

Rio Grande Sierran

November / December 2000

News of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club

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 NM1 John Kelly (D)
Congress NM 3 Tom Udall (D)

State Senate (District number in parentheses)

Carlos Cisneros (D) (6)
Brad Hays (D) (9)
Janice Paster (D) (10)
Dede Feldman (D) (13)
Cisco McSorley (D) (16)
Shannon Robinson (D) (17)
Leonard Tsosie (D) (22)
Nancy Rodriguez (D) (24)
Roman Maes (D) (25)

State House of Representatives

Patty Lundstrom (D) (5)
Fred Luna (D) (8)
Pick Miera (D) (11)
Miguel Garcia (D) (14)
Raymond Sanchez (D) (15)
Gail Beam (D) (18)
Sheryl Williams Stapleton (D) (19)
Mimi Stewart (D) (21)
Danice Picaux (D) (25)
Pauline Gubbels (R) (30)
J. Paul Taylor (D) (33)
Nick Salazar (D) (40)
Max Coll (D) (47)
Inez Moncada (D) (51)
Jeni Flores Alexander (D) (56)
James Moran (D) (60)
James Madalena (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, on "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 enforces

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 revisit the 1992 policy.

A Grazing Task Force, under the direction of then-Board member Betsy Gaines, 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 re-

See Grazing on Page 11

Why Is It So Hard?

by Consuelo Bokum

In early August, after over a week of intense negotiations, irrigators, 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 short-term plan that saves the minnow this year. Nor was everyone satisfied. Our State Engineer, Tom Turney, was concerned that the amount released to help the minnow was an "extravagant use of water." More importantly, he is concerned that there just isn't enough water to "repeat this experiment" next year. (New Mexican, August 3, 2000).

Given that 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 4 & 5, 2000, to discuss how to re-orient state highway and transportation department priorities to think beyond the pavement and become more community- and environmental 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 tethering stand alone subdivisions in the woods to our cities;
- Spending on mass transit, bikeways and sidewalks is marginal;
- Many highway projects are built without adequate environmental reviews or investigation of alternatives;

Ballot

Vote For THREE	Member	Spouse
Lawrence Gibson	_____	_____
Edward Sullivan	_____	_____
Elizabeth Walsh	_____	_____
John Buchser	_____	_____
Ted Mertig	_____	_____

Mail by November 28, including mailing label, To:

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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 this Newsletter.



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Regional and National Representatives

Southwest Region Conservation Committee (SWRCC)

Ted Mertig, Gwen Wardwell; Alternates: Elizabeth Walsh, Jennifer Johnson

Council of Club Leaders Delegate

Barbara Johnson; Norma McCallan (alternate)

Sierran

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The Rio Grande Sierran is published six times a year by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club as a benefit for Sierra Club members living in New Mexico and West Texas.

Make address changes by contacting Membership Services at 415 977-5649 or send member name and number to address.changes@sierraclub.org

Non-member subscriptions at \$10.00 per year are available. Send checks to Blair Brown, Treasurer; 2226B Wyoming NE, PMB 272, Albuquerque, NM 87112. Please allow 8 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 Sierran is published in early January, March, May, July, September, and November.) Photos, artwork and poems are also welcome. Letters and articles are subject to abridgement.

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 Sierran. 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.

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



Politics & Chapter Officer Election

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

The Don Tripp campaign letter says: "the largest decrease in the number of minnows has occurred during the last two years of continuous flows down the river." Fact: The largest decreases in silvery minnow populations occurred prior to listing the minnow as endangered in 1994. Once Rio Grande silvery minnow was one of the most abundant fish in the entire basin; its range has shrunk from 1200 miles (Rio Chama to Gulf of Mexico) to its present 60 mile refuge below San Marcial.

The letter says "Let's move the minnow to a controlled habitat...upstream." Fact: The US Fish and Wildlife Service has attempted to do just that in 2000; they have release nearly a million silvery minnow fry near Albuquerque. Unfortunately, early evidence shows no real improvement in population as a result of this experiment. Quite possibly this is because suitable habitat has become scarce due to modern dams, diversions and channelization of the river.

The "move the minnow" movement may be on the right track, but before moving minnows we must assure that they will have the kind of habitat they need. River restoration is the first step. Restoration promises to be a costly and complex long term solution and it will almost certainly require a number of significant changes in Rio Grande water management policies.

The letter says: "If we don't move the minnow, all flood control work on the river will stop". Fact: Structural flood control measures, like channelization and levees may be implicated in the minnows decline, but the chance that minnow recovery would require abandoning flood protection for Socorro is extremely remote.

The letter says: "Hearings are going on right now...under a gag order" Fact: US District Judge James Parker has referred Minnow v. Martinez to a magistrate who convened a negotiating process among the parties. Lawyers for the conservancy district that supplies irrigation water negotiated the present, short term agreement and continue to represent farming interests. A mediation on the long term solution to this complex problem will probably convene shortly before election day.

Rep. Tripp's "Minnow Facts 2000" says: "85% of the remaining minnows live in the part of the river that dries up most often." Fact: This argument, so often repeated, is intended to imply that the minnows "like it dry", a fallacious conclusion. More likely is that with upstream habitat progressively deteriorating after the construction of Cochiti Reservoir in 1973, minnows which are adapted to simply drift during egg and larval stages, wash downstream, year upon year, seeking the slow moving water and sandy riverbeds they prefer. By now, remnant populations have accumulated in the minnows "last chance" before Elephant Butte Reservoir.

Minnow Facts 2000 says: "The minnow is not endangered, it is thriving in the aquarium at the Rio Grande Zoo." Fact: If an aquatic species depends for its survival upon a captive population in a tank, it is in the severest of jeopardy- the fish equivalent of intensive care. Rio Grande silvery minnow is in no way "thriving".

Minnow Facts 2000 says: "The amount of water wasted...down the river on minnows this year (170,000 + acre feet) is one and a half times the water consumed by all the farming in the valley." Fact: Wrong! At least 200,000 acre feet is consumptively used each year by irrigation between Cochiti and Elephant Butte reservoirs. While the 170,000 acre feet of supplemental water provided for minnows is indeed significant, it is still less than traditional irrigation demands. Moreover, in 2000 irrigators again received very close their accustomed supply, at least partially owing to agreements arising from Minnow v. Martinez, which provided irrigators with at least 35,000 acre feet from City of Albuquerque storage in Abiquiu Reservoir. Fact:

Laurence Gibson

I am a violinist, orchestra conductor, and music educator by profession, and outdoors person, mr. fixit, renaissance man 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 backpacker, I figured it was time to repay some of what the club and the wilderness had given me when I rejoined the El Paso Group ExCom and took on the chair position. To this point our main contributions have 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 soldiers 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 huge, powerful giant like our club move quickly anymore? Can we agree on enough issues, without compromising into mediocrity, to be effective, or exciting, or even brilliant?

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

Edward Sullivan

Since being appointed to the Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee in 1999, I have had the distinct pleasure of working with other Club leaders to identify new volunteers and focus our energies on forward looking conservation campaigns.

As Executive Director of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, I have worked over the last two years to build momentum and enthusiasm throughout the state to protect more Wilderness areas for future generations. I believe the Sierra Club should continue to work on Wilderness and wildlands issues, as public lands protection is at the core of our history and our mission. It is a crucial issue that inspires enthusiasm among our members and brings us together as an organization.

In a time of seemingly endless attacks on our already endangered ecosystems, we must continue to push the envelope to secure better protections for our public lands. I support curbing over-grazing, protecting our endangered species, and realizing landscape-wide habitat restoration and protection, while working with local people and communities to bring about changes in attitudes and behavior towards our public lands.

I am dedicating my life to this cause, and I believe I have the time and energy to continue to be a dedicated activist and volunteer organizer for the Sierra Club. I formerly worked for the Sierra Club's Washington, D.C. office, and also currently serve on the Central Group Executive Committee in Albuquerque. I would be honored to have your vote to continue serving on the Rio Grande Chapter ExCom.

Elizabeth Walsh

I am Associate Professor of Biological Sciences at The University of Texas at El Paso. My research focus is the ecological and evolutionary genetics of freshwater invertebrates. I am the faculty advisor for the Environmental Conservation Organization (ECO) at UTEP (1995 to present).

I have been a member of the Sierra Club for 4 years and in addition, I am a member of many other environmental organizations. I believe people need to apply in their personal lives what they ask society to

do, and that if people take a political stance on an issue they need to reflect that commitment in their lifestyle.

I am interested in serving on the ExCom to gain experience in environmental matters which are of importance to me and, ultimately, to society.

The Sierra Club has the potential to be the greatest grassroots force for environmental conservation in the US. I would like to help the Club meet this potential.

ExCom members make decisions on activism priorities, are responsible for motivating members on these issues, and to set examples by active participation. While my academic and research commitments are heavy, I will make every effort to fully attend to the duties of this position.

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 entire culture 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 on 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 water availability places upon human activities. Do we enjoy the Cottonwood bosque? Are the acequias in northern New Mexico, and the centuries-old culture that depends upon water in the acequias, important to sustain?

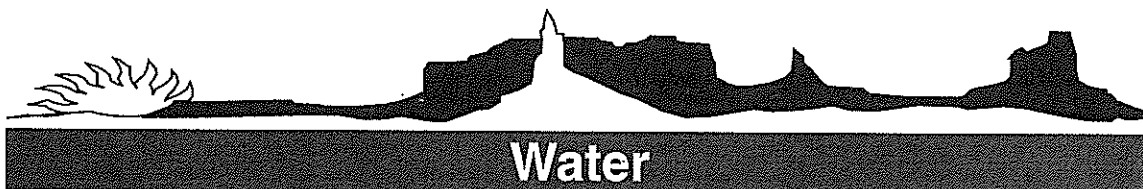
For three years I have been in a leadership role with the Chapter. It has been a very challenging and rewarding job. Two personal goals were attained: (1) The Baca land grant (Valles Caldera) is now in the public's hands, and (2) Mr. Tom Udall is now a representative of the United States Congress.

The future: lots of outreach. We must expand upon dialog with the farmers and the participants (acequia users). Legislative changes, like giving the state engineer authority to penalize over-use of water, must occur. Many fine environmental groups exist in this state. We need to concentrate on common goals.

Ted Mertig

Sierra 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 ecoregion task force.

My major fields of interest have been in leading inner city outings, and working on grazing and logging issues. I plan to continue to invest my time in these same areas. There are many threats to the environment and we need to keep a constant vigil in order 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.



Water

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 2400 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 approaches appropriate for the coming decades. Some of the key changes and issues they face 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 designated as The Fundamental Water Service 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 re-

Vehicle Emissions Linked To Water Pollution

Pollution from traffic congestion is getting into 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, Minnesota; 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 Van Metre, lead author of the study from the U.S. Geological Survey. <http://ens-news.com/ens/>

sources 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 regards to 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 the required implementation steps are carried out in a timely manner.

The FWPS document will be presented to the Albuquerque Metropolitan Water and Wastewater Board in September. This new Board, created by a Joint Powers 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. Perhaps, 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, it's bosque and the critters that live there; the preservation of the farmlands 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.

cally use the rhetoric of fear, perpetuate artificial divisions among people and make the search for a solution to the decline of the river that serves us all, that much less likely to succeed. We will all lose in that process.

Water from Page 1

So, what got us in this mess? There are a number of causes, and the answer will vary depending on who is answering the question. Certainly, the agreement to save the minnow was preceded by lots of finger-pointing. Whether or not the finger-pointing was justified, however, there are some basic underlying problems. Until we confront those, we can expect continuing crises as we try to find water for one important use or another.

One underlying problem is that for the most part we lack good information. Without good information about water supply and demand, our decision-making will be flawed. Many inflows and outflows of surface water are not measured and therefore are not quantified. We don't know how much water used for irrigation seeps into the aquifer, and we are only beginning to understand how much water is consumed by riparian vegetation. Increased measurement of our water supply and water use is a first step toward informed decision-making.

Second, we need water budgets that track water supply and demand and indicate if and when demand exceeds supply. Unless we confront the reality that our water supply is limited, we put off the hard work of figuring out what we need to do and only compound the problem as we use up supplies in storage or from our aquifers, some of which will be critical for emergencies or drought years or to provide the flexibility to ease transitions to new ways of managing water. If we fail to act, we face a significant water deficit and a future with cities constantly struggling to find adequate water to supply their customers' basic needs, dried up agricultural lands, a river channeled in a concrete ditch, and a dying bosque.

A good water budget will give us the ability to be as responsible for our water supply as we are for money in our state treasury. Just as the local and state governments do not spend more than they have, we should work to balance supply and demand. New uses of water should be not be approved unless water is available or we cease an existing use to make water available for a new use or we are able to find new ways to augment our water supply or decrease demand. We are beyond the point where we can afford to endlessly increase our total water consumption.

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 cause 2000 deliveries to exceed that amount, New Mexico will be credited with any over-deliveries, up to 200,000 acre feet.

Minnow Facts 2000 says: "We have the answer, but we still have a big problem. That is: the radicals won't accept the solution." Fact: When drought 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 seem to work, 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 cyni-



Water Along the Rio

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 riverine and riparian habitats between Cochiti and Elephant Butte Reservoirs. 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 handle under the Endangered Species Act for saving some semblance of a river ecosystem within New Mexico's most urbanized corridor. Still, the minnow's legal prominence should not eclipse 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 spring when there may be more than can be stored in reservoirs. More often, it flows when releases from upstream dams are needed for downstream urban, industrial and agricultural uses. Agriculture claims most of this water. However, the minnow must survive through 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, diversion 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." Gratefulness seems to have turned to uncompromising ungratefulness. Does the public gain no 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. Stomp

[Editor's Note: Blair Brown and Susan Gorman have expressed the concerns 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 Stomp, Manager of the Water Resources Division, City of Albuquerque Public Works Department. Brown and Gorman 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. At our last meeting, we discussed ways for the City and the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club to coordinate and discuss issues 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 interim 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 Sandia Pueblo and Montano Road; and 3. Construction of new surface water diversion with fish passage and screens also to be located between Sandia Pueblo and to 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 bosque, effects on the hydrology of the river system associated with fully consuming our San Juan-Chama water and impacts to the shallow

ground water in the Bosque. Based on this 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. The San Juan-Chama project imports 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.

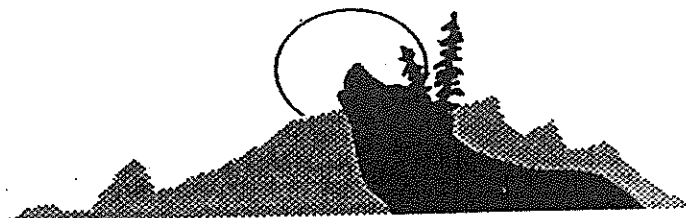
The City will call for the release of our imported San Juan-Chama water into the Rio Grande at Heron or Abiquiu reservoir. The San Juan-Chama water added to the system will then be conveyed in the Chama River and Rio Grande to Albuquerque where we will divert it and fully consume it. Our ratepayers are 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 huge environmental consequences.

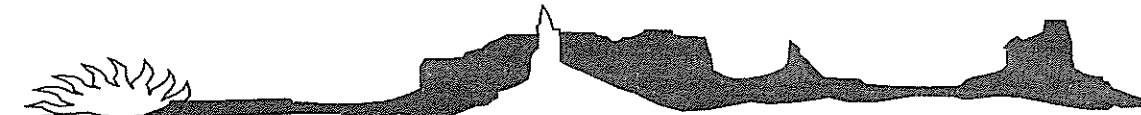
The addition of the non-native San Juan-Chama water into the Rio Grande system has many advantages. First, the San Juan-Chama water once added to the system will provide incidental benefits to the ecosystem. Second, by utilizing this non-native water to provide a sustainable supply, the City doesn't 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 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. Stomp III, P.E., Manager
Water Resources Division, PWD
City of Albuquerque





Water & Food

Headwaters Residents Watching Downstream

El Paso, TX — "There needs to be a different approach. It's not an 'if', it's a 'when'," says Deanna Chilian, Development Coordinator for the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust. The issue is water management in the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin. Chilian 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 Chilian. "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 Grande," 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 thirty years ago, from Beaumont, TX. She remembers taking vacations with her family to the Rio Grande, 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 dispersing the booklet to communities along the Basin. The Congress opens the evening of November 9th with keynote speaker Ambassador Alberto Székely of the Mexican Foreign Service. Ambassador Székely is a world-renowned 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. Simultaneous translation is provided for all sessions. 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 915-532-0399 or calling the Congress coordinator at 505-546-0886.

Contacts: Suzanne D'Avalon Congress Coordinator 546-0886 sdavalon@zianet.com

Bess Metcalf Co-Director, Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin Coalition (915) 532-0399 coalition@rioweb.org

[As of press time, financial assistance to attend the Uniting 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 dares. 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 pollen 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 IGF-I, which a growth factor for prostate and breast cancers.

WHAT 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 e-mail via the Kraft web site: www.kraft.com/html/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 remove them 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 r-BGH 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.sierraclub.org/biotech To subscribe to our Biotech Forum listserv, contact Jim Diamond: jim.diamond@sierraclub.org For any questions, contact Laurel Hopwood, Chair, Genetic Engineering Committee: jhopwood@wvz.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!

www.repamerica.org

P. O. Box 7073
Deerfield IL 60015
847-940-0320

Energy & Environmental Justice

The Cost of Driving

by Andy Kunz

The typical statistic stated around here is a car costing \$6000 per year for a small to average size car. Since so many people are now driving SUV's, these are more accurate stats:

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 15,000 miles per year costs \$7,487 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 skyrockets.

The hidden costs of driving in the U.S. amount to at least \$184 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) So much 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 laws 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 how solutions can be crafted to meet the issues. Confirmed speakers to date:

- Michael Replogle, Environmental Defense, Washington DC;
- John Holtzclaw, Transportation Committee, Sierra Club, San Francisco;
- Ken Ryan, Transportation Chair, California Chapter, Sierra Club; and
- Hank Dittmar, 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; nmex.field1@prodigy.net

To reserve a room: Plaza Resolana has rooms set aside for the workshop at \$80/night for double occupancy, and \$70 for 1. Contact them at 800-821-5145 or www.plazaresolana.com for information plus a map of downtown Santa Fe.

For more information: Ken Hughes, Transportation Chair, Rio Grande Chapter Sierra Club, 474-0550; 1lesscar@netscape.net

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 discussion. You can direct your correspondence to Tim Frank or Kirstin Replogle:

tim.frank@sierrachub.org
kdohrer@life.uiuc.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. For 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 every bit as much as it has degraded the environment. Therein lies a tremendous opportunity. The very best responses to both the social justice 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/lit%20review.pdf

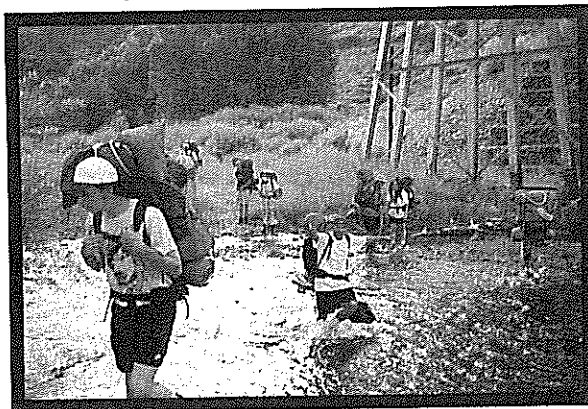
If you have any questions or comments, please direct them to either Kirstin or Tim. You will find our email addresses below. Please let us know if you pass a resolution on this issue. In addition, if you could identify someone from your chapter or group who is interested in the social justice issues 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 entwined with social justice;
The _____ Chapter (or Group) joins the Sierra Club's National Challenge to Sprawl Campaign and Environmental Justice Committees in recommending that the Board of Directors adopt the Neighborhood Principles for Smart Growth.

Neighborhood Principles For Smart Growth

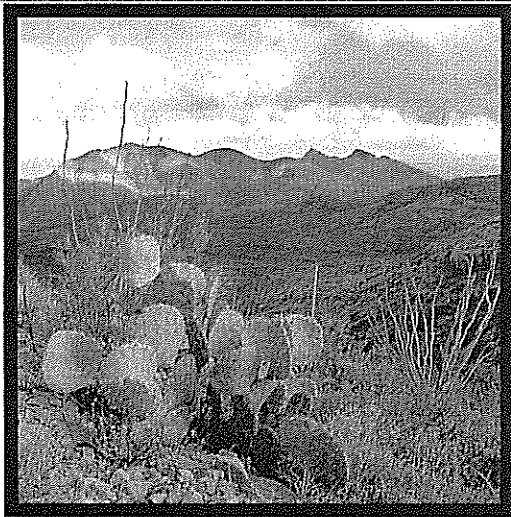
- 1 All neighborhoods should have a fair share of the benefits as well as responsibilities of growth.
- 2 Growth should meet the economic, environmental, and social needs of low-income and other communities.
- 3 Low-income neighborhoods and communities of color should have a strong voice in decisions 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.



El Paso Inner City Outing - Gila Wilderness

Ted Mertig

Wild Places



As Wild As It Gets

by Martin Heinrich

The Big Hatchets... Chances are you haven't been there. In fact, unless you joined the alliance when we surveyed the Big Hatchets, you may not have even heard of them. That is one of the primary reasons they are so wild. Few people ever set foot here... this is a true wilderness if there ever was one. Just look at the list of rare species that call the Big Hatchets home. There are wild desert bighorns, thick billed king birds, Sonoran mountain kingsnakes, and whole herds of coatimundis! Plants include several species of pincushion cacti, majestic Chihuahuan pines (at the edge of their range), and night blooming cereus.

The list of threats for the Big Hatchets is unfortunately, nearly as long as its list of endangered species. Oil and gas exploration, mining, and overgrazing are encroaching on the area. Wilderness designation would go a long way towards ensuring that this spectacular area remains wild, healthy, and free. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is committed to protecting the Hatchets. We've already fought off a misguided proposal to scar the proposed wilderness with seismic exploration for oil and gas. We'll continue to fight any proposal to tame this wild "island" that rises up from a "sea" of Chihuahuan desert.

A group of NMWA volunteers and I recently hiked fourteen miles through the creosote flats, gardens of cacti, rare madroan oak savannah, and pinyon juniper forests of the Big Hatchet Mountains. We came away from that hike committed to preserving this wild landscape. Discover the Hatchets... we think you'll become an advocate too.

Best Season

Fall, winter, spring

Topographic Maps

Hatchet Ranch, Big Hatchet Peak, Sheridan Canyon, and U Bar Ridge USGS 7.5 minute quadrangles

Location

In the east section of the Bootheel, just west of the Mexican border, 70-miles south-southeast of Lordsburg

Size

48,720 acres. Size recommended by the NM Wilderness Alliance: 91,219 acres

Elevation Range

4,400 to 8,366 feet at Big Hatchet Peak

Trails

No marked or maintained trails

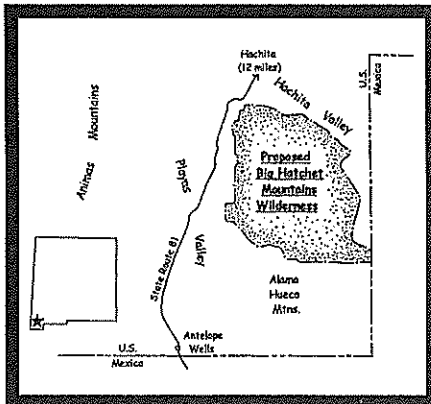
Ecosystems

Evergreen oak, pinon and Chihuahuan pines, chaparral, semi-desert grassland, Chihuahuan desert scrub

Getting There

Until very recently, no vehicular access existed for the Big Hatchet Mountains WSA, but the BLM has put in a new gravel road that runs along the mountains' southeast side between the Big Hatchets and the Alamo Huecos and then along the Big Hatchets' east side.

From *New Mexico's Wilderness Areas: The Complete Guide*, by Bob Julian, Westcliffe Publishers



Sky Islands Wildlands Network — The Future of Habitat Protection

by Roseann 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 fall short of providing adequate habitat for functioning, complex 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 temperate 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 mountain "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 those 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

Feedback

Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I would like to add a few words to Barbara Johnson's coverage in the last newsletter of our 2 national awards, specifically the Danny and Ida Wilcher award for the Santa Fe Group's *Day Hikes In The Santa Fe Area*. I want to give a big hurrah to our Santa Fe outing leaders, without whom we would never have had a hiking book, and especially one sustained over 5 editions.

Just about every hike in the book, present and past editions, was written by an outings leader (many of whom, of course, have moved on to other pursuits; some of whom, sadly, have died). Every hike in the book that is retained for the next edition is thoroughly checked by an outings leader. It takes a cadre of dedicated outing leaders who not only are knowledgeable about the various hiking possibilities in the area, but who want to share their trail experiences with others, and are willing to put the effort into carefully condensing this knowledge into a succinct trail description which is intelligible 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 Betsy Fuller, Bill Chudd and Ingrid Vollnhof, who laboriously typed out the whole book on a manual typewriter. And I would like to commend my long-time outings co-chair Norbert Sperlich, who is not only responsible for a number of hikes in the book, but has checked out more of them over the years than any one else, and been a major worker on the book committees.

Additionally I would like to clarify the figure of \$18,000 which Barbara mentioned that the Group expects to receive each year from the current edition. This is the gross revenue. Each year we set aside an amount to cover the publishing of the next edition. Estimating about \$25,000 for the next printing, we are taking out \$5000 a year, assuming a life of 5 years for each edition. This means we net about \$13,000 - still a very impressive sum, and one the Group is delighted to have to put toward our various Club efforts.

*Norma McCallan,
Book Committee member,
and former outings co/chair of the Santa Fe Group*

Sky Islands from Previous Page

Wildlands Network is a visionary plan to restore nature and sustain human communities that will take years, most likely generations, to accomplish.

To learn more about the Sky Islands, or to find out how you can help protect this unique area, contact one of the Sky Islands Wildlands Network sponsors below. They will provide information about memberships, donations, volunteer opportunities, and action campaigns. The restoration and protection of the Sky Island region will only happen with the support and commitment of people like you: Networks of people protecting networks of land.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, P.O. Box 13116, Albuquerque, NM 87192; (505) 843-8696; nmwa@nmwild.org; www.nmwild.org

The Wildlands Project, 1955 W. Grant Road, Suite 145, Tucson, AZ 85745; (520) 884-0875; wildlands@twp.org; www.twp.org

Sky Island Alliance, P.O. Box 41165, Tucson, AZ 85717; (520) 624-7080; info@skyislandalliance.org; www.skyislandalliance.org

Naturalia, A.C., Apartado Postal 21-541, Mexico 03600, DF, Mexico; (52) 5559-5696; direccion@naturalia.org.

Editor:

I fear, that while I agree overall with Edward Archuleta (Fighting Sprawl, Sept./Oct. issue), I must differ with one of his assertions. He states, "The number one thing we can do to fight sprawl is to let our government -- city, county, state and federal -- know that we care about how and where we grow"

Nonsense! The number one thing we can do is let government know that our current out-of-control population growth is unacceptable and must be stopped. We are a nation of over 275 million people (double what we were 50 years ago) and at current rates, we will be 500 million people this century.

While I realize the politically correct, have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too buzz word right now is "sustainable" growth, I am able to recognize an oxymoron when I see one. While, in fairness, Archuleta did not use the term, he implied that all we have to do is direct the growth where we want it. I assert that is naive, costly and, in the words of Isaac Asimov -- "Democracy cannot survive overpopulation," -- will require the loss of freedoms and human dignity that most Americans or New Mexicans will find appalling.

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 ridiculous to believe we can "manage" growth of such magnitude. We are headed toward a population density equal to that of China in the 1950s, an eventuality that will not bring happy-ever-after stories for us, our children or the environment.

Ironically, perhaps the ultimate model for "sustainable" or "smart" growth is Los Angeles, California, where in an attempt to curb its infamous sprawl, the city between 1970 and 1990 moved toward higher population density. By 1990, land consumption per L.A. resident had dropped to 0.011 acres. No other urban area provided so little land per resident -- apparently the model that Smart Growth advocates wish for all Americans as the U.S. population continues to boom.

Yet, despite the highest population density of any area in the United States, Los Angeles still sprawled across an additional 394 square miles, or 252,160 acres. (Source: Sprawl in California, University of Southern California, Kolankiewicz and Beck.) Similar trends occurred in Riverside-San Bernardino, San Diego and virtually every major California city.

Put another way, if our current growth (occurring at one of the highest rates in our nation's history) continues, even if we are packed in like sardines, our cities, despite even the most draconian measures, will continue to sprawl, and congestion, water shortages, wildlife habitat loss and other environmental problems will worsen.

Kate Burnett, Los Alamos

Book Reviews

Anasazi America

by David E. Stuart

Published by UNM Press

review by Susan Gorman

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 come home and curl up in a comfy 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 saga from hunting and gathering beginnings, through the advent of agriculture and evolution to Chacoan agribusiness, to the bold Chaco Phenomenon that resulted in the monumental infrastructure of magnificent public buildings and wide roads, grand religious rituals and an extensive trading network and market based economy. He then describes the growth of the population, followed by periods of drought and climate change which resulted in malnutrition and other public health problems. He goes on to trace a stratification of society that widened the gulf between the privileged elites and the working class people and the decisions to direct the efforts of the people to building the massive public infrastructure at the expense of basic needs such as the growing of food. The culmination of these factors finally resulted in the collapse of this great society.

During the centuries that followed the collapse of the Chacoan empire, the Puebloan people survived the resulting chaos and were able to build successful communities through a strategy based on efficiency rather than power.

The story then shifts to the present and in one incredible and profound chapter, Stuart suggests that there are many parallels between America in the 21st century and the late Chacoan era that may foretell events in our future.

This is a very important book that should be widely read. It should be read by New Mexicans because it has much to teach us about ourselves. It should be read by all Americans because it gives us a glimpse of the challenges that are on the horizon and suggests the broad changes Americans will need to make if we are to survive another millennium.




SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892



El Paso Inner City Outing - Gila Wilderness

Ted Mering



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 Malpai Borderlands Group, located in the bootheel of New Mexico and southeastern Arizona. In fact, their pioneering use of a grassbank on the Gray Ranch has lit a fire, so to speak, that is about to spread across the West.

The Malpai group used their grassbank to help prevent the break-up of private ranch lands into ranchettes. 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 rested and restored ecologically.

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

First and foremost, grassbanks alleviate ecologically 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 Malpai 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 Grande 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 Grande 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 deBuys 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 projects 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 allotment for two to 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 several 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 grass bank could provide.

Which is one of the reasons why the grassbank idea has 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 (turning 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 prescribed fire remedy 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 precursor on the Gray Ranch, have clearly demonstrated the utility of grassbanks for ecological and economic restoration. They shown it to be not only a good model in theory, but one that works in the real world too. It is a practical tool; one that is not burdened by ideological posturing, political agendas, or bumper-stickeritis. 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 Malpai Borderlands 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)

8:15am Stewart Udall, former Secretary of the Interior. Welcoming Remarks

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

9:00 am Panel One: Dr. Craig Allen, USGS, Bandelier Field Station; Bill Miller, rancher, Malpai Borderlands Group; Bruce Runnels, The Nature Conservancy; Ann Bartuska, 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; Palemon Martinez, Northern New Mexico Stockmen'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

1:15pm: Drum Hadley, The Animas Foundation Afternoon Welcome

1:30pm Panel Three: Virgil Trujillo, The Quivira Coalition; Leonard Atencio, Santa Fe Forest; Tim Herfel, 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 Three; Will Barnes, The Conservation Fund; Dr. Kris Havstad, 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 deBuys.

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

Grazing Policy

Grazing Policy from Page 1

ceived, 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 Ferenstein 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 of 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 refusal) to adopt it. It was the general feeling of the Council and the Board that this was an example of activists being 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 some 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 burden 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 seem 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/or administrative actions, such as wilderness bills, that primarily address non-grazing issues, but do not meet the goals of this grazing 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 should be allowed to reduce utilization rates or rest or retire lands without losing their permit or lease, and without the retired use being reallocated to others.
- (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 the grazing strategy that will maximize biological preservation and recovery shall be awarded the grazing contract, even if that bidder proposes to retire the allotment and manage it for other values, such as water quality.
- (c) The managing agency should determine and document, at each renewal interval, that the allotment has made substantial progress towards established ecological and environmental quality goals. Permits or leases where such progress is not demonstrated should be terminated.
- (d) The managing agency should establish 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 arid 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 imminently 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 exists:

- Lands that receive an average annual precipitation of 12 inches or less or areas with cryic soils.
- Associated activities (e.g., water developments, 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.



El Paso Inner City Outing - Gila Wilderness

Ted Meritt



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

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 "Alias Aldo" as our wild-country guide. We will soar on Leopold's inspired Sand Country words; learn to think like a mountain; and top 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, & fruit juices. Ovens and refrigerator are available for warming or cooling items. All serving ware is provided.

Any questions, call Ken Hughes (474-0550) or Norma McCallan (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
505 • 983-2703

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Doug Fraser

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 *Sprawl Costs/Sprawl Solutions*, which was done with large contributions from 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 forsaking grassroots activism. We have been actively involved in the political arena with the upcoming elections — endorsing candidates and disseminating information about the candidates' voting records. Thanks to our Political Chair Susan Martin and the Chapter's Political Chair Jim Hannan (another Santa Fe Group member) for their hard work in organizing us 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 Sierran.

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 (820-6401). Please also consider attending the Transportation conference that Ken Hughes has been organizing for the Chapter, December 4-5 at Plaza Resolana in Santa Fe. For more information, contact Ken Hughes, Transportation Chair, Rio Grande Chapter (474-0550) lllescar@netscape.net

Also, John Buchser has been diligently following water issues in Northern New Mexico. The fruits of some of his labors are on view at the Water Pollucks he sponsors at his house the second Monday of the month. See 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 Ballot for the Santa Fe Group ExCom election, along with the candidates' statements, 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.

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 activists 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 Southwestern 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 (OHV). 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 the regulations they are worked so hard to create. The result is that *all* non-urban homeowners 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 statewide 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 the *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 2000

- 4 Stephen Markowitz (983-2829) Moderate Hike Eagle Traps in Banderier. 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.
- 5 Victor Atyas (438-9434) Easy Hike to Tent Rocks near Cochiti. About five miles. Some scrambling and off-trail. Meet leader in the parking lot in front of Walgreens at Villa Linda Mall at 9 AM (look for maroon Cherokee).
- 11 Art Judd (982-3212) Moderate Hike near Santa Fe. Lve 8 AM.
- 12 Marcia Skillman (820-6654) Strenuous Hike to Cabezon volcanic plug north of Bernalillo. About 5 miles, 1500' elevation gain, but has vertical hand-and-foot rock climbing and exposure to falling. Must call for reservation.
- 18 Lionel Soracco (983-6715) Moderate X-Country Ski Trip probably in Ski Basin - or Moderate Hike with dogs if no snow - call to find out which. Leave 8 AM.
- 18 Easy Hike into the Santa Fe Watershed Please call 954-7120 to reserve a spot.
- 19 Norma McCallan (471-0005) Moderate Hike to Cerro Pelado southeast of Atalaya Mtn, under five miles but steep, about 1500' elevation gain. Dogs OK. Leave 9 AM.
- 25 Norbert Sperlich (983-1962) Moderate Hike to Buckman Mesa, Otowi Peak, and blowhole. About 6 miles RT, 1100' elevation gain, rough terrain, steep climb. Call for reservation.
- 26 David Bryant (1-505-757-3477) Strenuous Hike to Rancho 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 McKee (672-3426) Moderate Hike to Ancho Rapids. 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 (466-2389) Easy Hike on Falls Trail (Banderier). Kids welcome. Leave 9 AM.
- 9 Lionel Soracco (983-6715) Moderate X-Country Ski Trip if snow is good, otherwise moderate hike. Leave 8 AM. Call for reservation.
- 10 Marsha Skillman (820-6654) 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 Tobin Oruch (820-2844) Moderate Hike to Glorieta Ghost Town. Dogs allowed. Leave 9 AM. Call for reservation.
- 17 Victor Atyas (438-9434) Easy Hike to Cerrillos Hills. Meet at Villa Linda Mall pkg lot in front of Walgreens. Leave 9 AM.
- 23 Stephen Markowitz (983-2829) Moderate Hike to Bayo Canyon/Otowi Ruins. 8 miles RT, 900' elevation gain. Mostly off-trail, some rough terrain. Leave 8:30 AM. Call for update on trail conditions.
- 24 Norma McCallan (471-0005) Easy Hike on Nun's Corner Loop. Dogs okay. A few steep spots. Wear boots. Leave 9:30 AM.
- 30 Lionel Soracco (983-6715) Moderate X-Country Ski Trip if there is snow, otherwise moderate hike. Leave 8 AM. Call for reservation.
- 31 Norbert Sperlich (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.

Sat Sun January 2001 HAPPY, NEW YEAR !!

Monday, January 1, 2001

- Marsha Skillman (820-6654) Celebrate the New Year with a Moderate Snowshoe Hike up Ravens Ridge. Fabulous views! Hike if no snow. Leave 9 AM. Call Marsha for details.
- 6 Lionel Soracco (983-6715) Moderate X-Country Ski Trip if there is snow, otherwise moderate hike. Leave 8 AM.
- 7 Norbert Sperlich (983-1962) Moderate Hike into Domé Wilderness, trail conditions permitting. Rough terrain. Call for reservation. Leave 8:30 AM.
- 13 Lionel Soracco (983-6715) Moderate X-Country Ski Trip if snow is good, otherwise moderate hike. Leave 8 AM.
- 14 Tobin Oruch (820-2844) Moderate Hike near La Bajada. Dogs allowed. Leave 9 AM. Call for reservation.
- 20 Bob McKee (672-3426) Moderate Hike on mesa top south of White Rock. 8 miles RT. Dogs allowed. Meet leader at 9 AM in White Rock at Smith's Supermarket or carpool from Santa Fe at 8 AM.
- 21 Norma McCallan (471-0005) Easy/Moderate Hike. Dogs allowed. Call for details. Leave 9:30 AM.
- 27 Stephen Markowitz (983-2829) Moderate Hike in Banderier. Leave 8 AM. Call leader for update on trail conditions.
- 27 Gordon Spencer (672-3707) X-Country Ski Workshop for skiers with limited experience who want to improve their techniques, including downhill, speed control, and confidence in back-country touring. Call by January 25 for reservation. Time permitting, lessons will be followed by a short ski tour.
- 28 David Bryant (1-505-757-3477) Moderate Hike on Rail Trail. Leave 9 AM.

Most especially call the leader for X-country ski or snowshoe 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 office, 621 Old Santa Fe Trail, "Plaza Desira," just south of Kaune's Grocery at the corner of Old SF Trail and Paseo de Peralta. Carpooling will be arranged. Each hiker should come prepared to pay \$5 a mile to the driver of the car in which s/he rides. Bring a lunch, water, sturdy hiking boots or shoes, and clothing suitable for the weather - leader reserves the right to turn away anyone whose equipment or experience appears unsuitable. Leader has right to alter destination of hike or cancel trip due to weather, unfavorable conditions, or insufficient numbers of participants. Unaccompanied minors must have written permission from parents or guardians to participate; permission forms are available at the Sierra Club office. Dogs not permitted on hikes unless noted otherwise. Telephone leader for details of the individual hike.

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: Dee Sands, Kathy and Doug Fraser, Ned Sudborough, Bernard Preskin, Carol Owens, Linda and John Buchser, Steve Markowitz, Bob McKee, and Norma McCallan. 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: Tuesday, December 4, 6:30 PM
 Tuesday, January 2, 6:30 PM
 Group Conservation Committee: Tuesday, November 28, 7 PM
 Tuesday, December 19, 7 PM
 Water Pot-Luck (John Buchser's house):
 Monday, November 13, 6:30 PM
 Monday, December 11, 6:30 PM

♦ ♦ SANTA FE GROUP OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS ♦ ♦

Chair — Doug Fraser * 474-7615 / 662-4104 fax
 Vice-Chair — Barbara Johnson * 466-4935 lunah3@aol.com
 Secretary/Treas — Lionel Soracco 983-6715

Gwen Wardwell * 438-3060 edenland@earthlink.net
 Political Committee — Susan Martin * 988-5206 smartin@lanl.gov
 Membership — Norma McCallan * 471-0005 nmccallan@mindspring.com
 Newsletter/Publicity — Kay Carlson 982-3926 kcarlsonwp@earthlink.net
 Phone Tree — Dee Sands 455-3005
 Chapter Rep — Doug Fraser * 474-7615
 Outings — Norbert Sperlich 983-1962
 — Tobin Oruch 820-2844 oruch@lanl.gov

Conservation — Cliff Larsen * 466-2128 clarsen1@ix.netcom.com
 Mining — Cliff Larsen * 466-2128
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 National Parks-Courtney White * 982-5502 wldvst@rt66.com
 Rangelands-Roger Peterson 983-7559 rogpete@aol.com
 Sustainability-Barbara Johnson * 466-4935 lunah3@aol.com
 SF National Forest-Greg Pollak 988-7650
 Carson Nat'l Forest-George Grossman 982-1024
 Activist Outings-Norma McCallan * 471-0005 nmccallan@mindspring.com
 Growth-Eleanor Eisenmenger * 820-6401

* Member of the SF Group Executive Committee

Santa Fe Group News



NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR AND ABOUT NEW MEXICO'S LARGEST SIERRA CLUB GROUP

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 guvnuh's" call for "commonsense conservationism"

Senator Reid's gut reaction to "the guvnuh's" conservation ethic should be a wake-up call for Sierrans. Senator Reid is far from uncompromising in his own environmental beliefs; thus, the intensity of even his fear of an administration led by "the guvnuh" 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 own district. 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 Goudreau, 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 Sierra Club # (the eight digit number on your mailing label), and mail the ballot to Richard Barish, 3935 Anderson SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108. Please do not include this ballot with the Chapter ballot.

STEPHEN CAPRA:

I feel the Sierra Club is a vital link in our state's environmental protection. In 1990, I walked, from Mexico to Canada along the Continental Divide, to raise awareness for Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This hike allowed me to see the "on the ground" condition of our range, timber, and wildlife resources. As a result, I strongly support adding more wilderness areas within our state, especially in less protected desert areas, and demanding more environmental accountability from our elected officials. I am currently the Media Coordinator for the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and the Southwest Forest Alliance. If given the chance, I look forward to helping the Sierra Club become an even stronger voice in New Mexico.

KELLIE GOUDREAU:

I view the Sierra Club as vitally important to preserving our state's wildlands 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 Rio 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 Citizen Action to Clean Up Sandia Labs,

JAY MORROW:

I have many irons 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. Every day, 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 light 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

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The Central New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club depends upon the efforts of volunteers. To help, call any of us!

Natural Resource Planning, and have worked with local communities on landscape restoration and ecological health monitoring. I am deeply committed to wilderness and endangered species protection. I feel the Rio 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 regretfully 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 Kelly 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.



PROGRAMS...

JOIN US at 7:00PM on Tuesday, November 14, 2000, in Room SB106 of TVI's Smith-Brasher Hall at 717 University SE for a presentation by Jay Morrow of the Rio Grande Chapter's Waste Reduction Committee. Jay will teach us how we can live life more simply. He is even starting simplicity circles around Albuquerque to help us through the process. So, come and find out how you can get involved. As Russell Peterson once said, "All of us have opted for environmental damage, albeit unwittingly, by voting for convenience with our dollars."

HERE WE COME A-WASSAILING at our Holiday Party! Join the Central NM Group of the Sierra Club in celebrating the holidays on Sunday, December 17th at 5PM at the home of Martin Heinrich and Julie Hicks, 3817 Simms SE., Albuquerque, 232-7151.

OUR JANUARY MEETING is still to be determined...

...BUT DON'T MISS FEBRUARY 19TH, when we will host John Rosapepe, the National Parks and Conservation Association's Alaska Campaign Outreach Coordinator, with a spectacular slide presentation on our Alaska National Parks at the Crossroads! Read more about this event in the next issue of the newsletter.



THE GROUP BALLOT...

CHECK THE BOX TO INDICATE YOUR VOTE Member Spouse

NOMINATED BY THE COMMITTEE:

Steve Capra	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kellie Goudreau	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Matt Lasek	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jay Morrow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jim O'Donnell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SPACE FOR WRITE-IN CANDIDATES:

<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name, _____ SC# _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail to Richard Burich, 3935 Anderson SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108

Central New Mexico Group News

OUTINGS...

REMEMBER; the free Outings E-mail Service ensures that 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 RickHurley@aol.com or 299-8401 to be added. Please be advised, however, that *impromptu* events, those which are 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. Drive: 120 miles RT. Visit some Anasazi 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'. Drive: 150 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 hop 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. Elevation: Varies. Drive: 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 Eye of Carnuel, Juan Tabo or Del Agua Canyons in the Sandias, Petroglyph NM, or the Volcanos. 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 rocks, badlands, precipitous cliffs, outstanding vistas, mysterious narrow and winding canyons, archeological 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 255-1497 or tompeten@juno.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.sierraclub.org.



Guest Editorial

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 ourselves (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 wasn't pure 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 male in El Paso took his yearly 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 Deming wagons plying the streets. Until then we thought all water tasted awful.

Farms in those days were not so much farms as orchards: pears, peaches, apples. Furthermore, the river twisted and turned toward the Gulf, in the process obscuring the international boundary and creating a water-wasting broad swath of swamps and thickets.

A 1905 treaty erased those curves, and similar action in New Mexico and Colorado created a Rio Grande as little more than a long ditch from northern Colorado to the Gulf. Farming as we now know it mushroomed as irrigation became as simple as gouging out a channel. In 1906, we signed an unequal (for Mexico) water-sharing agreement. Elephant Butte dam opened around 1915.

In 1933 we signed the Rectification Treaty. The Canalization Project went into effect in 1936. Caballo 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 us our present perilous water position.

Realizing the occasional unreliability of the Rio Grande, we drilled and found some pretty good water in the Hueco Bolson. Even though we suspected it wouldn't last forever, the optimist in us whispered

"seek 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 nifty purchases 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 middling border towns into the huge border metropolis that we are now.

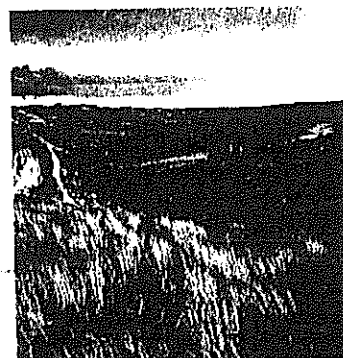
That's the upside

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 is capable of miraculous things, but forever sustaining farms, plus a steadily increasing population and a wider industrial base are not three of them.

Now is not the time to pray for more water because water will only encourage more growth. So pipelines to the Mississippi, or icebergs towed 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 its limitations, and in the Southwest, water is one of them.

We either adjust and cut back, or we move.



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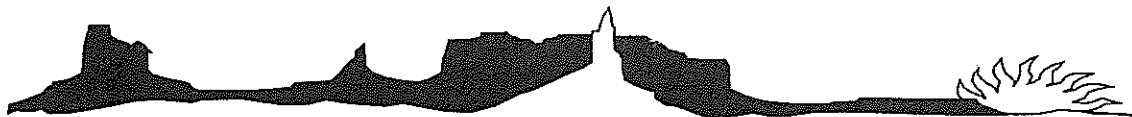
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Open

Web Master

Terry Sunday: 584-9301
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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. Laurence Gibson, Shirley Phillips, Jamie Newlin and Ted Mertig are all running for re-election. John Walton has also declared as a candidate. Four seats will be filled.

Ballots for the local election are scheduled to be mailed on November 10. The last day to return ballots is December 31. Ballots will be counted on January 13, 2001, at 6:00 PM at Jaxon'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 Comanche Peak by the light of the full moon. The Franklin Mountains escapade was led by Richard Rheder with Life Management Center (LMC) staffers Javier Loya, Ivan Velez, Laura Nunez and volunteer Ian Hanna and two youngsters. 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 Juárez 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 River's Upper Valley was the culmination of a summer of training rides every Monday morning. Three youths and Mary Lou Parker rode a half metric century (32 miles) while neophyte rider Laura came in at a quarter metric century. Richard and Ivan pushed harder, gaining 55 miles on the Upper Valley route through cotton fields, chile 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, Birgit Alonso, and two adult volunteers climbed with eight youths up to Aztec Caves, traversed Mundy 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 an all-day affair. Cottonwood Spring was such 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, 8929 Viscount Blvd. Anyone who wishes to help introduce youths to the wilderness and environmental education is welcome. Contact Ted Mertig, chair, at 852-3011.

Outings (Area Code 915)

Nov 4-5: GMPNP Carcamp/Fall Color Day Hike

Place: Guadalupe Mountains National Park south of Carlsbad. NM
Class: Easy
Length: 7 miles
Elevation gain: None
Leader: Carolina Greenfield: 594-7342 (H)

You must not miss the fall foliage at our nearest national park. Color is usually at its height on this weekend. We will be leaving midday Saturday for the two-hour drive out east and up Guadalupe Pass to Pine Springs Campground. Since this will be high season early arrival will be necessary to secure a campsite in the park! Saturday evening will offer opportunities for camaraderie and stargazing if the weather cooperates. Sunday early we'll drive to McKittrick Canyon for the leisurely walk up to the Grotto where we will have a gourmet picnic, enjoying the fall colors and pristine riparian areas.

Nov 11-12: Full Moon Backpack

Place: White Sands National Monument
Class: Easy
Length: 2 miles
Elevation gain: None
Leader: Laurence Gibson: 594-7342 (H)

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 sponsored this outing. 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 togetherness and space, too.

Nov 18-19: Bud's Hole Backpack

Place: Gila Wilderness
Class: Moderate
Length: 12.6 miles
Elevation gain: 800 feet
Leader: Rollin Wickenden:
532-9645 (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 corner like at Bud's Hole. This trip offers 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: 1,000 feet
Leader: Terry Sunday: 584-9301 (H)

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. Tragically, 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. There were no survivors. The Air Force quickly cleared most 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 abraded. Participation is limited and hiking experience is required. Call early to reserve a space.

Mar 18-23(?): Bright Angel/Tonto/Hermit Trail Loop Backpack

Place: South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona
Class: Strenuous
Length: 24+ miles
Elevation loss/gain: 4540 feet
Leader: Rollin Wickenden:
532-9645 (leave message)

In March 1995, an intrepid group 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 intrepid 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 one: 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 \$20.00 towards the cost of the non-refundable backcountry permit. The dates of this trip may change based on what permit is issued. Reservations are required immediately.

The Lorax - El Paso Group

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 (aka 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 mere mortals to read and comprehend this lengthy, technical document, no extension was granted by the lead federal agency, the U.S. Section—International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC). A comment period extension was granted, however, and a hastily organized public meeting held, for the residents of the Hatch, New Mexico area, who were mad as hornets when they learned that a water treatment plant would be built on some local farmland 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 reestablish year-round flows between Caballo Dam and Anthony, Texas—the site of a new water treatment plant. Although the resulting loss of shorebird 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 18-28 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. Incredibly, 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 Tigua Indians of Isleta 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 Tiguas to resolve these issues, and expects a final EIS to be released in late November, with a final record of decision due by 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 mowing, 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 restoring the Rio Grande yet. Already, Parsons 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 more 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 to be any hope of restoring the diversity of aquatic habitats—and species—common to the Rio Grande before the agency straitjacketed the river in the 1930s.

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 sue us again

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 meet downstream irrigation needs in southern New Mexico and west Texas as part of the Rio Grande Project.

The Bureau curtails 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 intentional drying up of 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 (URGWOPS). This review will evaluate environmental impacts of the agency's actions and determine how the Bureau and other agencies can use their existing water operations authorities to help meet the water needs of all users, including endangered species.

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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 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. (EBID 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 URGWOPS 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.

SWEC and the Alliance for the Rio Grande Heritage intend to petition the Bureau to include the Rio Grande Project in URGWOPS. Failing 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.

Next Page

In practical terms, the Rio Grande is the region's only renewable water source. Of the area's two major aquifers, one—the Hucco Bolson—is clearly being mined and will soon be economically exhausted, while the other—the Mesilla Bolson—is an unknown quantity showing signs of localized drawdown. Given the experience of Albuquerque and El Paso, it seems prudent to view groundwater supplies as a savings account which can be used to supplement the region's annual income of surface water from the river.

The flow of the river is strictly regulated and largely dependent on the amount of water released from Elephant Butte/Caballo Reservoirs. A "normal" year's release is 790,000 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 also assume that we've achieved a regionwide per capita 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 half the acreage currently cultivated, and to increase irrigation efficiency on that acreage by 25 percent. That would leave enough surface water to support almost 5 million people in most years, 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—tithed, if you will, to the river itself. Now we're down to about 3.7 million people that could be supported on surface water alone.

These are ballpark figures, but accurate enough to have sobering implications. The region's population is already approaching 3 million, which means we have very little room to grow before overshooting 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 League of Women Voters is sponsoring a public meeting on preservation of open space in Dona Ana County. The public meeting is Wednesday, December 6 from 6:30 to 9:30 in the East Ballroom of Corbett 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 Anna County.

Time will be provided for the public to identify areas 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 nationwide, 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 522-5065.

November and December Outings:
Please call Annie Gordon at 522-4527 (evenings) for outings in November and December. (plans had not been firmed up in time to meet the Sierran deadline)

BALLOT: IMPORTANT

Southern NM Executive Committee Elections

Vote for as many as 3 (2year terms)

Member

I 2
II II David Farrell

II II Margo Wilson

II II _____ (write in)

Your membership #('s)
(as on the Sierran Label)

1. _____
2. _____

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

Group Directory			
Pajarito Group of the Sierran Club			
Administration		Conservation Committee	
David Bouquin, Chapter Rep.	662-3741	Michael Smith, Chair	662-2380
Fred Hartline, Publicity Rep.	661-9031	Janet Gerwin, Co-Chair	662-9568
Miriam Oudejans, Newsletter	672-0414	Jody Benson, Sprawl	662-4782
Guthrie Miller, Membership	662-5545	Janet Gerwin, Water	662-9568
Warren Steckle, Outings	672-0414	Abe Jacobson, Mining	672-9579
Executive Committee		Carole Jacobson, Adopt-A-Highway	672-9579
Abe Jacobson, Chair	672-9579	Jennifer Johnson, Jomez Mountains Issues	289-9183
Bev Hartline, Vice-Chair	661-9031	Chuck Pargler, Grazing	661-6169
Carole Jacobson, Secretary/Treasurer	672-9579	Michael Smith/ Gordon Spangler, DOE Land Transfer	662-2380/ 662-9481
Fred Hartline	661-9031	Michael Smith Forests	662-2380
Miriam Oudejans	672-0414	Wildlife OPEN	
Michael Smith	662-2380		
Gordon Spangler	662-9481		

Outings

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

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 we will have early and heavy snows, but some good offerings have come in. Noteworthy outings include the following. Be sure and call leader for details. All phone numbers 505 except as noted.

Sat Nov 18 (weather permitting) **Santa Fe Watershed Tour.** Craig O'Hare, 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 serious potential for wildfire, and hear about the proposed management plans for this critical area. Prior reservations required.

Sat 11/4, 11/11, and 11/18 and Sun 12/3 and 12/17 **Desert Exploratory Hikes.** Tom Petencin 255-1497. 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. Carcamp.** Carolina Greenfield 915-594-7342. Enjoy an easy dayhike into Pine Springs and McKittrick Canyon where fall colors should be spectacular.

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

Fri/Sun Nov 13-12 **New Mexico Wilderness Alliance Inventory Weekend In The San Mateo Mountains.** Michael Scialdone 843-8696, scial@nmwild.org. Help inventory potential wilderness in these little visited mountains, and meet some great people.

Sat Nov 12 **Cabezon Peak Scramble.** Marcia Skillman 820-6654. Strenuous (in difficulty, short in miles) hike to the volcanic plug north of San Ysidro. Some hand & foot climbing.

Sat/Sun Nov 18/19 **Gila Wilderness Backpack.** Rollin Wickenden 915-532-9645 (leave message). Moderate + hike (12.6 miles) into Bud's Hole.

Sat/Sun Dec 2/3 **Bosque National Wildlife Refuge Carcamp.** Fred & Bev Hartline 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.** Rick Hurley 299-8401. Explore an interesting hogback near the old road to Cuba, and look for artifacts & hoodoos nearby. 6-8 miles r.t.

Southern NM Hiking - Annie Gordon 522-4527 requests calls re. yet to be scheduled trips in the balmy climes of the Las Cruces 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. Na-

Saving Water in a Desert

Series Of Programs

The Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly is sponsoring a series of talks which began in October. These talks will occur as part of the regular monthly meeting of the Action Committee on the third Wednesday of each month from 5:30-7:30 P.M. at the Natural Resources Conservation Service conference room at 6200 Jefferson N.W. in Albuquerque through March. The hosts listed below will coordinate presentations by panels of officials and experts associated with the major water-using sectors in the Middle Rio Grande. The purpose of this series of programs is to begin discussing current and future means for reducing water depletions across all water uses.

November 15	Agriculture	Sterling Grogan
December 20	Evaporation	John Shomaker
January 17	Riparian	Steve Harris
February 21	Self-Supply	Frank Robinson
March 21	Summary	Lee Brown

Tripp Campaign Gets Minnow Story Wrong

State Representative Don Tripp (R-Socorro) recently mailed a three page campaign letter to constituents suggesting that the mediated, multiple party agreements in the Minnow v. Martinez lawsuit are endangering the survival of both farming families in the valley and the Rio Grande silvery minnow.

"Tripp's assertions are based on a number of factual errors, gross simplifications, and self-serving election year rhetoric that demand correction", according to Steve Harris, director of Rio Grande Restoration, a river conservation group which has been working toward peaceful and collaborative solutions to Rio Grande valley's complex water problems.

Tripp's campaign piece portrays conservationists as, "radicals...[who] want dams removed...flood control levees removed and all human uses of the river stopped." The letter also asserts that continued compliance with the agreements under the endangered species act will "devastate the valley's economy" and that "all property east of El Camino Real Street in Socorro will be threatened by flood."

Says Harris "In a drought year such as this one, people are understandably nervous about the future; many folks remember hard times during the long drought of the 1950's. They're easy prey for the sort of disingenuous fear-mongering Tripp's campaign seems to be engaging in."

"Farmers should know that, far from removing water from irrigation, the Minnow v. Martinez agreements resulted in at least 35,000 acre feet of additional water being made available for irrigation; in effect the minnow extended irrigation for another five weeks."

tional 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 magnificent opportunity for current outing leaders and those considering becoming leaders to receive professional instruction, and share ideas/problems. Further details to follow.

Victor Atyas 438-9434 a SF hike leader, is looking for anyone interested in a [private, non Sierra Club] camping trip in the European Arctic next summer.

Court from Page 1

strong environmental protection, or one that turns the clock back on our hard-fought gains.

For example, in a case decided earlier this year, Justice Scalia expressed horror that a person who lives near a polluting plant would be able to hold the company accountable for violating the law. Justice Scalia argued that the Court was making it too easy for people to fight environmental threats in their own neighborhoods. Never mind that the factory in question had poisoned a river by dumping toxic mercury into the water 489 separate times.

The Sierra Club overwhelmingly endorsed Al Gore for President because of his strong commitment to environmental protection: http://www.sierraclub.org/newsroom/gore_endorsement.asp

Your vote for Al Gore — and your work to spread the word about how bad George W. Bush would be for the environment — are the most important things you can do for the environment between now and Nov. 7th!

All Creatures Great and Small



Photo by Gary Easch

"Every good thing, great and small, needs defense." — John Muir

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Backpack!



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