Rio Grande Sierran
NEWS OF THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB  JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2003

NM Rule Sets Target for Renewable Energy: 10% by 2011

On 17 December 2002, after two years of hearings and revisions, the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (PRC) voted to adopt a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), a rule requiring the four major electric companies to provide renewable electricity to their customers in New Mexico.

The rule is to take effect on 1 July 2003. The coal lobby or others, however, may sue the PRC, claiming that the authorizing statutes directed the commission to study renewable energy, but did not give it authority to act. It is good news that Shirley Baca (D) and David King (R), the incoming PRC commissioners from southern and eastern New Mexico, respectively, both support renewable energy and the mandated RPS. It is possible that the Legislature will pass legislation regarding this measure—so let your legislators know how you feel about renewable energy.

Renewable electricity includes solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, and some forms of hydropower. The rule now requires utilities to derive 5% of their electricity from renewable energy by 2005, and 10% by 2011. Affected utilities are:

- Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM)
- Xcel Energy
- El Paso Electric Company, and
- Texas New Mexico Power.

The electric co-ops are exempted from the rule. In order to provide incentives for diversifying energy sources beyond wind power, the PRC approved a schedule in which the utilities will receive:

- one credit for generating one unit of wind,
- two credits for generating one unit of either biomass or geothermal power, and
- three credits for generating one unit of solar power.

If, for example, a utility chooses to fulfill its renewable requirements with solar power, it would have to provide only one-third of the 10% (3.33%) of its electricity from renewables by 2011.

Each power source has advantages and disadvantages. Biomass and geothermal power, in particular, differ from wind and solar in that they can provide "baseload" or constant power. Just the same, the intermittent nature of wind has not seriously hindered its deployment elsewhere.

As a start, PNM announced plans in October 2002 for a long-term contract to purchase all of the energy from a 204-Megawatt wind farm to be constructed 20 miles northeast of Fort Sumner in Quay and De Baca counties. It will generate enough electricity to power 94,000 average-sized homes. According to PNM's web site, this means that

"The cost of wind energy has declined from 40¢ per kilowatt-hour to less than 5¢. The cost of electricity from photovoltaics has dropped from more than $1/kilowatt-hour in 1980 to nearly 20¢/kilowatt-hour."

National Renewable Energy Laboratory (www.nrel.gov)

Water, Energy, Mining, and Wildlife Are Key Issues for 2003

The Rio Grande Chapter has targeted four issues—water, energy, wildlife, and the NM Mining Act—as areas to focus attention during the 2003 session of the New Mexico Legislature, which convenes on January 21 and runs until June 20. Chapter members and Leililya MaryBeth Morris will also track developments in several other areas, including public transportation, Otero Mesa wilderness designation, and creation of the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park. Summaries of the legislative status of these issues are included below.

Protecting New Mexico's Water Resources
Water issues are surfacing in many different ways: local, state, and national. Drought and climate change have both affected water supplies for the state.

NM Mining Act
The NM Mining Act is a legal instrument that outlines the rights of the state and individuals to mining. The act is important because it affects the use of land and water resources.

Other Important Issues
- Promote other water-conservation initiatives (e.g., graywater use, water-conservation appropriations)
- Advocate for public transportation:
  - Regional transit district (RTDs)
  - Safe routes to school
- Establish Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park
- Support the Otero Mesa wilderness designation and other sound land-use initiatives

ACQUSIA WATER BANKING AND INTERNAL TRANSFERS—The Sierra Club is very interested in two bills presented by the New Mexico Acquia Association to the Interim Legislative Committee on Water and Natural Resources. These bills would allow the state to acquire water rights and use them in other states. The second bill, if passed, would allow the state to acquire water rights in other states and use them in New Mexico.

Water rights would be exempted from the use-it-or-lose-it penalty. Any transfer off the acquia, temporary or otherwise, would have to go through the OSE process, as under current law.

(continued on page 5)
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THE RIO GRANDE SIERRAN

The Club has three structural levels. The National Board of Directors determines the overall direction of the Club. The National Organization is subdivided into Chapters, and each Chapter is further divided into Groups. One representative from each Chapter reports to the National Board through the Council of Club Leaders. The largest part of the Chapter's budget goes to the salary and expenses of the Conservation Organizer and a part-time lobbyist, followed by the printing and mailing of this newsletter.

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Contributions are welcomed from members. E-mail contributions preferred. Contributions' names and e-mail addresses will be included in the article, as a source of more information, unless the contributor specifies otherwise. Send to the editor (sierrannewmexico@sierraclub.org) • P.O. Box 315, El Rio, NM 87530. All submissions must be received by the 20th of the month prior to publication. (The Rio Grande Sierran is published in early January, March, May, July, September and November.) Photos, artwork and poems are also welcome. Letters and articles are subject to abridgment.

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Change of Address?
Send address changes to: Membership Services
415/777-5649 • address changes@sierraclub.org

Thank You!

Several extraordinarily dedicated volunteers rotated out of important leadership positions at the end of 2002. We can only begin to thank Jim Hansen who served as Chapter chair for two years, John Bucher who served as vice-chair and managing editor of the newsletter, and Barbara Johnson who has been chair of the Northern Group. We also like to offer our sincere appreciation to Doug Fraser and Paul Parnell who represented us as the Chapter's lobbyist and auditing lobbyist, respectively, in 2002.

January/February 2003
Priority Issues For 2003 (continued from page 1)

The bill would give legal recognition to historical acequia water-management practices. For years, acequia associations have opposed the idea of a single, state-operated water bank, believing it to be conceived as a mechanism to move water rights from non-agricultural rural to developing areas. Given a chance to craft their own water-banking bill, acequia leaders have refined water banking as a mechanism for water rights to remain in, and to continue to benefit, the local community.

Thanks to the efforts of the New Mexico Acequia Association, two bills have already been considered by the interim joint House and Senate Water and Natural Resources Committee.

The acequia community, like the environmental community, struggles to remind decision-makers that water policy is not just about new infrastructure, but rather about what we value as a State and what we want the landscape—both natural and human—to look like in the future.

For more information, contact Chapter Conservation Chair John Bucher (820-9201, jbucher@earthlink.net) or David Benavides at Community & Indian Legal Services of Northern NM (982-9886 ext. 111, or 800-573-9881 ext. 111; dbenavides@clsm.org; PO Box 5175, Santa Fe, NM 87502).

Graywater—According to the State Engineer, New Mexicans are using twice as much water as we receive, a situation that can hardly be called sustainable. A viable "source" of water is saved water. Up to 40% of possible water consumed in urban areas is used to water landscapes. Using graywater—from bathtubs, showers, birdbaths, sinks, and washing machines—for this purpose could save more than 16% of New Mexico's total water consumption.

An Environment Department Graywater Advisory Group has presented recommendations for legislation and/or regulations permitting greater use of graywater to the Legislature's Interim Water and Finance Committees. Representative Mimi Stewart agreed to sponsor a bill, and the committees unanimously approved it. We are now seeking additional sponsors and support for the bill, which we think has a very good chance of being adopted.

Based on Albuquerque, the bill will allow the daily use of up to 250 gallons of graywater for landscape watering without a special permit and special careful treatment (as now required), providing that certain public health considerations are met.

For more information, contact Paul Eayoshi, conservation chair for the Northern NM Group, in Santa Fe (932-1984, pappy@me.com).

Metering and Limitations on Domestic Wells—The Chapter will support a bill to require metering of new domestic wells as a way to gather sound data to inform regional planning efforts, including allocation of resources.

The Chapter will also support legislation affirming that the State Engineer has the authority to deny or place limitations on permits for domestic wells. If the Engineer determines that the well will infringe upon existing water rights. Presently, the State Engineer grants all requests for domestic well permits.

For more information, contact Chapter Conservation Chair John Bucher (see Directory, page 2).

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO)—New Mexico is sustaining a dramatic influx of large, industrialized dairy operations, notably in the eastern part of the state—Chaves, Curry, Las Cruces, and Dona Ana counties. The average dairy cow in New Mexico uses 115 gallons of water per day. At this rate, a 3,000-head operation uses more than an acre foot/day, not including water used to clean facilities, store waste on fields, and grow feed. And according to the EPA, a single cow generates 120 pounds of wet manure/day; a 3,000-head operation produces as much waste as 90,000 people.

According to a NM Environment Department employee, "Of 194 permitted dairies in New Mexico, about 61 have recorded discharges exceeding state regulations." Cesspools leach into groundwaters and overflow into surface waters, contaminating supplies with bacteria and nitrates, the latter of which correlates with higher levels of bladder cancer in women.

While the Chapter heartily supports farming and ranching practices that embrace sustainable agriculture, we will continue to oppose operations that

Please Welcome MaryBeth Morand as Our Lobbyist

The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club would like to welcome MaryBeth Morand as its lobbyist for the 2003 session of the New Mexico Legislature—and well like to take this opportunity to introduce her to our 6,500+ members throughout the Rio Grande watershed.

MaryBeth comes to us with an impressive background in relief work, primarily in our zone. She brings social, business, and administrative skills cultivated in international and domestic environments that are deeply affected by politics and constant change. MaryBeth began her international work as a Peace Corps volunteer in Kenya, where she helped to set up a basic water system in village. Back in the United States, she completed her M.B.A. at International Management at Thunderbird, the American Graduate School of International Management in Glendale, Arizona. Within a couple of years of graduation, MaryBeth headed back to Kenya to work as a logistics coordinator of relief supplies for refugees and displaced persons camps throughout northern Kenya, South Sudan, and Somalia. While she was in Kenya, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) invited her to become one of its staff officers inside Somalia and then in Gambia, Tanzania, and Afghanistan. After a tour of six years in three war zones with UNHCR, MaryBeth returned to the United States to set up a base in Tucson, where she was a refugee resettlement case manager and then a finance director for a non-profit social services organization. MaryBeth moved to New Mexico in 2002 to take a position as a case manager for risk-management assessments for 64 Indian trust lands. Over the past year, she has traveled to Bureau of Indian Affairs agencies and tribal headquarters throughout the western United States.

MaryBeth will be working out of the Sierra Club office on Old Santa Fe Trail in the Capital City (see Directory, page 2 for contact information). She welcomes calls and visits from members, and would especially like to encourage all of us to come meet with our legislators during the upcoming two-month session, as well as at home throughout the year. The strength of her lobbying efforts on behalf of the Chapter rests on our genuine concern for our natural resources, our conviction that there are sound solutions for our challenging natural resource issues, and our readiness to back her up with letters, calls, and visits with our state representatives and senators.

(continued on page 6)
Deregulation Negotiations May Prove Costly for NM Rate-payers

In October 2002, the Public Utility Company of New Mexico (PNM), the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (PRC), the NM Attorney General, the NM Industrial Energy Commission (NMIEC), and the City of Albuquerque signed a stipulated agreement effectively agreeing to repeal the 1999 Electric Utility Industry Restructuring Act, thereby returning New Mexico to a regulated electricity market. The New Mexico Legislature and the Attorney General's office had been eager to repeal the 1999 utility-deregulation legislation, in part because the experience in California was so disastrous. PNM, however, has been eager to develop its unregulated wholesale power activities. By its own testimony, PNM acknowledges that it seeks to "participate in the emerging competitive generation business...through the integrated utilization of regulated and unregulated assets, a structure best achieved within the utility using merchant generation."

"Merchant power" is power that is developed specifically to be sold off-state. There are currently approximately 96 applications for new power plants in New Mexico, most of which are merchant power plants that will tie into our natural gas pipelines and consume large amounts of water. By developing merchant power in a deregulated environment, PNM believes that it can return more profit to its shareholders (who are not necessarily its customers).

In exchange for agreeing not to oppose repeal of deregulation during the 2003 legislative session, PNM has been granted permission to pursue unregulated merchant power by leveraging its regulated assets. However, for these customers to have paid, PNM may invest up to $1.25 billion in merchant-power generation plants under the credit security and utility assets provided by New Mexico ratepayers. The profits, however, will accrue to shareholders, not ratepayers.

The stipulated agreement 1) requests the PRC to approve financing of PNM's merchant plants on an expedited basis, and 2) takes away the Commission's authority and reasonable scrutiny of PNM's merchant-plant financing activities.

In October 2002, the U.S. Executive Agencies (USEA) the federal agencies that buy power from PNM filed an objection opposing the stipulated agreement. USEA argued that the deal—repealing the Restructuring Act in exchange for the merchant-plant provision—subverts the interest of NM ratepayers (see box).

The stipulated agreement also authorizes PNM to recover 100% of nuclear decommissioning costs (PNM is part owner of the Pub Verde nuclear plant in Arizona) and up to $100 million associated with the decommissioning of the San Juan, La Plata, and Navajo coal mines.

As we do all that we could to move toward a renewable energy future, PNM is a utility with excess generation capacity and, therefore, has few incentives to develop efficiency measures that would do the most to reduce energy use, the consequent generation of greenhouse gases, and consumption of large amounts of water. Moreover, much of PNM's generation equipment is old, and approximately 85% uses coal. While other states are moving to wind power and lowering their electricity rates (e.g., Utah, Colorado), we are allowing our utility to generate more fossil-fuel-based electricity at a financial risk to New Mexico residents. We should change the incentive structure so that utilities are rewarded for efficiency, rather than only for generating and adding more electricity by building more power plants.

If these issues concern you, please contact your legislators and elected commissioners on the Public Utility Commission. There will be bills related to renewable energy and electricity deregulation in the 2003 Legislature, and our elected officials need to hear that New Mexicans want to aggressively pursue development of cleaner electricity.

For more information about renewable energy in New Mexico, see the website of the Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy (www.cfee.org).

—Gail Sykes
Chapter Energy Chair

Objection

USEA [United States Executive Agencies] is opposed to the stipulation which USEA believes subverts PNM ratepayer's interest in exchange for a political issue, i.e., repeal of the Restructuring Act.

Such merchant power will be used by PNM mainly to sell power to non-NM customers with none of the benefits or profits accruing to NM customers, who will bear the financial risks, and could face risks arising due to potential bankruptcy if PNM's merchant activities go sour as has happened in the case of Enron and a significant number of other merchant power suppliers in the country.

This stipulation violates the letter and spirit of the Commission's Holding Company Order...which attempted to insulate NM ratepayers from PNM's unregulated and uncontrolled business activities. The stipulation also requests the Commission to approve PNM's financing of PNM's merchant plants on an expedited basis and would take away the Commission's authority and reasonable scrutiny of PNM's merchant plant financing activities."

—United States Energy Administration
Grounds for Opposing Stipulation

Utility Case No. 3157
Filed 17 October 2002

Forum Focuses on Mexican Gray Wolf

On February 7-8, 2003, historians, wolf experts, ranchers, and environmentalists will gather in Las Cruces, New Mexico, to discuss the history and future of the Mexican gray wolf at a public forum, which is free and open to the public. "El Lobo," the first Aldo Leopold Forum organized by the New Mexico State University (NMSU) Department of History, will address:

• the history of wolf reintroduction to favor deer and elk hunters and ranchers;
• the historical role of large predators in the southwestern ecosystem;
• the current battle over wolf reintroduction; and
• other key speakers on Friday, February 7:
  • Susan Fadley, historian, biographer of Aldo Leopold, and author of Thinking Like a Mountain;
  • L. David Mech, the country's foremost wolf biologist, and author of The Wolf: The Ecology and Behavior of an Endangered Species; and
  • Caren Crow, executive director of the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association.

A day-long symposium on Saturday, February 8, will include talks and a round-table discussion leading environmental historians, biologists, policy-makers, environmental activists, and ranchers on both sides of the border. Hank Fischel, special projects coordinator for the National Wildlife Federation, will be the keynote speaker. In addition to the keynote and dinner speakers, participants include:

• historian Thomas Dunlap (author of Seeing American Wolves); Dan Flores (author of Horizonte Yellin); Louis Warden (author of The Hunters' Game); and Diana Hasley;
• Craig Miller of the Defenders of Wildlife;
• Michael Robinson of the Center for Biological Diversity; and
• ranchers Hugh McKeen, Laura Schoenberg, Dairy Eby, Jan, and Will Holder, and Jim Winder;
• ecologists Michael Phillips and David E. Brown (author of The Wolf in the Southwest);
• Julian Kelly of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and
• a number of other policy-makers and scientists, including representatives from the Apache reservations.

El Lobo is the first Leopold Forum focusing on environmental history and policy in the Southwest Borderlands. The forum is funded by grants from the Environmental Leadership Program, the New Mexico Endowment for the Humanities, the Thaw Charitable Trust, the McCon Charitable Foundation, the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, and the Southwest and Border Cultures Institute. The forum is organized by the New Mexico State University (NMSU) Department of History, and is co-sponsored by the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum and the NMSU College of Agriculture.

For registration information, contact Vanessa Stewart (wolfcons@nmsu.edu), or visit the conference web site (www.nmsu.edu/~histdep/wolf). Seating will be limited; advanced registration is required by 24 January 2003. There will be a charge for luncheon. For more information, see the NMSU web site (www.nmsu.edu/~histdep/wolf/nmchi), or contact Marilyn Westergaard (665-4587; mwwesteg@nmsu.edu)

—Vanessa Stewart

Aldo Leopold Forum Project Aims
Department of History, New Mexico State University

January/February 2003
Come Celebrate Water Education!

There's nothing like spending the summer enduring a Stage 3 Water Shoreline Emergency to increase awareness of how precious water is! Santa Feans now understand much more about watering lawns, brown grass, short showers, and dry cars. They also understand that there will be difficult choices to be made as we face the future.

So when fifth-grade teachers received a flyer inviting them to apply to bring their students to the first Children’s Water Festival to be held in the Santa Fe area, they responded with enthusiasm! The Water Festival for Santa Fe students will be held at Sweeney Center on 13-14 March 2008. More than 500 students will attend to spend the day participating in fun, hands-on learning activities about water science, history, geography, drama, and our water future.

But why a Water Festival? According to Festival Manager Susan Gorman, "This summer, New Mexicans have all learned what drought really means. With not enough water to provide for all needs, we are faced with incredibly difficult choices. In 15 years or so, the fourth-grade students will be the water engineers and managers, the voters and decision-makers. They will have to make critical choices about water—and they must have the facts, concepts, values, and critical thinking skills to do that. The Water Festival will provide teachers and students with some of those water facts, concepts, values, and a catalyst that sets off a chain reaction for ever more water education to take place in every school and every home."

It takes many organizations and individuals donating time, resources and money to make the Water Festival possible. There are plenty of opportunities for folks to participate!

The New Mexico Environment Department Surface Water Quality Bureau and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 have committed funds through the Clean Water Act, Section 319 grant programs to support the Water Festival. The Rio Grande Chapter is a local sponsor. For more information, contact Festival Manager Susan Gorman at Albuquerque (505/719-6073; spociente@nmsu.edu; www.pioneerwest.net).

—Susan Gorman

Biopharming: Cultivating Prescription Drugs in Food Crops

Care for prescription drugs or industrial chemicals in your own fields? If the U.S. Department of Agriculture continues to allow biopharm food crops to be planted in open fields, this may happen.

Horizontal gene transfer has already been shown to occur in fields of genetically engineered (GE) corn, resulting in the creation of "superweeds" that have become herbicide-resistant. Now the production of drugs or industrial chemicals in GE plants—biopharming—poses new alarming concerns.

Biopharming traits can spread through pollen carried by wind or insects, spilled seed, unharvested seed sprouting the next year, and biopharm seed residues carried by farm equipment to conventional fields.

Three hundred open-field trials have already been conducted in unidentified locations across the country. While the identities of most of these substances are guarded as confidential business information, a few known examples include contraceptive, plant growth regulators, a blood-clotting, blood-thinner, industrial enzymes, and vaccines (see www.oxon.org/phar/06/index.html).

For more information, visit the biotech resource and education website (www.sierrachub.org/biotech), or contact Jim Diamond, chair of the Genetic Engineering Committee (jimdiamond@sierrachub.org).

Take Action

Dear [Senator/Representative],

I am writing to express my profound concern over the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s policy that allows food crops to be used to create genetically engineered pharmaceuticals and industrial chemicals.

In mid-November 2002, it was widely reported that a biotech company, ProdiGene, had twice violated USDA guidelines established to prevent the contamination of the human food supply.

I urge you to call for Congressional hearings into this matter. I also ask that an immediate moratorium be placed on the outdoor cultivation of all pharmaceutical crops.

Signed,
[Your Name & Address]

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

You can also send form letters or submit your own letters through the web site of the Campaign to Label Genetically Engineered Foods (www.thesmackdown.org/)

[More information available online]
threaten the environment and public health, are
inhumane, and of little benefit.
For more information on CAFOs, see page 5 this
issue, the Rio Grande Sierra May/June 2002, or
contact Chapter CAFO Chair Paul Fidler in Clovis,
NM (985-2182; paul.fidler@bluewaterwater supply.com; www.SaveOurWatersupply.com).

Energy
With the conviction that reducing dependence on
oil and gas (and nuclear power) is perhaps the most
important strategy for promoting sound manage
ment of land and water resources and air quality—not
to mention sound international relations—the
Chapter will focus on the following two legislative
initiatives to promote the use of renewable energy.

Mandatory Targets for Renewable Energy
Generation—(see article page 1).

Tax Credits for Residential Solar Power Sys
tems—On 7 January 2003, the Energy Conservation and
Management Division of the Energy Mineral and
Natural Resources Department (EMNMRD) will
convene an open meeting to discuss incentives to
increase the use of solar power, including tax credits
for the installation of residential solar systems. For
information about the outcome of this meeting and
further plans, contact Brian Johnson at EMNMRD in
Santa Fe (576-3313; bjohnson@state.nm.us). The
Chapter will actively support legislation to instigate
such a program.
For more information about these and other
energy initiatives, contact Chapter Energy Chair
Gail Ryba (see Directory, page 2).

Wildlife Protection
The Wildlife Conservation Act (WCA) is New
Mexico’s endangered species law, and it designates
the Conservation Services Division (CSD) of the
New Mexico Department of Game & Fish to be
responsible for "comprehensive conservation services
for non-consumptive wildlife uses."
The Chapter will be supporting an initiative to
amend the language of the WCA to include threat
dened species and time frames for required actions.
We will also support allocation of at least $1,000,000
in general obligation for a target for the CSD in
order to obtain and maximize federal matching
funding. Legislation to address these issues has passed
in previous years but was vetoed by Governor
Johnson. We would also support a bill to change
the name of the Game & Fish Department to the
Department of Wildlife.
Although these measures would help protect
wildlife in the short term, long-term protection will
require:
• a guaranteed funding stream, and
• realignment of the Department to place more
emphasis on non-game species.
To this end, the Chapter will support a Memo
dial creating an interim committee to review the
status and needs for management and conservation
of New Mexico’s wildlife resources.
For more information, contact Chapter Political/
Legislative Chair Gwen Watchell (see Directory,
pages 2).

The 1993 New Mexico Mining Act
 Phelps Dodge Mining Company has requested
amendments to New Mexico’s Mining Act that
would greatly weaken environmental regulation of
mines. Phelps Dodge has proposed to the Interim
Committee on Water and Natural Resources that the
NM Mining Act be amended to:
• eliminate the requirement that Phelps Dodge
provide third-party financial assurances for
reclamation of its mines;
• allow Phelps Dodge to evade reclamation
along the mining "mining zones" in which
mining would be declared to be the "highest
and best use" in perpetuity and
• transfer environmental regulation from
the New Mexico Environment Department
to the Mining and Minerals Division of the
NM Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources
Department.
This proposal comes on the heels of Phelps Dodge
receiving several Notices of Violation (NOV) for
not meeting the deadline for cleanup plans at three
copper mines near Silver City. In mid December 2002,
the Mining Commission heard testimony from all
parties concerning the attempt by Phelps Dodge to
make the NOVs withdrawn. Cliff Larsen and Max
God testified on behalf of the Rio Grande Chapter.
Phelps Dodge was not successful, and the NOVs
and the modified abatement schedules stand.
Our attention will now shift to the legislature,
where the Sierra Club and its allies will work to
keep the Mining Act from being weakened (see D.
Frazier’s notes in Northern Group News pages 12-13).
For more information, contact Chapter Mining
Chair Cliff Larsen (see Directory, page 2).

Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park
Since 1999, the Southwest Environmental Center in
Las Cruces has advocated for the proposed Mesilla
Valley Bosque Park to protect up to 4,000 acres of
private and public land along three miles of the Rio
Grande near Las Cruces. This would be the largest
river restoration project in southern New Mexico
and a pilot project for the kind of work that could be
done elsewhere within the Interim Boundary and
Water Commission’s (BWCO) Drainage Project—
a 105-mile stretch of the Rio Grande in southern
New Mexico and western Texas.
As proposed, the area would be managed by State Parks as a natural area for riparian restoration
and nature-oriented recreation. There would be a visitor’s center, trails, and interpretation.
Last year, the legislature passed a memorandum direct
State Parks to conduct a feasibility study. The
draft study, completed in August, supported the idea
of establishing a state park at the site. The final study
was released to the Legislative Finance Committee
in mid October 2002.
The Trust for Public Lands has been actively
involved in negotiations with landowners, which
include the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and
Bureau of Reclamation, the NM Department
of Game & Fish, the BWAC, Elephant Butte Irrigation
District, and several private parties. There is gener
ally wide support for the park proposal.
The Rio Grande Chapter will support legislation
that will allow $50,000 for master planning
for it, as well as SWGC’s efforts to secure
$400,000 for land consolidation from its local
legislators’ discretionary funds.
For more information, contact Kevin Bichy by
SWGC in Las Cruces (528-5527; auec@ciunet.com).

Transportation
The Club is backing the work of the Surface
Transportation Policy Project (STPP)—New Mexico
in promoting environmentally progressive transpor
tation legislation to:
• authorize the formation of regional transit
districts (RTDs);
• design and build safe bicycle and pedestrian
routes to schools;
• bring back park-and-ride transit services;
and promote the return of "heavy rail" passenger
service from El Paso to Denver through
New Mexico.

Regional Transit Legislation—Regional transit
districts (RTDs) would allow public transit systems to
serve multiple communities. Existing New Mexico
law does not support long-term cooperation between
county governments on public transit projects, and
currently does not permit RTDs. RTD legislation introduced in 1997 died on the
Senate Floor in a session-ending filibuster by Senator
Bill Davis, and similar 1998 legislation died in com
mittee.
The proposed legislation before the 2003 session
will enable the creation of RTDs across New Mexico.
Local governments could decide whether to partici
pate; each local government would submit to its
respective voting body an application. Governor Bill
Richardson has stated that he will support enabling
legislation for RTDs. His plan to promote balanced
transportation system, "Through these regional
authorities, we will provide improved mobility,
economic opportunity, and environmental quality
"(press release, October 2002).
For more information, contact Chapter Transpor
tation Chair Ken Hughes (see Directory, page 2).

Safe Routes to School—With 120 pedestrian
fatalities in 2000 and 2001, New Mexico has the
nation’s highest pedestrian fatality rate. The state
also has one of the highest child-pedestrian fatality
rates in the United States. New Mexico ranked sixth in
bicycle fatalities in 1999. In Albuquerque, 22% of
all traffic deaths were pedestrians, in Las Cruces
20%, in Santa Fe 12%. Many New Mexico commu
nities, especially those surrounding our schools, lack
sidewalks, bike paths, street crossings, and other
elements necessary for safe walking environments.
The Traffic Safety Bureau of New Mexico’s High
way and Transportation Department (NMHTD)
has identified reducing fatalities and injuries
resulting from pedestrian crashes as a priority.
States receive Transportation Safety Set-aside funds
from the Federal Highway Administration. The Safe
(continued on page 15)
Public Transit Can Fill Gaps Left by Airlines in the Wake of 9/11

As travel service nationwide has declined since 9/11, with many airports experiencing a decrease in the double digits, according to a new report from Reconnecting America. The report goes on to call for integrating air, rail, and bus to provide travelers with more choices.

The impact of 9/11 has been most severe on America's small and medium airports. In New Mexico, the Santa Fe and Hobbs (Lea County) airports have lost more than half of their flights over the past year. Twenty-one airports, including New Mexico's Ruidoso Airport, have ended all scheduled service. The report concludes that 9/11 exposed the frailties lines in an already faltering industry, and that air travel will be unable to play its traditional role in the national transportation portfolio.

"The reduction in flight means travelers are being forced to take connecting flights instead of direct routes and have fewer flights to choose from when booking their trips," said Darrin Holt, Las Vegas, Nevada, co-director of Reconnecting America. "This service cut represents a fundamental restructuring of the air travel network, not a temporary adjustment. The report analyzes the loss in nearly 400,000 scheduled flights at over 500 airports described in the Official Airline Guide. The report compares comparable weeks during the fall of 2001 and 2002.

Some of the most dramatic reductions in flight schedules have been seen at non-hub commercial airports, which are typically served by a few flights each day to one or two destinations. Santa Fe had the fourth-highest reduction in the nation (62%) and the Hobbs (Lea County) Airport tied for sixth (61%). The average cut in flight frequency for non-hub commercial service was 7.7%. Farmington, Gallup, Roswell, and Taos airports all saw substantial flight losses above the national average. Albuquerque, New Mexico's largest airport, saw an 8.9% reduction in service.

Pressured from low-cost carriers has forced fares down, even at airport charges and security costs are rising, making short- and medium-distance flights unprofitable. The report identifies a way out of this dilemma, noting that there are several markets where bus and rail provide an alternative. Even the airline trade group, the Air Transport Association (ATA), recognizes that this trend has reduced access to smaller and medium communities. In November 2002, ATA's President Carol Hefley warned, "As the industry continues to contract, smaller and medium-size airports will be disconnected from the national air transportation system—a system vital to their economic health.

Reconnecting America is calling for changes in government policy that would permit a closer integration of air with rail and bus, thereby creating a more financially stable transportation network which will enable each transportation mode to serve the markets it's best suited for. The campaign is calling for an overhaul of the nation's transportation system when Congress reconvenes funding for air, rail, and highways next year.

The full report is available at Reconnecting America's website (www.reconnectingamerica.org). For more information, contact Co-Directors Hank Dietmar at the Great American Station Foundation in Las Vegas, NV (702-545-0626) or (773)278-3800 ext. 154; or Scott Bernstein at the Center for Neighborhood Technology in Chicago, IL (773)278-4800 ext. 154; or (773)278-3800 ext. 154; or (773)278-3800 ext. 154; or (773)278-3800 ext. 154; or (773)278-3800 ext. 154; or (773)278-3800 ext. 154; or (773)278-3800 ext. 154.
News from the Chair

Don Dearholt

The election has come and gone now, and the results were often disappointing in terms of environmental interest. The best news on that front was the defeat of several of the targeted "dirty dozen". It’s clear that, as environmentalists, we have our work cut out for us. Please do not be too discouraged—but rather use the entire situation as one of increased motivation and effort! In short, we need you to become active and to help keep the pressure on those who would despoil our wonderful natural resources through neglect or exploitation for short-term gain, either financial or political.

We’re extremely pleased to welcome new members to the Executive Committee of the SNM Group—new members Cathy Mathews and Anthony Hyde—we surely look forward to their involvement and participation in our group’s activities! Also, returning members David Farrell and Margot Wilson were re-elected, and we’re very appreciative of their efforts on behalf of environmentalism in southern New Mexico. And please consider attending some or all of the following activities our group is sponsoring in the next few months.

UPCOMING PLANNING MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS:

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

Wednesday, January 8—PLANNING MEETING: (ExCom and interested members and guests of the SNM Group), 6:30 p.m. at the new Southwest Environmental Center (SWEC) location at 275 North Downtown Mall (1/2 block south of Coa’s My Bookstore), just south of Las Cruces Avenue on the mall. Please enter the west door, just south of Day’s Hamburgers. We’ll begin planning our job assignments for the year.

Wednesday, February 5—PLANNING MEETING: (ExCom and interested members and guests of the SNM Group), 6:30 p.m. at SWEC (see location information above in the description of the program meeting on November 14). Please enter the west door, just south of Day’s Hamburgers. We’ll begin planning programs for the year.

Thursday, February 13—PROGRAM MEETING: 7:00 p.m., on the status of open spaces around Las Cruces—members of the Open Space Task Force will present their current concerns and the issues being addressed now. The program will be at the new Southwest Environmental Center (SWEC) location at 275 North Downtown Mall (1/2 block south of Coa’s My Bookstore), just south of Las Cruces Avenue on the mall. Please enter the west door, just south of Day’s Hamburgers.

Wednesday, March 5—PLANNING MEETING: (ExCom and interested members and guests of the SNM Group), 6:30 p.m. at SWEC (see location information above in the description of the program meeting on February 13). Please enter the west door, just south of Day’s Hamburgers.

OUTINGS:

Saturday, Jan 18, Cross-country ski outing in the Sacramento Mtns. All are welcome. You can rent equipment, if you don’t own such. Call Ben at 526-7811 for meeting place and further information.

March 22, Cooke’s Peak hike - I’ll be leading it and it is already scheduled as a SW Environmental Center Outing. Same call info as above.

And if you’d like to lead an outing, please call Ben at 526-7811

Group Directory
Southern N.M. Group
Executive Committee
P.O. Box 395, DB
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003

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Legislative Issues
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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2003
Growth Strains Water Supply
by Leon Metz

Water seems to be the news lately. There is a current effort under way to get us to rethink our lawn design, and of course we have to ask for water in restaurants.

It seems to me that neither the water company nor the drinking public are taking this water shortage seriously enough. While we are not in desperate straits yet, the end may be in sight. And there won’t be any irrigation zone down from the Polo to save us.

Looking at it another way, El Paso’s problem isn’t that we have too little water, but that we have too many people. While historically there have always been a few dry water years, we’ve reached the point where the dry water years, as they are now, are going to seem natural.

El Paso alone is approaching a million residents, Las Cruces is booming, and Juarez is out of sight in terms of population growth. By law, Juarez gets a certain allocated amount of Rio Grande water per year. If we think those water needs won’t grow, and massively so, we are wrong. If we think we can ignore these needs, we can’t. The El Paso, Juarez, Las Cruces population growth is an increasingly, silently ticking water bomb.

Our water comes from underground sources, plus river sources from Elephant Butte and Caballo reservoirs. And these resources are shrinking. Granted, we’ve purchased underground supplies to the extent that we can use (and those folks are furious), and we may have occasional good years with the Rio Grande, such as the 1960’s when both Elephant Butte and Caballo threatened to overflow. But even if both Elephant Butte and Caballo were bursting at the seams, we still couldn’t supply the stuff for later uses or emergencies. We’d simply have to open the valves and let it drain off.

So water in a reservoir, even when it’s full, is not exactly like money in a bank. We can replenish bank accounts. Only Mother Nature can replenish reservoir accounts.

Even in good years of heavy snowpacks to the north we waste water because there are no other options, no other places to store it. So we tend to think of these good times of ample supplies as periods that will last forever. And they won’t.

Last week, I drove past both Elephant Butte and Caballo, and I saw were not so much lakes as puddles. In my mind’s eye, I pictured people wading out there instead of paddling.

Even so, in addition to the river, we had extensive underground supplies of good water and potable water. Well, we’ve pumped and swallowed most of the good stuff. The pond water is going to taste funny even after being treated, although I’m told we can get used to it. It’s the smell that’s going to be tough.

So what’s the remedy?

The reality is that we are trying to find additional water (and should continue) when we should also be discouraging immigration into the El Paso Southwest.

The problem is not too little water, it is too many people. So we can implement, delay the inevitable for many years, maybe even a century, perhaps even find additional supplies, but in the end the population on both sides of the river is going to have to be controlled.

For in the absence of training people to drink less, much less, the only option is to have fewer people.

Historian Leon Metz writes and speaks often on El Paso and the Southwest. He may be reached at 487-8860.

Selected Outings

Jan 1: Cottonwood Springs New Year’s Day Hike
Place: Franklin Mountains
Class: Moderate
Length: 4 miles
Elevation gain: 750 feet
Leader: Elizabeth Walsh 584-1471 (H) ewalsh@utep.edu
Join Professor Walsh for a morning hike to see your head. We have the nation’s largest urban park in our midst, so what better way to begin the New Year?

Jan 5: Ron Coleman Trail Day Hike
Place: Franklin Mountains State Park
Class: Moderate
Length: 5 miles
Elevation gain: 2000 feet up-1500 feet down
Leader: Terry Sunday 584-9301 (H) terry@sunlight.com
From the trailhead at McKelligon Canyon, we ascend the rugged eastern slopes past two natural caves. Soon we top out on the ridge, where fantastic views of the West Side open up. After taking a break at a beautiful saddle, we face the hike’s biggest challenge—a sheer rock wall looms ahead. Good hand- and footholds abound. With a little careful scrambling we surmount the obstacle. We’re rewarded with a peak through a natural rock “window.” After lunch near the top, we join the Las Cruces Peak trail at Goodnight Notch and descend to Trans-Mountain Road where our car shuttle returns us to the trailhead.

Jan 11: Lower Sunset Trail Day Hike
Place: Franklin Mountains State Park
Class: Easy
Length: 5 miles
Elevation gain: 2000 feet
Leader: Jim Bell 584-5804 (H) jbell@sierra.net
With Professor Bell as our leader, we return to this great multi-use trail, which wanders through impressive Chihuahuan desert ecosystems.

Jan 17-20: Pecos Wilderness Backcountry Loop Backpack
Place: Pecos Wilderness in the HMA-AZ border area, Mexico
Class: Strenuous
Length: 19 miles roundtrip
Elevation gain: 1400 feet
Leader: Robin Wickenden 585-6007 (H) rwicki@outlook.com
This is an exploratory backpack. Trails may be difficult to follow; signs may no longer exist. Some of these trails follow old roads, others may be overgrown and require bushwhacking. We may have to navigate by map, compass, and GPS. Participants must be experienced backpackers familiar with backcountry using on rough, prickly pear, and mesquite. Monday should be a short day with time to return to El Paso at a reasonable hour.

Jan 26: South Franklin Peak Day Hike
Place: Franklin Mountains State Park
Class: Easy
Length: 2 miles
Elevation gain: 750 feet
Leader: Richard Rhener 544-553 (H)
Meet at the picnic tables at the top of Transemission Rd. at 8 A.M. for this moderately challenging trek to the towers atop South Franklin. Bring a lunch or snacks, water, and dress for the weather. Call to let us know you are coming.

RIO GRANDE SIERRA
Sacred Lands is 2003 Focus

At the December meeting, the Executive Committee chose to focus on preservation of "Sacred Lands" in central New Mexico. Some of these important sites are threatened, such as Zuni Salt Lake, Petroglyph National Monument, and the Sandia Mountains. All three of these sacred lands were recently profiled in the November/December 2002 Sierra Magazine.

Why sacred lands? This issue touches on many issues that are important to our members in central New Mexico.

Zuni Salt Lake is threatened by proposed coal mine that will likely drain the desert aquifer that feeds the lake. Both the Pueblo and Navajo people hold the lake sacred, harvesting salt for their rituals. Meanwhile, this proposed mine is an example of bad energy policies that pollute the land and destroy the land. To learn more about the Zuni Salt Lake, plan to attend our March General Meeting (see notice below).

The Sandia Mountains are sacred to the Sandia tribe. Development on all sides of the mountain threatens to overrun sacred sites in the foothills. The Sandia tribe is working to guarantee that the west side of mountains will be protected from future development. Development of the Sandias also threatens favorite hiking places in these mountains.

The integrity of the Petroglyph National Monument continues to be threatened by the proposed construction of a six-lane highway through the park. The highway would allow Albuquerque to sprawl to the west, threatening our water supply and increasing congestion and pollution in the Rio Grande Valley. The Petroglyph National Monument is also a favorite hiking area.

As you can see, the Sacred Lands affect us all. We are interested in preserving the sacred sites of all cultures. So, we are asking you to help us identify these and other special places, especially if they are threatened. If you would like to bring a site to our attention, please e-mail Richard Johnson at rjohnson@unm.edu.

Also, we are asking you to be involved. We will need volunteers to help us protect these important places in Central New Mexico. Contact any of us.

Central New Mexico Group
PO Box 25342
Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87123-5342

Executive Committee (area code 505)
Alma Rosa Silva Bedinecas
Blair Brown
Steve Capra
Marilyn Cooper
Mark Doppke
Richard Johnson
Michal Mudd
Marilyn D. Thomson
Sherry Wolf
Alma Rosa Silva Bedinecas, Blair Brown, Richard Johnson, and Sherry Wolf are elected to the Group Excom. Alma Rosa and Blair have served for a number of years. We welcome them all and look forward to the challenges of the new year.

Roadless Rule Put Into Effect!

From the first day that the Bush Administration took over, they have stonewalled on Roadless Area Protection. But as of December 12, 2002, the delays are over! A decision by the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals lifted the preliminary injunction, so that the Bush Administration is now required to protect the 58.5 million acres of roadless areas within our National Forests, including nearly 14 million acres within the Tongass and Chugach National Forests. The court case now moves back to the District Court level where opponents must win an uphill battle in their efforts to overturn the Roadless Rule.

Welcome to New Excom Members

We are pleased to announce that Alma Rosa Silva Bedinecas, Marilyn D. Thomson, and Blair Brown were elected to the Group Excom. Alma Rosa and Blair have served for a number of years. We welcome them all and look forward to the challenges of the new year.

General Public Meetings Calendar
Please put these events on your calendar:

Monday, January 20 at 7:30PM
JWMorison from Rails Incorporated will talk about bringing commuter rail service to the central New Mexico area.

Monday, February 17th at 7:30PM
Brian Shields from Amigos Bravos will be discussing the Mining Act of 1872 and its current detrimental effects on New Mexico and the West.

Monday, March 17th at 7:30PM
Andy Beiler, a Sierra Club activist from Arizona, will talk about efforts to protect the Zuni Salt Lake from a proposed coal mine.

Monday, April 21st at 7:30PM
Richard Paerfundel, the "Bagman," will discuss environmental-friendly ways to control pests in and around your home.

Monday, May 15th at 7:30PM
Denise Forte, a UNM Law School Professor, will talk about legal issues involving water in New Mexico.

Monday, June 16th at 7:30PM
Michael Robinson from the Center for Biodiversity will offer a presentation on well-field protection and ranching in New Mexico.

All meetings will be at the First Unitarian Church on the corner of Carlisle and Comanche, in the Social Hall. All are FREE and open to the public. Coffee, drinks, and snacks are provided.
Trash Talk
by Jay Morrow

Three or four months ago I got a call from a County Sheriff's lieutenant. He asked what the county policy was on illegal dumping and asked me if I had found an illegal dump site. I would go clean it up. (I am the County Solid Waste Coordinator) I explained that there are thousands of sites and we don't have the resources to take them all on. At the same time, I was intrigued to be talking to an enforcement officer about illegal dumping and suggested that we get a group together and come up with a strategy. I was thinking about five or six folks over coffee and King Kresge.

I went to my counterpart with the City of Albuquerque, and we decided to jump on this thing of illegal dumping. We started calling governmental entities surrounding Bernalillo County and were overwhelmed by the interest of everybody to work together not only to clean up illegal dumps but to actually do something to deter dumping to start with. A VERY DAUNTING TASK. We decided to have a Middle Rio Grande Illegal Dumping Summit.

What started out to be a meeting of a few folks over coffee grew to a gathering of 120 professionals from the area at the Hispanic Cultural Center, with elected officials, law enforcement, zoning, environmental health, open space, Pueblos, State Highway, EPA, legal departments, Albuquerque Public Schools, UNM, Keep NM Beautiful, public works and more from five county areas as an all day summit. It was great.

The NM Environment Department brought in a Texas firm that has set up state programs in Texas that prove an ordinance that caravanned your truck if convicted of illegal Dumping. Radical! We also heard of a program where a local government paid for old furniture and appliances and tires. Opposite of charging for them. They had young people going out on places like the West Mesa picking up junk and bringing it in for a $20 pick-up load where it would have cost that government $100 to do the same thing. Los Lunas New Mexico has just started a program call "The worst Men's Plato Fest" where people, without trespassing, take photos of illegal dumping for cash prizes. Very interesting results from that are coming in.

To make a long story short, we are going to establish a state wide Illegal Dumping Campaign in 2003 and will need support from groups like the Sierra Club to turn around an attitude that has permitted this blight. There may be an effort to establish an Environmental Land Use Court in New Mexico next year, so stay tuned.

In another development, the New Mexico Recycling Coalition has joined with the State Highway Department to form a task force to look for ways to incorporate "recycled" items in highway construction. It will be called "Recycled Roads." This could be HUGE! The first thing we are looking at is using match and compost on interchanges as a place of unwanted trash for erosion control. We did a test job at the NE quadrant of the 40 and Juan Tabo interchange a year ago and it has saved bundles from storm drain clean out cost. The next item will probably be old tires and tire bales and then maybe glass. Highway engineers are tough nuts to crack on trying new materials (test choice can be very expensive) but both groups are very encouraged about the future possibilities.

Jay Morrow is the Bernalillo County Solid Waste Coordinator and a former member of the Casual New Mexico Group. He can be reached at jmorrow@hcnr.gov

Thinking Locally About
Global Climate Change

The Pew Center on Global Climate Change has released "Greenhouse &
Statehouse: The Evolving State Government Role in Climate Change," which
features case studies of nine states (Georgia, Massachusetts, Minnesota,
Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Texas, and Wisconsin) that
have taken action to mitigate climate change. The report tracks trends in state
climate change action and draws conclusions about the potential of state action
and its implications for national policy.

In addition, the Pew Center's searchable database of state activities has
published 14 new case studies, covering 7 states. The case studies are available
at http://www.pecg.org/states. Please contact me at:

Leaders: Tom Pettenos 771-9325 pettenos@juno.com

Sunday, January 19th - Desert Exploratory Hike
(osc January 11th listing for description)

Saturday, January 16th - Desert Exploratory Hike
(see January 11th listing for description)

Sunday, January 12th - Three Gen Spring Trail, Sandia Mt. Wilderness
Excellent conditioning hike to wonderful viewpoints. Depending on snow
conditions, may go as far as Oso Pass. Approx. 6 miles round-trip, 1500 ft.
elevation change. David Thier, 269-1535.

Sunday, January 26th - Pre-Super Bowl "Waddle":
Call for meeting time/place. Before indulging myself in "super snacks," I'll
need a little exercise. We'll waddle this well-traveled trail in the Sandias as
far as we feel comfortable (deep snow turns us back), with thankfulness
about noon. Good exercise (10 miles RT, 2800') if we make it to the ridge.
Feel free to come and walk part-way as hike is out-and-back. Returns to cars by
mid-afternoon (or for game). Flying Star for snack/but tea optional afterwards.
Bring lunch, water and dress for the weather.
Leader: Rick Burley (299-4941, simpurious@aol.com).

Sunday, February 2nd - Desert Exploratory Hike
(see January 11th listing for description)

Saturday, February 15th - Desert Exploratory Hike
(see January 11th listing for description)

Sunday, February 16th - Domingo Baca Canyon Hike
Contact leader for meeting time/place. Weather permitting, we'll make a 1/2
day hike up this scenic trail on the West side of the Sandias. Finish in afternoon,
may go for snack afterward. Hike could be changed to another location or
abbreviated if snow is heavy in canyon. Hike: ~5 miles, Elevation: ~1500'.
Leader: Rick Burley (299-4941, simpurious@aol.com).

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Leader: Rick Burley (299-4941, simpurious@aol.com).

Saturday, February 23rd - Desert Exploratory Hike
(see January 11th listing for description)
NORTHERN NEW MEXICO (alias Santa Fe) GROUP 2003 MEETINGS

Tuesday, January 21, 7 PM
ENDANGEROSED SPECIES
And How We Can Help Them

Our guest speaker is Susan MacMullin, deputy assistant regional director for ecological services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, Department of Interior. Ms. MacMullin will be showing slides and speaking about grant programs, partnership programs and habitat conservation plans—all through the federal and state auspices.
Come and find out what the government is doing and how we the public can contribute to the programs.

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

Northern New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club
621 Obs Santa Fe Trail, Plaza 621, Suite 10, Santa Fe, NM 87505
955 985 2703

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Doug Fraser
I've been elected to the position of Chair of the Chapter, which includes all of New Mexico, as well as west Texas. I've enjoyed the leadership of the Northern Group and will certainly remain active on the Group EsCom.
It was certainly a kick-in-the-teeth on December 20th when the NM Supreme Court handed us a decision regarding existing mining area expansions not needing to comply with the NM Mining Act. Talk about the grinch who stole Christmas! Since the Club helped draft the Act, it was clearly understood that "we," both the mining industry and the environmental community, accepted that an existing mine could not just expand at will without the new section of the mine coming under the Act. Gratefully, dissenting Chief Justice Patricio M. Bane realized this and so stated. It is interesting to note that only one maverick mining operation pursued this litigation. The industry as a whole knew better. Unfortunately, it is sometimes cheaper to litigate a "long shot" than to comply. But now, as the court majority suggested, we will need to amend the NM Mining Act during the upcoming legislative session, which will not be easy. Wish us well. This is the Sierra Club's baby. We led the fight for the Act's 1993 passage following three years' hard work. May the New Year be good for you and our environment.

CONSERVATION CHAIR

Paul Paryski
Most of the conservation issues facing the Sierra Club in Northern New Mexico in the last months of 2002 centered on water and the consequences of the election of a new Governor. The snow storms during this period have somewhat alleviated the public's and the politicians' fears of water shortages, but these snows in no way can make up for the water deficits, particularly in urban areas. The problem remains critical for residents, the health of the rivers, particularly the Rio Grande and the Santa Fe, and their associated riparian ecosystems and watersheds.
A way to reduce the demand for water is to use graywater for landscape watering, which accounts for almost 40% of water use in cities. With the help of Melissa MacDonald, Santa Fe's Permaculture Institute, we presented a graywater bill to the Legislature's Interim Water and Finance Committee. The bill will be sponsored by Rep. Mini Stewart, a friend of the environment. It would allow the use of graywater for household landscape watering without a permit.
A series of reuse and water efficient housing workshops organized by the State Engineer will result in a series of guidelines for builders, counties and municipalities for reuse and water conservation, a pilot housing demonstration project, and hopefully, in water conservation legislation requiring new commercial construction and new subdivisions. This initiative, begun last summer, has the support of the construction industry.
I helped organize and participate in a series of meetings with representatives of NM's environmental community to propose to the Governor-elect persons whom we suggested for appointments in his new administration. Hopefully, Mr. Richardson and his transition team will accept some of these people.
I represented the Club in a series of workshops, organized by Skyline Development Services with a grant from the McCune Charitable Foundation, to build bridges between the environmental community and traditional agricultural groups. Richard Barth of the Central Group and I participated with the Alliance for the Rio Grande Heritage in their laudable efforts to save the Rio Grande.
A conservation issue that will cause some controversy is newly elected State Land Commissioner Patrick Lyons' statement that he favors the shooting of coyotes. Environmentalists consider coyotes to be a essential part of the ecosystems of the region.
NORTHERN NEWS GROUP

OUTINGS FOR 2003

Sat Sun
January 2003

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

1 Easy/Moderate Hike in Cerrillo Hills. Dogs allowed. Leave 9 AM. Bob McKee (672-3432)
2 Easy/Moderate Hike near the community of Albuquerque. Leave 9 AM. Mike McLaughlin (505-262-3322)
3 Easy Hike. Leave 9 AM. Mike McLaughlin (505-262-3322)
4 Easy/Moderate Hike in Canyon de Chama. Leave 9 AM. Mike McLaughlin (505-262-3322)
5 Easy/Moderate Hike in the Jemez Mountains. Leave 9 AM. Mike McLaughlin (505-262-3322)
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PLEASE ALWAYS CALL THE OUTINGS LEADER PRIOR TO A HIKE FOR CONFIRMATION AND DETAILS.

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

LOST??

Outings leaders plan to maintain a collection of top and other maps of the Santa Fe area at the office. Old tops can be useful, too, since they sometimes show details or old trails left off of more recent versions. To save a tree and recycle your area maps or guidebooks (birds, wildflowers, geology, etc.), call Teoh Oruch (820-2844) or Norbert Sperlich (744-4354).

GROUP MEETING DATES

Tuesday, January 7, 6:30 PM
Tuesday, February 7, 7 PM
Tuesday, March 7, 6:30 PM
Tuesday, April 5, 7 PM

Water Pot-Luck (John Buchser's house 820-9216)

Outings Notes - Unless otherwise noted, all outings leave from the same spot, 621 Old Santa Fe Trail, Paseo de Peralta. Pacing will be arranged. Each hiker should come prepared to pay $5 a mile to the driver of the car in which he rode. Bring a lunch, water, sturdy hiking shoes and clothing suitable for the weather. Leader reserves the right to turn back or change routes if the pace is too fast, unfavorable conditions, or for other reasons. Numbers of participants. Unoccupied seats in more than one participant's vehicle are available at the Santa Fe Club office. Dogs not permitted on hikes unless noted otherwise. Telephone leader for details. Outings not on hikers' maps unless noted otherwise.
MEETINGS

All meetings are held in the upstairs rooms in the Mesa Public Library at 7:00pm and are open to the public. General meetings are on the first Wednesday of each month. There will be no General Meeting in January 2003.

OPEN MEETING
BANDELIER NATIONAL MONUMENT
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5 7:00PM
MESA PUBLIC LIBRARY
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOMS

Bandelier National Monument Superintendent Gene Bane will focus on major threats in upcoming years including:
- Ecological Restoration Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- Fire Management Plan EIS
- Vanishing Treasures and Archeological Inventory Condition Assessment.

Chief of Resources John Mack will join him as the staff expert on some areas.

OPEN MEETING
VALLES CALDERA NATIONAL PRESERVE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5 7:00PM
MESA PUBLIC LIBRARY
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOMS

William delBuys, Chairman of the Valles Caldera Trustees will address our issues and concerns about the new Valles Caldera National Preserve in a question and answer discussion.

Pajarito Group Directory
http://tiggrande.sierracub.org/pajarito/
- Bob Black, Chair & Program Representative blblack@yahoo.com 602-2368
- Kim Manley, Vice Chair kmanley63@yomicom.com 602-6163
- Carole Jacobson, Secretary/Treasurer abejaco@worldnet.att.net 672-9579
- Chuck Pergler, Conservation Chair pergher@att.net 601-6169
- Judy Benson bensonj@hnl.gov 667-8465
- Matt Hevner, Webmaster hevner@james.com 829-3645
- Abe Jacobson abejaco@worldnet.att.net 672-9579

Thanks For Buying the Valles. Now Keep Out.

The Pajarito Group endorses, in general terms, the interim steps by the Valles Caldera National Preserve. On one particular issue, however, the Preserve seems to be headed in the wrong direction—the public is not gaining the unguided foot access that most people had expected. Perhaps this is only an anomaly of the interim management, and perhaps patience will pay off. But we cannot assume it. It’s time to speak out—the Trust should allow unguided foot access to the Preserve. Remember, it was the public that made the Preserve possible through their taxes and, before that, through their volunteer advocacy for the land purchase. It is neither just nor fair that the public can enter the Valles only for a few hours at a time, and only in ultra-pricey guided tours ($45 for three hours).

Over the past year we have heard several arguments on why unguided public access cannot presently happen. These arguments don’t stand up to reason:
- The public would trample the fragile ecosystem. Really? Pedestrians or silent access for 150-pound humans would damage the landscape very little compared to the 1,000 half-ton bison that graze on the Valles for several months each year. Weeds would not grow as fast as the traversed, would not pull up and emit the willow shoots from the presently denuded riparian corridors, and would not pose the risk that cattle do of spreading noxious weeds, cheat grass, etc. We are not against the Preserve’s grazing program, but only pointing out that humans are at least as fair a consideration as cows do. Cows don’t pay taxes; people do. If the Trust needs advice or expertise on how both to allow public access and at the same time to protect the environment, then our National Parks and Monuments, including Bandelier, could offer useful guidance.
- The ranch must obey its legislative charter and has to “pay for itself.” Good! This is easily done with individual access too. For example, we’d gladly pay $50/year for an annual pedestrian family pass to the Preserve. By contrast, the Trust would have to hire a person on ten (ten that, 10) guided three-hour walks in a single year to gain the same revenue. Of the $45 admission on the guided walks, only $5 goes to the Trust. The Trust could also charge $5.00 for a guided single-day access, $10.00 for a week, $50 for a year, etc. To impose on the visitor public a $45/person burden for three hours, so that the Trust can garner $5/person, is neither efficient nor fair.

OUTINGS

Sunday, 26 January 2003 • Cumbres Pass Ski and Snowshoe Tour—Moderately strenuous trek at altitudes from 10,000-11,000’ Contact Abe Jacobson (672-9579) abejaco@worldnet.att.net.

Please check the Northern Group pages for additional outings in the area.

If people know we are any market measure, the present Trust policy on $50 tours will be not only irritating to the public, but an economic step to boost.
- At present there are no toilet facilities. Agree. But neither are there toilet facilities in the bulk of the National Forest or in the Bandelier back-country. Neither of those places ever had to this degree. Moreover, speaking of toilet facilities, there is this little matter of 1,000 half-ton cows. Are they toilet-trained? For that matter, what about the ski? But let’s not go there! It ought to be possible for the Preserve to install a minimal complement of outhouses near entry points, and dispense with this particularly nifty argument against public access.
- Unguided individuals might hurt themselves. Some of us still don’t demand to be protected from our own mistakes. There are places for folks who desire such protection: shopping malls.
- There is presently no “developed parking.” True. But neither is there any “developed parking” for most of the wild places people visit on foot or ski. Unguided foot visitors could enter from anywhere around the perimeter, and need not park on State Road 4. For example, Los Alamitos (or Elks visiting Los Alamos) could enter on foot or skis from Camp May, the Pipeline Road, etc. Folks could enter from the San Antonio hot spring road. Forest roads and trails surround the Valles on the west, north, and east sides. Only the south side is fronted by a paved highway. Parking is a nonissue on three sides, and would be easily resolvable on the fourth.
- The Preserve is supported by paying clients; therefore, the benefits of the Preserve should go to its paying clients. Yes, indeed, but only if we ignore the massive $101-million capital outlay that the general public, through their taxes, made possible. If the Preserve were in a real sense “self-supporting,” then it would have to do what any self-supporting business does, and use current revenues to cover debt service on its $101-million mortgage. That would require about $6-10 million of revenue per year just for debt service (about ten times expected total annual revenue). That sort of revenue is not going to happen.

So, let’s not talk about “self-supporting” as an argument to wall off the general public. It just doesn’t wash. The Preserve is not self-supporting in a business sense. Rather, the Preserve is a public enhancement, established by the public taxes. The Trust should move swiftly to allow unguided public access. We have no problem with this access being subject to appropriate and sensible regulations on public activity, and subject to a reasonable annual, weekly, or daily fee. National Parks and Monuments have done this balancing act successfully for over a century. It’s not difficult. The seal to be innovative should not deny us the benefit of what already proven and works.

—Abe Jacobson
Pajarito Group Forest Issues Chair

January/February 2003
Priority Issues for 2003 (continued from page 9)

Routes to Schools legislation directs NMSHTED to use transportation funds to make it easier for children to bike and walk to school.

Other Public Transit Issues—The chapter will also continue to support efforts to establish park-and-ride services and "heavy rail" from El Paso to Denver through New Mexico.

Federal Transit Administration dollar for the bull city system in New Mexico, with a March for local dollars. New Mexico is one of four states in the country that does not expend dedicated state dollars for transit projects.

New Mexico's Public Mass Transit Act prohibits the state from spending more than $50,000 in federal matching funds on rural transit systems. A 1997 law set the maximum expenditure. In 1997 and 2001, the legislature passed bills that would have raised the funding cap. At the urging of top NMSHTED officials, however, Governor Johnson vetoed the legislation.

The chapter will support SEPTO's efforts to promote legislation in the 2003 legislative session to eliminate this funding cap.

Land Use

The Sierra Club will focus on strengthening the 1993 Subdivision Act by requiring the installation of water-conservation measures as a condition for permits, and by opposing attempts to weaken the current laws by adding to the list already existing loopholes. The chapter will call for the new state planning office to put land use on its plate of issues to consider.

For more information about the chapter's involvement in land-use issues, contact Chapter Spokesperson Jon Kindel (see Directory, page 2).

Otero Mesa

The chapter will follow the lead of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (NMWA) regarding the campaign to designate the Gypsum Otero Mesa Area as a wilderness area. It is possible that the alliance will ask the Legislature to pass a memorial during this session.

Otero Mesa, in southern New Mexico, is considered to be the nation's largest and wettest remaining Chihuahuan Desert grassland. The NMWA has documented more than 200,000 acres that qualify for wilderness protection according to guidelines prepared by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Thus far, however, BLM has resisted initiatives to protect the grassland, in part because the Harvey B. Yates Oil Company, based in Roswell, wants to develop the area. As local ranchers have become informed about the scope of the proposed development, they have grown increasingly concerned and vocal about the impact this would have on their quality of life.

NMWA urges New Mexicans to contact U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman (908-6647-580, 202/224-5521; DC: bingaman@bingaman.senate.gov) to affirm that we want wilderness protection for the Greater Otero Mesa Area.

For more information, contact Chapter Wilderness Chair Martin Heinrich (see Directory, page 2), or Stephen Capra at NMWA in Albuquerque (843989; steve@nawild.org, www.nawild.org).

-Round-up: Richard Darby, Daniel Bonito, Kevin Rivero, John Bucher, Stephen Capra, Paul Elder, Doug Fraser, Ken Hughes, Cliff Lounet, Paul Purdy, Marty Post, Gail Ryba, and Grier Woodhead

Renewable Energy (continued from page 1)

PNM will get 4% of its electricity from wind when this facility comes online in 2004.

Other power developers, to the potential for various forms of solar, geothermal, and biomass sources in New Mexico. Vaca Power, for instance, has suggested plans for power plants on the order of 30 megawatts, perhaps near Radium Springs or Hillboro, New Mexico. Boeing and Sterling Energy Systems have indicated the potential for installing solar thermal power systems and selling engine services, respectively.

The Albuquerque Journal and the New Mexican have quoted utility sources saying that the new rule will cause customer rates to go up. PNM has, however, already agreed on a rate-reduction proposal that will take effect next year, and has agreed not to pass any renewable energy investment costs on to customers for five years. Moreover, the Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy (of which the Rio Grande Chapter is a member) believes that, while there may be about a 1.7% rate increase in about the year 2007, this increase will be temporary, and costs will actually come down as the cost of wind-power development decreases.

In any case, one can expect that the price of wind, itself, will stay constant—while the cost of oil and gas, in the long term, will continue to rise as reserves are depleted around the world.

In addition to the RPS rule described above, utilities are allowed to offer a "green surcharge" that permits customers to voluntarily choose to buy renewable electricity at a higher rate. The reason that the Sierra Club supported a requirement for renewable energy, instead of simply encouraging this voluntary surcharge, is that the renewable energy industry can provide much better prices and services if it has an assured market for some amount of power. In Texas, which has adopted this mandated approach, utilities are ahead of schedule.

For more information, contact Chapter Energy Chair Gail Ryba (see Directory, page 2).
Get Outside, and Consider Getting Involved in Decision-making

It is snowing on the peaks in both the Jemez and Sangre de Cristo Mountains as I write this—good news for the land and our drought-stricken city. Down south, the weather is probably mild—a good time of year to get out and explore the areas too hot to hike in summer. The holidays will soon be over and 2003 slipping in. By most indicators, it's going to be a tough year for the land, for our global environment, for the common man, and all our critters. While it is hard to effect positive change at the global or even national level, it is somewhat easier to move things at the local level. I urge all of us to get involved in the decisions of our towns and counties. As you are out walking, look for open spaces threatened by encroaching development, power plants spewing too much pollution, Indian cultural sites desecrated by ORV traffic, more highways snaking across the land, when better public transportation would be the more environmentally friendly and energy-efficient solution. Getting into the outdoors and enjoying our magnificent landscape is one of the most healing and rejuvenating activities I know. I hope you will take advantage of some of these outings led by our dedicated corps of leaders, then come back refreshed, and ready to work with other Sierra and community members in tackling a local issue.

I wish all of you a peaceful and upbeat new year, filled with the song of birds, the pungent smell of damp creosote bushes and new green sprouts, the good company of fellow hikers, and the rewards of reaching out into your community. Be sure and check out our five Groups' pages for more information and for additional activities. All area codes are 505, except as noted.

—Norma McCallen

Sierra Club Outings in January, February, and March 2003

Saturday, January 11 • Cabernet Area Hike Trip—Moderate hike ride near the Cabernet Wilderness Study Area. Michael DiRossi (663-0648—Les Alamos).

Saturday, January 11 • Lower Sunset Trail, Franklin Mountains State Park—Moderate 6-mile hike through the impressive Chihuahuan desert ecosystem. Jim Bell (915-581-8864—El Paso).

Friday-Monday, January 17-20 • Pecos Mountain Loop Backpack—Serious, 19-mile exploratory backpack in one of the most remote corners of New Mexico. Ren Wichenden (915-855-6097—El Paso; rwickglut@aol.com).

Saturday, January 18 • Sacramento Mountain Ski Trip—Cross country ski tours; this available to rent if you don't own such. Ben Zerby (520-791-1Las Cruces).

Sunday, January 19 • Three Guns Spring Trail, Sandia Mountain—Great conditioning hike, 6 miles round trip to good viewpoints. David Ther (260-1553—Albuquerque).

Sunday, January 19 • Areo del Cobre, near Abiquiu—Moderate hike in a little known area. Norbert Sperlich (474-4534—SF).

Sunday, January 26 • Cumbres Pass Ski and Snowshoe Tours—Moderately strenuous outing to the best snow in New Mexico, 10,000-11,000'. Alex Jacobson (672-9579—Las Alamos; alex.jacobson@anl.gov).

Saturday, February 1 • Cerillos Hills Farm Park Tours—Day hike with local guest historian Bill Burton to view some of the historical mines which will soon be covered up. Norma McCall (471-0033—SF).


Saturday, February 8 • Cross Country Ski Workshop—Training for skiers of limited experience who want to gain confidence and improve techniques. Call by 1/30. Gordon Spencer (672-3707—Las Alamos).


Sunday, February 16 • Ojo Caliente Mica Mines—Easy hike, 5-6 miles; optional stop in hot springs. Les Dospel (438-3306—SF).

Saturday, February 22 • Wild and Scenic Rivers, near Questa—Moderate hike. Michael DiRossi (663-0648—Las Alamos).


Saturday, March 1 • Eagle Trops, Bandelier National Park—Moderate 8-mile hike. Stephen Marzotke (797-5833—Albuquerque; stephmarzotklk@hotmail.com).

Sunday, March 9 • Ravens' Ridge Snowshoe Trip—Serious trek up this pristine, conditional ridge where the Ski Basin wants to build new runs. Marcia Stillman (674-7414—SF).

Friday-Sunday, March 21-23 • Cross Country Ski Weekend, near Taos Ski Area—Serious ski outing, staying at Buld of the Woods yurt. $60. Reservations required, so call pronto. John Bucher (830-9020—SF).

Saturday, March 22 • Cookes Peak Hike—Serious climb to this prominent landmark near Deming, Ben Zerby (526-7811—Las Cruces).

Ranching At the Crossroads: Forging a West That Works
The Quivira Coalition's 2nd Annual Conference
16-18 January 2003 • Albuquerque, NM • The Hilton Hotel

Session I: Where Will the Deer and the Antelope Go? An overview of ranchland ecosystems and the folks who steward them—Jeff Jones, research associate, American Grassland Trust; The American West; Alton, Colorado; Steve Daley, executive director, Quivira Coalition; Bridging the cultural divide in the management of natural resources—Gay McPherson, professor, University of Arizona.

Session II: Restoring the Gift of Good Land—Laszlo Magyari, goat rancher, Evergreen, Inc., Till Zeeck, riparian restoration specialists. First steps in restoring the Southwest—Craig Allen, research ecologist, USDA-NRCS, Las Vegas.

Session III: Making the Self-Sufficient Ranching Operation Successful—John Phillips, owner and manager of R1 Ranch, the Chico Basin Ranch; Brian Tipton, president and executive director, Wildlife 2000; Skip Heafner, rancher, Land Trust, Santa Fe.

Session IV: Creating a Community dialogue through maps—Rosemary Romero, facilitator, Romero Consulting, Inc.; Tom Fowlkes, rancher, Amon Ranch, Aztec, NM; Agnes Wood, land and water coordinator, Santa Clara pueblo, Santa Fe.

$30 for Quivira Coalition members; $65 for non-members; $30 for students.

Two-day conference, evening talks, conference materials, coffee, tea, continental breakfasts, and Friday lunch included. Call to register 505/820-2544.