Gubernatorial Candidate Bill Richardson Outlines Renewable Energy Platform

The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club has endorsed former U.S. Senator and Energy Secretary Bill Richardson for New Mexico governor. Richardson delivered this talk at the Albuquerque Renewable Energy Conference on May 29, 2002.

Thank you for inviting me here today. Just last week, 160 New Mexico business leaders endorsed my campaign for governor, because I said I would bring people together to create a high-wage economy for our state. I said I would devote 25% of my time to this endeavor. One crucial area to develop high-wage jobs—and quality, homegrown New Mexico businesses—is renewable energy. Let's use the resources of New Mexico—its sun, its wind, and, of course, its creative people—to produce a renewable-energy industry that will add to the nation. I believe in solar, wind, geothermal, and biomass—and my record shows it.

As secretary of energy:
- I championed the One Million Roofs Initiative, to put solar power on one million roofs by 2010;
- I founded Wind Powering America, which funded projects throughout the country and set ambitious goals for wind-energy production;
- I installed photovoltaic power systems on federal buildings, including the Department of Energy in Washington, DC.

When I was in Congress, I supported increased funding for renewable-energy research and development of fuel-efficient vehicles.

I'm always looking for areas where New Mexico is at the top of the list—our strengths. Well, here's one—New Mexico is 12 in the country when it comes to the amount of naturally occurring wind. Other states have taken their wind, and they're producing energy:
- California produces 1700 megawatts to power 500,000 homes;
- Texas produces 1000 megawatts to power 500,000 homes;
- Wyoming produces 95 megawatts to power 30,000 homes; and
- Colorado produces 60 megawatts to power 18,000 homes.

In New Mexico, we generate a meager 1.32 megawatts—through two small wind farms in southeastern New Mexico. That's enough energy to power a neighborhood of 200 homes—and we should be talking about powering entire cities.

New Mexico is sitting on a great opportunity to capitalize on production of renewable energies, not only for use here, but for export to other states. Yet today, we generate from renewable energy less than 1% of the energy we consume.

We're so far behind—in a field where we should be leading the way. And when we become a leader in those fields, we will attract new manufacturers—of wind turbines, photovoltaic panels, and other components of these energy sources.

Shell Oil, for example, plans to invest $500 million over five years in wind, solar, and biomass. This company recognizes that hydrocarbons are finite—and Shell wants to be in business for many more years. I will say to Shell Oil, “Come to New Mexico. We've got the wind, sun, and the research underway.”

Just last week, a group of petroleum experts predicted that global supplies of crude oil will peak in 2010. And we will then be facing a new era of soaring energy prices and economic upheaval.

Now is the time for New Mexico to build a new industry, with new jobs, working on new technologies. And that’s exactly what I’ll work on when I’m elected governor of New Mexico.

Today, I want to outline my five-point plan, which I call “New Mexico,”
- First, I will set a goal—that New Mexico generate 10% of its energy by 2010 through renewable sources.
- Second, by the end of my first term, I want New Mexico to be recognized as one of the top three states when it comes to wind-energy production.
- Third, I will encourage New Mexico businesses to generate their own power to sell back to the utilities by increasing the ability to net-meter.
- Fourth, I want New Mexico state government to lead the way with its use of renewable energies by solar-powering all government buildings, and the Governor’s residence in Santa Fe. And
- Fifth, I want to encourage use of alternative fuels in our vehicles to keep our New Mexico states clean.

(continued on page 4)

Feds Reassess Floodplain Insurance

In a move that could reduce death and destruction as a result of flooding, by discouraging building in dangerous floodplains along New Mexico's major rivers, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently agreed to determine the effect of its National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) on numerous endangered species. The agreement comes in response to a lawsuit filed in January 2001 by Forest Guardians, the Sierra Club, and the Southwest Environmental Center that claimed that new development along river banks and in the adjacent floodplain was damming the habitat of species listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The settlement agreement, which was signed in late February 2002, required FEMA to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on the effects of the NFIP by submitting a Biological Assessment to the agency by May 1, 2002. The recently completed assessment addresses the effects of implementing the NFIP, which facilitates development within floodplain portions of communities, on all the major New Mexico river segments including the Rio Grande, San Juan, and Pecos.

The environmental groups claim that uncontrolled development of floodplains along the Rio Grande (see photos page 7) and San Juan (continued on page 14)
## Executive Directors

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors is elected by the members of the Club. The Board oversees the operations of the Club and makes policy decisions. The Board meets monthly to discuss and approve the Club's financial and operational matters.

## RIO GRANDE SIERRA CLUB

The Río Grande Sierra Club is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the natural environment of the Río Grande Valley. The Club promotes conservation and stewardship of the region's natural resources.

Website: [www.riograndesierraclub.org](http://www.riograndesierraclub.org)

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2 RIO GRANDE SIERRA

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Key Environmental Issues Facing New Mexico

by Jim Hansen

We have gone eight years with an administration that has been indifferent, if not antagonistic, toward environmental issues. As a result, neither the administration nor the legislature has brought forth much in the way of environmental legislation. The following are some key issues that should be addressed by a new administration.

The Sierra Club is currently involved with all of these issues. If you have comments or suggestions, please contact Jim Hansen in Santa Fe (505-576-9888; jhansen@sierraclub.org).

Water Quantity

New Mexico is over-allocated, and under adjudicated. We are trying to deal haphazardly with delivering water to Texas, now by buying our irrigation rights along the Pecos. We need a 100-year plan for the state water system that makes certain assumptions:

- We protect and improve the Rio Grande. Currently, the river is listed among the most endangered rivers in North America. A new administration should develop a plan for water diversion.
- We protect the system of Native American and community water systems.

Water Quality

We protect and improve the water quality in New Mexico. We must ensure that mining operations and other activities do not degrade our waterways.

Air Quality

The State must continue to improve air quality monitoring and enforcement. The executive branch must insist that the regulatory agencies have sufficient resources to deal with both point and non-point sources of air quality issues. It should be noted that the Sierra Club is currently helping the San Juan Generating Station over air quality issues.

Energy

New Mexico is highly dependent on revenues from oil and gas leases. Much of our public school system is dependent on this source for its operating funds. We must begin to move immediately away from reliance on this unsustainable, limited resource. New Mexico must look at energy supply and demand for a minimum 100-year period. Once our oil and gas reserves are gone, how will we survive as an industrialized society? Our entire manufacturing sector is highly dependent on petroleum. Instead, we should look to increasing our RPS (renewable portfolio standard), mainly wind, solar and biomass. The NM Public Regulatory Commission (PRC) has begun this process. We should take the following steps:

- Immediately begin construction of wind plants in eastern New Mexico. There is no longer any reason for delay. Both the State Legislature and the U.S. Congress have approved energy tax credits for wind.
- A new administration could consider using its bully pulpit to encourage wind generation manufacturers to locate in New Mexico, to provide jobs for New Mexican workers.

There are currently about 20 applications for new power plants in the State. Most of these are "merchant" power plants, but they will use our natural gas pipelines and export the electrical power out of state. There is absolutely no lack of generation capacity in New Mexico at the current time or foreseeable future. We will simply deplete faster our limited gas reserves to sell power to Texas, Arizona, and California.

New Mexico was once the solar capital of the U.S. We need to regain our stature in this field. New Mexico is well suited for solar, both for passive heating and for active PV generation. A new administration could work with agencies like the Energy, Mineral and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) and our national labs—Sandia and Los Alamos—to again become the solar leader.

- Conservation measures cannot be overstated. It is much more cost effective to build in or retrofit energy efficiency than to produce more power. In many cases, payback of investment is less than 10 years.

State government, including Construction Industries Division (CID), should push forward adoption of the 2000 Model Energy Code and mandate Home Energy Rating Systems (HERS) ratings of 87-90 for new residential units.

Planning/Growth

According to the American Planning Association, New Mexico's Comprehensive planning statutes remain similar to the 1920s model legislation upon which they were based. A good place to start in this area is by studying the seminal work "Growth in New Mexico: Impacts and Options." This report provided a comprehensive analysis of issues and options for statewide growth management and offered 35 policy options.

Wildlife

The past eight years have been disastrous for wildlife. We now have a Game and Fish Commission that is totally subservient to a small segment of the State. Both bear and cougar hunts have been increased beyond sustainable limits. The current administration has actively opposed the wild-introduction plan (see page 10), thus encouraging lawless behavior in western New Mexico.

We envision a new administration that will restore the role of both the Commission and the Department as advocates for wildlife.

Toxics/Pesticides

The current pesticide-management program in New Mexico is dominated by a small group of vendors and NMSU. There are no consumer or health members of the Commission. We believe that this is an area that deserves considerable attention by a new administration. New Mexico should look at recent advances in this field, particularly in the area of notification of pesticide use. The State of New York has been a leader in this field.

Mining

The State of New Mexico passed a good inter-irock mining act in the early 1990s. Two issues have now surfaced as a result of the construction of a new administration. The ground and gravel industry was left out of the original act. There is now emerging a pattern of unacceptable sand and gravel operations throughout the State. The Sierra Club has been working closely with the State Land Commissioner in drafting a bill to deal with this issue. We would welcome support from the executive branch.

The second item pertains to the issue of allowing new mines to open under the permit of an existing mine. The Club is currently litigating this issue. If we lose in court, we would welcome support to amend the original act to better address this issue.

Wilderness/Open Space

Wilderness may be more of a federal than state issue. A new administration, however, can help set the tone of the debate by supporting a substantial increase in wilderness lands in our State. It is imperative that we leave wilderness and open space to succeeding generations.

Transportation

Another area that needs overhaul is the State Highway Department. The past eight years have been the worst in highway funds as political payoffs. The Johnson administration has committed our State to many years of future highway bonding capacity for questionable projects. In particular, a new administration should closely scrutinize the proposed Hondo Valley/Highway 70 project.

The state executive branch should continue to support and move forward more equitable, environmental method of transportation. A recent demonstration project between Santa Fe and Los Alamos was very well supported, but was subsequently dropped because of lack of will. A bullet train in the Rio Grande corridor should be given real consideration.

Finally, the State should invest in whether it can raise auto fuel efficiency standards (see Rio Grande Sierran March/April 2002) at the state level. Current federal fuel standards date back to 1974. If New Mexico were to raise the standards at the state level, we would instantly become a national model.
Renewable energy has come a long way in the past five years, to the point where many sources are actually competitive with conventional energy. I believe that the role of government should be to help close the pricing gap. That means encouraging development of technology and providing financial incentives to producers and consumers.

Back in the mid-1980s, state and federal governments offered an array of tax incentives to encourage renewable energy—and business boomed. Between 1980 and 1987, more than 40,000 active and passive solar systems were installed in New Mexico. But in 1983, the tax credits disappeared—and the impact was devastating. At the beginning of 1985, we had 250 solar-energy businesses in the State, employing more than 2,500 people. By the end of the year, 80% of them had closed.

Developing our renewable energy is such an important issue, especially in this day and age. It’s the right thing for our environment—to protect our public lands, and to keep our air clean. But it is now an issue of national security—we have to decrease our dependence on foreign oil and our dependence upon the Middle East. We must become self-sufficient.

Set a Goal—10%

The first part of my plan is setting what I consider to be a realistic goal. Ten percent of our energy should come from renewable sources by 2010. I will ask the State Legislature to pass a resolution that affirms this goal, and that encourages our residents, businesses, and elected officials to embrace the production and use of renewable energy. This means we need to pursue a combination of new energy sources—wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass.

New Mexico today has an electrical load of 2,000 megawatts—and that goal means that we need to generate 200 megawatts from renewable sources. I talked earlier about what other states are doing with wind. Wyoming is already generating 10 megawatts—that’s half of our goal.

As governor, I will make sure the State provides strong encouragement, through leadership, technology development, and incentives. We need to increase research, at our national labs and at our universities—facilities such as the Southwest Technology Development Institute at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces.

I support the tax credits we have in place at the state and federal level, but I would add an incentive to encourage homeowners to invest in solar and wind. I will push for a state income-tax credit equal to 15% of the cost of a certified solar hot-water or photovoltaic system, or wind turbine. In addition, the owner of this system should be entitled to an ongoing tax credit for the energy produced. These incentives will increase demand, which will help create renewable-energy companies.

I will also encourage the issuance of Industrial Revenue Bonds to finance renewable-energy power plants. In addition, I will support an effort to join with other western governors to build 1,000 megawatts of Concentrating Solar Power in the West. A project of this size will generate the economies of scale we need to make solar power cost-effective.

When we deregulate electricity in New Mexico, I’ll make the utilities offer “green pricing”—customers can choose to pay a premium, and purchase renewable energy. And we will continue to develop geothermal and biomass.

Right now, New Mexico is the #1 state in the country, when it comes to geothermally heated greenhouses. These greenhouses, for example, grow trees, roses, and fish for export outside of New Mexico. They employ 250 New Mexicans with a combined payroll of $53.7 million. Geothermal energy lowers the cost, and gives these companies a competitive advantage.

We’ve got the natural resources, the financial incentives, the research technology, and, of course, the people. Put all that together with strong leadership, and we will meet the 10% goal by 2010.

Top Three in Wind Energy

The energy source with most potential is obviously wind—and I expect to see some major developments in New Mexico in the next 12 months. My second goal is to put us in the top three states when it comes to production of wind energy. That means we have to move ahead of Colorado and Wyoming. This is an industry in its early stages—and we have nowhere to go but up.

Congress this year passed a generous wind-production energy credit that should encourage wind farms to be built here in New Mexico. Our own legislature gave an additional boost when it passed the Renewable Energy Production Tax Credit this year. New Mexico has the ability to produce 425 billion kilowatt hours—25 times the energy that the State consumes.

My goal is to use our wind power to create a new export business. Wind farms will provide much-needed jobs, energy, and also additional revenue for farmers and ranchers. This new kind of power generation will be especially helpful in rural New Mexico—places like Taos, which is often cited as one of the best wind-energy production sites in the State.

Advances in wind turbine technology mean we’ve minimized the thrust to birds. Right here at Sandia Labs, they’re researching how to make turbines even more efficient—more durable, with improved airfoils, and better aerodynamics.

I will work directly with our own energy companies, like PNM and Southwestern Public Service, and the many electric co-ops around the State, and encourage them to take advantage of the credits now in place. It’s good business, and it’s good for New Mexico.

Net Metering Will Encourage Competition

If we talk the talk, then we better walk the walk. This is the fourth part of my plan. By 2010, I want 10% of our state government’s energy consumption to be from renewable energy sources. This is yet another way that I’ll help to create the demand, the market, for a new industry in New Mexico.

One of the first things I’ll do as governor is to order the governor’s residence be converted to solar power. I will work with the neighborhood, and within historic guidelines, to ensure compliance with city standards. I am committed to making changes.

I will initiate a program—Solar Schools—to power our schools with the sun. In the process, we’ll teach our children about renewable energy. I propose to power 10 schools each year, all over the State. We’ll look at new schools under construction, to see how we can use solar power into the energy mix, and we’ll retrofit existing schools. We will fund Solar Schools with the savings we generate from new energy-efficiency programs in our schools. We can make this happen.

In addition, I will commission a study of all state facilities to determine where it makes the most sense to convert to solar energy. Already, we have installed photovoltaics in many of our state parks—at visitor centers and pay stations. We have a solar hot-water system in the Central New Mexico Correctional Facility in Los Lunas.

As secretary of energy, I commissioned the federal offices along Colorado’s Front Range to purchase 10 megawatts of wind power. I also directed the Department of Energy to purchase 3% of its total electricity from renewable energy sources by 2005, and 7.5% by 2012.
by 2010. We installed photovoltaic power systems at the Pentagon and the Department of Energy. I am making the same kind of commitment to New Mexico.

Putting Clean Vehicles on the Street

While we focus on energy to heat and light our homes and businesses, my fifth point is that we need to pay attention to the cars we drive. The largest source of air pollution is cars—and I will encourage New Mexicans to drive clean, fuel-efficient vehicles.

As secretary of energy, I supported the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles Program and the research on fuel cells at Sandia and Los Alamos. In just a few years, we should be looking at cars in the showroom that get 80 miles to the gallon.

I support the Clean Corridors program—and I will leverage state and federal funds to build more natural gas service stations on Interstates 25 and 10, from Colorado to Texas. We also need to make it possible for private citizens to access government fueling stations.

I also want to provide incentives for New Mexicans to purchase hybrid vehicles that operate on gasoline and electricity. These cars can realize efficiency of 70 miles per gallon, or higher. And they can reduce emissions significantly. I am proposing that people who purchase these hybrid vehicles be exempt from paying gross receipts tax. In addition, we will waive all registration fees for the life of the vehicle.

We will investigate other states to find the best model for a financial incentive to encourage the purchase of other alternative fuel vehicles, especially those powered by natural gas. I believe these incentives work, but I want to make sure we don’t get into the same kind of financial trouble as our friends in Arizona.

Finally, I will ensure that state government is living by its own mandate—that all new state vehicles must be capable of running on alternative fuels.

On all these issues, I believe New Mexico should be a leader. And with these specific objectives, we will be:

- First, a goal of 10% renewable energy by 2010.
- Second, make New Mexico one of the top three states for wind energy.
- Third, expand solar-metering.
- Fourth, convert state facilities—including the governor’s mansion—to solar energy.
- And,
- Fifth, put more alternative-fuel vehicles on New Mexico roads.

This is my plan to Renew New Mexico—and I welcome your support to make it happen. Thank you.

For more information, and to volunteer or otherwise contribute, contact Jennifer Keczowski at the campaign’s Bernadillo County headquarters (944-7900), 2929 Corra Road NW, Suite 201, Albuquerque, at Richardson’s Santa Fe County headquarters (953-9406), 1322 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe, contact Sandy Rodgers (sandy@newmex.gov), Paityn Trujillo-Knaus (pkn@newmex.gov), and Paityn Larragoite (pll@newmex.gov).

Chapter Endorses Candidates

The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club has endorsed Bill Richardson for Governor, Gloria Trujillo for United States Senate, and Richard Romero for United States Congress from District 2. Each of these candidates has been interviewed by some or all members of the Chapter Executive Committee. Any of their opponents who were willing were also interviewed.

Richardson’s positions on renewable energy are featured in this issue. More information about the environmental records and positions of these candidates, and what each of us can do to help get them elected, will be included in the next two issues of the Rio Grande Sierra.

None of these candidates is a "shoo-in," each one has a chance, and all of them need your help. Please give your time, and send your contributions.

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Endorsements for the State House of Representatives

- District 11—Rick Miten (incumbent), endorsed in the Democratic Primary
- District 14—Miguel Garcia (incumbent), endorsed in the Democratic Primary
- District 15—Steve Archbould, endorsed in the Democratic Primary
- District 19—Sheryl William Stapleton (incumbent), endorsed in the Democratic Primary
- District 21—Mimi Stewart (incumbent)
- District 33—J. Paul Taylor (incumbent)
- District 40—Nick L. Salazar (incumbent), endorsed in the Democratic Primary
- District 47—Max Coll (incumbent)
- District 69—W. Ken Martinez (incumbent), endorsed in the Democratic Primary

Next Chapter Quarterly Meetings

The Chapter’s Conservation and Executive Committees will meet on Saturday, August 24th, 2002 at 10:00 AM. The meetings will be held at Albuquerque’s Eco-Friendly Office of “Homes by Markfix” 1120 Yale Blvd, SE. From I-25, take the Yale exit east to Yale, then north one block at Yale street distance.

The Conservation Committee will meet in the meeting, discussing the Chapter’s conservation campaigns and plans. In the afternoon, the Executive Committee will handle Chapter business, including political items, personnel, and budget.

All Club members are invited to attend. For more information, contact Jim Hannan (johannas057@comcast.net; 988-5760).

Stay Informed

Get the Latest News and Alerts by E-mail

Sierra Club National is implementing a new way for members to subscribe to membership services that provide up-to-date information and alerts. A new link in the form below (www.sierraclub.org/newsletters), which is done online, and is free or inexpensive and includes the old way of signing up.

To receive and post messages on current happenings of environmental interest in the Rio Grande Chapter, send a message to Interest Lists via email listorg, with the subject "subscribe (your listname) (your interests)". Because this list is open to anyone interested,
Historical Perspective on NM’s Current “Drought”

The Northern Group of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club ran a paid political advertisement in the June 14, 2002 edition of the Santa Fe New Mexican about the drought conditions that New Mexico is experiencing and the Group’s proposed community-wide response to the situation—which is actually more “normal” for our region than the wetter conditions we’ve grown used to during the past 20 years.

During the course of our research, Dr. Thomas Swetnam, Director of the University of Arizona Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research, provided more insightful information than we were able to incorporate into the advertisement. We include some of his comments here.

Several features of these records (see figures) are worth pointing out:

“The tree rings are a good but not perfect indicator of statewide rainfall during the previous fall to current spring. Summer rainfall is not included in the inch gauge record because tree-ring growth in these sites is less affected by it than by cool-season precipitation.”

“Note the very wet conditions that occurred in New Mexico from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s. This was the wettest two-decade period in the 20th Century, and the tree-ring record (lower graph) suggests that it was the wettest two decades during the past 1,000 years. (Of course, this was also a period of maximum growth in Southwest human populations.) Other recent tree-ring and climate research indicates that this was not only an extraordinary wet period in the Southwest, but it was also quite warm, especially during the winters.”

“The 1950s drought was the most extreme and long-lasting drought during the 20th Century, and it also stands out as one of the worst droughts in the past 1,000 years. Major droughts of this magnitude and greater have been a recurrent theme in New Mexico for many centuries. These droughts have been disruptive of human societies and ecosystems. The so-called “Great Drought” of the mid to late 1950s, for example, is thought to have been one factor leading to the abandonment of the Colorado Plateau by the Anasazi people, and their migration to the Rio Grande and establishment of some of the modern Pueblos. The 1580s drought has recently become known as a “megadrought” of continental extent, ranging from the Carolinas on the eastern seaboard to the Californias. This drought may have contributed to the mysterious disappearance of the first English colony in America on Roanoke Island, and it has been attributed to extensive disease epidemics and declines of human populations in Mexico.”

The current “drought” period has so far been characterized by extreme single-year events interspersed with relatively wet years. This is a prime formula for extensive wildfires, because the wet years produce more grass and tree leaves, so fire easily ignites and spreads during the dry years.

It is unknown whether or not the current drought will continue. There is some speculation, however, based on long-term trends in sea-surface temperatures of both the Pacific and the North Atlantic Oceans. These trends suggest that we may have shifted into a condition more typical of the pattern that prevailed during the 1950s—a cold tropical Pacific and warm North Atlantic—when New Mexico experienced both winter and summer drought and very hot summers. If this is the case, we may be headed for persistent, extreme drought in coming months and years. (Note: This is a big “If,” and no predictions are being made.)

For more information, contact Tom Swetnam, Director and Professor of dendrochronology, Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721 (520)212-2112; fax 520212-2229; swetnam@ltr.arizona.edu; www.ltr.arizona.edu; http://sweat.ltr.arizona.edu/ swetnam.html. For further reading, see page 18.
Albuquerque's Water Woes: Oasis or Living in Denial?

As Albuquerque residents, we are reminded daily that we reside in the high desert. Dry winds kick up dust clouds over the city, and tumbleweeds the size of no economy car spread across our paths on the freeway. Dust devils have been spinning this arid land for centuries. In the heart of this, the cottonwood forests nurtured by the Rio Grande are our oasis in the desert—and they are the largest cottonwood forests in North America.

In recent dry seasons, however, and anticipating drought years, farmers and environmentalists continue negotiating water use; the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District recognizes the urgency to change to a stringent water schedule; and the City of Albuquerque needlessly seeks solutions for our depleting aquifer.

Albuquerque's only underground water source, the aquifer, is being depleted. Most experts predict lower aquifer levels over the next 40 years that may cause irreversible impacts with a number of chain-reaction effects.

This thirsty wake-up call prompted city planners to look for alternative water sources. San Juan Chama water, purchased from Colorado by the City of Albuquerque more than 30 years ago, is cited as the 'Silver Bullet' that will solve Albuquerque's water woes. New Mexico surface water is over-allocated and becoming a statewide water crisis. Recently, the City of Albuquerque moved forward with its proposal to formally request a permit from the New Mexico State Engineer to divert surface water from the Rio Grande for municipal, industrial, and related purposes (see cabq.gov/waterstrategy). This permit request includes 47,000 acre-feet of water diverted from San Juan Chama water plus an additional 47,000 acre-feet of "borrowed native river water." The City proposes to:

- build an inflatable dam across the river near Alamedas Bridge to divert San Juan Chama and native water into the city water system,
- to treat the water to drinking quality or tertiary standards for city use,
- to chemically treat and return as wastewater, 15 miles from the diversion point, the 47,000 acre feet of displaced native river water.

The diversion of native water will deprive the river, its aquatic life, and the Bosque for the 1.5-mile stretch between diversion and return.

Research and analysis has brought river-protection organizations together with land-based allies in formal protest, Amigos Bravos/Friends of the Wild Rivers, Rio Grande Restoration, the Sierra Club, New Mexico Public Interest Group, Socorro Soil and Conservation District, John Camargo, and the Assn. of Professional Trusts (of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District) joined in protest against the Albuquerque Water Project filed in the New Mexico State Engineers office November 28, 2001. (Note: The Sierra Club challenged the only native water diversion.)

The collaborative shares the following concerns about the Albuquerque drinking-water plan:

- Water Quantity—The 47,000 acre feet of natural water diversion will deplete the Rio Grande and Bosque for approximately 15 miles. Reduced river flows will concentrate contaminants at low flows, while the treatment system adds compounds to the river, threatening human health and the crust of downstream farmers, and imperiling the river's ecosystem.
- Water Quality—Water should be improved to high quality drinking-water for all city users and should return minimal flows of 250 cubic feet per second (cfs) to the river. A healthy river produces healthy crops, grown and sold locally. Do not violate existing water-quality standards.
- No New Diversions—Diversions points for the San Juan Chama water are already in place; others may be negotiated. The proposed inflatable dam too more potential for harm, and works against protection and protection of the river ecology.
- Conservation, Restoration, Recharge—If residents can lower use from 209 to 150 gallons/day (as is achieved in El Paso and Tucson), we could keep 30,000 acre feet of water in the aquifer. Bosque restoration—replanted saltcedar and Russian olive with cottonwood—would actually increase river flow and help recharge the aquifer. Such restoration also decreases the incidence of fires during dry seasons.
- Sacred Waters, Wise Use, Responsible Vision—Many New Mexicans live and work in the area and are committed to maintaining the integrity of our high-desert landscape. We affirm the cultural values of land-based communities. We grow up to the enhancement of New Mexico, and we have seen its beauty, multi-cultural expressions, rich and varied heritage.

PUBLIC HEARING

Comment on Albuquerque's Rio Grande Diversion EIS

The long awaited Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the City of Albuquerque's surface-water diversion project was issued in mid-June 2002. To view or download a copy, see http://www.enviro.state.nm.us/2001/2227/environmentalimpactstatement/pdfs/index.htm. (It is now available.)

Public hearings on the draft Environmental Impact Statement are scheduled for July 10-12 in Las Cruces, El Paso, and Albuquerque.

The groups that protest the City Project suggest that the City has yet to address five concerns:

- The City's plan will reduce native Rio Grande flows in the Albuquerque reach;
- The City's plan will diminish the water supply to downstream users;
- The City's plans for constructing a new dam, further segmenting river habitat;
- The City's plan will not maintain an adequate minimum flow in the river to protect water quality; and
- Albuquerque must set aggressive water conservation goals and devote some of the conserved water to the river—to the ecosystem, the downstream users, the Pueblos, and Rio Grande Compact compliance.

For more information, contact Steve Harris (Rio Grande Restoration, P.O. Box 3-C, Embudo, NM 87531; ph/fax: 505-771-1269; cell: 771-2803; smeheg@gmail.org; www.rgfr.com; www.rigordnecconservation.org).

"The fact that water is essential to life lends an ethical dimension to every decision we make about how it is used, managed, and distributed.

We need new technologies, to be sure, but we also need a new ethic:

All living things must get enough water before some get more than enough."

—Gordon Pastel, from "Trashed Water"
Alliance Protecting Old Growth in the Southwest

by Dave Sherman with Ted Schikke

Intensive logging over the past 120 years has destroyed more than 95% of the Southwest’s original old-growth forests. Because of this, in 1992 the National Biological Survey declared the old-growth ponderosa pine forests of the Southwest one of the most endangered ecosystems in the nation.

In 1992, the U.S. Forest Service developed management guidelines that were supposed to protect the Northern goshawk and the old-growth habit that it depends upon for survival. These guidelines were implemented throughout the Southwest region’s 11 national forests in 1996. The Management Recommendations for the Northern goshawk (MRNG) were based on only three telemetry studies from the 1980s, ignoring the foraging behavior of Northern goshawks. Two of the three studies involved observations of goshawks in Sweden; one of the studies was from central Utah.

Instead of providing protection, the Goshawk Guidelines are being used to justify the continued decimation of these imperiled ecosystems.

The MRNG asserts that the goshawk is a habitat generalist that does not require dense forest canopy cover and contiguous, mature forests in order to forage successfully. As a result, the MRNG did not recognize any detriment to the goshawk by fragmenting the forest into small habitat patches with less canopy coverage throughout the goshawk’s foraging areas. This ignores the fact that key prey species, such as the unique Kaibab squirrels, need dense canopies with interwoven crowns to survive.

According to the Forest Service’s own reports, more than 70% of the goshawk’s prey depend upon mature forests for their survival. This includes not only the Kaibab squirrels, but also such species as woodpeckers, the Hairy woodpecker, and Blue grouse.

The goshawk’s short powerful wings and long rudder-like tail are designed for hunting in an old-growth forest. Their soft and swoopy hunting style depends upon a dense forest canopy to hide the goshawk as it approaches its prey. Furthermore, goshawks nest high in the canopy of old-growth ponderosa pines where they are shaded from the sun and protected from larger predators. Goshawk populations are in decline throughout the Southwest due to the loss of old-growth habitat.

At least five relevant scientific studies on goshawk foraging behavior appeared after the MRNG was finalized and before the final decision to implement them—the Record of Decisions (ROD)—was issued by the Forest Service. The conclusion of every scientific study released since October 1991 contradicts the MRNG’s conclusion that the goshawk is a habitat generalist that does not prefer contiguous mature forests with high canopy cover. Studies not discussed or analyzed by the Forest Service show that Northern goshawks, when foraging, consistently select forested areas with greater canopy coverage and relatively large, dense stands of large trees. The post-MRNG studies show that Northern goshawks choose to hunt in those areas where such conditions are present rather than in forests or open areas where those conditions are absent. Not surprisingly, the goshawk is most successful when hunting in such forests.

The Forest Service was well aware of the existence of the Northern goshawk studies when it was conducting the required NEPA review. In addition to conservation groups, state and federal wildlife agencies, including the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the New Mexico Fish and Game Department, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and at least one U.S. Forest Service biologist all submitted detailed comments questioning the scientific validity of the MRNG based on the most recent studies. Despite these clearly articulated recommendations and concerns, the Forest Service analysis continued to rely exclusively on the 1991 MRNG.

Because of this, two members of the Southwest Forest Alliance—the Center for Biological Diversity and the Arizona Sierra Club—appealed the MRNG before a federal judge in May 2002. Although the appeal was denied, further action is anticipated.

Misusing the Goshawk Guidelines

Currently, the Forest Service is not implementing the guidelines as they were written. Throughout the Southwest, minimum canopy densities specified within the MRNG have instead been applied at maximums. Logging large openings around and within each stand has destroyed the integrity of old-growth stands. A highly fragmented landscape of stunted trees, dwarfing giants, and eroding soils is the result.

Throughout New Mexico, the guidelines are being used to justify logging operations. On the Lincoln National Forest, the Rio Peteneco project would log 17,600 million board feet on 32,000-50,000 acres in the remote Sacramento Mountains in southcentral New Mexico. Although logged extensively in the early 1900s, the remaining old-growth and mature forests of the Sacramentos harbor the densest breeding populations of Mexican spotted owls in New Mexico, as well as rare and endemic species such as the Sacramento Mountains salamander.

Although there is a legitimate need for some forest thinning in the region (e.g., community fire protection), millions of board feet would be commercially logged in the name of the Goshawk Guidelines.

The Sheep Basin Project, on the Gila National Forest, would destroy approximately 4,000 acres. Although presented as another necessary logging operation for goshawks, the Forest Service recently admitted that it is a timber-improvement project. Furthermore, the project limits opportunities for local communities that have attempted to create jobs by removing small-diameter trees in forest restoration. By including old-growth and large tree logging, the Sheep Basin project disqualifies local citizen groups from receiving grant money from Senator Bingaman’s Community Forest Restoration Program that requires preservation of large and old trees.

In Arizona, perched on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, the Kaibab Plateau has long been recognized as an area of outstanding biological diversity. Furthermore, it harbors the largest population of protected goshawks in the Southwest. President Theodore Roosevelt honored this rich heritage when he created the Grand Canyon National Game Preserve in 1906. It is the only such game preserve managed by the U.S. Forest Service. Due to its remoteness, the area still harbors extensive tracts of old-growth ponderosa pine and mixed conifer habitats. Unfortunately, these areas are threatened now more than ever. Under the auspices of the Goshawk Guidelines, the Forest Service is now cutting more large, old trees in the Southwest than they were before 1996.

(continued on next page)
Since adopting the guidelines, more than 55,000 old-growth trees have been logged on the Kibab Plateau in just six timber sales. Nearly half of the trees were 24 inches in diameter or greater and included very large trees up to 50 inches in diameter. The Dry Park timber sale contract, recently signed by the North Kibab Ranger District, authorizes the logging of 6,000 more old-growth trees two miles from Grand Canyon National Park. In February 2002, the Alliance successfully appealed the East Rim timber sale, which would have logged 2,300 acres of old-growth trees just three miles from Grand Canyon National Park. Both the East Rim and Dry Park sales are "goshawk sales." Instead of providing protection, the Goshawk Guidelines are being used to justify the continued destruction of these imperiled ecosystems.

An Old-Growth Preserve Campaign

The Southwest Forest Alliance is hoping to achieve permanent protection for approximately 400,000 acres of old growth on the Kibab Plateau through the creation of an old-growth preserve. Such a designation would bring about changes in forest management that will preserve remaining old-growth trees and perpetuate old-growth conditions on the landscape level, across the Kibab Plateau. Such a designation would prohibit the logging of small-diameter trees, when and where such logging was determined to be necessary to help the plateau regain its old-growth characteristics.

Such a designation requires a great deal of public input.

The Southwest Forest Alliance

Only 5% of our centuries-old, old-growth forests remain in the Southwest. It is time to preserve and protect these unique and imperiled ecosystems.

The Southwest Forest Alliance is at the forefront of such efforts. Based in Flagstaff, AZ, the Alliance is comprised of more than 60 national, regional, and local groups throughout New Mexico and Arizona, and has launched an exciting campaign to protect and restore old-growth forests in the Southwest. "Old-Growth Forever" seeks to increase the level of public awareness and outrage over the continued logging of rare old-growth trees throughout the region.

We invite you to join in this historic opportunity. Please contact both the Forest Service (see box) and your elected representatives to support this historic initiative. In Summer 2002, we will be conducting field trips to the North Rim to introduce folks to this awe-inspiring area. Once the devastation caused by the continued logging of old growth is seen in person, it is difficult to not be inspired to help protect those areas that are still intact.

Our website contains up-to-date information about this important campaign, a calendar of upcoming slide shows, and our field trip schedule. You can also use our electronic postcard (www.sfwa.org/goshawk_action.html) to contact the Forest Service and Bush, encouraging them to protect the remaining old growth on the North Rim and throughout Southwest.

Please visit our website, and contact us if you are interested in hosting a presentation and/or have any questions regarding our program (PO Box 1948, Flagstaff, AZ 86002; 928/774-6514; www.sfwa.org).

Please Write!

Please fill out this form and mail it to:

Southwest Forest Alliance
P.O. Box 1948
Flagstaff, AZ 86002

Dear Regional Forester,

I am very concerned about the destruction of the last remaining old-growth forests in the Southwest. I respectfully request that you:

- Implement a moratorium on the cutting of all trees established before 1900 and all trees 16" diameter and larger on the Southwest's National Forests.
- Replace the 1992 "Goshawk Guidelines" with a new plan that truly protects the goshawk and its old-growth habitat. Work openly with the timber industry and include all public and scientific participation.
- Designate the North Kibab Ranger District on the Kaibab National Forest an unparalleled reserve of old growth adjacent to the Grand Canyon, as an Old-Growth Preserve.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name (Printed)]

Address:

E-mail:

[Signature]

[Name (Printed)]

Address:

E-mail:

[Signature]

[Name (Printed)]

Address:

E-mail:
NM Ranks 5th in Diversity—But Losing Plants & Animals

New Mexico ranks in the top five states for the diversity of plants and animals within its borders. But it also ranks No. 13 for how fast it’s losing that ecological variety. A recent Nature Conservancy study, “Status of the Union: Ranking America’s Biodiversity,” placed New Mexico fifth in the nation for its different plant and animal species (4,836). More than 10% of the State’s species, however, are in danger of becoming extinct.

New Mexico ranks well in overall diversity partly because of geography. It overlaps several major ecological regions, including:

- the Chihuahuan and Sonoran deserts,
- the Great Plains,
- the southern Rocky Mountains, and
- the Colorado Plateau.

The State is third in the diversity of reptiles (93) and mammal species (154), and fourth in plant varieties (3,305). New Mexico ranks eleventh in number of species found only within its boundaries (90). While New Mexico ranks only 30th in the nation for varieties of fish, we are in danger of losing nearly half these species.

“It is rather striking how diverse New Mexico is,” said Gary Bell, director of sciences for the Nature Conservancy’s New Mexico chapter. “The thing that surprises most people, not just about New Mexico but about the Southwest, is how many fish species we have, how many amphibians we have, how many things we have living in the water, and how endangered they are.” And, he said, they’re endangered “because our aquatic systems are so stressed with all the demands on them.”

Rachael Maurer, a Conservancy spokeswoman, said the organization does “ecological planning”—looking at areas most in danger of losing species. “A lot of people believe The Nature Conservancy just buys land,” she said. “That is a portion of what we do, but we take a scientific look at the land and say, ‘What can be conserved?’ If a piece of land has no viable conservation needs, then that is not an area where we need to put our efforts.”

Wolves Could Roam Southern Rockies

Reintroduction of the gray wolf to the Southern Rockies would not only help a federally endangered species recover, it would also help restore the delicate balance of the Southern Rockies ecosystem.

Since the last Colorado wolf was killed in 1945 as a result of a government-led campaign of extermination, the Southern Rockies landscape has been missing a key ecosystem regulator—the wolf. The gray wolf is now a federally endangered species. In the Rocky Mountains of northern New Mexico, Colorado, and southern Wyoming, the effects of population growth, extractive industries, and livestock grazing threaten native habitats and wildlife, as well as the diversity of flora and fauna that regulate ecosystem health.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has written a draft plan that:

- attempts to reduce protection for the gray wolf in the Lower 48 states, even though wolves are still missing from key areas, and
- lessens the chance that wolves will be restored to the Southern Rockies.

The FWS has received tens of thousands of comments from concerned citizens around the country (inspired largely by the Sierra Club’s educational efforts) demanding full and continued protection for the wolf under the Endangered Species Act. Still, it is not clear that the plan will be improved to better protect wolves and promote reintroduction in the Southern Rockies.

Wolves in the Southern Rockies

While the FWS has studied and established a plan to recover the wolf in the Northern Rockies, it continues to ignore the important role the Southern Rockies can play in wolf recovery. In 1993, Congress appropriated funding for the FWS to conduct a Biological Feasibility Study on the practicality of reintroducing wolves in Colorado. In eleven national forests and neighboring areas, scientists concluded that 1,128 wolves could survive given the existing prey base, a clear indication that the Southern Rockies are critical habitat for wolf recovery.

A poll released in May 2001 showed that more than two-thirds of Coloradans from all parts of the state favor wolf reintroduction. These numbers document the strong and lasting public support for wolf recovery efforts.

The Southern Rockies Wolf Restoration Campaign

The goal of the Sierra Club’s Southern Rockies Wolf Restoration Campaign is to educate the public and key state and federal decision-makers about the importance of establishing a wolf recovery area in the Southern Rockies, and to ultimately reintroduce wolves there.

The Southern Rockies’ large tracts of public lands could serve as reintroduction sites, providing plenty of room for wolves to roam with little conflict.

Proactive policy development and public education will be required to ensure that the federal and state governments do the right thing by returning the wolf and restoring natural balance to the Southern Rockies.

For more information, contact Tina Arquihiles at the Sierra Club Southwest Regional Field Office in Bozeman, MT (192/449-5955; tina.arquihiles@sierraclub.org).
August General Meeting
Summer Slides and Videos
After our Summer hiatus, let's get caught up by sharing memories of vacation adventures! Bring some slides, either film or digital, or even a video to narrate for your fellow Sierraans.

Wednesday, August 28th, 7:30 PM
University and Wiggins on the UTEP campus
Centennial Museum

Carpe diem
by Laurence Gibson

There are exciting times to be an El Pasoan! We have many opportunities before us right now. Consider:

- a chance to lead the first new full-service medical school to be established in Texas in 33 years.
- a chance to become a model desert city, with a vibrant downtown, professionally planned development, walkable streets, open space, bike paths, and a sustainable water supply.

Other cities have long ago taken the bull by the horns. Think of San Antonio's strategies... and its impressive results, or the desert harmonies of Tucson. Most importantly, it would resemble a long-planned downtown to destination-rent standards.

These accomplishments required strategy. Now we are struggling! City Council, remember Palmavo! "We have seen the enemy and it is us." Let's not blow our one-in-a-lifetime chance with petty jealousies, personal ambitions, or just plain bickering. If the Mayor is reluctant to strike you up, just remember nobody's perfect. Sierraans, we need to support the following initiatives with cash and letters in the next few weeks:

- a TIF District to help fund the medical school.
- impact fees for new developments to finance that growth for parks.

Important URL's:
http://www.earl.org
http://www.elpaso.edu/science/apsunsite.htm
http://www.taasc.org

The Lotus is now available in PDF. You may request to receive an e-mail link or to receive a hard copy at lgibson@utep.edu. Please be sure to include your zip code.

Website News

Let's hear your ideas! Need a membership application? Log on to our outstanding website for all things El Paso Regional Group activities. The El Paso Regional Group Castro credits the new members coming through their efforts now.

Sierra Club - El Paso Regional Group
Directory (Area Code 915)
http://taswa.sierclub.org/elpaso

Selected Outings

July 6: Summer Birds of Rio Bosque Wetlands Park
Place: El Paso's Lower Valley
Class: Easy
Length: 2.5 miles
Elevation gain: 3 feet
Leader: John Spraul 947-9053 (W) jspraul@utep.edu
For most folks, birds at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park mean wintering waterfowl. But summer is also a fascinating time, with nesting Sora and Avocet, Yellow-breasted Chat, Common Snipe, Passerine Buntings, and many other surprises. Rio Bosque doesn't always have water in summer, but this year it does. It is a green and lively place, one we'll explore on this early morning walk.

July 13: Inti's Bridge Relocation Issue Tour
Place: Fabens, Texas
Leader: Bill Addison 915 206-9043 (H) adibill@poco.org
El Paso County proposes a new highway and expanded Inti's Bridge on 360 acres of land to relieve pollution and congestion at the Bridge of the Americas. Proponents will profit from selling their land while poor farmers will suffer from pollution and higher taxes which will eventually force them off the land. Come out to see for yourself why our progresive alternative is internally self-support.

July 20-21: Delce Canyon-Chinookwater Creek Backpack
Place: Gila Wilderness
Class: Moderate
Length: 8 miles
Elevation gain: +800, -1000 feet
Leader: Amy Kalkroth 833-9162 (W) akalkroth@prodigy.net
Although we will drive up to the Gila on Friday, camping at the Gold Dredge trailhead, the outing will officially begin Saturday morning with the car shuttle to Delce Canyon trailhead. There we will shuttle our packs for the 800' climb to the ridge and descend into the pristine Chinookwater Creek. We will wind our way downstream, crossing four times, then walking high above the water, eventually reaching our spacious campsite at the old powerhouse. Sunday's short hike up the Gold Dredge Trail to the site should give a plenty of time for a leisurely return home.

July 27-28: Little Bear Meadow Fork Loop Backpack
Place: Gila Wilderness
Class: Moderate
Length: 9 miles
Elevation gain: 1800 feet
Leader: Ruth Colyer 915 858-8827 (H) rclyer@ix.net
We will depart El Paso Friday night and drive to our campsite at the Grapevine Campground. After leaving a vehicle at the Middle Fork trailhead, we will begin our hike at El Tonto, biking trail #729 across a river mesa top and through "the Narrows" of Little Bear Canyon to the Middle Fork of the Gila, camping on a beach above the river. On Sunday, we will follow the Middle Fork Gila Trail downstream for 6 miles past the hot spring to the Middle Fork trailhead. This day will involve several river crossings. Bring a bathing suit and boots that you do not mind getting wet. We will not have time to be changing shoes at each crossing. One author recommends neoprene socks. Be prepared for rain. We may encounter mosquitoes, so bring bug repellent.

Next ExCoom: July 10, Wednesday, at 6 PM
Jesse's Restaurant and Brewery, 1135 Airway, El Paso

Members Step Up

Several of you have recently contributed excellent letters to the editor of the El Paso Times. We need a constant stream of these!
Albuquerque Sells Out the Rio
Comments Needed

By Richard Barish

On June 14th, Albuquerque released the long-awaited Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for its river water diversion project. Albuquerque wants to reduce its pumping of groundwater and use water imported from the San Juan River basin (San Juan-Chama Project water) as its primary source of municipal water. The Sierra Club agrees with the City that it needs to plan for its future water supply. However, the preferred alternative identified in the DEIS for use of the San Juan-Chama water only considers the needs of the City. It ignores the costs the plan will impose on the river and on farmers downstream. The City's plan calls for the construction of a new dam in the river near the Alamedos Bridge to divert water from the river. The City would divert not only its 47,000 acre-foot of San Juan-Chama water, but an equal amount of native Rio Grande water as well. The native water would be returned in the river at the Southside Wastewater Treatment Plant, about fifteen miles downstream. The new dam proposed by the City would create yet another barrier to fish passage in the Rio Grande. Endangered Rio Grande silvery minnows reproduce by releasing their eggs into the current, where they float downstream for several days. If they float over a dam, the fish are trapped below the dam. About 90% of the surviving silvery minnows are now found south of the southwest diversion dam in the middle reach, at San Acacia north of Socorro. This is the very part of the river that is most prone to drying in the summer. We need to be removing diversion dams and reconnecting the river, not creating more barriers to fish migration. While the proposed dam has been designed with a small side-channel for fish passage, the channel is inadequate to provide significant fish passage. The City's plan would also result in dangerously low flows in the summer. Under the plan, the City will continue to divert native water from the river until native flows are reduced to 70 cubic feet per second (c.f.s.). Seventy c.f.s. is a very, very low flow. Such low flows would threaten aquatic life and the bosque. The City presently maintains a minimum flow of 250 c.f.s.

As it is presently formulated, the City's plan meets Albuquerque's needs — although only indefinitely, and imposes severe costs on the river and on downstream farmers. Downstream farmers with whom the Club has staked in protecting the City's plan also are concerned about the quantity and quality of the water delivered to them. The City needs to come up with a more balanced plan that meets the needs of the entire community. One obvious piece of the puzzle is conservation. The City's plan gives short shrift to conservation. We live it a desert, and our water planning needs to reflect what a precious commodity water is in this part of the world. The Bureau of Reclamation and Mayor Chavez need to be told that it is not acceptable to meet Albuquerque's needs by selling out the river and farmers.

You can comment on it in writing by August 13, 2002, and you can comment at any of the public hearings on the DEIS. Written comments should be sent to:

Bureau of Reclamation, Attn: Lori Robertson 305 Marquette NW, Suite 1313, Albuquerque, NM 87102
Honorable Martin Chavez, Mayor, City of Albuquerque P.O. Box 1250, Albuquerque, N.M. 87101

The Albuquerque public hearing will be on the day you receive this issue of the Sierra. Other public hearings you can attend (6 to 9 PM each day) are:
- July 9, Mescal House, New Mexico Tech campus, 401 Leroy Place, Socorro.
- July 10, City Council chambers, 405 Paseo del Oeste, Santa Fe.

The DEIS can be viewed or downloaded at: http://www.naco.galvani.nm.us/silvery_minnow.html, or you can request a CD-ROM or a hard copy by calling Rick Billings at Foremost Engineering (505-880-4325). For more information, please contact Richard Barish, 505-232-3013, rdbarch@sierraclub.org.

Update on the Planned Growth Strategy
By Blair Brown

As we reported in the May/June Sierra, the City of Albuquerque has released the Planned Growth Study (PGS) which promises to make significant improvements in the quality of life in Albuquerque. It establishes a more proactive and logical process to determine how our City will grow, thereby giving us the chance to maintain the unique qualities that we love in Albuquerque.

On June 10th, the City held a morning Informational Meeting on the PGS followed by an afternoon question and answer session. One very interesting point made during the session was that cities that have planned growth strategies similar to those in the PGS have more vital economies and better job opportunities than those that don't.

That evening the PGS was presented to the City Council and initial public comment was heard. In the upcoming months, the City will be holding additional public meetings to receive our opinions and to collect their input on the PGS, so watch the newspaper for dates and locations. Further public comment is scheduled to be heard at the City Council meeting on Monday, August 19th.

We urge everyone to learn more about the PGS and tell the City what you think. To learn more, go to the City's website at www.ciabq.gov/awards/bgs where you can view the Summary, the Ordinance and the whole PGS report. It's a fairly large document, but you can also view it at one public library or ask for it on a CD-ROM to read on your computer (call 768-3100). If you have questions, feel free to contact me at bb3hark@sierraclub.org.

General Public Meetings

July - Vacation - No meeting scheduled

Monday, August 19th at 7:30PM

Ben Luce, from the New Mexico Solar Energy Association, will talk about renewable energy sources. His talk will focus on how New Mexico can take advantage of its natural renewable resources and will be contrasting New Mexico's alternative energy opportunities (wind, solar) with the dependence on oil, coal, and gas.

Where: 1st Unitarian Church, 3701 Carlisle NE at Comanche, Social Hall

Monday, September 16th at 7:30PM

Richard Fagard, the famed "Biogas" and synthesized columnist, will discuss environmentally-conscious ways to control bugs and rodents. He writes a weekly column which appears locally in the Albuquerque Tribune. He will most answer questions from the audience, so bring your questions about critters.

Where: 1st Unitarian Church, 3701 Carlisle NE at Comanche, Social Hall

Central New Mexico Group

Central New Mexico Group
P.O. Box 25342
Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87125-5342

Executive Committee (area code 505)
Blair Brown 259-2190 bb3hark@sierraclub.org
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Michel Mudd 884-3315 mjmudd@sierraclub.org
Sherry Wolf 254-2190 swolf@fsm.com

The Executive Committee normally meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7:30PM. Watch for various locations, so please contact one of us for the meeting locations, or if you have issues you would like to discuss. The meetings are free and open to all members.

Project Leaders (area code 505)

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The Central New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club depends on the efforts of volunteers. If you can help, give any of us a call.

July/August 2002
Central Group News

The Sierra Club has joined the Sandia Preservation Alliance to help find a land dispute over 9,890 acres on the west side of the Sandia Mountains (the area). The agreement would ensure the area's continued protection as Wilderness forever. The area extends from the first ridge to the east of the Sandia and includes the La Lasa trail. If successful, the area will receive its irrevocable designation as a Wilderness area with additional special protections. It would continue to be administered by the Forest Service and would continue to be available to the public. Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) has introduced legislation that if enacted will end a land dispute with a history over 300 years. Bingaman's legislation is based on an agreement made two years ago by the Pueblo of Sandia, the Forest Service, and the Sandia Peak Team Company. The agreement will expire on November 19, 2002. If the legislation isn't called into Congress, the agreement expired will continue. The current uncertainty regarding ownership of the land that does not serve the interest of the public or any of the parties in the interests. The Pueblo of Sandia has won one court battle that stated that the eastern boundary is the court. If the Pueblo of Sandia continues to prevail in court they could ultimately withdraw the land from the National Forest System, stop public access, and end management of the area as wilderness.

As of April 2nd, 2002 the Sandia Preservation Alliance includes the Pueblo of Sandia, the Sierra Club, Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), New Mexico Conference of Churches, South West Organizing Project (SWOP), Independent Movement Political Action Committee (IMPAC), New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, SAGAR Council, Americans for Rural Opportunity, Justice Community Center (JCC), Puebloan Guardians, Albuquerque Hispanic Bar Association, and the Anti-defamation League. The Sandia Heights Homeowner's Association Board of Directors now also approve a timely conclusion to this matter. The Sierra Club is very cautious about making changes on the land claims, but support settlement for its distinctive nation, unique qualities, and previous legal wins for the Pueblo of Sandia in this matter of time.

The area has always been sacred to the tribe. The area's legal history began in 1740 when the Spanish granted the Pueblo of Sandia a large grant. The original language defining the eastern border was "...por el rio Orino Queretaro de las Hueritas...", "The Spanish Land Grant was surveyed and acknowledged as legal by the US Congress in 1585 which reaffirmed that the Pueblo's eastern boundary was the "riego riego called Sandia", the survey of the boundary had inapplicable indicated that the eastern boundary of the Pueblo was the first ridge (herrera). The surveyor Clemente is a history of conductingienious surveys on other New Mexico reserves. The two adjacent land grants to the south (Eliza Callares and Baca) contain virtually the same language and both were carved as extending to the montains of the region. Since the early 1990's the area has been the Pachach National Forest managed by the National Forest Service. In the 1980's the Pueblo of Sandia began legal lawsuit to fix the 1858 survey. To date the Pueblo has prevailed in court. If Congress does not pass legislation enacting some agreeable settlement than the pueblo will probably push to have a new survey consistent with the KIC District Court opinion recognizing the court as the eastern boundary. This would probably result in an administrative appeal and another court date in the US District Court. The Sandia Preservation Alliance agreement calls for the creation of the "Tud Stair Brice (grass needle mountains) Preservation Tract Area. The Pueblo of Sandia will give up all claims to the land in question. The settlement will preserve all presently existing property rights in the area, including private property, permanent utility access, Sandia Peak Trail operations, and rights away for roads. The agreement guarantees public access consistent with current access including recreation, hiking, hunting and trapping. The area would continue with its irrevocable designation as Wilderness Area Plus administered by US Forest Service. Additional protections against development, logging and mining are included. The Pueblo of Sandia will receive access to the land for religious and cultural purposes. Finally, the Pueblo of Sandia would be committed in all new uses and changes in current uses of the land. A third neutral party would arbitrate any disputes in this process if both sides agree. The settlement agreement expires November 15, 2002. If Congress does not pass legislation enacting the settlement agreement then none of the parties are required to continue negotiating and the Pueblo is free to pursue its claims in the courts. Call or write to your US Senator and Representatives today to express your support for the Tuj Stair Brice Settlement Agreement. Senator Bingaman is sponsoring a bill, but we are still unsure about the specifics that will be in the Senate. Senator Durango and Senator Wilson need urgent to support the settlement agreement so that the New Mexico delegates provide a united front for when a bill is introduced. Please indicate that you see in this is their districts.

Call and tell them to support the Tuj Stair Brice Settlement Agreement because it will add an extra layer of protection to this wilderness area.

Fish vs. Farmers? Don't Buy It!

By Richard Johnson, Central Group Chair

Outings

FIRE RESTRICTIONS may cease to remain in place and allow local decision making by the Liar to verify the time and place.

Sundays, July 21: Sandia Mountains, 10K Trail. The 10K Trail is an easy hike across the east side of the Sandia mountain range. Meet day short glasses and a range. Pick a day to suit you. We'll have our kids in the backstairs. Bring plenty of water. Leader: Rick Hurley (505-846-1197; RickHurley@comcast.net).

Saturday, July 7: Out-of-town Hike Call for meeting time and place. Details. Meet on the hillside hike to Lake Pena. Part of trail and explore late. Early call. Call or email for details. Leader: Steve Mardle (715-7822; stephler@hotmail.com).

Wednesday, August 14: Evening Hike in the Sandia's Tentatively planing a 2-4 mile hike to the Sandia in the evening. Call for meeting time, place and info. Leader: Rick Hurley (505-846-1197; RickHurley@comcast.net).

Sunday, August 25: Sandia Mountains, South West Trail This hike is not difficult. There are a few rocky places, but the views of the Rio Grande valley are fantastic. We'll hike a few miles and have lunch. Then we will hike back. Kids are welcome. We'll have two kids in backpacks. Bring plenty of water. Leaders: Carl Johnson (505-471-4444 for details and driving instructions.

Sunday, September 22nd: Strummers, exploratory, off-trail hike West side of the Sandia. Call or email for updates and details. Leader: Steve Mardle (715-7822; stephler@hotmail.com)

Fish vs. Farmers? Don't Buy It!

By Richard Johnson, Central Group Chair

Politicians have a bad habit of framing environmental issues in terms of humans vs. nature. Unfortunately, the mainstream media usually adopts this resolving of environmental issues with little analysis. The silvery minnow issue is a classic example. Politicians want the people of Albuquerque to see this issue as fish vs. farmers. In other words, if we want to save these endangered minnows, we need to take the water from the farmers on the Rio Grande. The elephant in the room no one is talking about is Albuquerque itself. The people of Albuquerque, not farmers or minnows, are the ones who are overusing water. Every day, the scenario a few feet down creates a river of water in our streets. The local bank branch insists on washing its sidewalk on rainy evenings. Our nearby high school is watering a practice football field in the middle of a hot, sunny afternoon. Certainly, all of this wasted water could help farmers and minnows alive.

According to a news release from the Mayor's office, by May this year Albuquerque had used about a half a billion gallons of water—a 200 million gallon increase over this time last year. In the release, Chavez complains that "We are pouring too much water over our lawn-based landscapes in the desert." How one. (By the way, this is the same Mayor Chavez who wants us to annoy the silvery minnow issue in a "first case" against the Endangered Species Act.) So, when we hear politicians talking about saving the silvery minnow convoys farmers, don't buy it. They are simply pitting two victims against each other. The real problem is this guy up the street, and that hath football practice field. If Albuquerque would correct its own water use, these would be plenty of water for fish and farmers.

Unfortunately, some Rio Grande farmers are buying into these anti-environmental arguments. Many of them don't realize that Albuquerque will continue to draw up more and more water, minnows or no minnows. Driving the minnow into extinction will mean more water for Albuquerque, not farmers. In the end, politicians are simply looking out for the short-sighted interests of Albuquerque, not the interests of farmers.

If anything, farmers and conservationists should band together. Our interests are the same. Until the people of Albuquerque reform their wasteful ways, there will be less and less water for farmers and minnows. Both of these important species will soon go extinct.
News from the Chair

Don Dearholt

It's the consensus of most around here that summer has come to southern New Mexico—it's hit 100 a few times now, with no rain in sight as this is being written. The Southern NM Group is taking some respite from the schedule we maintained during the academic year, although we are trying to accomplish a few things during the summer. Probably most important is that it is an election year, and we have both the opportunity and the obligation to do what we can for conservation now, before the election is held. Some of us are expecting to meet with John Arthur Smith soon, to discuss aspects of our environmental concerns with him. I'll let you know our views on his responses in the next newsletter. There are other important elections, too, of course, and please learn all you can about the views of the candidates on our principal issues. The candidates who have been endorsed by the Chapter are discussed elsewhere in this issue, and we urge you to support them.

The city of Las Cruces has now hired Joe Lewandowski, a recycling expert, and he was introduced to the environmentalists at a meeting of CURB (Citizens United for Recycling Benefits). Ben Zerbey represented the Group at that meeting, and we believe that the city council members and Mr. Lewandowski are impressed with the interest shown in achieving a significantly higher rate of recycling by those present at the CURB meeting.

General Meetings

Executive Committee Meetings are typically the first Wednesday of the month—all members are welcome to attend. Call Cheryl at 524-4861 for time and place.

Coming Events

If this newsletter reaches you in time, please try to attend the slide show presentation, "The Last Great Wilderness Project", with slides and discussion of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (and a few slides and comments about Otero Mesa as well), by Lenny Kohn and Jeff Barrie. This will be held on Thursday, June 27, at 7:00 p.m., at the new building of the Southwest Environmental Center, on the downtown (Las Cruces) mall, at the SW corner of the mall and Las Cruces Ave.

Outings

July 20, Saturday: Hike the Rim Trail in the Sacramento Mtns. This will be a moderate hike of about six miles. Bring lunch and water. Call Ben @ 526-7811 for further info and to reserve space.
From Ice-Age to Greenhouse? The Scoop on Millions of Years of Changing Climate
by Dr. Synne Peacock

In April 2002, Dr. Synne Peacock gave a talk on climate, as a program for Earth Day offered by the Pajarito Group of the Sierra Club in cooperation with the Pajarito Environmental Education Center. This is the text version of the talk.

The abundance of water in its liquid form makes Earth unique among planets in the solar system, and perhaps beyond. The small fraction of Earth's atmosphere comprised of greenhouse gases (water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane) ensures that this planet is a comfortable place to live. If all greenhouse gases could be eliminated from the atmosphere, Earth would be a chilly place indeed, with an average temperature around -18°C. If, on the other hand, greenhouse gases were the major atmospheric constituent, the planet would be scorching. As it is, things are just right for life as we know it.

The climate in which we live today may seem wildly erratic, but when viewed through the lens of geological time, the last 10,000 years stand out for being a period of remarkable stability. Over Earth's history there is evidence for periods of time when Earth was completely covered by ice (the so-called "snowball earth"). There have also been times during which even polar regions were ice-free ("greenhouse earth"). Over much of the past 100,000 years or so, it appears that abrupt fluctuations in global temperatures and ice volumes have been the rule rather than the exception.

Evidence for a "snowball earth" comes from the period before land-based life had emerged, and it is thought that Earth may have become covered in ice as many as four times between 750 and 560 million years ago. There have been at least a handful of ice ages throughout our planet's history, the next to last of which ended some 230 million years ago.

The dinosaurs became extinct in a "greenhouse earth", around 65 million years ago. Since these great beasts disappeared, the earth has been undergoing a cooling, most of which occurred in three major events, some 36, 15, and 3 million years ago. The climate of this cooling trend has been the entering of a new "ice-age", characterized by a series of "glacial-interglacial" cycles.

Meetings

All meetings are held in the upstairs rooms in Mesa Public Library at 7:00 PM and are open to the public. General meetings are on the first Wednesday, conservation meetings the second Wednesday, and Executive Committee meetings the third Wednesday. There will be no general meetings in July and August.

Environmental Ethics, A Moral Imperative?
Wednesday, September 4, 2002
Mesa Public Library, upstairs meeting rooms

Environmental responsibility embraces the ideals of social equity, economic prosperity, and ecological integrity when addressing such issues as global warming, land degradation, species extinction, deforestation, toxic-waste generation and disposal, energy and resources usage, rapid urbanization, and corporate and social irresponsibility.

Many people believe that organized religion deals solely with humans and their spiritual—and in extension, personal and social—well-being. Most issues important in the environmental-responsibility movement, however, are similar to those that are important to religion. Are there points at which these two ideals merge? A panel consisting of three to four ministerial representatives from various religious communities in Northern New Mexico will offer insights into how various religions view environmental responsibility. Each panel member will give a short presentation followed by questions and discussion.

Outings

August 17 • Bandelier National Monument Dayhike—Moderate, approximately 8 miles along the Apache Springs Trail to Upper Frijoles Canyon to Ponderosa Campground. The trail descends 1,000 feet into Frijoles Canyon and gains 1,000 feet at the end. Meet at Ponderosa Campground at 8:00 AM and carry to the trailhead. Bring water and lunch/snacks, protective gear. We should be back around noon. (Dependent on whether the backcountry, currently closed due to fire danger, is open.) Also and Elazar Block (502-2360).

Wednesday, August 21 • Sierra Club Picnic—Bring your favorite dish and join fellow Sierrans for an evening of fun and socializing. Drinks will be provided. The site will be Camp May just beyond the Pajarito Ski Area if the skies are open. If fire danger persists, the alternative site will be a county park. 6:30 PM. Please call or check the local paper for more information. Jene Bloch (502-2360).

Saturday, August 24 • Obsidian Ridge from Dose Road Dayhike—Easy/moderate, 6 miles, 500' elevation gain, dogs OK. Call for time and meeting place. Robert McKee (672-3426).

September 21 • Cerro Grande Dayhike—Moderate/strainless, 8-9 miles, 2,000' elevation gain, off-trail and expeditious, easy pace. Call for time and meeting place. Robert McKee (672-3426).

The Pajarito Group's Link to the Sierra Club Web Site
Pajarito can be accessed at:
http://riogrande.sierraclub.org/pajarito/
Matt Rese is the webmaster.
IN MEMORIUM

The Santa Fe Group, as well as the Chapter, has recently lost two long-time conservation activists.

BOB LANGSENKAMP
1946 - 2002

JOHN PIERPONT
1917 - 2002

Little more can be said that was not said at their memorial services, and they will be deeply missed by family and environmental friends.

The Club has donated $1,000 to the New Mexico Environmental Law Center in their honor.

Let’s all reflect for a moment on death, as was read during John’s service, from the words of Sierra Club founder John Muir.

HOMEBOING

So the snow-flowers go home when they melt and flow to the sea, and the rock-ferns, after unrolling their fronds to the light and beautifying the rocks, roll them up close again in the autumn and blend with the soil.

Myriads of rejoicing living creatures, daily, hourly, perhaps every moment sink into death’s arms, dust to dust, spirit to spirit - waited on, watched over, noticed only by their Maker, each arriving at its own Heaven-dealt destiny. All the merry dwellers of the trees and streams, and the myriad swarms of the air, called into life by the sunbeam of a summer morning, go home through death, wings folded perhaps in the last red rays of sunset of the day they were first tried.

Trees towering into the sky, braving storms of centuries, flowers turning faces to the light for a single day or hour, having enjoyed their share of life’s feast - all alike pass on and away under the law of death and love. Yet all are our brothers and they enjoy life as we do, share Heaven’s blessings with us, die and are buried in hallowed ground, come with us out of eternity and return into eternity.

“Our lives are rounded with a sleep.”

- From the Chair

CONSERVATION CHAIR
Paul Parsky

Still More on Water

Another water related issue is the disastrous spread of wildfires throughout New Mexico and the Southwest. Some politicians are wrongly blaming the fires on environmentalists. We wrote to the Santa Fe New Mexican to release that we support rational management of forests that includes thinning and other measures.

Unfortunately, forest management by governmental authorities has been shown to be very ineffective in maintaining healthy forest ecosystems. The risks of a wildfire in the Santa Fe Watershed remain high.

The Group also continues to support the efforts of the Alliance for the Rio Grande Heritage to save the Rio Grande and maintain its in-stream water flow. The Rio Grande is the main ecological artery of our state. This historic river should not die.

How to communicate with your elected City officials:
Mayor Larry A. Delgado, 955-6590, mayor@city-sante-fe.nm.us
Santa Fe City Councilors:
District 1 Pati Busbee*, 955-6590, pbusbee@city-sante-fe.nm.us
District 2 David Fiechter, 955-4811, dlf@city-sante-fe.nm.us
District 2 Karen Hembopen*, 955-6818, khembopen@city-sante-fe.nm.us
District 3 Rebecca Wurzburger, 955-8315, wurzburger@city-sante-fe.nm.us
District 3 David Cota*, 955-8304, drcota@sierraclub.org
District 4 Miguel Chavez*, 955-8616, miguelchavez@city-sante-fe.nm.us
District 4 Carol Robertson Lopez, 955-8612, cebertos@sierraclub.org
District 4 Matthew Ortiz, 955-8817, mritortiz@gmail.com

* sponsors of the water budget ordinance introduced by Pati Busbee; if you call or write, please thank the sponsors for their efforts.

FUNDRAISING YARD SALE
Saturday, October 5
Mark your calendars for our annual yard sale and start setting aside usable items that are no longer needed. Details in next bulletin.
SANTA FE GROUP OUTINGS FOR 2002

PLEASE NOTE: Most of the activities listed in this schedule take place in the Santa Fe or Carson National Forest.

As of June 27, these 27 forests were closed because of fire danger.

Call leaders to confirm the scheduled outings are happening. ALWAYS, ALWAYS CALL LEADER ANYWAY.

Sat Sun
July
Thursday, July 4
Very Strenuous Hike to Santa Fe Baldy, possibly via Lake Kashyana with seismic tremors from there, 5,3 miles, 5000-5000' gain. Dan Rushton (699-8970)

6
Strenuous Hike to Horsehead Meadow from Panchuela CG in the Pecos, 11 miles/2000', dogs okay. Tyrone Orness (505-2864)

7
Moderate/Strenuous Hike to Nimbo Lake, 5-7 miles, 2100' gain. David Bryant (505-737-3477 / dbryan at cybermesa.com)

Friday and Saturday, July 12 and 13
Fajaron Restoration WORKSHOP with the Quivira Coalition at Comanche Creek in Valle Vidal. See article on back page. John Bucher (820-2001)

13
Moderate/Strenuous Hike Above Vista trail to rocky overlook 10 miles/2000' gain. Heather Liston (982-9715)

14
Moderate Hike in high country, leave 8 AM. Art Judd (982-8332 or ajudd@ent.com)

20
Easy/Moderate Hikes dogs okay. Llewellyn Sorensen (983-6715)

21
Moderate/Strenuous Hike East Fork Box in Jemez, walking in river near end, 5 miles/600' gain. Norbert Sperrich (474-6334)

27
Very Strenuous Hike to Wheeler Peak, 14 miles, 4300' gain. Marcia Skillman (744-7614)

Very Easy Hike to Jemez hot springs, 3 miles. Ron Duffy (982-2890)

28
Strenuous Hike Round Mountain/Booty's cabin loop in Pecos Wilderness from Jack's Creek trailhead, 12 miles/6000' gain. Leave 8 AM. Dogs okay. John Jasper (505-283-5466 live voice)

For additional outings in Northern New Mexico, please check the Fajaron Group page(s) in this newsletter.

Sat Sun
August
Saturday and Sunday, August 3 and 4
Hopiaren Restoration WORKSHOP at Comanche Creek in Valle Vidal. See article on back page. Reservation Required. John Bucher (820-2001)

3
Easy Hike: Gail Bryant (505-737-6545)

4
Strenuous Hike Holy Ghost to Spich Lake in Pecos. 14 miles RT, 2800' gain. Heather Liston (982-9715)

10
Strenuous Loop Hike to Lake Peak. Part off-trail, exploratory.

25
Moderate Hike to Aspen Peak. Short distance, some off-trail, great views. Rich Casas (473-1949)

Friday and Saturday, August 16 and 17
Fajaron Restoration WORKSHOP with Quivira Coalition at Comanche Creek in Valle Vidal. See article on back page. John Bucher (820-2001)

17
Moderate Hike in High Country. John Jasper (1-505.565.4566 - b: 586-6413 - w)

18
Easy Hike: Brenda Willms bring binoculars. Ron Duffy (982-2890)

22
Moderate Hike to Hamilton Mesa. Michael Goldby (820-7592)

Saturday and Sunday, August 24 and 25
Car Camp and Strenuous Hike in Llano Peak area. Drive to trailhead Saturday afternoon, return Sunday evening. Michael Hiltos (603-4045)

23
Moderate Hike from Dome Road to Chalino Ridge, 7 miles RT, 500' gain. Dogs allowed. Rob McIntee (697-3402)

25
Moderate/Strenuous Hike to Nimbo Lake 7 miles RT, 2100' gain. Les Drapela (438-8156)

Moderate Hike in High Country. Dogs allowed. Norman McMullen (471-9000)

GROUP COMMITTEE MEETING DATES
Group Executive Committee: Group Conservation Committee:
Tuesday, August 6, 6:30 PM Sunday, August 4, 6:30 PM
Tuesday, August 13, 6:30 PM Tuesday, August 27, 7 PM
Tuesday, September 3, 6:30 PM Water Pot-Luck (John Bucher's house 505-382-0001)
July 8, August 13, September 10

INFORMATION ON FOREST CLOSURES AND FOREST FIRES
New Mexico Public Land Information Center, 1474 Rodeo Road, 438-7842 (www.publiclands.gov) tracks the latest information on forest closures and what public lands are still open. On the web site, click on New Mexico on the map of the united States. On the New Mexico main page, hit News for closures. The New Mexico pages also have information on numerous other topics about conserving our public lands, including the Valles Caldera.

CERRILLOS HILLS WALK
12 Noon, Sunday, July 14
The 2 1/2 hour escorted tour with the Cerrillos Hill Coalition will concentrate on nature and some of the historical miners. Meet in the Cerrillos Park parking lot, north on First Street of a mile from the town of Cerrillos. Call Bill Baxter (505-424-3574)

The above activity is neither sponsored nor administrated by the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club has no information about the planning of these activities and makes no representations or warranties about the quality, safety, supervision or management of such activities. It is published only as a reader service because it may be of interest to the readers of this publication.

RIO GRANDE SIERRAN
http://www.riogrande.sierranews.org/santafe/home.html

♭ ♭ SANTA FE GROUP OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS ♭ ♭

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Vice-Chair — Barbara Johnson * 465-4093
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Phone Tree – Herta Hanna * 424-1435
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* Member of the SF Group Executive Committee

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Tobie Orness 424-3545
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Water/John Bucher * 505-387-5792
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Recreation — Roger Peterson 505-387-5792
Cerrillos Fire — George Germain 505-387-5792
Archaeology/Norm McMullen * 505-387-5792
Growth — Ira Schreiner 424-3545
Jim Keel * 474-2077

RIO GRANDE SIERRAN 17

Junc/August 2002
Flooflains (continued from page 1)

River is harming endangered fish and wildlife including the Bold eagle, Southwestern willow flycatcher, and the Rio Grande silvery minnow. The NPRI allows businesses and homeowners within participating cities, counties, and other local governments to build hazardous, flood-prone areas and receive federal insurance as long as the communities adopt certain minimal land-use controls.

"We hope this assessment and its final outcome demonstrates that protecting flood-prone areas from permanent human encroachment is vital not only for endangered fish and wildlife, but also because it can help keep people out of harm's way," said John Fiegling, Forest Guardians Executive Director. "The bottom line is that protecting flood-prone areas protects people and fish and wildlife."

Further Reading on Climate (see page 6)

Ice Age to Greenhouse (continued from page 15)

Around 20,000 years ago, the last glacial period was at a peak. Ice sheets covered much of North America and Europe, causing the sea level to sit about 120 meters lower than today. Polar temperatures were about 5°C colder, and greenhouse gases concentrations were considerably lower. The glacial world was also a much windier and drier place.

But how do we know all this? Among the most important tools we have for probing recent changes in Earth's climate are deep-sea sediment cores and ice cores. Throughout the ocean live microscopic creatures called foraminifera. Their shells, made of calcium carbonate, reflect the chemical signature of the seawater in which they grow. When they die, they fall to the sea floor and are buried in the sediments. By drilling into the seafloor, and measuring the changing chemical composition of these organisms, it is possible to obtain a record of past changes in ocean composition going back millions of years. A drawback of deep-sea sediment cores is that the resolution is poor, both because of a low sedimentation rate (typically only a centimeter or two in a thousand years), and because of bioturbation on the sea floor. A much higher-resolution record of changes in climate can be obtained from ice-core records, where it is sometimes possible to detect even a seasonal variation in certain isotopes.

A widely measured chemical signature that can be obtained from both foraminifera in deep-sea sediment cores, and from ice cores, is the ratio of heavy oxygen-18 atoms to lighter oxygen-16 atoms ($^{18}O$). Because water containing the lighter $^{16}O$ evaporates more easily, and water containing the heavier $^{18}O$ is rained out of clouds more readily, the water in clouds become enriched in the lighter $^{16}O$ relative to $^{18}O$ by the time it reaches polar regions. As global temperatures drop and polar glaciers grow, the snow falling in high latitudes becomes progressively enriched in the lighter oxygen isotope and the ocean becomes enriched in the heavier isotope. Harold Urey, a Nobel-winning chemist at the University of Chicago, was the first to suggest that the ratio of oxygen-18 to oxygen-16 could be used as a paleothermometer.

It was a startling idea that met with amazing success: it was soon demonstrated that within the tiny creatures buried in the mud of the sea floor was preserved a record of changing climate. Among these fluctuations were those paced by variations in the amount of sunlight reaching the Earth. The main elements of variation in Earth's orbit (the "eccentricity" of orbit, the "obliquity" of the Earth's axis, and the "precession" of the equinoxes, occurring with periods of roughly 100,000, 41,000, and 23,000 years, respectively) had been computed in the 1920s by a Swedish astronomer Milton Milankovitch.

As the timing of the cycles evident in deep-sea cores was refined through improved dating techniques (such as uranium-thorium), acceptance of the orbital theory became widespread. Ice cores hold not only a record of oxygen isotope variations, but also, in trapped air bubbles, a record of past atmospheric composition. One remarkable feature to emerge from the ice cores was the close correspondence between cold low-$CO_2$ periods and warmer higher-$CO_2$ periods. Another fascinating detail to come out of these records was the rapidity and frequency of climatic fluctuations.

Global mean temperatures appear to have jumped abruptly in time and place again during the last glacial (so-called "Dzungard-Achterberg") event. Why the past 10,000 years have been so anomalously stable remains an open question.

(continued on next page)
Arctic Refuge—Conference Committee Follows April Win

In a big victory for America’s environment, the U.S. Senate rejected (54-46) yet another proposal to open the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. The decisive vote in April 2002 was a stunning rebuff for one of the Bush Administration’s top domestic priorities. Moreover, the victory is a testament to tremendous outpouring of grassroots activism in support of protecting the Arctic Refuge.

The coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a national treasure—home to polar bears, wolves, and countless migratory birds. The coastal plain is also the nesting grounds for the 120,000-member Porcupine River caribou herd, and it is sacred land to the Gwich’in Athabascans, a Native people whose traditional lifestyle depends on the caribou. Arctic drilling will do nothing to reduce our dependence on foreign oil or increase our national security. Government estimates indicate that there is less than a six-month supply of oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and even the oil industry admits that it would take ten years to get that to U.S. markets.

While the Senate staved off attempts to include Arctic Refuge drilling in its version of an energy bill, the House version (which is dramatically worse) does include a drilling provision. This discrepancy will have to be reconciled in a conference committee. So, though we have one victory under our belt, it is possible that the conference may yet produce a bill with an Arctic-drilling provision.

Even though the Senate rejected Arctic Refuge drilling, the Sierra Club cannot support the Senate’s energy bill in its current form. While the bill began as a promising plan, polluters plunged it. Now, the Senate bill utterly fails to meet America’s energy needs, and instead sends America backward. The Senate bill:

- saves virtually no oil;
- barely increases renewable energy;
- eliminates safeguards that protect consumers from Enron-like manipulations; and
- gives billions of dollars in subsidies to dirty coal and oil, and dangerous nuclear power.

New Mexicans can applaud Senator Bingaman who co-sponsored the Senate energy bill and voted to protect the Arctic Refuge from drilling. Both Bingaman (D-NM) and Senator Domenici (R-NM) are members of the conference committee. Urge them to continue to fend off future attacks on the Arctic and reject the inadequate House and Senate energy bills that should emerge from the conference without dramatic changes—and encourage friends and family in other states to join you by contacting senators and representatives who will also participate in this debate.

To see how your senator voted, see the Sierra Club website (www.sierrclub.org/novistas/2002/09/energy.aspx) for more information, see the Sierra Club website (www.sierrclub.org/wildlands) and the Northern Alaska Environmental Center website (www.naecon.org).

Hands-On Riparian Restoration & Elk Exclosures
July 12-13 & August 16-17 (Friday-Saturday) • Comanche Creek in the Valle Vidal

Come help New Mexico Trout, Trout Unlimited, and the Quiver Coalition build mini-enclosures on Lower Comanche Creek.

This workshop is part of a larger project to restore Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout habitat by encouraging the re-growth of willows and cottonwoods along the creek. Comanche Creek is located in the Valle Vidal unit of the Carson National Forest, south of Questa and east of Costilla off State Road 552, close to the Colorado border. Camping at Shaver Lodge parking lot. Running water and toilet facilities available. The work is hard and fun.

Contact Andrew Kelton of Trout Unlimited (955-8095-SF, akelson@sal.org) or Dave Patton of New Mexico Trout (294-1807-AJ-2p).
Be Creative, Seek Opportunities to Get Out Into Wilds

by Norma McCalla

The sun is warm on my back, a light breeze cools my face, the sky is a brilliant blue, and although I have walked this stretch of the Rail Trail numerous times, it always feels good to be out, good to be walking briskly and breathing clean air, meandering to watch the blue silhouettes of the Jemez, the Ortiz, the Sandias and the Sangre de Cristo come into view. No smoke planes today, although the acid fumes of the Fourmile Fire, or maybe the monster Hayman fire in Colorado, blew into my bedroom last night. With the continuation of our drought, tinder dry forests, and closure of many if not most of our favorite summer hike locales, it is not an auspicious time for outings. I sympathize with members, residents and tourists who aren’t able to go on trips planned perhaps months ago. I would urge all of us, however, to be creative, find enjoyment in urban trails, state parks, or BLM lands that are still open, and look for volunteer opportunities with the land agencies, which have even less staff than before to deal with trail maintenance, re-vegetation, brush clearing, etc. Check out the national Club’s innovative service trips on their web site (www.sierraclub.org).

Meanwhile, our outing chairs have prepared a good schedule for the upcoming months, when we hope, the summer rains will have arrived and eased our dreariness conditions. Also, I understand that New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors, to date, has been able to maintain its extensive schedule, even in the forests. Try them (505-1901—Aboh; www.nmvol.org). Be doubly sure to call leaders to confirm trip plans, and check Group pages for additional information and outings. All phone numbers are 205 except as noted.

Sierra Club Outings in July—September 2002

Friday, July 12-Saturday, July 13 • Riparian Restoration Workshop—Join riparian restoration specialist Bill Zeedik to learn about stream ecology, geomorphology and how to induce meandering (see below). Location TBA, near Santa Fe and Albuquerque. John Kiefer (505-200-0935). Friday, July 12-Saturday, July 13 • Riparian Restoration Workshop on Lower Comanche Creek—Help build elk exclosures (see page 19). Dave Fulton (954-107-Albuquerque; dfx55602@msn.com) or Andrew Keiss (955-995-525-25; ak@x10.com).

Saturday, July 20 • Crest Trail, Sacaaramba Mountains Dayhike—7-mile hike (with car shuttle) at $5.00-$9.00 for adults: fee used to maintain trail. Ben Zeddy (526-711-Les Alamos).


Sunday, July 21 • Kent Fork Box, Jemez River Dayhike—Moderate, streamside hike includes walking at the river near trail; 2 miles/900’ elevation gain. Workshop. Physical Fitness Tips. ($7.50-$9.00).

Saturday, July 27 • Wheeler Peak Dayhike—Very strenuous hike to our highest peak; 14 miles/4,300’ elevation gain. Maria Kilburn (515-774-310).


Saturday, August 3 & Saturday, August 4 • Riparian Restoration Workshop, Comanche Creek in the Valley Vidal—Riparian restoration specialist Bill Zeedik to learn about stream ecology, geomorphology and how to induce meandering (see below). John Kiefer (505-200-0935).

Sunday, August 4 • Holy Ghost Canyon to Spirit Lake Dayhike—Streamside 4-mile hike in the Pecos Wilderness. Heather Linton (505-751-51-80).

Sierra Club Outings in July—September 2002

Friday, August 9-Saturday, August 10 • Riparian Restoration Workshop—Join riparian restoration specialist Bill Zeedik to learn about stream ecology, geomorphology and how to induce meandering (see below). Location TBA, near Santa Fe and Albuquerque. John Kiefer (505-200-0935).

Saturday, August 16-Sunday, August 17 • Riparian Restoration Work Party on Lower Comanche Creek—Help build elk exclosures (see page 19). Dave Fulton (954-107-Albuquerque; dfx55602@msn.com) or Andrew Keiss (955-995-525-25; ak@x10.com).


Saturday, August 27-Sunday, August 28 • Log Canyons/Mineral Creek—Backpacking—Moderate, 5-mile hiking in the Gila National Forest. Includes visit of an old mine shaft, the old townsite of Colenso, and a spectacular desert canyon. Rollin Wickenden (515-855-6097-El Paso).

Sunday, August 28 • Hamilton Mesa Dayhike—Moderate hike to the high mesa in the Pecos Wilderness. Michael Techele (305-730-0739).


Sunday, August 25 • Nambe Lake Dayhike—Moderate—streamside 7.2-mile hike to this 13,400’ lake in the Pecos Wilderness. Les Draper (505-936-586).

Sunday, September 8 • Santa Fe Ballet Dayhike—Streamside hike to this 13,225’ peak; 2-hour trail; Dan Richiez (609-8207-El Paso).


Saturday, September 29 • Ortiz Mountain Eudational Reserve Tour—Tour of the newly opened Santa Fe Botanical Garden—resoritonal pro; Norma McCalla (505-995-893).

Riparian Restoration: Induced Meandering Hands-on Workshops with Bill Zeedik

July 12-13 & August 9-10 (Friday-Saturday) • Locations TBA, in the vicinity of Albuquerque-Santa Fe August 3-4 (Saturday-Sunday) • Comanche Creek in the Valley Vidal

Under the tutelage of riparian specialist Bill Zeedik, we will work with three different channel types and their corresponding vegetation. Bill is well known for his innovative low-cost, low-tech riparian restoration strategies. If you have ever been interested in the effects of dormant season grazing, effective low-cost riparian restoration techniques, or simply wanted to give nature a helping hand, this workshop is for you. Classes limited to 30 people. RSVP is a must. Contact the Quivira Coalition (802-2544—PFE; projects@qvivic.org).