness Alliance; and Naturalia (Mexico).

Implementation of the plan will happen at many levels, from national policy to on-the-ground efforts of local citizens. The Sky Islands

See Sky Islands on Next Page
Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I would like to add a few words to Barbara Johnson’s coverage in the last issue of the article on the national awards, specifically the Danny and Ida Wicher Award for the Santa Fe Group’s Boy Hikes In The Santa Fe Alps. I want to give a big kudos to our Santa Fe outing leaders, whom we would never have had a liking for, and especially one sustained over 5 editions.

Just about every hike in the book, present and past editions, was written by an outing leader (many of whom, of course, have moved on to other pursuits, some of whom, sadly, have died). Every hike in the book that I have gone on I have found to be enjoyable. This is the result of the cooperation and the expertise of the leaders, someone who have their own experiences with others, and are willing to put the effort into carefully condensing this knowledge into a succinct trail description which is invaluable to someone who has never been there before.

In addition to the several names Barbara mentioned, I would like to add Ann Young, who first came up with the idea in 1981, and her loyal crew, including Bev Fuller, Bill Church and Ingelid Wolfsfeder, who laboriously typed out the whole book on a manual typewriter. And I would like to commend all of us on our long-time outings co-chair, Norbert Sorenson, who is not only responsible for the number of hikes in the book, but has checked out more of them than any one else, and been a major worker on the book committee.

Additionally I would like to clarify the figures of $18,000 which Barbara mentioned that the Gorge expects to receive each year from the current edition. This is the gross revenue. Each year we set aside an amount to cover the printing of the next editions. Estimating about $25,000 for the next printing, we are taking in $25,000 a year, assuming a life of 5 years for each edition. This means we are about $13,000 a year, a very impressive sum, and one the Group is pleased to have to put toward our various club efforts.

Norma McCulley, Book Committee member, and former outings chair of the Santa Fe Group

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Book Reviews

Anasazi America
by David E. Stuart
Published by UNM Press
review by Susan German

Take a ride along any major new road in your area and observe the width and scope of this grand exercise in road engineering and construction. Do the same for any new public buildings being built nearby. Then climb into a car and go up in a cozy chair with a copy of Anasazi America, anthropologist David Stuart’s epic story of the generations of Pueblo people who have lived in the Four Corners area over the past 10,000 years.

Dr. Stuart tells the Pueblo people’s story from hunting and gathering beginnings, through the advent of agriculture and national and regional organization. It is the story of the earliest inhabitants of the region, the Ancestral Puebloans, who had built the Mogollon and later the Chacoan pueblos. It is the story of the Mesa Verde culture, which flourished between 900 and 1200 A.D.

The United States is today the world’s third most populated nation in total population and the sixth fastest growing ahead of even Bangladesh and Mexico. It is this growth that led to the creation of the National Park Service, which seeks to preserve the beauty of the land for future generations. In this book, which covers the history of the National Park Service, we learn about the early settlers and the government’s role in preserving the natural beauty of the land.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in the history of the United States and the development of the National Park System. It is a well-written and informative book that will appeal to a wide range of readers. I give it my highest recommendation.
Management of Grazing

Grassbanks: An Idea Whose Time Has Arrived.

by Courtney White

A useful new tool for conservation has appeared. It is called a grassbank, a term coined by the ranchers of the justly well-known Malpais Banderillas Group, located in the foothills of New Mexico and southeastern Arizona. In fact, their pioneering of the grassbank on the Gray Ranch has lit a fire, so to speak, that is about to spread across the West.

The Malpais group used their grassbank to help prevent the break-up of private ranch lands into small units. Their model, applied to Northern New Mexico, has been used by The Conservation Fund and its partners to advance the ecological rehabilitation of hard-used public grazing lands.

The grassbank concept, as applied in northern New Mexico, is easy to grasp. It is a stretch of country, currently not being grazed by livestock, that is made available on a short-term basis to ranchers and their cattle so that the home range can be reseeded and restored ecologically.

But why is this such a novel concept? And what good does it do?

First and foremost, grassbanks alleviate ecological stresses on land without imposing economic penalties on the rancher. If the home range is suffering from the effects of prolonged drought, or overgrazing, or if it is being overwhelmed by an invasion of woody species (trees and shrubs) and must be thinned and burned to restore its natural health, then the short-term relief offered by a grassbank becomes a valuable resource.

It is a novel idea because the traditional response of public and private land managers is to fill up an empty ranch allotment with more cows. Until the Malpais Group came along, the idea of banking grass for beneficial use in the long-term was rarely contemplated. And the idea that grassbanks can be used to restore damaged or unhealthy ecosystems for the benefits of all species was truly novel.

But that is exactly what is happening today. Now the idea seems ready to spread rapidly.

A successful role model is the Valle Grandes grassbank, located on Rowe Mesa, forty-five miles east of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Developed and operated as part of a broad partnership that includes The Conservation Fund, Forest Service, Northern New Mexico Stockman’s Assn and the NMSU Cooperative Extension Service, the Valle Grandes grassbank has become a model of collaboration, good stewardship, and ecological restoration. As such, it has attracted the attention of public and private land managers across the country.

In 1997, conservationist and writer Bill deBoys convinced The Conservation Fund, a national environmental organization, to purchase a tract of deeded land on Rowe Mesa, which allowed the Fund to become the sole grazing permittee on the 36,000-acre Valle Grande grazing allotment within Santa Fe National Forest.

Simultaneously, Bill and other organized a collaborative effort among ranchers, Forest Service personnel, scientists, extension service agents, foundations, conservationists, and others to put a plan into action. It was a hard road, as he will testify today, mostly because of the lack of trust that has prevailed for so long in the grazing debate. Overcoming some of that distrust was perhaps the project’s greatest accomplishment.

The plan was a simple one: the grassbank would be offered to Forest Service grazing permittees from northern New Mexico who were willing to place their cattle on the Valle Grande for two or three years, while their home ground was restored ecologically, mostly through prescribed fire. The ranchers who participated in the grassbank had to accept the ecological goals of the Valle Grande Steering Committee, on which all four of the core-partnership organizations listed above were represented.

Of course, being public land, the Forest Service would have the last say.

The steering committee thought it might take seven years for the grassbank to reach capacity, mostly, again, because of the distrust issue. By the start of the second grazing season, however, it was full. In fact, in the first full cycle of applications to the grass bank, the steering committee received requests for three times as much grass as the gross bank could provide.

It was one of the reasons why the grassbank idea caught the attention of the Forest Service and the BLM across the West. Meanwhile, the restoration projects are going forward, albeit a bit more slowly than many of us would like (burning theory into practice has been difficult given the regulatory constraints under which the Forest Service operates). Fortunately, the recent rash of forest fires, not to mention the Cerro Grande disaster at Los Alamos, have not dampened everyone’s enthusiasm for the grassbank idea and the ideas it has inspired to our overgrown forests and rangelands.

And in one final bit of good news, all projects are being scientifically monitored with a new, quantitative and qualitative protocol developed by the researchers at the USDA’s Jornada Experimental Range.

The success of the Valle Grande grassbank, and its precedent on the Gray Ranch, have clearly demonstrated the utility of grassbanks for ecological and economic restoration. They show it to be not only a great model in theory, but one that works in the real world too. It is a practical tool; one that is not burdened by ideological pasturing, political agendas, or bumper-stickerism.

While others are busy pointing their fingers, the grassbank is busy growing grass, maintaining and restoring cultural and biological diversity, and solving problems. It is an idea here to stay.

To find out more, please consider attending a two-day conference entitled:

Grassbanks in the West: Challenges and Opportunities A Two-Day Conference of Ideas and Experience

Friday-Saturday, November 17-18, 2000

Sponsored by The Conservation Fund, The Quivira Coalition, the Malpais Banderillas Group, the Northern New Mexico Stockman’s Association, the United States Forest Service, and the NMSU Cooperative Extension Service.

FRIDAY [in the Firestone Theater, downtown]

8:30am Bill deBoys, Director of the Valle Grande Grassbank. A Grassbank Case Study: Can the Model Be Exported?

9:00am Panel One: Dr. Craig Allen, USGS, Bandelier Field Station; Bill Miller, rancher, Malpais Banderillas Group; Bruce Rumets, The Nature Conservancy; Ann Battista, USFS.

What are the background conditions - environmental, economic, political, and social - that suggest a grassbank as a tool to improve the health and productivity of range and forest land? How do you design a grassbank to respond to those conditions?

10:15-10:30am BREAK

10:30am Panel Two: Gerald Chacon, NMSU Cooperative Extension Service; Palesmon Martinez, Northern New Mexico Stockman’s Assoc.; Bart McGuire, City of Tucson; Owen Lopez, The McCune Foundation.

How do you organize a grassbank? How have effective partnerships been formed (and how can they be formed) among ranchers, agency personnel, donors, and conservationists? What are the essentials of land, agreements, money, people, laws, and public participation and how do they fit together into a whole?

NOON - LUNCH

11:50pm Dean Shelly, The Animas Foundation Afternoon Welcome

1:15pm Panel Three: High Traffic, The Quivira Coalition; Leonard Arenicco, Santa Fe Forest; Tim Herfett, EPA, Region Six; Bob Alexander, BLM, New Mexico Office (invited).

How do grassbanks meet multiple-use objectives? What regulatory and institutional obstacles might hamper their creation and operation? How can these obstacles be overcome? What new opportunities for public/private partnerships lie ahead?

2:45pm BREAK

3pm Panel Four: Ellie Towns, USFS, Supervisor, Region Thrice; Will Baines, The Conservation Fund; Dr. Kris Huvard, Supervisory Scientist, USDA, Jornada Experimental Range.

How do we maintain and measure grassbank success economically, ecologically, politically, and socially? Where are we headed from here?

4:15pm Ed Marston, publisher, High Country News. Summation

5pm Reception

7pm Dinner Event, featuring Wes Jackson, and Wendell Berry (a fund-raiser for the Quivira Coalition).

SATURDAY

8am-Noon - Tour of the Valle Grande Grassbank

We will meet at a central location in Santa Fe and carpool to the Valle Grande Grass Bank (located 45 miles east of town). The tour will be led by Bill deBoys.

For more information, contact Courtney White, at (505) 820-2544, or courtney@quiviracoalition.org.
Grazing Policy from Page 1

cultured and, those proposed policies were distilled into two: a "no grazing on public land" policy and a "reform grazing" policy.

Shortly before the annual meeting, a "compromise" policy was circulated by Bruce Hamilton, Conservation Director, and Board members Jennifer Fereinstein and Charlie Ogle. Discussion at the San Francisco meeting focused on this compromise policy. In the end, the proponents of the "no grazing" position and the "reform" position endorsed a revised version of the "compromise" policy. The Council of Club Leaders voted unanimously to endorse the revised "compromise" policy (with one abstention), and the Board of Directors also voted unanimously (with one abstention and one recusal) to adopt it. It was the general feeling of the Council and the Board that this was an example of activists willing to work together to address their differences and to produce something which, it was hoped, all could be comfortable with.

Federal Public Lands Grazing Policy

Goals

The primary goal of this Sierra Club federal public lands grazing policy is to protect and restore native biodiversity and achieve functional and self-sustaining ecosystems. The Sierra Club recognizes that the preponderance of scientific evidence documents that grazing by non-native species has led to severe and sometimes irreversible degradation of native ecosystems. Federal public lands belong to the American public and must be managed to maintain their long-term ecological integrity. In order to achieve our objectives, the Sierra Club advocates significant changes to current land management practices to correct the problem.

The following five points apply to all aspects of this policy:

1. Commercial grazing is not appropriate on Federal public lands except where it is shown by science that grazing is needed to achieve ecological objectives.

2. On federal public lands that were once grazed by large native herbivores the Sierra Club will seek, whenever feasible, the replacement of non-native grazing species (cattle, sheep, goats, etc.) with native grazers (within their historic range).

3. Where settlement or ownership patterns obstruct the reintroduction of native grazers on public lands, grazing operators should manage livestock towards the goal of maximum restoration of native plant and animal communities, water quality and other environmental goals. Meat or fiber production should not be a primary goal of such grazing and operators should be required to demonstrate a steadily improving range trend toward excellent ecological condition.

4. The Sierra Club recognizes that restrictions on grazing may have negative impacts on the cultural and economic stability of some communities. These impacts are apt to be most severe in Native American, minority and low-income communities. We are committed to developing partnerships with community members to identify and implement strategies to protect both traditional communities and the ecological integrity of public lands, without sacrificing either.

5. The Sierra Club is committed to helping ease the economic burdens on small family ranch operations with federal public lands allotments that would be affected by termination or reduction of their grazing leases.

Local entities are urged to advocate whatever incremental improvements occur most appropriate for specific sites within their jurisdiction up to and including an end to commercial grazing.

In addition to local-site specific efforts, the Club may seek federal legislation and regulations to curtail grazing and accomplish the other goals of this policy.

Nothing in this policy precludes the Sierra Club's full support for legislation and regulations to curtail grazing, and accomplish the other goals of this policy.

Sierra Club Strategy for Moving Towards our Goals for Public Lands Grazing

The Sierra Club believes that the following interim actions can facilitate the long term goal for eventual restoration of our federal public lands, and would support legislation or regulation where needed:

(a) Holders of grazing permits or leases shall be allowed to reduce utilization rates or rest or rotate lands without losing their permit or lease.

(b) If allotments become open for reallocation, they should be awarded by a competitive bidding system whereby a bidder who meets minimum bid requirements and proposes, in the grazing strategy, that will maximize biological preservation and recovery shall be awarded the grazing contract, even if that bidder proposes to reduce the allotment and manage it for other values, such as water quality.

(c) The managing agency should determine the amount of liquid, at renewal interval, that the allotment has made substantial progress towards the designated ecological and environmental quality goals. Permits or leases where such progress is not demonstrated should be terminated.

(d) The managing agency should establish, enforce, and enforce strict water quality standards for all streams on public grazing allotments. The managing agency should establish and enforce standards for protection and restoration of all public land riparian ecosystems. Where progress is not being made to fully meet these standards grazing should be terminated.

(e) The federal government should establish a Grasslands Restoration Bank to purchase open space and wildlife riparian easements on private grazing lands in primarily public land grazing watersheds where ecosystems are grazing dependent; or to buy the fee land from private ranchers in said or other areas where neither private nor public lands are suitable for grazing. Once these two highest priority needs have been largely met, this Bank could be used to subsidize the transition from non-native to native grazing species.

Internal Priorities for Immediate Action

Recognizing that changes to grazing policy will likely take a number of years to accomplish and that some areas of the public lands are more immediately threatened by destructive grazing practices than others, the Sierra Club has prioritized our efforts. As a first priority, the Sierra Club will work toward ending commercial grazing on federal public lands where one or more of the following circumstances exist:

- Lands that receive an annual precipitation of 12 inches or less or with xeric soils.

- Associated activities (e.g., water development, predator control, vegetation manipulation) are occurring in such a manner that native plant and animal species are significantly impacted.

- Grazing is causing degradation of habitat necessary for threatened, endangered or sensitive native plant and animal species.

- Grazing is causing significant degradation of water quality.

- The public land management agencies have insufficient funding, staff, and determination to create and administer monitoring systems that will provide reasonable assurance that adverse impacts will be minimized and opportunities for restoration taken advantage of.

This policy supersedes the Grazing on Public Lands Policy of September 12, 1992.

*** The Board directs the Conservation Governance Committee to see that a Grazing Committee is established to oversee implementation of this policy. This Committee should also adopt definitions and guidelines to accompany this policy.
SANTA FE GROUP MEETINGS

THE ENVIRONMENTAL AMBUSH: Global Warming and Human Health

Tuesday, November 21, 7 PM

What in the world is happening with the weather? For a hint, join us to hear:

Dr. Robert M. Bernstein, a Santa Fe endocrinologist, will review current and historical climate changes and the impact of human activities on global temperature. Dr. Bernstein will discuss the impact of global warming on human health, including increases in infectious diseases, water contamination, agricultural disruptions, and heat-related illness. He will also review possible solutions to ameliorate global warming.

This lecture given by our special guest is supported by a grant from Physicians for Social Responsibility.

The meeting will be held at the Unitarian Church
107 W. Barcelona St (between Galisteo and Don Gaspar).
All meetings, outings, and activities are FREE and open to the public.

REMEMBER TO VOTE
General elections will be held Tuesday, November 7
Your vote is critical to protecting our environment

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Ken Hughes and Barbara Johnson were pleased to be in San Francisco at the Sierra Club’s Annual Awards Banquet to pick up the Ida and Denny Wilcher Award for Excellence in Fundraising for the Santa Fe Group’s Day Hikes in the Santa Fe area. The Chapter received a Special Achievement Award for our Campaigns Committee. This was done with large contributions from the Santa Fe Group members Ken, Ed Moreno, and Barbara.

The Group is working on a couple of other reports to be published within the next six months. However, while we are clearly good in the publications arena, we don’t plan on forewarning grassroots activists. We have been actively involved in the political arena with the upcoming elections — endorsing candidates and disseminating information about the candidates’ voting records. We also plan on organizing for this important election.

We will also be gearing up for the next session of the New Mexico Legislature in January. We expect a report on how that session seems to be shaping up environmentally in the next Sierra Newsletter.

Eleanor Eisenmenger has been following development issues in the Santa Fe area and is actively recruiting volunteers for this important work. Anyone who is interested in attending City Council, County Commission, or other related land use meetings, reviewing plans, etc., please call Eleanor (820-6001). Please also consider attending the Transportation Conference that Ken Hughes has been organizing for the Chapter, December 4-5 at Plaza Residencias in Santa Fe. For more information, contact Ken Hughes, Transportation Chair, Rio Grande Chapter (474-0550)
eisenm@me.com

Also, John Bedwell has been diligently following water issues in northern New Mexico. The fruits of some of his labors are on view at the Water Pots web site sponsored by the City of Santa Fe. On the schedule on these pages and consider attending to learn more about water in your area.

GROUP AND CHAPTER ELECTIONS will be held in November and December. Due to changes in the Group and Chapter Bylaws, the ballots for the Santa Fe Group and the State Chapter elections will appear in the December issue of our bimonthly Flyer, News of the Santa Fe Group, which we expect you will receive by the end of November. LOOK FOR IT. Please VOTE in this election. Your vote is important.

HOLIDAY POT LUCK DINNER
Saturday, December 16, 6 - 9 PM
The Commons, 2300 West Alameda

There is a real treat in store at this year’s Holiday Party! Richard Bodner from the National Endowment for the Humanities’ Chautauqua Program will perform ‘Aldo Leopold: The Good Life — Wild Country, Conservation, and Community.” The sheer pleasure of nature’s beauty will come alive with “Aldo Leopold” as our wild-country guide. We will hear Leopold’s inspired Sand County words; learn to think like a mountain; and tip out on a ridge for a fresh look at where we are, how we got here, and where we are heading. Our exploration of “the good life” will draw a moving portrait of the developing conservationist and New Mexico’s own down-to-earth philosopher, from boyhood adventurer full of wonder to modern land prophet.

Please bring enough servings of one of the following to feed at least eight people: salads, cooked vegetables, casseroles, meat dishes, breads, appetizers, desserts, wine, beer, & fresh jaques. Ovens and refrigerators are available for warming or cooling items. All serving ware is provided.

Any questions, call Ken Hughes (474-0550) or Norma McCaflan (471-0005). The Commons is 2.3 miles west of St. Francis Drive at the corner of Camino Carlos Real — look for the big 2300 on the wall and turn left.

Santa Fe Group of the Sierra Club
621 Old Santa Fe Trail • Suite 10 • Plaza Desira • Santa Fe • New Mexico • 87501
955 - 983-2763

CONSERVATION CHAIR

Cliff Larsen

Recently I was appointed to the Resource Advisory Council (“RAC”) to the Bureau of Land Management in New Mexico. This 15-member body brings together environmentalists, resource users (ranchers, recreationists, etc.) and local governments to try to reach a consensus as to how the BLM might satisfy the many demands on its land holdings. The Rio Grande Chapter is fortunate to have three of its members as members of this group.

In mid-October the RAC met in Silver Springs for three days and focused on large-scale open pit mining and the protection of the Southernmost Willow Flycatcher. The topics were brought together, as essential Flycatcher habitat is owned by Phelps Dodge — one of the largest copper producers in the country and the second largest private employer in New Mexico. During this meeting, we also moved forward on recommendations to deal with the growing problem of land misuse by off-highway vehicles (OHVs). The BLM is expected to release its national OHV recommendations yet this year and we hope to have some impact on those decisions.

The next RAC meeting is planned for late January in Socorro, at which time we will focus on fire issues (controlled burning, tree thinning, etc.). One of the topics that I expect we will consider in future meetings is the mining of sand and gravel and other building materials on BLM land. This is particularly timely because of the growing number of concerns expressed about this topic throughout the state.

It is unfortunate that in New Mexico few counties have promulgated regulations regarding sand and gravel mining. Some that have, e.g. Rio Arriba County, are reluctant to apply regulations they are worked so hard to create. The result is that non-local interests can find their peaceful rural setting destroyed by a nearby mining operation. Agricultural zoning has been no protection to homeowners. The Rio Grande Chapter has decided, therefore, to make the creation of state-wide sand and gravel regulations a chapter priority.

We do not expect the creation of a new mining act to be an easy task. Unlike the existing mining act, we will have to try to control off-site impacts of an operation. Noise, dust, speeding gravel trucks, noxious weeds and the like are as much the issues as reclamation and water protection.

Our immediate task is to build a statewide network of volunteers. If you can help or suggest someone else who might be interested, please contact us.
SANTA FE GROUP OUTINGS

Sat  Sun  November 2009

4  Stephen Markowitz (983-2829)  Moderate Hike Eagle Traps in Bandelier. About eight miles, less than 500’ elevation gain, scrambling and a lot of off-trail. Leave 7:30 AM from Sierra Club Office or meet at Ponderosa Campground at 8:30 AM. Hike subject to change; call for update before 9 PM Nov. 3.


11  Art Jodid (982-3212)  Moderate Hike near Santa Fe. 5:30 PM.

12  Marcia Skillman (820-6554)  Strenuous Hike to Cobcroz volcanic peak north of bernallillo. About 5 miles, 1500’ elevation gain, but has vertical hand-and-foot rock climbing and exposure to falling. Must call for reservation.

18  Lionel Sorace (983-6715)  Moderate X-Country Ski Trip probably in Ski Basin or nearby Hikes with dogs if no snow—call to find out which. Leave 9:30 AM.

19  Norman McClean (471-0005)  Easy Hike to Cerro Pedalo southeast of Atalaya Mt, under five miles but steep, about 1200’ elevation gain. Dogs OK. Leave 9 AM.


26  David Bryant (1-555-737-3477)  Strenuous Hike to Ranco Viejo from Ski Basin area, 12 miles, 2800’ elevation gain. Alternate destination if snow. Leave 9 AM. Must call for reservation.

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

Sat  Sun  December

2  Bob McKenzie (687-3430)  Moderate Hike to Echo Rock, 6 miles RT, 1000’ elevation gain. Dogs allowed. Meet leader at 9 AM in White Rock at Smith’s Supermarket or carpool from Santa Fe at 8 AM. Call if not familiar with hike.

3  Jeff Jones (460-2389)  Easy Hike on Falls Trail (Bandelier). Kids welcome! Leave 9 AM.

9  Lionel Sorace (983-6715)  Moderate X-Country Ski Trip if snow is good, otherwise moderate hike. Leave 8 AM. Call for reservation.

10  Harsha Skillman (820-6664)  Exploratory Snowshoe Trip in Jemez — great chance for beginners to try out this exciting sport. Leave 9 AM. Call Marsha for details. Hike if no snow.

16  Toibe Orzech (820-2844)  Moderate Hike to Glorieta Guest Town. Dogs allowed. Leave 9 AM. Call for reservation.

17  Victor Ayes (438-9343)  Easy Hike to Cerrillos Hills. Meet at Villa Linda Mall parking lot in front of Wallgreens. Leave 9 AM.

23  Stephen Markowitz (983-2829)  Moderate Hike to Bayo Canyon/Ortowi Ruins. 8 miles RT, 900’ elevation gain. Mostly off-trail, some rough terrain. Leave 8:30 AM. Call for update on trail conditions.


30  Lionel Sorace (983-6715)  Moderate X-Country Ski Trip if there is snow. Otherwise, moderate hike. Leave 8 AM. Call for reservation.

31  Norbert Sprick (983-1962)  Moderate Hike in Caja del Rio, road conditions permitting. Rough terrain. Leave 8:30 AM. Call for reservation.

PLEASE ALWAYS CALL THE OUTINGS LEADER PRIOR TO A HIKE FOR CONFIRMATION AND DETAILS.

Most especially call the leader for X-country skiing outings, not only to find out about snow conditions, but to be sure that you have the proper equipment and conditioning.

Outings Notes: Unless otherwise noted, all outings leave from the Sierra Club Office, 101 Old Santa Fe Trail, "Pacheco" just south of Keres’ Grocery at the corner of Old SF Trail and Pacheco Dr. Depending on the weather, each hike should come prepared to pay for a mile to the door of the car in which they ride. Bring a lunch, sturdy hiking boots or shoes, and clothing suitable for the weather. Leader reserves the right to turn away anyone whose equipment or experience appears inadequate. Leader has right to alter destination or time of cancel trip due to weather, unanticipated conditions, or insufficient numbers of participants. Unaccompanied minors will require permission from parents or guardians to participate. Permission forms are available at the Sierra Club offices. Dogs permitted on hikes unless noted otherwise. Telephone leader for details of the individual hike.

THANKS TO ALL FOR A GOOD YARD SALE!!
Thank you to the many who donated goods for our yard sale on August 30. And thanks to those volunteers who helped out in pricing, tending tables, or ferrying items to the site: Debra Sandt, Kathy and Doug Fraser, Ned Sudborough, Bernard Prestkin, Carol Owens, Linda and John Bucher, Steve Markowitz, Bob McKenzie, and Norma McClean. A special thank you to Pastor Rime and his wife Joyce for allowing us to use the spacious parking lot at their Lutheran Church of the Servant on Rodeo Road for the sale.

GROUP COMMITTEE MEETING DATES
Group Executive Committee: Group Conservation Committee:
Tuesday, December 4, 6:30 PM Tuesday, November 29, 7, 7 PM
Tuesday, January 2, 6:30 PM Tuesday, December 19, 7 PM
Water Partners: John Bucher’s house:
Monday, November 13, 6:30 PM
Monday, December 11, 6:30 PM

F SANTA FE GROUP OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS
Chair — Doug Fraser * 474-7615 / 662-4140 fax
Vice-Chair — Barbara Johnson * 460-4933 lauli@zcom.org
Secretary/Treasurer — Lionel Sorace 983-0715

Gwen Wardwell * 438-3060 elomali@earthlink.net
Patricia Consoli-Susan Martin * 983-5050 smartin@bou.edu
Membership — Norma McClean * 471-0005 narclean@MSN.com
Newsletter/Publicity — Kay Carton 982-9326 kevintagore@earthlink.net
Phone Tree — Dee Sandt 455-3055
Chapter Rep — Doug Fraser * 474-7615
Outings — Norbert Sprick * 983-0715
Toibe Orzech 820-2844 arml@zcom.org

Conservation — Cliff tenHoff 460-2128 dyan@comcast.net
Mining — Cliff Lassen* 460-2128
Water-John Bucher* 820-0003 jbucher@earthlink.net
National Park-Country White* 983-5050 whitewl@bou.edu
Rangelands-Roger Peterson 983-7539 rogue@out.com
Sustainable-Bob Andrews* 465-4935 lauli@zcom.org
SF Nature —Forest-Greg Polatz 982-7030
Carmen Natl Forest —George Groenin 982-1024
Arlund Outings — Norma McClean * 471-0005 rmclean@MSN.com
Growth—Eleonor Eiseman * 320-6441

* Members of the SF Group Executive Committee

Rio Grande Sierran — Page 13
Vote! Vote! Vote!

"George W. Bush speaking on the environment is like Joseph Stalin talking about human rights."

—United States Senator Harry Reid responding to the gevna's call for "conscientious conservationism"

Senator Reid’s gut reaction to "the gevna's" conservation ethic should be a wake-up call for Sierras. Senator Reid is far from uncompromising in his own environmental beliefs; thus, the intensity of even his fear of an administration led by "the gevna" clearly demonstrates that we truly are facing the devil this election year.

The Sierra Club has endorsed Al Gore nationally and the Central NM Group has endorsed John Kelly in our state. We absolutely must get to the polls on election day and put votes behind those endorsements.

We are also facing chapter and group elections. Chapter nominations and the chapter ballot are elsewhere in this issue. Meanwhile, Cecily Vix, Ed Sullivan, and Richard Barish have nominated five (5) candidates for our group excom, specifically Steve Capra, Kellie Goodreau, Matt Lasek, Jay Morrow, and Jim O'Donnell. Statements are provided below and the group ballot is on the opposite page. You are asked to vote for no more than three (3) candidates. Fill in your name, address, and group ballot # (the eight digit number on your mailing label), and mail the ballot to Richard Barish, 1203 Anderson SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108. Please do not include this ballot with the chapter ballot.

**KELLIE GOODRAU:**
I view the Sierra Club as vitally important to preserving our state's wilderness and to keeping an environmental voice in the community at large. I am currently majoring in Conservation Biology at UNM and have spent the past several years volunteering with the Sierra Club and the National Parks, spending my free time hiking and camping throughout the West. I feel strongly about protecting wilderness in our state, which in my opinion New Mexico is clearly lacking, and about working towards a more sustainable Río Grande watershed. My husband and I recently bought a home in Albuquerque and look forward to becoming a stronger part of this wonderful community. I hope to work hard for you as a member of the Central NM Group Excom.

**MATT LASEK:**
It appears that we hadn’t received Matt’s statement by our printing deadline; however, he has been active with a group known as Citizens Action to Clean Up Sandia Labs.

**JAY MORROW:**
I have many years in the fire; but, this iron would be an opportunity for me to give a little back to the environmental movement that has given plenty to me. I work in the solid waste industry as a waste reduction professional. Everyday, my work brings me in contact with some fine folks whose passion in life seems to be resource conservation and environmental protection. I am currently serving as waste reduction issue chair and President of the Board of the New Mexico Recycling Coalition and would like to be part of the Central NM Group Excom. I think I could add to the mix and maybe help fight a fire under our membership.

**JIM O’DONNELL:**
I feel that the Sierra Club has the potential to positively impact the environmental landscape of the state. I have worked as a wilderness activist and organizer in New Mexico for several years, am a native of this area and know it well, will soon graduate from UNM with a master's degree in Natural Resource Planning, and have worked with local communities on landsape restoration and ecological health monitoring. I am deeply committed to wilderness and endangered species protection. I feel the Río Grande watershed is endangered and that we must work towards its restoration. I feel I would be a valuable addition to the Group Excom.

As a final note, I have reached a stage in my life in which, overloaded with commitments, I must select the most productive use of every last bit of my time and energy. Thus, with this election, I must reluctantly relinquish my position on the excom and the next issue of the newsletter will have a bit of a new look as well. Good luck to all of you and remember that, if we expect that people more committed to the environment than Al Gore or John Kerry are going to be elected this year, we will be kidding ourselves. If we fail to go to the polls or fail to vote for Al and John, we will be failing ourselves.
**THE GROUP BALLOT...**

Check the box to indicate your vote.

Nominated by the Committee:

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<td>Steve Capra</td>
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<td>Kellie Goudreau</td>
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<td>Matt Lasek</td>
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<td>Jay Morrow</td>
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<td>Jim O'Donnell</td>
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**SPACE FOR WRITE-IN CANDIDATES:**

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**Central New Mexico Group News**

**OUTINGS...**

Remember: the free Outings E-mail Service includes each subscriber on the list receives notification of any and all impromptu hikes. Subscribers are also urged to submit their own plans and ideas for outings as well. Contact Rick Hurley via email or phone to be added. Please be advised, however, that impromptu events, those not published in the newsletter, will, in accordance with club policy, be considered non-sanctioned events.

**Sat Nov 26**

San Miguel Ruins

Contact Rick Hurley by Tuesday, Nov 21st for meeting time and place. Hike: 6 miles RT on trail, 4 miles RT off trail. Driver: 120 miles RT. Visit some Aztec ruins just north of Cochiti Pueblo, a nice canyon, and maybe a waterfall along the way. Dress for weather. Bring boots, water, and lunch.

**Sun Dec 10**

Cuba Hogback/Artifact Search

Contact Rick Hurley for meeting time and place. Hike: 6-8 miles, all off trail, easy. Elevation: 500’. Driver: 160 miles RT. Forest service land near the "old road" to Cuba contains an interesting hogback with near vertical uplifts and rock gardens ~2 miles. After lunch, we will hike across the road to a nameless tract of BLM land and look for hoodoos and artifacts (4-5 miles). Dress for weather. Bring boots, water, and lunch.

**Sat Dec 16**

Monthly "Albuquerque" Hike: Contact Rick Hurley, for meeting time and place. Hike: 4-8 miles, slow pace. Driver: 40 miles RT maximum. Starting in December, I will do a local hike near Albuquerque each month, aimed at half day outings. Possibilities include the Ely of Canyon, Juan Tabo or Del Agua Canyon in the Sandias, Petroglyph NM, or the Volcano. Sleep in, meet late, and grab a bite afterwards.

Tom Petencin will also be leading five Desert Exploratory Hikes over the next couple of months. These unique hikes will visit some of New Mexico's most beautiful landscapes hidden in its desert places. Strangely eroded and colorful rock formations, badlands, precipitous cliffs, outstanding vistas, mysterious narrow and winding canyons, archaeological sites, petrified forests and other fossils, historic inscriptions, stone tools, pottery, pictographs, and petroglyphs are some of the discoveries that have been made on Tom's Desert Exploratory Hikes in the past.

These hikes are not physically difficult, but will require a sense of adventure on the part of the participants. There will rarely be a trail and the route will be very rocky and uneven at times; sometimes scrambling over rock surfaces [non-technical climbing] and walking narrow ledges, although this is quite often optional. Typical distance traveled is between 4 and 8 miles and we usually gain less than 1000' of elevation.

The dates for these hikes are Nov 4, 11, and 18; all Saturdays and Dec 3 and 17; both Sundays. Contact Tom Petencin at 258-1497 or tompestes@uno.com as early as the Wednesday before the hike for specific hike information, location, and meeting time. Meeting times will vary from 8:30am to 10:00am. The meeting place will always be the Smith's at Carlisle and Menaul, nearest to Carlisle.

The Desert Exploratory Hikes will be joint outings with OAFS [Outdoor Adventures for Singles].

For more information on what is happening in the Sierra Club, locally or nationally, you can subscribe to the SierraNews e-mail list through John Buchser at jbuchser@earthlink.net or you can visit the Sierra Club website at www.sierrclub.org.

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Rio Grande Sierra—Page 15
A Short History of Water in El Paso
by Leon Metz

Thanks to writer and historian Metz for permission to print his commentary.

As this column is being written, a front-page headline of the El Paso Times states: “Battle for Water Intensifies.” And the battle really is on. During the next 20 years, and perhaps beyond, El Pasoans are going to read a lot of headlines similar to this. I suspect we are going to see more and more battles (El Paso and Juárez) as frequent, reluctant guests on the national evening news, and being cited as bad examples of cities that did not know when to pull the plug on growth.

The ancient Indians generally had sufficient water. It was true by our standards, but it helped them survive to old age, which was around 30. The early settlers also worried about supply as well as quality. Thus every man in El Paso took his yardly turn at cleaning the irrigation ditches...which is where the drinking water usually came from. We also didn’t have yards or grass. Except for a couple of parks, such green benefits during those years would have been an unbelievable waste of resources.

Most of our early drinking water came in barrels from the river or the ditches. Later we bought it off Dashing Wagon Plying the streets. Until then we thought all water tasted awful.

Farms in those days were not so much farms as orchards: peaches, nectarines, etc. Furthermore, the river twisted and turned toward the Golf of California, and thus the international boundary and creating a water-wasting bread swatch of swamp and shanties.

A 1905 treaty erased these curves, and similar actions in New Mexico and Colorado created a Rio Grande as little more than a long ditch from northern Colorado to the Gulf. Ranching as we now know it ushered in an irrigation become as simple as gouging out a canion. In 1905, we signed an unequal (for Mexico) water-sharing agreement. Elephant Butte Dam opened around 1915. In 1932 we signed the Pacifica Treaty. The San Gabriel Project went into effect in 1936, Caballar Dam opened. All these agreements and projects made modern farming what it is today. It brought unexcelled prosperity to the El Paso Southwest. It has also brought to our present perilous water position.

Realizing the occasional survivability of the Rio Grande, we drilled and found some pretty good water in the Hueco Butson. Even though we suspected it wouldn’t last forever, the optimist in us whispered “look and ye will find.” The optimist made us believe that our water supply - divided between the ground, the occasional rainfall and the Rio Grande, plus a few high spots- is like those from Dell City would give us an everlasting water supply.

We were wrong. All of these water outlets permitted El Paso and Juárez to grow from a couple of muddling border towns into the huge bordermetropots that we are now.

That’s the upside.

The downside is that our two cities, in reaching for greatness, have stretched water capabilities to the limit. While the experts have done miracles, water is not a rubber band. As a resource, it’s capacity of miraculous things, but forever sustaining farms, plus a steady increasing population and a wider industrial base are not three of them.

Now is the time to pray for more water because water will only encourage more growth. So pipelines to the Mississippi, or icebergs sowed to Southern California, or massive snowfalls in the Rockies are not answers.

They will merely shift the day of reckoning onto the next generation. Instead, now is the time to realize that life has limitations, and in the Southwest, water is one of them.

We either adjust and get out, or we move.

Sierra Club - El Paso Regional Group Directory (Area Code 915)

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<th>Executive Committee</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
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<td>Shirley Phillips: 72-6503</td>
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<td>Office: 634-3011</td>
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<td>Forest Organizer</td>
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<td>Franklin Mountains</td>
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| Grazing | Ted Metz: 852-3011 | tmertig@earthlink.net |
| Inner City Outings | Ted Metz: 852-3011 | tmertig@earthlink.net |
| Membership | Ted Metz: 852-3011 | tmertig@earthlink.net |
| Membership | Ted Metz: 852-3011 | tmertig@earthlink.net |
| MUIR Mailing List | Laurence Gibson: 594-7342 | lgibson@utep.edu |
| Outings | Ted Metz: 852-3011 | tmertig@earthlink.net |
| Programs Open | Jamie Newlin: 584-1471 | chaeurro@juno.com |
| Web Master | Terry Sunday: 584-9301 | sundayt@zianet.com |
Candidates Nominated for El Paso Ex Com

The candidates for the Executive Committee of the El Paso Regional Group of the Sierra Club have been named. Lawrence Gibson, Shirley Phillips, Janis Newsome and Ted Merling are all running for re-election. John Walton has also declined as a candidate. Four tests will be filled.

Balloons for the local election are scheduled to be mailed on November 13. The last day to return ballots is December 31. Ballots will be counted on January 13, 2001, at 6:00 PM at Jason's Restaurant, 1135 Airway in El Paso. All members are invited to attend.

ICO News
by Mary Lou Parker

ICO Hikes in Moonlight and Rides among the Chiles

Moonlight Madness
It wasn't Halloween yet, but an eerie feeling enveloped the six Inner City Outing (ICO) participants on Sep 13 as they descended from Castaño Peak by the light of the full moon. The Franklin Mountains escarpment was led by Richard Rhoder with Life Management Center (LMC) staffers Javier Loyola, Ivan Veloz, Laura Nunez and volunteer Ian Haasen and two young women. They ascended by way of the Trail of a Thousand Steps and came down the "C" road. Richard reported they were "practically giddy" with the thrill of seeing the lights of El Paso and Juarez and with the freedom of being at the top of the city.

Bicycling Event
The Chile Pepper Challenge on Sep 24 in the Rio Grande Valley was the culmination of a summer of training rides every Monday morning. Three youths and Mary Lou Parker rode a half mile century (52 miles) while neophyte rider Laura came in at a quarter century metric. Richard and Ivan pushed harder, gaining 55 miles on the Upper Valley route through cotton fields, cacti fields, pecan groves and the Rio Grande. One youth gained the distinction of being the youngest to finish the 100-mile ride. He was accompanied by adult volunteer Kevin Sylvester, but he left Kevin in a cloud of dust after a mile. Kevin had the distinction of being the last person to make it back on that century route. His arrival caused a round of applause and invitations to "take a victory lap" which he declined, preferring a chair to his less-than-comfortable bicycle seat after so many miles. Another round of applause is due Lu Apple for her diligent sag wagon service.

Hiking to the Caves
The next weekend, Richard, Ivan, Brevin Allen, and two adult volunteers climbed with eight youths to Azaez Caves, traversed Mondy Gap, and visited Cottonwood Spring in the Franklin Mountains. Although the hike was less than five miles, the group played games, investigated reptiles (both alive and dead), and found a few cactus spines to make the event all day affair. Cottonwood Spring was still enough for a contrast to the surrounding desert, landscape, with green grass, little waterfalls and large trees, that it was a wonderful lesson on how water changes the ecology of the region.

Upcoming Meeting
The Steering Committee of ICO will meet at 6:30 PM, Nov 7, at Life Management Center, 2nd Floor, 8329 Vicente Blvd. Anyone who wishes to help introduce youths to the wilderness and environmental education is welcome. Contact Ted Merling, chair, at 832-3011.

Outings (Area Code 915)

Nov 11-12: Full Moon Backpack
Place: White Sands National Monument
Class: Easy
Length: 2 miles
Elevation gain: None
Leader: Lawrence Gibson: 594-7342 (21)
Here is an easy backpack quite suitable for beginners. Most of us have visited the White Sands by day or even attended the evening lecture at full moon, but how many of us have slept out in the dunes under the full moon? It has been years since we last explored this country. The White Sands National Monument staff advises arriving as early as possible after noon to secure one of the ten backcountry sites. With six people per site and a quarter mile between sites we should be able to find roominess and space, too.

Nov 18-19: Bud's Hole Backpack
Place: Gila Wilderness
Class: Moderate
Length: 120 miles
Elevation gain: 800 feet
Leader: Robin Winkendon: 323-5645 (leave message)
In western parlance a hole can be anything from a huge verdant plain with water like Jackson Hole's Snake River to a more intimate corner where a river or creek takes a sharp turn, creating deep pools in a canyon. This hike follows direct access to one of the less-traveled areas of our beloved Gila. We will depart El Paso Friday afternoon and drive to the trailhead to car camp. On Saturday, we will hike trails 153 and 189 to Bud's Hole on Mogollon Creek. Trail 153, the Seventyfour Mountain Trail, is one of the most scenic in the Gila Wilderness, offering fine views of Shelley Peak, Mogollon Peak, and Lookout Mountain. At mile 5.4, the trail drops to a small saddle and the junction with trail 189, which we will follow into the hole. Our campsite will be near water. Nighttime temperatures may be below freezing. Come enjoy a pleasant autumn weekend in a remote corner of the Gila Wilderness.

Nov 26: B-36 Crash Site Day Hike
Place: Franklin Mountains State Park
Class: Moderate
Length: 2 miles
Elevation gain: 1000 feet
Leader: Terry Sunday: 594-9301 (21)
December 11, 1953 was cloudy in El Paso, with intermittent snow showers. A low overcast hid the upper slopes of the Franklin Mountains as a giant ten-engined Strategic Air Command B-36D bomber approached to land at Biggs Field. Tragetically, due to a navigational error, the aircraft was west of the mountains, rather than east, as it descended in the clouds. We'll never know the final split second before the huge bomber hit unyielding granite a few hundred feet below the ridge. Those were no survivors. The Air Force quickly cleared evidence of the wreckage from the crash site, but some parts remain, including propellers, jet engines and landing gear. Join us for this first-time-ever hike to the site. It's a steep, rugged off-trail scramble up a rocky gully, so wear good boots and be prepared to get scratched and scared. Participation is limited and hiking experience is required. Call early to reserve a space.

Mar 10-23(?): Bright Angel/Tonto/Hermit Trail Loop Backpack
Place: South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona
Class: Strenuous
Length: 244 miles
Elevation loss: 1450 feet
Leader: Robin Winkendon: 323-5645 (leave message)
In March 1995, an intergroup project from the El Paso Sierra Club set out to hike this challenging route, but were thwarted by torrential rains that washed out the Bright Angel Trail, Indian Gardens Campsite, and broke the main water pipeline carrying water to the South Rim. In March 2001, an equally intergroup group will attempt this challenging route again, hiking in the opposite direction. This trip will be a 5 day backpack trip, spending 4 nights in the Grand Canyon at different backcountry campsites. Campsites will be near water sources on each night but none. On the second day of the backpack, participants must be able to carry up to 2 gallons of water. Participants must be experienced backpackers, familiar with the challenges of desert backpacking and carrying sufficient water for the night and next day. Participants must be willing to contribute $20 to the cost of the non-refundable backcountry permit. The dates of this trip may change based on which permit is issued. Reservations are required immediately.

Rio Grande Sierran—Page 17
Rio Grande Update

Several projects are underway or pending that could have a major effect on the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico and west Texas. Here’s an update.

El Paso-Las Cruces Regional Water Project:
damn the river, full speed ahead

This project (also the “El Paso pipeline”) is almost a done deal, which is a mixed blessing for the river. An 800-page draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the project was released in April, followed by a 60-day public comment period.

Despite complaints from SWEC and others that 60 days was not enough time for more measured and comprehensive technical review, no extension was granted, however, and a hastily organized public meeting held, for the residents of the Hatch, New Mexico area, who were made aware that they learned that a water treatment plant would be built on some local farmstead as part of the project.

Thankfully, the pipeline idea is dead (but like Phoenix, could rise from the ashes to become a blight on the landscape). The new proposal would use the river instead of a pipeline to convey water (now there’s an idea!). In the process it would entrench year-round flows between Caballo Dam and Anthony, Texas—the site of a new water treatment plant. Although the resulting loss of shoal-dwelling habitat is a concern, the restoration of winter flows through this reach is welcome.

The bad news is that the project would reduce flows in the Rio Grande below El Paso substantially (by 18-20 percent, according to the project DEIS). The river below El Paso desperately needs more water, not less, so in this sense the project would be a step in the wrong direction. Incidentally, the DEIS does not acknowledge the depletion of flows in the river as a significant impact.

The release of a final EIS, scheduled for September, has been delayed by action from an unexpected quarter. The Tiguan Indians of I pela del Sur Pueblo filed a lawsuit to halt the project. They felt they had not been adequately consulted, and were also concerned about the impact of the project on flows in a stretch of the river below El Paso used for ceremonial purposes.

IBWC is meeting privately with the Tiguan to resolve these issues, and expects a final EIS to be released in late November, with a final record of decision due by the year’s end. Whether the final EIS will address the issues raised by SWEC and other river advocates remains to be seen. More lawsuits could be in the works.

A Bigger Box for IBWC

Meanwhile, IBWC is preparing another environmental impact statement, this one on its management of the river in southern New Mexico. (Never one to hide behind euphemisms, the IBWC refers to this stretch of river as the “Canalization Project.”) The IBWC has hired Parsons Engineering from Austin, Texas, to analyze the impacts of IBWC’s moving, dredging, grazing and levee maintenance and other management activities on the environment.

The EIS will also examine alternative approaches to providing flood protection and water delivery that are less destructive and more compatible with river restoration, such as moving levees further from the river, entering into cooperative agreements with adjacent landowners, and even acquiring additional right-of-way.

The EIS process could be the most significant opportunity for greater restoration of the Rio Grande yet. Already, Parson’s has identified numerous sites where aquatic and riparian restoration projects could be undertaken without compromising IBWC’s mission. Unfortunately, IBWC has hinted that it’s preference is to continue doing none of the same, only doing those “enhancement” projects that can be easily accommodated on IBWC’s existing right-of-way between the levees, i.e. continuing to think “inside the box.”

The problem with this approach is that it avoids dealing with a fundamental impediment to restoring the Rio Grande to ecological health: a floodplain that has been artificially narrowed from several miles in width to a few hundred yards between levees. The Boundary Commission has to find ways to widen that floodplain if there is any hope of restoring the diversity of aquatic habitats—and species—common to the Rio Grande before the agency’s undated legislators in the 1970s.

The process has a long ways to go. Alternatives are not scheduled to be finalized until next January, and the DEIS won’t be released until the Fall. Determined participation in the process by river advocates is needed. SWEC and the Alliance for the Rio Grande Heritage, of which both SWEC and the Rio Grande Chapter are members, intend to make participation in this process a very high priority.

Stop before they run us up

IBWC holds the key to restoring habitats along the river, but another federal agency, the Bureau of Reclamation, controls the water. Ever since Elephant Butte Dam was completed in 1916 the Bureau has managed the timing and amount of flows to ensure downstream irrigation needs in southern New Mexico and west Texas as part of the Rio Grande Project.

The Bureau sets dam releases and essentially turns the river off every winter because farmers don’t need or want water delivered between October and February. The Bureau’s decision to dry up the river, year after year after year, has been devastating to the river ecosystem, yet it has never considered other ways of doing business as required by federal law. Now, for the first time, the Bureau is reviewing the totality of its activities in the upper Rio Grande Basin through a process known as the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review (URGOWPS). This review will evaluate environmental impacts of the agency’s actions and determine how the Bureau and other agencies can use their existing water operation authorities to help meet the water needs of all users, including endangered species.

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The Log–So. New Mexico Group News

Sounds great, except that the Bureau won’t be doing it for the river below Caballo (except with respect to flood control, a relatively minor part of its activities). The reason? The Bureau claims that litigation with which it is involved prevents consideration and even public discussion of its operation of the Rio Grande Project.

This argument rings hollow for several reasons. First, the litigation referred to by the Bureau is a moving target. At first the Bureau pointed to the so-called “quiet title” lawsuit and its associated gag order, but that case has since been dismissed. Now the problem seems to be with a lawsuit recently filed by Elephant Butte Irrigation District challenging the Bureau’s authority to operate the Rio Grande Project without a signed agreement with the irrigation districts. (URGOWPS has made no secret of its contempt for all things federal with respect to operation of the project.)

Secondly, lawsuits are a fact of life in the water business in this region, particularly on the Rio Grande where the stakes are so high. For the Bureau to argue that it can’t change anything until litigation runs its course is simply an excuse to never change.

Finally, litigation is not preventing the Bureau from going forward with URGOWPS on the middle Rio Grande, even though it is involved with at least one lawsuit up there over the silvery minnow (SWEC and the Sierra Club are among the co-plaintiffs) in which a gag order has been issued.

URGOWPS and the Alliance for the Rio Grande Heritage intend to petition the Bureau to include the Rio Grande Project in URGOWPS. Pending that, the Bureau may be faced with another lawsuit, but this time “doing nothing” won’t be an option.

Growth: wet dreams versus desert realities
It’s instructive to look at several possible alternative scenarios for the future of the Paso del Norte area in light of available water resources.

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In practical terms, the Rio Grande is the region’s only renewable water source. Of the area’s two major aquifers, one—the Humedal Bolsons—is being withdrawn and will soon be economically depleted, while the other—the Mesilla Bolsons—is an unknown quantity. The question of localized drawdown is currently being addressed by the Northern New Mexico Water Development Board. Given the experience of Albuquerque and El Paso, it seems prudent to view groundwater supplies as a renewable resource which can be used to supplement the region’s annual source of surface water from the river.

The flow of the river is strictly regulated and depends on the amount of water released from El Abra and Caballo Reservoirs. A “normal” year’s release is 700,000 acre-feet. It is sometimes less, but rarely more.

One scenario is to take all that water out of the river, put it in pipes and divide it evenly. If we assume each drop of water can be used twice, and we assume that we’ve achieved a regional cap on water usage of 140 gallons per day, there’s no problem. We could support nearly 10 million people in the region, albeit with no water left over for farming or the river.

A second scenario assumes that we find a way to preserve farming on the 10% of the acreage currently cultivated, and to increase irrigation efficiency on the acreage by 25 percent. That would leave enough surface water to support almost 6 million people in next year’s, albeit with no guarantee there would be any water remaining for the river.

The third scenario is like the second, except that a tenth of the river’s flow is allocated to instream flows—titled, if you will, to the river itself. Now we’re down to about 7.5 million people that could be supported on surface water alone.

The fourth scenario is by far the best option for our region. The region’s population is already averaging 3.5 million, which means we have sufficient room to grow while protecting the last, and arguably most desirable, scenario. Once we pass that point, going back will be impossible.

It also means that we have a relatively short window of opportunity to secure and institutionalize protection for flows in the river before the issue becomes one of water for people versus water for fish—at which time any one who cares about healthy rivers should probably move elsewhere.

(The author is executive director of the Las Cruces-based Southwest Environmental Center and a Sierra Club member.)

Dona Ana County Open Space Meeting

To help the community better understand the options and opportunities for preservation, the Leagues of Women Voters is sponsoring a public meeting on preservation of open space in Dona Ana County. The public meeting is Wednesday, December 2 from 6:30 to 9:30 in the East Ballroom of Cochiti Center at NMSU.

The purpose of the meeting is to initiate community-wide discussions about open space. Speakers from a variety of perspectives will provide information about the options and opportunities for preservation of open space in Dona Ana County.

Time will be provided for the public to discuss issues or specific parcels of land that they want to see preserved as open space. Community groups and organizations will be present to distribute information about their ongoing efforts to preserve open space, including proposals for preservation of farmland, wilderness designation, river and desert nature parks, trail systems and more.

Urban sprawl and unprecedented growth rates in Dona Ana County contribute to a loss of open space. Because many county residents value the farms and desert spaces, preservation of open space will be one of the most compelling issues we face in the next 10 years. While worldwide, communities and states have appropriated almost 10 billion dollars to preserve their open spaces, locally, we are just beginning to address the question of whether to preserve open space.

Public participation in development of an open space plan is vital. The meeting will be a great opportunity for the public to learn more about open space issues and initiatives, and become involved in answering the questions: Should we preserve open space, and if so, how?

For more information contact Beth Bardwell at 522-3003.

November and December Outings:

Please call Ann George at 522-4827 (evenings) for outings in November and December. (Plants had been timed up in time to meet the Sierran deadline)

BALLOT: IMPORTANT

Southern NM Executive Committee Elections

Vote for as many as 3 (2 year terms)

| Member | II | David Parrelle |
| Member | II | Margo Wilson |
| Member | II | (write in) |

Your membership (£9.3)
(as on the Sierran label)

Please mail by Dec. 10 to:
Southern NM Group, Sierra Club
PO. Box 3705
Las Cruces, N.M. 88003

Outings

December 1-3
Join Bob and Fred Hartline for a weekend camping and birding trip to Bosque del Apache. The campground is easily accessible, off the main road inside the reserve. Port-a-potties, picnic tables and fire rings available. The winter bird population should be well established by then. Camping is limited to the first 30 who sign up (other interested in joining the birdwatching activities can arrange for and stay in lodging in Socorro or other nearby communities). Imagine seeing and waking up among tens of thousands of snow geese and cranes! Be prepared for cold nights. Call 661-9031 or email hartline@fatigue.net for more information or sign up. We especially seek knowledgeable birders to join this outing.

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Outing Outlook

by Norma McCallan

My own hiking itinerary (primarily a long national Sierra Club backpack on the Pacific Crest Trail) precluded my writing this column for the last issue, but hopefully I am back on track. Late fall/early winter is not the best of seasons for hikes, and it’s still too early to tell whether our drought will continue or if we will have early and heavy snows, but some good offerings have come in. Noteworthy outings include the following. Be sure and call leaders for details. All phone numbers 503 except as noted.

Sat Nov 18 (weather permitting) Santa Fe Watershed Tour. Craig O’Hara, City of Santa Fe Water Conservation Director 954-7120. In cooperation with the SF National Forest, the City is offering trips into the normally off-limits Santa Fe Watershed to allow participants to view the sensitive potential for wildfire, and learn about the proposed management plans for this critical area. Prior reservations required.

Sat 11/4, 11/11, and 11/18 and Sun 12/13 and 12/17 Desert Exploratory Hikes. Tom Petecin 255-1487. Explore some of NM’s most incredible & beautiful landscapes hidden in BLM’s desert country - strangely eroded and colorful rocks, badlands, precipitous cliffs, mysterious canyons, archeological sites, petrified forests, fossils, and more. Off trail, some rock scrambling, each hike between 4-8 miles on often rocky, uneven terrain.

Sat/Sun Nov 4/5 Guadalupe Mountains N.P. Backpack. Caroline Greenfield 915-594-7342. Enjoy an easy dayhike into Pine Springs and McIntire Canyon where, if... fall colors should be spectacular.

Sat/Sun Nov 11/12 White Sands National Monument. Lawrence Gibson 915-594-7342. Try a new experience - backpacking (in easy 2 miles) across the white sands by FULL MOONLIGHT!

Fri/Sun Nov 13-14 New Mexico Wilderness Alliance Inventory Weekend In the San Mateo Mountains. Michael Scialli 505-839-2204, scial@nwma.org. Help inventory potential wilderness in these little visited mountains, and meet some great people.


Sat/Sun Dec 2/3 Bosque National Wildlife Refuge Camp. Fred & Bev Flattie 661-9031. Tour of the refuge and car camp at the Group Campsite - should be a prime time for bird viewing.

Sun Dec 10 Cuba Hogback Artifact Search. Rich Hurley 299-8401. Explore an interesting hogback near ad old road to Cuba, and look for artifacts & spanish near by. 6-8 miles.

Southern NM Hiking - Annie Gordon 522-4527 requests calls re. yet to be scheduled trips in the barren blazes of the Los Ceresas area.

Outings Training Workshop Alert - The newly formed national Sierra Club’s Training Committee is setting up a series of demonstration training events for outing leaders across the country. National staff will provide a 2-day workshop on the various aspects of outings leadership. New Mexico is a prime candidate for their spring workshop. A tentative date of Sat/Sun March 31/April 1 has been proposed. This would be a significant opportunity for current outing leaders and those considering becoming leaders to receive professional instruction, and share ideas / problems. Further details to follow.

Victor Atrys 438-9454 is a SF hiker leader, is looking for anyone interested in a [private, non Sierra Club] camping trip in the European Arctic next summer.