NM Reps and Demos Introduce Ojito Wilderness Act in Congress!

On 24 September 2003, Senator Jeff Bingaman and Representative Tom Udall introduced the Ojito Wilderness Act (S. 1649/H.R. 3176), which would designate approximately 11,000 acres northwest of Albuquerque as the Ojito Wilderness. The bill is co-sponsored by Senator Pete Domenici and Representative Heather Wilson. If approved, the measure would create the first new Wilderness area in New Mexico since 1987.

In addition to permanently protecting the Ojito Area as Wilderness, the bill would allow the Pueblo of Zia to purchase some BLM land abutting the Ojito area—land which holds strong cultural and religious significance for the people of Zia. Under the bill, the land to be purchased by the Pueblo of Zia will remain open to the public for recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, paleontological, and conservation uses and is required to be managed as open space in perpetuity. In fact, this land will be protected from development, off-road-vehicle recreation, mining, and oil and gas exploration. That is a far higher level of protection than the land in question currently receives under BLM management.

More than 26,000 acres of land in the greater Ojito area will be conserved if this bill is passed. As a result, important archeological sites, petroglyph panels, habitat for rare plants, and incredible hiking areas will be forever protected.

This historic bill would not exist were it not for the strong coalition forged between groups such as the Sierra Club, the Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness, the Pueblo of Zia, numerous businesses, conservation organizations, and many local and statewide elected officials.

Thank you to all of you who worked hard to make this a reality.
Please write or call Senators Bingaman and Domenici, and Representatives Tom Udall and Heather Wilson for contact information, see page 3 and thank them for introducing the Ojito Wilderness Act.

—Martin Heinrich
Chapter Wilderness Chair

New Mexico Will Hold Democratic Presidential Caucus Early—To Participate, Register by 15 December 2003

The Democratic Party of New Mexico will hold its Presidential Caucus on Tuesday, 3 February 2004, at more than 170 caucus sites throughout the state. Participation will be open to all Democrats who are registered to vote with the Secretary of State's office (www.sos.state.nm.us/ELECTION HTM) or their County Clerk by 1 December 2003.

In the past, New Mexico has held this election in June. The traditional state primary will still be held in June 2004 and will include typical primary contests for congressional races, state legislative races, and other competitive elections.

New Mexico's caucus will operate like a party-run primary. Voting locations will be open that day from 12:00-7:00pm. Voters will mark a paper ballot.

Ballots also may be cast by mail, starting 2 January 2004. Vote-by-mail ballots may be requested from the State Party by mail, e-mail, or fax from 15 December 2003-20 January 2004. Vote-by-mail ballots must be postmarked by 26 January 2004.

“In 2000, Al Gore won the state by just 366 votes.... Every vote counts!”

For more information about the caucus, please contact Democratic Party of New Mexico (see below).

The New Mexico League of Women Voters also provides key information about registering and voting (www.lwvnm.org/2003VotersKeyFinal.pdf).

Contact: the major parties in New Mexico for information about how to participate in their efforts:

- Democratic Party of New Mexico (830-3650 in Albuquerque; 800/624-2477; www.dpnm.org)
- Green Party of New Mexico (830-3650; www.sang.org)
- Republican Party of New Mexico (290-3662; www.qopnm.org)

In 2000, Al Gore won the state by just 366 votes, and New Mexico will be considered a "battleground" state in the upcoming 2004 general election. Every vote counts! The Sierra Club urges its members to participate in the political process by exercising their right to vote in state, local, and national elections.

For more information, contact Chapter Legislative/Political Chair Gwen Wardwell (see masthead, page 2).

—Gwen Wardwell and Susan Martin
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SERRA CLUB STRUCTURE
The Club has three structural levels. The National Board of Directors oversees 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 larger part of the Chapter's budget goes to the salary of the Executive Director for the Conservation Organization and a part-time lobbyist, followed by the printing and mailing of this newsletter.

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Contributions are welcome from members. E-mail contributions preferred. Contributors' names and e-mail address will be included in the article, as a source of more information, unless the contributor specifies otherwise. Send to the editor (mpeale@chirmitu.com • P.O. Box 355, Taos, NM 87571). All submissions must be received by the 10th of the month prior to publication. (The Rio Grande Sierra is published in early January, March, May, July, September, and November.) Photos, artwork and poems are also welcome. Letters and articles are subject to abridgment.

Editorial practices developed by the Grand Canyon Chapter and adopted by the Rio Grande Chapter will be used in production of the Rio Grande Sierra. Letters to the editor over 500 words will be edited for length or returned to the author for editing. Submissions of Rio Grande Chapter members will take precedence over other submissions. Contents of Group pages are the responsibility of the editor for that group and any policies that are in place from the applicable Group.

Non-member subscriptions at $10/year are available. Send checks to Blair Brown, Treasurer • 2220 S. Wyoming Dr. PMB 272 • Albuquerque, NM 87112. Please allow eight weeks for processing.

The Rio Grande Sierra runs paid advertisements. Contact the editor for advertising policy and rates.

Change of Address?
Send address changes to: Membership Services 415/977-5900 • addresschanges@sierrasclub.org

Wanted: Publications Assistant!

The managing editor of the Sierra is looking for a desktop publishing assistant/trainer. If you are knowledgeable on a Macintosh platform, have PageMaker and Photoshop applications and experience, and want to work on an behalf of the environment, contact Marty Peale in Taos, NM (see contact information above). Pay depends upon experience.
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A Note From the Chair

As I write this, I am preparing for another 246-mile whitewater rafting trip down the Grand Canyon with only some 80 caps to worry about. Jim McCarthy, Chair of the Grand Canyon Chapter (Arizona) of the Sierra Club, has been kind enough to invite this writer along on his permit. (Those days, one must wait some 20 years to obtain a private river permit.) At my age, I don’t even apply—The Grand is a real wheelchair-accessible.

Just for a moment, let me comment that, as I review this past year’s accomplishments, there are two things that stand out. First, we have undertaken a more equitable dispersion of Chapter and Group leadership authority throughout our region of New Mexico and west Texas. As a result, our Groups are now working (as we did in the September/October 2003 issue of the Sierran), on their projects with largely unprecedented financial support from the Chapter. My thanks particularly to the Chapter leadership—Don Dreeholt (Las Cruces), Vice Chair (who is now, unfortunately, on a medical Sabbatical)—let us pray for his speedy recovery. Laurence Gibbon (El Paso), Snowmass and Blair Brown (Albuquerque), Treasurers. Thanks also to Loretta Esgate and Mary Wiper from national Club staff for their instrumental assistance. This spirit of environment and the grassroots leadership we have, a milestone of this era personal, competitiveness, over such long distances has made this position very rewarding. True environmental collaboration is more than it should be, even among like-minded people, and was great to behold. I plan to be visiting again El Paso, Las Cruces, and Albuquerque upon my return from the Grand.

We’ve put some great news right up front for this time: with bipartisan support that reflects remarkably broad-based citizen support, we have an Ojito Wilderness bill introduced in both the U.S. House and Senate. Just say “Yes!” And let’s say “Thanks” to all of them while we’re at it!

The fact that you sent four letters to the editor for this issue (pages 4 and 15) suggests to us that you’re reading this newsletter, thinking on your feet, sending the value of sharing your ideas, and recognizing that this is a good way to reach some 6,500 households in the Rio Grande watershed. Great! Thanks for stepping up to the plate! Keep up the good work—and register to vote (Dec. 15) on page 18.

-Doug Faust

Susan Martin Knows That We Each Make a Difference

You could say that the Sierra Club is in Susan’s blood. Her Colorado-born grandfather had moved to the Sierra to explore that landscape, and Susan had been a Club member since college at UC-San Diego, where she worked as a summer Volunteer for the Sierra’s Environmental Education Committee.

During law school at UC—Berkeley, Susan was an editor of the Ecology Law Quarterly and worked during summers at the Energy and Commerce Committees of the U.S. House of Representatives. This opportunity led to her appointment as counsel to the committee, where she organized the first congressional hearings on acid rain. These efforts dashed an attempt to put energy legislation that would have increased coal emissions by Midwest utilities that were prime contributors to acid rain in Canada and New England.

Susan moved to Santa Fe, became the research director for Western Network and co-authored “Western Water Flows to the Cities.” Her next position was planner director at the New Mexico Environment Department, where she headed its legislative efforts.

Susan is the chair of the Northern New Mexico Group’s Political Committee, which has been active and effective in getting environmentally responsive city councils and county commissioners elected. “This is the time when Sierra Club members can have a positive influence on who is elected to serve them locally, nationally, and on the state level. It is vital that you register to vote, talk to our friends about candidates who have good records protecting our environment, and help in campaigns of officials who have kept their promises on Sierra Club issues.” Research from the last election has shown that expensive TV ads in the last moments of an election become a blue to voters, and that votes are most influenced by talking with neighbors and friends. “We in the Sierra Club have a positive impact on this election cycle relying on the strength of our relationships with others.”

-Susan Martin

Susan Martin is a member of the Chapter Executive Committee and the Executive Committee of the Northern New Mexico Group. She is also the elected delegate to the Council of Club Leaders.
It’s Time for Progressives to Draft a Comprehensive Energy Bill

Dear Editor,

The September/October Sierra points out that the U.S. Congress has passed energy bills supported by the oil and coal industry. Worse, Democratic-presided energy bills only marginally better. Energy legislation is the most important issue facing Americans today, since it deals directly with worsening global warming and our disinterested foreign policy that protects our oil addiction. Politicians are behaving poorly on energy issues because they lack strong leadership from the public.

Groups like the Rocky Mountain Institute, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Sierra Club offer a different energy future. Yet even good people like Senator Bingaman are not getting the message and continue to work against the public interest.

Corporate energy interests are over-power on Capitol Hill, writing checks, distributing information, and writing legislation. Industry lobbyists are helped by an administration drawn from the oil industry.

Perhaps our message is lost on Capitol Hill because we lack a clear goal on energy issues. We talk about “sustainable energy,” but how many of us really understand sustainability and what alternative technologies we have for radically replacing carbon and nuclear power sources? Do we have a scientifically based, comprehensive energy policy to offer Senator Bingaman and others as a workable alternative to big oil, big coal, and big waste? Do we understand global warming and the need to immediately reduce our carbon dioxide output by 70% to stop this disastrous reality?

With American Middle East policy driven by our reliance on that region’s oil, with Congress poised to open critical lands in Alaska and the West to oil development, with America supporting repressive regimes in Africa and South America to gain access to oil, the energy issue demands understanding from everyone. In New Mexico and much of the rest of the country, we rely on coal power that fuels global warming, stores mercury and uranium into the atmosphere, and gets its raw material from strip mines on Navajo land.

Let us present to Senator Bingaman and others an achievable energy package that saves the earth from carbon energy. We must:

- acknowledge that oil is too valuable to burn and that future generations will need it more than we do;
- promote decentralized electric power generation—using wind, solar, fuel cell, biomass generation and above all, conservation—as we phase out carbon technologies;
- recognize the shortcomings of soft-energy technologies and dedicate resources such as LANL to improving sustainable energy technology as a matter of national security;
- devise a transportation plan that moves cars rapidly away from any petroleum consumption (including petroleum-powered fuel cells) with government-sponsored research and strong incentives for auto makers, while we boost public transit, especially railroads for moving people and freight.

A truly new energy policy will be the core of a new economic and industrial era for the United States—one that may even approach sustainability in many ways, one that moves us away from militarism and global warming.

—Tom Pike
P.O. Box 3151
Santa Fe, NM 87504
983-4654

Hydrogen Is Promising, Even if It Is Only an Energy Carrier

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to Mark Sackel’s article about the hydrogen economy in the July/August 2003 edition of the Rio Grande Sierra. Before reading the article, I did not know that the hydrogen used in a H2 fuel cell is an energy carrier, rather than an energy source, like gasoline. I did not understand that the hydrogen would have to be generated using a quantity of energy about equal to what it would carry.

Upon further research, I have learned that these facts do not debunk the promise of hydrogen fuel cells as your article claimed.

Transportation is one important and developing use of hydrogen fuel cells. These cells can be used to power vehicles without pollution. First, as your article explained, energy must be put into them in the form of compressed hydrogen gas. Contrary to one of your assumptions, this hydrogen can be produced locally, where it is needed and will not require significant transportation as fossil fuels do. In fact, it is very possible that today’s gasoline stations may soon be transformed into hydrogen-filling and -filling stations. The crucial problem is the source of this initial energy input, which can be generated from any number of sources including the environmentally damaging sources common today. This energy could also be generated using much safer renewables including wind, solar, and biomass sources. When this energy is generated through a nonpolluting source and then used to fuel such devices as can through hydrogen fuel cells, it becomes possible to drive cars without polluting. The promise of the hydrogen fuel cells is one crucial piece in a potentially pollution-free energy system. This is why so many scientists, engineers, environmentalists, and forward thinkers are excited.

Mr. Sackel’s sociocentrism is correct that hydrogen is an energy carrier. However, it is incorrect to discount its potential role in an energy economy that can be nonpolluting, renewable, and locally based.

—Jennifer Cazen
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Hydrogen Fuel and the Fall from High-Quality Fuels: A Response from the Author

Dear Jennifer,

Thanks for your letter, and for this opportunity to go deeper into the energy debate.

My Hydrogen Hallucination article was aimed at clearing up a widespread misunderstanding about hydrogen, particularly about what it can and can’t do for us. I frequently hear claims that hydrogen will “replace” petroleum, and I worry that we’ve lost sight of the significance of having vast reserves of easily tapped energy resources. Hydrogen is a very high-quality energy resource; hydrocarbons are only one form of energy—it is not an energy resource. As such, it cannot substitute for our dependence on energy resources, nor can it alleviate the very serious problem of energy resource degradation that I discussed in the article.

Your observation that hydrogen could enable flexibility in the selection of energy resources used for transportation is a good one, but it is a mistake to therefore conclude that generating hydrogen with renewable energy solves our energy problem. Petroleum is a very high-quality energy resource, meaning that only a small investment of energy is needed to produce an enormous amount of highly useful energy. This is in the case of gasoline. Your suggested scenario—in which renewable energy is harnessed, then used to generate hydrogen, which is then run through a fuel cell, producing electricity to drive an electric motor, which drives the car—requires a comparatively large investment of energy even for useful energy delivered. Renewable energy technologies always tend to be lower in quality than fossil-energy technologies, but adding the hydrogen step and the fuel-cell step reduces the quality even further.

The problem with advocating a shift to energy technologies that are so much lower in quality is that this translates directly into a reduction in the amount of energy available to run the economy. This, at a time when the rapidly declining quality of our oil and gas resources is already creating tremendous economic difficulties. The once-legendary “gusher wells” of East Texas are long gone—now we comb the deep oceans with 3-D visualization technology, looking for tiny pockets of oil that must be tediously extracted and shipped to distant markets. Production from U.S. natural gas wells is meanwhile declining so rapidly that we are contemplating a ten-year, $20 billion, 3,500-mile pipeline to Alaska to bring back a year-and-a-half supply of natural gas. Oil and gas may have both fallen into such short supply that energy markets have gone unstable, driving up prices and worsening our precarious economic situation.

(continued on the next page)
**Under the Energy Bill, This Land Will No Longer Be Our Land**

The Energy Bill now in conference will put the oil and gas industry in charge of our western public lands—with devastating results for some of our most stunning western landscapes. Even though tens of millions of acres of public land are already open to highly profitable oil and gas exploration and development, proponents of the bill's oil and gas title want to:

- exempt the industry from key environmental laws,
- fast-track new drilling projects in sensitive areas including proposed wilderness areas, areas with Native American cultural and spiritual importance, and areas with strong connections to local and rural agricultural communities.

Here are the top ten reasons why under the oil and gas title, lands belonging to all Americans will no longer be managed for all Americans.

1. We'll all have to trust the oil and gas industry to safeguard drinking water supplies, because the use of drilling fluids would be exempt from the Safe Drinking Water Act. Drinking water may no longer be clean, and waterfowlers and visitors may be forced to buy bottled water.

2. At risk: your favorite fishing spots. The construction of oil and gas drilling pads, roads, pipelines, and other infrastructure would be exempt from the Clean Water Act. In effect, the oil and gas industry would be given carte blanche to pollute western streams and rivers.

3. The deer and elk will be the ones to play in many places throughout the West, including Wyoming's Red Desert, which more than 50,000 pronghorn antelope call home during the winter. Why? Because the bill will weaken protections for wildlife. Industry wants to turn the Red Desert into a vast oil and gas industrial zone.

4. Great biotic opportunities like those in New Mexico's Otis Mesa will decrease as the energy bill speeds transformation of this beautiful Chihuahuan desert area and other western wildlands into an industrial complex of roads, pipelines, storage tanks, and drill pads by weakening environmental protections.

5. Energy projects on American Indian reservations will no longer have to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The bill will strip tribal members and other Americans of the right to review, comment, and challenge energy projects proposed on tribal lands. The bill will also relieve the federal government of its trust duty to analyze impacts to cultural resources.

6. Ranchers and landowners who own "split-estate" lands would not be protected from damage caused by oil and gas development. In addition, the bill would give federal officials broad authority to condemn private property for transmission lines, allowing energy companies to circumvent landowner protections in some states, including rights to fair market value for condemned land.

7. Can you say "Jackpot for industry?" The energy bill will give huge benefits to energy companies, including, at last count:
   - tax credits for small oil and gas drilling at a cost of more than $2.9 billion;
   - an additional $7.3 billion in tax credits to industry; and
   - $100 million to gas producers to encourage coalbed methane development, even though the industry is already incredibly profitable and well established.

8. You may no longer be able to see the beauty of Utah's redrock cliffs or Colorado's canyon country, as oil and gas development activities pollute crystalline aquifers and cause a host of other damages to sensitive lands that are home to endangered species and important historical sites.

9. Wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities will be reduced as habitat is lost to increased development. The areas targeted for drilling now support 737 rare and vulnerable species, including 75 species listed as threatened or endangered. Many animals are already in trouble, such as grizzly bears, wolves, and prairie dogs.

10. The pristine nesting habitat for the prized Black-footed ferret and many other waterfowl in Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve—the critical Trans-Alaska Pipeline region—is targeted for oil drilling. Also at risk: moose, caribou, brown bears, wolves, lynx, polar bears, and beluga whales, and threatened species. The energy bill calls to lose this vital area of the western Arctic at fire-sale prices without regard for wildlife, native hunting and fishing, water quality, or other non-commercial values.

For more information, contact Sierra Club Associate Representative Mary Wiper in Albuquerque (505-777-2433, mary.wiper@sierraclub.org) or see the Sierra Club web site (www.sierraclub.org).

---Mary Wiper

---

**New Mexico's Own Wind Farm Is on Line**

If you are a PNM customer, you can now choose electricity generated by New Mexico's winds. The Wind Energy Center in eastern New Mexico has 136 turbines which can generate 204 megawatts of power at wind speeds of 8-30 mph for a total annual energy of 594,000 megawatt hours (see July/August 2003 Sierra). Now two existing wind facilities in the United States are larger in terms of output.

Home and small business customers can choose to participate in one of two ways:

- Purchase "blocks" of 100 kilowatt hours of electricity at a rate that is $1.80 per month more than the standard rate (approximately $9.00-$9.50), up to 90% of your minimum monthly usage during the previous 12 months. The average home customer will be able to purchase up to four blocks, while the average small business customer will be able to purchase up to 13 blocks.
- Subscribe for 90% of your monthly electric consumption, meaning that your additional monthly billing amount will depend on your actual usage.

Wind-generated energy is not actually segregated from coal generated energy in New Mexico. Nevertheless, "purchasing" wind energy sends a message to PNM about our commitment to clean energy. If you want to participate, call PNM (505-657-7854; 246-5700 in Albuquerque), visit a PNM office, return the coupon in your October PNM bill, or register online (www.pnm.com/powercons/conservatory). By the way, when I signed up, I identified myself as a Sierra Club member.

For more information, contact Gwen Wardwell, Rio Grande Chapter Legislative/Political Chair in Santa Fe (see mainhead, page 2).---Gwen Wardwell

The Limits of Hydrogen (continued from the previous page)

We clearly need to embrace renewable energy technologies, but we must consider our energy predicament and go about it strategically. We should begin by evaluating our vulnerabilities, and then employ the most powerful tools we have to protect ourselves. Given the seriousness of the situation, I believe an all-out effort to increase energy efficiency using current, proven technologies is warranted. Next, we should invest heavily in the highest quality renewable technologies available, including wind and biomass energy from waste streams such as forest thinnings, municipal solid waste, and landfill waste. But with an economy already suffering the effects of energy resource degradation, focusing on a low-quality, finite technology that would necessitate replacement of our entire transportation fleet and much of its infrastructure, simply doesn't make sense.

Thanks for your interest in solving our energy problem, and I hope you will continue your efforts to bring about a safe, clean energy future.

---Mark Sardella

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**Is Global Warming Too Hot To Handle?**

7-8 November 2003 • Albuquerque

This participatory conference on global warming is bringing together people of faith, public-interest advocates, and state policy makers:

- to explore global warming policy from the perspective of values, and
- to discuss valuer-based energy principles for the New Mexico Sustainable Energy Campaign.

Speakers from Physicians for Social Responsibility, Natural Resources Defense Council's Climate Center, Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy, Union of Northern Arizona (environmental education), University of Arizona's Institute for the Study of Planet Earth, the New Community Project, and Spirituality at Work.

For more information, contact the NM Council of Churches in Albuquerque (505-1560; www.nmchurches.org/globalwarming).---

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**Take Action!**

Please Oppose the Energy Bill's Public Lands Give-Away

Contact Senators Domenici and Bingaman and voice your opposition to the current Energy Bill (see contact information, page 5).
Collaboration Yields Rio Grande Outstanding Natural Area Act

The windblown meadows are studded with fragrant sage chopped by the harsh conditions of high altitude desert heat and winter's freezing temperature. The sparse soil settles in the crevices and crevices of the arid canyon landscape to provide alpine vegetation for the lichen and vegetation. Barbeque stoves rest cool beneath the rock in summer, and winter sun light during hibernation. The colorful bull snake winds itself in the shade of rabbitbrush and the wind howls over this land of stretch rock.

Beneath the antelope and mule deer meadow falls the Rio Grande canyon, richly green, in the narrow riparian zone. The occasional Black Bear trots down the winding canyon path for a drink and to cool off beside the river. Above, soars the thermal blue skis, are Fregonian Felsen and Golden Eagle eagles in hunt for mice and kangaroo rats. Their cries against the quiet belt their series tucked in the canyon well.

A few rugged individuals make the Rio Grande canyon their home. Without available power lines and utility conveniences, they rely upon wind and solar power for electricity. These are quiet, reclusive people who would rather not have neighbors closer than two or three miles. However, this land is for sale, and buyers from as far as Japan and Germany purchase lots unseen from real estate developers selling the idea of mountain that one can visit in the distance. Many of these lots are offered for sale for unpaid tax rates. The result is more people set up housekeeping in this wild land, the more the wildlife, sparse vegetation, and raptors are endangered.

In 1998, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) completed a study of the Rio Grande corridor and eight miles north of the Colorado-New Mexico state line to Velarde, New Mexico. The study concluded that the BLM lands qualified for wilderness status. With public land management under scrutiny, the San Luis Valley (SLV) Ecosystem Council, a local environmental group, had joined the study team. The possibility of a Wild and Scenic designation in the Rio Grande canyon concerned the water users upstream of the area in the San Luis Valley. Due to Rio Grande Compact obligations already in place, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District (RGWCD) joined with the SLV Ecosystem Council to investigate if other options to protect this fragile and remote landscape and river corridor that did not put federal demands on an already overtaxed water system.

David Robbins, attorney for the RGWCID, and Mary Ann DeBoer, executive director of SLV Ecosystem Council, at that time, along with many other stakeholders, began negotiations on an option that would not create a Federal Reserve water right in the Rio Grande corridor. They found that designation as an Outstanding Natural Area (ONA) would offer protection without involving Federal Reserve water rights that would come with a Wild and Scenic designation. A draft of the Rio Grande ONA legislation was completed in 1999 and was introduced in the U.S. Senate in July 2003 by Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell. This demonstrates a careful process undertaken collaboratively among water users, federal and state agencies, environmental and public interests.

The Rio Grande and its tributaries begin at the Continental Divide in the San Juan Mountains at an elevation of over 12,000 feet and flow into the San Luis Valley. The protection of the area below the cities and farms of the San Luis Valley is important not only to the people of the valley, but to all who cherish wild and remote places such as the Rio Grande corridor. The Act will preserve and protect the area for its unique natural, educational, and environmental values; scenic beauty; cultural sites, and habitat of various species of raptors, other birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Archaeological sites have date to the Paleo-Indian and nomadic bands of Ute and Apache.

The Rio Grande ONA consists of approximately 10,656 acres extending for a distance of 33.5 miles along the Rio Grande in southern Colorado from the Alamosa Wildlife Refuge to the Colorado-New Mexico state line. The boundary encompasses the Rio Grande and its adjacent riparian areas. About 2,771 acres are managed by BLM and 7,885 acres are privately owned. The landowners are in agreement that this land needs protection and have the opportunity to engage in the management planning process as part of the Commission set up within the ONA Act. There are absolutely no federal takings involved, and any participation of landowners is fully a volunteer effort.

The Commission consists of nine members including:
- a BLM representative,
- the manager of the Alamosa Wildlife Refuge (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service),
- a Colorado Division of Wildlife representative,
- a representative from the Colorado Division of Water Resources, which is responsible for the Rio Grande drainage;
- a Rio Grande Water Conservation District representative; and
- four individuals representing the general public who are citizens of the State and the local region, and represent non-governmental agricultural interests, and two to represent non-governmental environmental interests.

We felt that a management plan could be devised to meet the varied needs of the Area with a commission well practiced in the collaborative process. The Act eliminates opportunities to construct water storage facilities, mining operations, and calls for a reduction or elimination of roads and motorized vehicles on public lands. Any changes in stream flow regime beneficial to the Area can be accommodated through negotiations with the State of Colorado, the Rio Grande Water Conservation District, and water users within Colorado. These changes are encouraged, but may be imposed as a requirement. The Act may include language to provide for the Land and Water Trust to purchase water from willing sellers and donate it to the Colorado Water Conservation Board to meet future in stream flow needs within the Area.

We are still awaiting final wording and passage of the legislation. The Act demonstrates a long-term relationship among stakeholders in the San Luis Valley and their amazing ability to come to the table to discuss the needs of all, including the needs of the Rio Grande and its natural inhabitants.

For more information, contact Kate Doyle in Del Norte, CO (katedoyle@fuses.net).

I'm Buying More Organic Food—Take the Pledge

As bio-tech companies and supermarket listening to their customers? When was the last time you told them of your concerns? What are effective ways of being heard? Tierra Axial has begun gathering data about the amount of money people spend on sustainable agriculture, such as buying organic or supporting small farms. When you pledge your support, you are saying you will, in a substantial way, not support genetically engineered foods and non-sustainable growing practices.

Here's how it works. On the personal pledge sheet, you estimate the amount you spend monthly on organic foods, and the Tierra Axial Coalition compiles the information. (We hope to reach the $100,000 in November 2003.) After reaching the $100,000 goal, we'll send letters to bio-tech firms and supermarkets chains to notify them of the amounts.

No GMOs:
A Personal Pledge

[Your name] make a personal commitment to significantly decrease consumption of foods containing GMOs (genetically modified organisms) until meaningful research has taken place. I believe that, by doing this, I can help educate people about this issue and counter potential health and environmental-related problems suggested by current research. My action will also serve to notify the industry that I support the labeling of GMO foods.

These firms are putting profits before human values, and this is a concrete way of letting them know that we want safe, affordable food and that the major amount of our food dollars will go toward sustainable practices.

If you'd like a personal pledge sheet for individuals or for members of your organization, please contact us (tierraxial@projects@hotmail.com). You can sign the pledge or pick up pledge sheets at La Montanita Food Co-op or the Economic Justice Center in Albuquerque.

On the Road with a Film: Global Banquet

Look for the next film in our Tierra Axial Projects public film series about food and genetic engineering, Global Banquet, showing 18 November 2003 at... (continued on page 13)
Urge Sen. Domenici to Protect Otero Mesa

The Greater Otero Mesa on New Mexico's southern border with Texas encompasses more than 1.2 million acres. This vast and complex Chihuahuan Desert Grashland is home to many species of wildlife and native plants as well as to independent cattle ranches that have been in operation for generations.

Islands of rolling hills filled with unusual cacti, native grasses, and giant rock formations rise from the rare Chihuahuan black-grass-grass desert. This area is a crucial wintering ground for migrating songbirds. Babbage's and Cassin's sparrows, Sprague's pipits, long-billed curlews, western bullock owls, and hawks such as the ferruginous hawk use this undeveloped open space as a sanctuary against the spread and pollution that seriously effect their numbers in other parts of the country.

Along with rare birds, Otero Mesa harbors ancient petroglyphs and pictographs on walls and bluffs of its remote canyons and mountainsides. Images of bighorn sheep and bison on outcrops and rock midden are evidence of the Apache tribes who came to hunt, harvest agave, and collect medicinal plants. The nearby Western Apache still return each spring to harvest agave.

The Yates Petroleum Company, New Mexico's oldest oil company owned by one of its wealthiest families, is pushing aggressively to drill this area. This is the company that, in 1982, illegally bulldozed a road into the Salt Creek Wilderness near Roswell. Only after many rounds of legal wrangling did Yates remove its well under court order.

Two years ago, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance inventoried the Greater Otero Mesa Area and discovered that it had the largest remaining wilderness potential in New Mexico, with more than 1,000,000 acres of roadless lands. At NMSU Professor Emeritus Walter Whitfield has said, "If oil and gas development occurs in Otero Mesa, the area can never be restored." The combination of shallow soils and little rain make restoration nearly impossible.

Governor Bill Richardson has made protection of Otero Mesa a priority—he even met personally with Washington, D.C., with then-interior Secretary Gale Norton to make his case. Yet despite its value as one of the United States' two remaining wild grasslands, with all its irreplaceable habitat and cultural sites, the Bush Administration has slated Otero Mesa for full-scale oil and gas development.

The Otero Mesa Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is due out in December 2003. This assessment process was taken out of the hands of New Mexicans and is, instead, being written in Wyoming—Dick Cheney's home state and one in which oil development has few restrictions. Discussions are coming straight from Washington, D.C. At this point, Senator Domenici is the key player. He needs to hear what we want (see contact information, page 8).
NORTHERN GROUP NEWS

Tuesday, November 18, 7 PM
NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN NEW MEXICO
And Their Waste Cycle

Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety (CCNS) will speak with the Sierra Club about nuclear weapons and their waste cycles in New Mexico. Joni Arends, co-founder and Executive Director of CCNS, will address uranium mining and milling, plans for a uranium enrichment facility near Hobbs, nuclear weapons activities at the national laboratories, and waste generation and final disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. Joni will focus on Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), its role in the nuclear weapons complex, and its impacts to public health and the environment. She will present information about CCNS’s Rio Grande Watershed Initiative, which has established citizen monitoring of the Rio Grande below LANL.

Memorandum meetings are held at the Unitarian Church 109 W. Barcelona St. (between Galisteo and Don Gaspar).

GROUP NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

PLEASE CONTACT any member of the nominating committee to voice your interest in running for the Northern Group Excom by November 14 (see article elsewhere in this newsletter for position instructions). John Buchler, chair, Lionel Soronco and Ray Carlson (see contact info below)

Members Nominated for the four available positions:

Linda Buchler            Greg Lower
Nelson Demann           Paul Paryski
Gwen Wardwell           Norma McCallan *
                          Julia Takahashi
                          Incumbent

Northern New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club
621 Old Santa Fe Trail, Plaza 621, Suite 10, Santa Fe, NM 87505
505-983-2703

FROM THE CHAIR

Jan Kindel

In early September I participated in a national Sierra Club training for trainers course on Understanding, Preventing, and Coping with Conflicts. Thirty volunteers from all over the country convened on Denver for this opportunity and have committed to provide the training at least three times during the next two years on an as-needed/educational basis. The course is designed for Chapters and Groups that want to communicate more effectively. It is not intended for those entities in the throes of major conflict situations. I learned there is a Sierra Club mediation team available to work with highly charged groups that are having difficulty moving forward. In the course I attended we became aware of our own conflict resolution style, what escalate conflicts, and had an overview of the conflict resolution process. It is impressive to me that the Sierra Club recognizes the inflammatory possibilities of the many environmental and political issues that come before us and is ready and willing to provide education to help us make our dialogue more palatable to all concerned.

GROUP COMMITTEE MEETING DATES

Group Executive Committee:  Group Conservation Committee:
Tuesday, December 1, 6:45 PM    Tuesday, November 25, 6:45 PM
Tuesday, January 6, 6:45 PM
No December meeting

Water Puddle, Wednesdays, 6:30 PM, John Buchler’s house (829-0201)
December 10
January 24

SPECIAL SLIDE SHOW

Nebert Speicher will present a slide show with beautiful pictures of day hikes with the Sierra Club on Saturday, November 22, from 5-6 PM, at the Travel Bug, 328 South Guadalupe (at Montoya).

CONSERVATION CHAIR

Paul Paryski

Although a rather pointed letter was sent to the CEO of Sippury Ski Resort demanding that all mention of the Sierra Club be removed from their website and expressing the Group’s opposition to any expansion of the resort, there has been no response from their management. The Group has provided a small amount of funding for an administrative appeal being made by the Western Environmental Law Center and Rio Pueblo/Rio Embudo Watershed Protection Coalition opposing the expansion to the U.S. Forest Service.

The State Water Plan culminating Town Hall, in which the Chair participated as a member of the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Task Force, produced a consensus white paper describing priority actions that should be included in NM’s first State Water Plan. The document can be found at http://www.nmstate.nm.us/water-inf/nm/waterplanning/finaltownhall.pdf.

The OSE has established a functioning Waters database using GIS technology and remote sensing to speed up the water rights adjudication process, and both LANL and Sandia are developing water management computer scenario models.

The continuing drought will have a large impact on Northern New Mexico and, according to the experts, will result in the loss of up to 80% of pillos and a significant number of pondersosa.

On September 19, the Mexican Land Education and Conservation Trust held its first workshop with representatives from the land grants and the environmental community on Environmental Justice and stewardship in Northern New Mexican land grant communities. This project is partially funded by the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter. Doug Fraser, Chapter Chair, and George Grassman, member of the Northern Group ExCom, attended the workshop and reported that it was a success.

Let’s hope and pray for ample snowpack in the mountains this year.

* * * NORTHERN NEW MEXICO GROUP OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS * * *

Chair — Jan Kindel          jkindel@nmsu.edu  476-3227
Vice-Chair — Barbara Johnson *  land@placitas.net  465-7935
Secretary-Treas. — Lionel Soronco  982-6715
Political Committee—Steven Mantis * smantis@lfasun.com  982-3365
Membership/Activist Outings — Norma McCallan * mmcallan@msn.com  476-0055
Newsletter/Publicity — Kay Carlson  kcarlson@msn.com  982-3926
Web Master — Gas Arends  gas@4x.com  424-4165
Phone Tree — Beth Hanus  424-1425
Chapter Rep — Doug Fraser * dfraser@eastern.net  476-7635

* members of the NM Group Executive Committee

Outings — Nebert Speicher  476-4354
— Toby Green  820-2894
Conservation — Paul Paryski * pparyski@msn.com  982-1984
Mining—Cliff Larson  clarlson@msn.com  466-2128
Water—John Bauch  jbauch@comcast.net  820-0230
Natural Parks & Banglades—Roger Peterson  regp@nmsu.edu  983-7359
Carson NRTP Forest—George Grassman * 982-1024
Activist Outings—Norma McCallan * mmcallan@msn.com  476-0055
Land Use—Bruce Ewing  ewingb@earthlink.net  830-6640
Teixed-Jim Hansen  938-7610
Genealogically Engineered Food—Jim Hiern  jhiern@msn.com  988-5760

Northern Group of the Sierra Club
621 Old Santa Fe Trail, Plaza 621, Suite 10, Santa Fe, NM 87505
505-983-2703

Saturday, December 13, 6 to 9 PM
ANNUAL HOLIDAY POTLUCK PARTY

The Commons
2300 West Alamedo, corner of Camino Carlos Real

Once again we will meet for our lively holiday potluck together. This is a great time to meet new friends and reconnect with old ones.

Please bring about eight servings worth of food — appetizer, salad, casserole, veggie, meat dish, bread, dessert — or wine, beer, juice and soft drinks if you prefer not to-cook. Dishes are provided, and a refrigerator and stove are available for warming.

Our after-dinner program will be a slide show by L. A. Niemeyer, well-known professional photographer who now lives in Santa Fe. He will concentrate on New Mexico images, including those in two books: New Mexico and Desert Heirlooms, which will be released in 2004 and may be available for purchase and signing at the meeting. He exhibits at Jack Rabbit Fine Art Gallery, 229A Johnson Street.

We will also be auctioning off beautiful prints by the late Carolyn Keshwala. Hope to see you there!

All meetings, outings, and activities are FREE and open to the public.

November/December 2003
GROUP OUTINGS

Sat Sun November
8 Easy Hike from Forest Road 79 via Arroyo Hondo to Watershed Boxcanyon, 6 mi. Guest leader Paige Grant, director of SF Watershed Assoc (650-1965) will discuss the ongoing forest burning project along the fence line to prevent a catastrophic fire in our city's primary water source. Meet 8:15 AM at BLM Office on 98 Road toarpark. Dogs okay. Bob McKee (471-0005)
8 Bike Ride Long up chatilite Canyon down Blond Canyon, with a stop at the ghost town of Blond if open. 16 miles of RT, 1300' gain, and several stream crossings along (nastyly) hardpacked gravel roads with some single track make this a technically intermediate and moderately strenuous ride, but worth it. Leave 8:00 AM. Must call Michael Di Bona (663-0485 b, 697-0905 w)
9 Moderate Hike up Atalaya Mountain in town. 7 Mi, 1500' gain, dogs okay. Dan Rastaus (682-8707)
15 Easy Hike and Walk jointly with Audubon Society, bring binoculars, Ron Duff (982-2890)
15 Easy-Moderate Hike Gall Bryant (1-505-775-6654)
16 Moderate-Hike from Nuns Corner along Pesonente Ridge, 7.5 miles, approx. 500' gain. Moderate pace. Dogs okay. Leave 9 AM. Norma McCallas (471-0005)
22 Strenuous Hike Queen Mary Otowi Mesa below Los Alamos. NM version of Mobiliario. Appr. 10 mi, 1500' gain, moderate, significant rock scrambling and some exposure. Fally fast pace. Indian steps accent optional. Leave 8:30 AM; must reserve people and dogs by 2 PM the day before. Stephen Markowitz (505-797-5833 stephenmarkowitz@comcast.net)
23 Easy Hike Diablo Canyon, 6 miles, 400', Victor Atayas (438-9343)
23 Easy Hike to Tent Rocks near Cochiti Pueblo, 2 miles, 350' gain. Leave 9 AM, dogs okay on leash, Eliza Schmidt (747-2840)
30 Strenuous Hike Sue Miguel Puts in Base of Wandell, 11 miles, rough terrain, some off-trail, Norbert Sperlich (747-4354)

Sat Sun January 2004 HAPPY NEW YEAR II
16 Moderate Snowshoe Trip if no snow. Marcia Skillman (474-7414)
4 Strenuous Hike near Abiquiu/Sierra Negro. About 10 mi. RT, 1000' gain, all off trail, some steep sections. Leave 8 AM. Norbert Sperlich (438-4354)
10 Santa Fe River Cleanup and Vegetation Maintenance Trip 9 AM-12 noon. John Buckner (650-0027) See explanation next column.
10 Moderate/ Strenuous Hike Dogs okay. Tobin Oruch (820-2844)
11 Easy Hike Call Gall Bryant (1-505-775-6654)
17 Moderate Hike in Mortandad Canyon to look at pictographs. 6.5 mi. RT, mostly off trail, some rock scrambling. Limit 12. Leave Santa Fe 9 AM. Call for meet place. Michael DiBona
17 Easy Intermediate X-Country Ski Trip if no snow. Call Lionel Soracco (505-781-4319)
18 Beginner Snowshoe Outing Call Marcia Skillman (474-7414)
18 Easy Hike on Fajal Trail (Glandelier). 5 mi. RT, 700' gain. Victor Atayas (438-9345)
24 Easy/Moderate Hike to Tor, volcanic knob in Cañon del Rio, 6 mi RT, some off trail, dogs okay. Leave 9 AM Bob McKee (471-0005)
25 Moderate Hike White Rock Canyon. About 800' change. Some steep sections with poor footing. Leave 8 AM Call Les Drapels (438-3336)
31 Moderate Hike in Ojito Wilderness Study Area. All off trail. Beautiful badlands scenery. Leave Santa Fe at 7:30 AM, meet leader at Bernals McDonald 8:15 AM. Stephen Markowitz (2-505-797-5833)
31 Easy Hike Arroyo de Las Chamisos Trail. Dogs okay. Leave 9 AM. Eliza Schmidt (747-5840)

Sat Sun December
6 Easy Hike Call for details. Gall Bryant (1-505-775-6654)
6 Strenuous Hike La Bajada to Teuilla Peak. 12 mi. RT, 1700' gain, mostly off trail. Leave 8:00 AM, meet leader at La Bajada 8:30 AM. Stephen Markowitz (1-505-797-5833)
7 Moderate Snowshoe Trip if no snow. Marcia Skillman (474-7414)
13 Santa Fe River Cleanup and Vegetation Maintenance 9AM-12 noon. John Buckner (650-0027) See information below.
13 Intermediate X-Country Ski Trip if no snow. Call Lionel Soracco (505-781-4319)
14 Easy/Moderate Hike Hyde Park Circle Trail. Some steep sections. 5 mi. RT, 1000' gain, dogs okay. Eliza Schmidt (474-5840)
20 Easy Birdwatch Walk jointly with Audubon Society. Bring birdcallers. Ron Duff (982-2890)
20 Moderate Hike to Buckman Mesa/Otowi Peak. All off trail, some steep rough sections, 6 Mi. RT, 100' gain. Norbert Sperlich (474-4354)
21 Easy Hike Rail Trail. Dogs okay, leave 9 AM. Eliza Schmidt (747-2840)
21 Strenuous Snowshoe Trip up Ruesos Ridge. Hike if no snow. Leave 8 AM. Call Lester Drapels (438-3336)
27 Easy Hike Nuns Corner Loop. Loop trail conditions permitting. One steep section, dogs ok. Leave 9:30 AM. Norma McCallas (471-0005)
28 Moderate/ Strenuous Hike Dogs okay. Tobin Oruch (820-2844)

ALWAYS:
PLEASE ALWAYS CALL THE OUTING 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.

SANTA FE RIVER CLEANUP AND VEGETATION MAINTENANCE December 13 and January 10
Meet at the Clason Street footbridge over the Santa Fe River. Park on Lower Alto Street, at the north end of Clason. Bring work boots, gloves and drinking water. See article in September-October newsletter for more info. John Buckner (650-0027) or Buckner@comcast.net

ORTIZ MOUNTAIN PRESERVE AT RISK
In September a Sierra group hiked to Placer Peak in the Botanical Gardens Ortiz Mountain Preserve near Cerrillos, accompanied by six volunteer docent guides led by Todd Brown. It was a strenuous and wonderful hike to the peak, mostly off trail in a wild terrain of cocal, rocks and bushes. The guides were knowledgeable about the geography, history and wildlife of the region. We learned the Preserve is in jeopardy of being lost to the public because Santa Fe County charges property taxes, which the botanical garden is not able to pay, even though it is tax exempt and donated land. A solution to this dilemma would be more educational use by schools and other groups. There are easy hikes available on old mining roads. Want to schedule a group? Have any questions? Call: SF Botanical Garden 426-1684.

RIO GRANDE SIERRAN NOW ON THE 'NET!!
http://www.riograndesierrclub.org/taoslive/home.html

Outings Notes - Unless otherwise noted, all outings leave from the Sierra office, 621 Old Santa Fe Trail, Plaza 621, just south of Kauai's Grocery at the corner of Old SF Trail and Pan de Positas. Carpooling will be arranged. Each hiker should carry prepared to pay $5 to the driver of the car in which she/He rides. Bring a lunch, water, sturdy hiking boots or shoes, and clothing suitable for the weather - leader reserves the right to turn away anyone whose equipment or appearance appears unacceptable. Leader has the right to alter destination of hike or cancel trip due to weather, unforeseeable conditions, or insufficient numbers of participants. Unaccompanying minors must have written permission from parents or guardians to participate. Permission forms are available at the Sierra Club office. Dogs not permitted on hikes unless noted otherwise. Telephone leader for details of the individual hike. To participate, you will need to sign a liability waiver. If you would like to receive a copy of this newsletter, see http://www.riograndesierrclub.org/riograndesierrclub/forms, or contact the Outings Department at (415) 977-5028 for a printed version.

November/December 2003
Rio Grande Sierra
9
Central Group News

Real Urban Living - Coming Soon to East Downtown!
By Susan Gorman & Blair Brown

Imagine a place where shops of many kinds alternate with restaurants and coffee shops, local offices, and entrances to apartments above the stores. A wide sidewalk fronts the shops and as you walk along, there are trees to provide shade and benches for sitting to watch the street life flow. Your car is parked conveniently just up the street but other folks have walked from their apartments in the neighborhood or arrived by bus to then stop for a cup of coffee. Just up the street is a park where the neighborhood kids play while parents chat. Within a few blocks are single family homes, courtyard apartments and even multi-story loft apartments - a real mix of housing choices.

Could this place be in Albuquerque? Perhaps someday soon. Where? In East Downtown, now fondly named EDO, the area along Central, east of downtown and along Broadway from Coors to Martin Luther King.

This vision of a future place was created by participants in the EDO Charrette, a five day design process organized by the Broadway + Central Corridors Partnership and Tobi Dickson, developer of Old Albuquerque High Lofts. The participants were a wide ranging group - folks from the Broadway and Central neighborhoods, an assortment of residents from other areas of Albuquerque, local architects and planners, and members of the City of Albuquerque’s Transit and Planning Departments. The Charrette's design team included folks described by Dickson as “Luminaries in the World of New Urbanism”: architect and urbanist Stephen Polyzoides, transit consultant Peter Swift and G.B. Arrington, retail development expert Bob Gibson and John Notusick, Mayor of Milwaukee. The most exciting element of the Charrette Program was an evening session when we were given large maps and markers and asked to draw our vision of what could be done to transform the area. Our small group included area property owners and residents as well as other interested folks. We talked about what could be, a bit shy when we suggested that some of the existing structures and land uses should change. The results of everyone’s work will be included in the final Master Plan.

The final vision was the report from the Charrette Professional Team, led by Stephen Polyzoides, on the Master Plan. We viewed drawings on large map panels that designated locations where possible retail shops, apartments, townhomes, small businesses, offices, hotels, parking structures and parks could be. There was a landscape plan and a street plan, too. The wonderful exciting neighborhoods of healing Highways were left untouched, recognized by all to be an irreplaceable asset for the whole area. A downloadable PDF file of the presentation from the East Downtown Charrette is now available at http://www.EDOCharrette.com.

The Charrette Professional Team has continued the work to complete the Master Plan and create the Codes for East Downtown from the work done at the Charrette. The Final Draft of the Master Plan and Codes should be available on the website for review prior to Thanksgiving.

We believe that the Sierra Club has an unprecedented opportunity to be involved in and possibly influence the Master Plan. We have met with Rod Dickson several times and he is most anxious for the Club to bring it’s knowledge and support to this urban re-development initiative. In our view, this is exactly the kind of project that the Club should be supporting as an element of the National Club's Fight Sprawl Campaign.

We urge everyone to check the website, both ours and www.EDOCharrette.org for news. We invite you to join us at the public hearings early in 2004 along with all of the residents of Albuquerque who hope for a thriving Downtown and alternative lifestyle choices in the very near future to support the visionary work that has been done.

Sierra Club Meeting in Gallup
Sierra Club folks in Gallup are excited to announce that we will be holding a local meeting Thursday, November 6th at 6:00 pm at the Catholic Indian Center located on 508 West Highway 66.

We will be welcoming guest speakers from ENDAUM, Eastern Navajo Utes Against Uranium Mining, to present an “Uranium Uranium Mining, Past, Present and Future”.

Immediately following the presentation, we will begin organizing local efforts to address this and other issues important to Gallup.

For more information, please contact Shelly Landis at 505-879-7696 or call/text 505-894-7302.

General Public Meetings
Monday, November 17th at 7:30PM
Hawks Aislop will come with a slide show and a few of their feathered friends.
December - Holiday Season. No meeting is scheduled.
All meetings will be at the First Unitarian Church on the corner of Carlisle and Cerrillos, in the Social Hall.
All are FREE and open to the public. Drinks and snacks are provided.

Elections in December - Be Sure to Vote
Elections for the Executive Committee of both the Rio Grande Chapter and the Central New Mexico Group will happen next month. Ballots will be mailed to all members about December 5th. All members are encouraged to read the candidate statements and vote for the candidates they prefer.

Candidates for the Excom
Announced candidates for the Central Group Excom are Kaye Hafich, Mark Doppke, Richard Johnson and Mike Pufile. We are still seeking candidates so anyone interested in running is asked to contact Michel Mudd, Richard Barish or Blair Brown by November 14th (contact info at the right).

Petroglyph Monument Threat Continues
By the time you read this, you will know whether the Street Bonds were turned down by the voters.
If they were turned down, we will be celebrating, but only for the moment. The Mayor and the pro-road folks will surely come up with another plan to build the road through the Monument and we and our friends will need to be ready to oppose them again.
If they were approved, we will be disappointed, but not defeated. We will be rallying our next line of defense. There are significant legal obstacles to the building of the road and the Club and our friends will be pursuing them vigorously. Look for an article in the next Sierra and check our website at riogrande.sierrachip.org/employment.html
Mexican Youth Ambassadors Speak Out

By Mark Dopka

On June 23, 2003, Sierra Club's Global Population and Environment Program in cooperation with Partners of the American and Planned Parenthood of New Mexico, organized a panel discussion at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque. Designed as an educational opportunity, activists and community members learned from the experiences of four Youth Ambassadors from Mexico whose advocacy work focuses on women's reproductive rights, natural resource conservation efforts to provide family planning, and education in Mexico (see photo below). The youth ambassadors shared their stories and showed pictures and slides of Mexico, reminding participants that the money the U.S. spends on family planning efforts benefits U.S. people.

Mexico has quietly undergone a miraculous transformation. The population rate has dropped from well over six children per couple down to 2.4. Most of this decline is a result of access to voluntary family planning initiatives through Mexican NGOs that are funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and foreign assistance programs like USAID. It is possible that many younger urban Mexican couples may be better informed about family planning options and have better access to contraceptives than young American couples do.

The Sierra Club's Global Population and Environment Program seeks to protect the global environment and preserve natural resources for future generations by slowing population growth and reducing wasteful consumption, providing training and resources to communities to promote family planning initiatives. The program promotes voluntary domestic and international family planning programs and reproductive health services, encourages the public to support women's access to basic rights (healthcare and education), and encourages people to reduce excessive consumption and live in ways that have less impact on the earth's resources.

The collaborative work done by Sierra Club, Partners of the America's and Planned Parenthood New Mexico provided a great opportunity to unify our messages and bring activities together to make the connections among population, women's health and the environment beyond our own borders. The Youth Ambassadors' stories put a human face on the issues of international family planning, the impacts of U.S. policies and the need for the U.S. to continue to invest in international family planning.

For more information about Partners of the America's Partnership and Youth Ambassador Programs go to: http://www.partners.net. To find out more about Planned Parenthood New Mexico: go to: http://www.plannedparenthood.org/affiliates/index.html

Now Here's What You Can Do!

One year ago, President Bush cut all U.S. support for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). As an environmental activist and supporter of international family planning, urge your congress members to support legislative efforts that fund the important family planning programs and end policies that restrict access to the critical services provided abroad.

Tell your legislator:
- As an environmentalist, you support family planning
- Reimburse funding for the UNFPA
- Support the Global Gag Rule

Sign up to learn more about the population and environment connection and to participate in the Sierra Club's Global Population and Environment Program by visiting www.sierraclub.org/population.

More Transportation Choices in Albuquerque's Future

By Susan German

How many vehicles are sitting in your garage or driveway? What kind of gas mileage do those vehicles get? How much are you contributing to global climate change each time you drive to work or to shop or to deliver the kids to school and other activities? For those of us who care about the future of the planet, there are really tough questions. We all depend on our personal cars and trucks for our transportation needs and for most of us there is just no other alternative.

But as we look to the future, this could change! The City of Albuquerque is studying ways to provide high capacity rapid transit alternatives for folks who live in Albuquerque and the Middle Rio Grande Region. Earlier this year, public meetings were held to present the concept of adding Rapid Transit routes to the City's transit system.

The technologies considered are Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems. LRT systems consist of electrically-powered rail vehicles operated on a dedicated right-of-way. The guideway can be separated from streets or integrated into the street. Stations for passenger pick-up are spaced at intervals of approximately 1 to 1.5 miles. BRT systems consist of high-demand bus routes operated within dedicated travel lanes. In general, BRT service operates like and resembles LRT systems; however, because they consist of individual buses, they have much lower capacities than LRT vehicles. BRT is also less costly to build than LRT.

The idea is to build the first Rapid Transit line along a Central Avenue corridor to be determined by a process that is specified by the Federal Transit Administration and is intended to analyze and compare various technology and alignment alternatives within a specific corridor.

Two alignments within the Central Avenue Corridor have been recommended for further evaluation as part of an environmental impact statement. These are:
- Central Avenue from Coors Boulevard to Louisiana Boulevard and North on Louisiana to Uptown
- Central Avenue from Coors Boulevard to 2nd and 3rd Street, North on 3rd Street to Louisiana Boulevard, East on Louisiana Boulevard to Louisiana and North to Uptown

The next step in the evaluation process is a series of public scoping meetings:
- November 16th at 6:30P.M. at Alvarado Transit Center
- November 19th at 6:30P.M. at Mill Road Church
- November 19th at 6:30P.M. at St. Peter's Catholic School
- November 19th at 6:30P.M. at St. Joseph's Old Town

This information is also on their website www.abqrt.com. The Sierra Club will continue to monitor the process and make comments as appropriate. It would be nice to have a viable transit alternative to the car or truck in your driveway, ease, and listen and participate! It's our opportunity to do something good for Albuquerque and the planet!

Outings

Sunday, November 2nd - Desert Explorer Hike

Come and visit some of New Mexico's most incredible and beautiful landscapes hidden in it's desert places. Strangely colored and colorful rocks, badlands, precipitous cliffs, outstanding vistas, mysterious narrow and winding canyons, archaeological sites, petrified forests and other fossils, historic inscriptions, stone tools, pottery, pictographs and petroglyphs are some of the discoveries we have made on these Explorer Hikes in the past.

The hikes are physically difficult, but will require a sense of adventure on the part of participants. There will rarely be a trail and the route will be very rocky and uneven at times. Sometimes we scramble over rock surfaces (non-technical climbing) and walk narrow ledges, but this is quite often optional. Typical distance traveled is between 4 and 6 miles and we usually gain less than 1000 feet of elevation.

Meeting time will vary from 8:30AM to 10AM. Meeting place will always be Smith's at Carlisle and Main, nearest to Carlisle.

Contact leader by previous Wednesday for info on specific hike location and meeting time. Most are joint outings with Outdoor Adventures For Singles. Leader: Tim Peterson at 271-9928 or ttpeterson@juno.com

Saturday, November 22nd - Desert Explorer Hike

(See above for description)

Sunday, December 7 - Three Gas Spring Trail Hike

Sandia Mountain Wilderness. Excellent conditioning hike to viewpoints. Depending on snow conditions, may go as far as Ono Pass. Approx. 6 miles round trip, 1500 ft. elevation. Contact: David Thor at 280-1553.

Sunday, December 7th, Saturday, December 20th and Wednesday December 31st - Desert Explorer Hike

(See above for description)
Musings About Grasslands by Mary Katherine Ray

This article was supposed to be about southwestern grasslands so when I began to ponder how it should go, I casted my eyes to visualize the topic. What I saw was rolling hills, waving banners of blue gramna grass with yellow wildflowers bobbing in between. Thistle, clover, chicory, bluebells, larkspur, and subterranean treasures like onion. The dance of July still felt in the springness of the soil and the fnal air smell of the plain. Maybe there are some antelope in the distance. In a short while a snail crawls across the path. But now I open my eyes and see it is quite different. There are no gramna grass seed head fnlags. In fact, what grass survives to tiny, barely green blades threaded between last year’s dead brittle chapes. The ground is dry and harsh. The简称 that the antelope is chasing.  The mud is full of holes and dirt. The waves are dry and not too distant.

The dryness permeates the entire summer like a hot, breathless nothing from every- thing it touches. We humans go about our lives copulating about the heat and wondering when the weather will break, but at the end of the day, I am aware, a fnal meal and a hot shower. What awaits the antelope or the meadowlark? In my garden, which was once watered to be sure, a nice crop of grapes was developing. Some tangerines showed up be- fnre the grapes were even close to ripe but they ate the grapes anyway. I stood by and watched as my grape crop dispersed. Outside the fence, there was nothing green and certainly no fruits and very fnest. My life didn’t depend on my eating those grapes. I suspect the lives of these half dozen tangerines did. Before it’s over, the drought may still make the rest of us all up and take notice, but not yet. Only a few years ago, there was a push to reopen the mine at Copper Flat just west of Cochise. To make mining easier, several new wells would be needed. These would pump water practically from the banks of the Rio Grande from a riverbed so that the riverbed water at a rate of 400 gallons every minute of every day.

The Sierra County commission and the Truth or Consequences Chamber of Com- munity Commerce has a black sheep idea. Think of all the sheep! Finally, it was any environmental regulation or protect commit to the BLR or letter to the editor in opposition that stopped this folly. It was the plummeting of the price of Copper and the bankruptcy of the mining company. The mine along the Rio Grande was hellish for life below.  In the dry heat of the lake is miserably low but it’s such a small amount of water for the fnish, it hardly makes any diference to the amount of water in the lake. Even with average rainfall in the years to 1950 there were two decades before Elephant Butte was fnally fnlled. Elephant Butte now average is a lot to hope for. The Mines is a fnisher of a million generations and one of the less than half of fi sh speces in New Mexico that the State is now completely extirpated. We humans act like antelopes and care for the living but do not extirpate. 8:00 AM, or meet us at the General Store in Winston at 9:00 AM. There will be some walking. Bring what you need to be comfortable in the way of food and clothing. We will be in the mountains in De- cember. We can expect to see some snow. If you have a four-wheel drive or truck please bring it. We will use some Forest Service vehicles, but might need additional transportation. Call Margot at 744-5800

PLANNING MEETINGS

Tuesday, November 11: The Southern Group ExCom, interested members and guest will meet at 5:30 p.m. at the Southern Environmental Center at 275 North Downtown Mall, south of Las Cruces Avenue on the mall. Enter through the west door, off the parking lot, and south of Day’s Ham and eggs. Come and join the Campaign to protect Otero Mesa, the Null Grasslands and assuring that the cur- rent representative to congress from District 2 is retired after one term. Your participation can make a diference! We need activist who is willing to volunteer for sitting at tables at the Farmer’s Market and call at fairs, making calls and writing letters. If you can not attend please call me, Margot Wilson at 505-744-5800.

OUTINGS

November 8: Check out the birds of the Nest Grasslands coupled with SMM’s Martha Dassen, ornithologist and specialist in Chihuahuan Desert birds. Meet at the General Store at 8:00 AM, with binoculars and a sack lunch for a morning of trekking and observing resident and migratory birds. We will also have access to the Heritage Ranch call Margot at 744-5800. We will meet for breakfast at 7:30 if you would like to join us.

December 6: Birder’s Breakfast. Sponsored in conjunction with Elephant Butte State Park and supported by the Friends of Elephant Butte State Park. This event will begin at 7:00 AM at 7:15 AM and continue 7:30 AM on hand by assistant those who might need some help. The Paseo del Rio Park is located 3.2 miles east of the 3rd Street stop light in Elephant Butte. The Park is graciously walking their day use fee. For additional information contact Margot Wilson at 744-5800 or Amy Clemenson at 744-9988 December 6: Birder’s Breakfast. Sponsored in conjunction with Elephant Butte State Park and supported by the Friends of Elephant Butte State Park, will begin at 7:00 AM at 7:30 AM. This event will take place at the Paseo del Rio Park, 3.2 miles east of the 3rd Street stop light in Truth or Consequences. Breakfast will be served to those who are less than expert! The Park is coyly waving the day use fee. Call Margot at 744-5800 or Amy Clemenson at the State Park at 744-9988.

December 13: Join the Forest Service in a tour of the Boiler Fire, Poverty Creek and other areas, with the Black Range District’s Leo Defon. See examples of the National Fire Plan in action. Meet at the Black Range District of the Food Basket shopping mall south of the 79 exit to Truth or Consequences at 8:00 AM, or meet us at the General Store in Winston at 9:00 AM. There will be some walking. Bring what you need to be comfortable in the way of food and clothing. We will be in the mountains in De- cember. We can expect to see some snow. If you have a four-wheel drive or truck please bring it. We will use some Forest Service vehicles, but might need additional transportation. Call Margot at 744-5800.

Otero Mesa

Otero Mesa Needs Your Help!

Write Senator Domenici

• Otero Mesa is the largest remaining Chihuahuan Desert Grassland on our public lands and is home to important native species.
• 95% of our public lands are already open to oil and gas development.
• Otero Mesa should be protected as a National Conservation Area.
• There is enough fresh, drinkable water in the aquifer beneath Otero Mesa for over 400,000 people.

Write and call:

Senator Pete Domenici
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510-3101
202-224-6621
Hot El Paso Issues

- With the recent Rio Grande Chapter approval of Jose Escobedo’s work on our Asarco proposal we need only a few more greets to be able to hire a coordinator for this project. Jose built locally recently with national’s Beyond the Border program director Jenny Martinez to promote our proposal. We appreciate the help of the SW Region’s Lawson Legate on this and all the chapter projects. The most recent news on the Asarco issue was a bid-termination-only meeting at City Hall between the EPA and residents of the most affluent affected areas on this side of the border. Even though the EPA can only afford to clean up about 30% of the 380 most heavily contaminated homes without Superfund designation, these neighborhoods want to avoid listing. According to the El Paso Times, the City and State health people raised "no major health concerns," and advised parents to have children wash their hands after playing outside and to control the amount of dust and dirt in their homes. Residents want annual, comprehensive blood testing of children ages newborn to 6 years old to begin immediately. The City-County Health and Environmental District Director said he may do more blood testing on children ages 1 to 3 years old. EPFR activist Taylor Moore has long advocated that we, the EPFR, offer testing and build our own database to expose this situation.

- Franklin Mountains State Park is protected on the Northeast by Cantor Range, a former military firing range still contaminated with unexploded ordnance which would cost many millions to clean up. The US Border Patrol wants a chunk of Cantor for its new headquarters even though there are several other sites in Northeast that could be used without spoiling open space adjacent to our treasured Franklin. We feel that approval of the Border Patrol’s Cantor alternative would trigger a dilemma effect ultimately resulting in the piecemeal destruction of yet another El Paso treasure. As members of the Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition we’ve gotten an extension of the comment period, attended meetings, commented to the officials, and written impassioned letters to the editor. The comment period ended October 26. Now it’s wait and see.

- With the election of a developer-financed mayor and city council, the 3-year hiatus on sales of public land for development is finally over. We are presently witnessing the masterplanning by Parkhill, Smith & Cooper, Inc. of 2000 acres of prime open space adjoining Franklin Mountains State Park on the west side, land that we’ve been covering since 1999 for inclusion in the state park. A similar process for northeast El Paso sold by another national firm, Kimberly-Horn and Associates, began in August. We can thank ex-Mayer Raymond Caballero for instigating professional masterplanning of our public lands. Problem is, some of this land shouldn’t be developed. Which brings us to our final issue: water.

- After spoiling the 80s using New Mexico for water, the 90s planning to steal El Paso’s needs with Rio Grande water, and more recently angering West Texas ranchers by buying their neighborhoods in out to get their water for a 5-foot diameter pipeline to El Paso, our water utility has begun to stall and dequalitate. This is not to say pumping water out from under West Texas has been forgotten. Efforts are underway to create a water market for anyone wanting to sell instead of grow. Most recently legislators even brought up the idea of financing schools by selling the water out from under the state lands used to fund education, much as they do with oil and gas leases. Nevertheless, small-scale deal deals have been purchased and construction planned on a large hotel project with Fort Bliss. So we’re going with deal in the short term. The good news about dequalifying and desalinizing our own basin is that we will be fed with dequalifying and selling our own backyard, not someone else. This may force people to realize there is a limit to what this desert can sustain. Our children would thank us for this.

—Laurence Gibson

Selected Outings

Nov 9-10: Guadalupe Mountains Backpack
Place: Guadalupe Mountains National Park
Class: Strenuous
Length: 14 miles round trip
Elevation gain: 2300 feet
Leader: Harry Newman 888-7192 petrauel@cox.net
After curving up at Dog Canyon, we will descend to the Blue Ridge campground to spend the night. The next day, we will descend to the cars using the Bush Mountain Trail. This trail should offer a scenic view if conditions are right. Participants must carry all water needed for 2 days. Be prepared for a moderate pace but long daily distances.

Nov 15: Guadalupe Peak Dayhike
Place: Guadalupe Mountains National Park
Class: Strenuous
Length: 8 miles
Elevation gain: 3000 feet
Leader: Mike Episcope mipisco@earthlink.net
Hike to the top of Texas and enjoy our nearby National Park on what should be a cool fall weekend.

November 22-23: Bush Mountain Trail Backpack
Place: Guadalupe Mountains National Park
Class: Moderate
Length: 7.4 miles
Elevation gain: 800-900 feet
Leader: Rollin Wickenden 855-6697 (855wicksy@aol.com)
We will depart early Saturday morning for the scenic drive through Dell City over to Dog Canyon Campground. After arranging for our backcountry permit, we will hike over to Marcus campground on the Bush Mountain Trail. Once in camp participants may take advantage of dayhike opportunities to places such as PS Flat or the Brinkoff Mountains. Participants must carry all water for two days.

Dec 19-21: Little Creek Early Winter Backpack
Place: Gila Wilderness near the Visitor Center
Class: Moderate
Length: 16 miles round trip
Elevation gain: 600-1000 feet
Leader: Rollin Wickenden 855-6697 (855wicksy@aol.com)
We will depart El Paso Friday evening and drive to our camp spot at Gropovac Campground. Sunday morning we will drive to our trailhead at Woody’s Corral and hike trail 160 to Little Creek, where we will set up camp. On Sunday, we will return to the West Fork drainage via EE Canyon. There will be one crossing of the West Fork, which may have a high flow. Participants should be prepared for cold, windy, winter weather with possible snowfall. Recommended equipment includes a sturdy tent, a sleeping bag rated to 20 degrees or below, wool or polyester pile clothing, a wool or pile hat, wool socks, and warm gloves. Come enjoy the solitude of the Gila in winter.

Liability Waiver Reminder
All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver before you chose to participate on an outing, please go to: http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms or contact the Outings Dept. at (415) 977-5528 for a print version.

2003 El Paso Regional Group Directory (Area Code 915)

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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2003
Watch for Your Ballots and Join in Chapter and Group Elections

The Election Calendar printed in the September/October 2003 issue of the Rio Grande Sierra was inaccurate. Therefore, the Election Committee, with the concurrence of the Executive Committee of the Rio Grande Chapter, has revised the calendar as follows:

October 31—Nominating Committee slate announced to the Executive Committees, published in the Sierra.

November 16—Nomination or issue petitions submitted to the Election Committee for verification of signatures.

November 28—Ballot goes to the printer.

December 5—Ballots mailed to all members.

January 2, 2004—Ballots returned, postmarked on or before this date.

January 9—Ballots counted by the Election Committee, results reported to the Executive Committees.

Four of the five Groups of the Rio Grande Chapter have elected to name the Chapter's Election Committee as their election committee. These are:

- the Northern New Mexico Group
- the Central New Mexico Group
- the Southern New Mexico Group
- and the Pajarito Group.

These Groups will, therefore, be following this calendar as well. This article presents election information for all four of these Groups as well as for the Chapter.

Rio Grande Chapter

The Nominating Committee for the Rio Grande Chapter has nominated the following people as the 2004 candidates for the Executive Committee:

- Richard Barish
- Ile Beck
- John Bruchac
- Nelson Dusman
- Mark Duphle
- Laurence Gibson
- Margaret Williams

Accordingly, the Nominating Committee advises the membership of the following:

Any member in good standing of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club as of 1 September 2003 may run for election by a petition presented to the Nominating Committee no later than 14 November 2003. The petition must contain the signatures of at least 100 members in good standing of the Rio Grande Chapter as of the date of signing the petition. Petitioners must also include a statement to be included with the ballot, detailing their conservation philosophy and goals for the Chapter.

If you have questions, contact the Nominating Committee Chair, Richard Barish (barishr@mac.com), or the Election Committee Chair, Miguel Mudd in Albuquerque (884-3315; micmudd@aol.com).

The Northern New Mexico Group

The Nominating Committee for the Northern New Mexico Group has nominated the following people as the 2004 candidates for the Executive Committee:

- Linda Bucher
- Nelson Dusman
- Greg Lawler
- Norma McCullar
- Paul Parry
- Julia Tadeo
- Coen Washburn

Accordingly, the Nominating Committee advises the membership of the following:

Any member in good standing of the Northern New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club as of September 1, 2004 may run for election by a petition presented to the Nominating Committee no later than November 14 of this year. The petition must contain the signatures of at least 70 members (39% of the 2,194 members) in good standing of the Northern New Mexico Group as of the date of signing the petition. Petitioners must also include a statement to be included with the ballot, detailing their conservation philosophy and goals for the Group.

If you have questions, contact the Group Nominating Committee Chair, John Bucher in Santa Fe (bucherj@comcast.net; 820-6201), or the Election Committee Chair, Miguel Mudd in Albuquerque (884-3315; micmudd@aol.com).

The Pajarito Group

The Nominating Committee for the Pajarito Group has nominated the following people as the 2004 candidates for the Executive Committee:

- Ile Beck
- Jody Basso
- Carole Janson
- Kim Manley

Accordingly, the Nominating Committee advises the membership of the following:

Any member in good standing of the Pajarito Group of the Sierra Club as of 1 September 2003 may run for election by a petition presented to the Nominating Committee no later than 14 November 2003. The petition must contain the signatures of at least 15 members in good standing of the Pajarito Group as of the date of signing the petition. Petitioners must also include a statement to be included with the ballot, detailing their conservation philosophy and goals for the Group.

If you have questions about the election, contact the Election Committee Chair, Miguel Mudd (see above).

The Central New Mexico Group

The Nominating Committee for the Central New Mexico Group has nominated the following people as the 2004 candidates for the Executive Committee:

- Mark Duphle
- Rick Johnson
- Mike Pelle

Accordingly, the Nominating Committee advises the membership of the following:

Any member in good standing of the Central New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club as of 1 September 2003 may run for election by a petition presented to the Nominating Committee no later than 14 November 2003. The petition must contain the signatures of at least 25 members in good standing of the Central New Mexico Group as of the date of signing the petition. Petitioners must also include a statement to be included with the ballot, detailing their conservation philosophy and goals for the Group.

If you have questions, contact the Group Nominating Committee Chair, Blair Brown in Albuquerque (539-7199), or the Election Committee Chair, Miguel Mudd (see above).

The Southern New Mexico Group

The Nominating Committee for the Southern New Mexico Group has nominated the following people as the 2004 candidates for the Executive Committee:

- Cheryl Blevins
- Uper Dethelt
- Michael Gitzlaff

Accordingly, the Nominating Committee advises the membership of the following:

Any member in good standing of the Southern New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club as of 1 September 2003 may run for election by a petition presented to the Nominating Committee no later than 14 November 2003. The petition must contain the signatures of at least 10 members in good standing of the Southern New Mexico Group as of the date of signing the petition. Petitioners must also include a statement to be included with the ballot, detailing their conservation philosophy and goals for the Group.

If you have questions, contact the Nominating Committee Chair, David Parrell (see above), or the Election Committee Chair, Miguel Mudd (see above).

—Barbara Johnson

[Un]-Healthy Forests Bills In Conference

The U.S. Senate is set to vote by the end of October 2003 on a slightly altered version of the Bush Administration's ill-named Healthy Forests Initiative. The plan would do little or nothing to reduce the risk of wildfire to western communities, yet would do much to remove citizen participation, interfere with the judicial system, and increase commercial logging. The bush plan, which could still be subject to changes in Conference Committee, stands in stark contrast to a proposal by conservation groups that focuses aid in communities at risk from wildfire.

Over the past year, hundreds of nationally- and locally-elected officials, scientists, and homeowners from across the country have spoken out against the Bush plan. They warn that it does not provide the funding needed to help communities protect themselves from wildfires and is instead a stalking horse for more subsidized commercial logging. In fact, during a recent fundraising swing through the West, Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert boasted that the Healthy Forests Initiative is "an important bill for the forest industry" and called it "a common sense approach to make sure we can build the roads we have to build so this industry can start to come back." That's a far cry from reassuring communities that help is on its way.

Take Action!

Call your legislators to express your desire to protect communities from fires. Please call the U.S. Senate Switchboard (202/224-3121) and urge your senators to oppose the Healthy Forests Initiative because:

- the Administration's proposal fails to protect currently healthy forests such as mature and old-growth forests and roadless areas,
- cuts citizens out of decisions affecting their public lands, and
- does not ensure increased protection for communities from wildfires.

For more information, see the Sierra Club web site (www.sierraclub.org/forests), or contact Mary Wiper in Albuquerque (243-7767; marywiper@sierraclub.org).
Don't Ignore Population Growth and Overconsumption Any Longer.

Dear Editor,

Most environmental organizations' leaders have retreated from national and global population stabilization efforts even as the destruction of the biosphere caused by population growth has been escalating. Activists are working to expose and oppose this.

The U.S. threat was described by Roy Beck and Leon Kolodziec in a highly praised report, "Perspectives Fundamentals: The Environmental Establishment Abandons U.S. Population Stabilization" (www.csc-up.org/article/2001/perspectives/). On the first Earth Day (1970), "environmentalists heartily embraced stabilization of America's population," without which they believed harm to the natural world unstoppable. The ending of stabilization work leads the report to conclude, "...the environmental bureaucracy and the federal government today are failing to stop the destruction of the nation's natural environment."

The Oregon Sierra Club's Chapter newsletter, The Conifer, recently printed an article by Greg Jacob, "Time to Reassert Our Neutrality Policy on Immigration" (July/September 2003; www.oregon.sierreclub.org). Our borders have been opened wide. Immigration now causes 87% of U.S. population growth, and the population growth causes 52% of sprawl, according to a new study by Beck, Kolodziec, and Steven Causa ("Outsourcing Smart Growth"). Also, Club members, please visit Sierra for U.S. Population Stabilization's web site (www.sups.org).

Negative population growth (www.sups.org) has been running excellent advertisements in E The Environmental Magazine (www.seemagazine.com) and other publications. The latest points out that, unless fertility and immigration are reduced, U.S. population will grow to 500 million or more by the end of this century (other estimates go up to over one billion). And, "...our present scale of economic activity is so large relative to the biosphere that all three measures [reducing population (the most critical), cutting overconsumption, and increasing energy and materials efficiency] are needed in order to reduce it to a sustainable level."

The environmental bureaucracy has run away from addressing the most important cause of environmental harm despite decades of calls-to-action from such luminaries as Bertrand Russell, Martin Luther King, Paul Ehrlich, David Brower, Edward O. Wilson, and prominent scientific groups (they issued important public statements in 1992 and 1998).

And despite decades of environmental degradation to the present dire situation, world population at its current consumption level already exceeds by more than 20% Earth's long-term carrying capacity (*Ecological Footprint Accounts; www.BiodiversityNews.org). Environment-consuming economic growth will continue, globally, until long after the end of population growth (or until it is thwarted by depletion). That's because policymakers will determine that the needs of five billion people are few hundreds of millions of unemployed, and 77 million more consumers per year must be met by such growth. Consequently, a mass extinction is well underway (www.mannextinction.net; http://ecocrisis.org/cr/EarthCrash.html).

Thus, by their neglect and avoidance of birthrate-reduction efforts, the responsible environmental, governmental, and international entities have brought us far beyond the stage where population stabilization would have sufficed. Now, we must reverse population growth as soon as possible, if we are to avert the ruin of the biosphere and a die-off of humanoid.

-Raymond M. Reddy
Albuquerque, NM
repp Industries, North Carolina

License Plates Support New Mexico Wildlife

You can now order a Wildlife License Plate, featuring a Gambel's quail, for your car. These plates, created as a result of legislation sponsored by Representative Mimi Stewart in early 2003, support the state's Share with Wildlife program. Share with Wildlife funds research, public education, habitat protection, and wildlife rehabilitation exclusively through donations. Endangered and threatened species, as well as non-game species benefit greatly from programs.

Order forms can be obtained from the NM Motor Vehicle Division (888-683-6036; www.snmvd.state.nm.us). Select "Motor Vehicle Forms," and scroll down to "Wildlife Specialty License." Or see the NM Department of Fish and Game web site (www.nmfd.state.nm.us). Scroll to the bottom of the page to "New Feature In the Spotlight," then click on "Order Wildlife License Plate."

—Animal Protection of New Mexico

Organic Food (continued from page 6)

7:00am at the Main Library on Washington Street in Santa Fe. For interested groups, we are taking your series on the road and will show at your location for a small donation to continue our work in education, providing food for the community, and research.

Another film available through Tierra Axl is Heartbreak in the Heartland.

For more information, contact Ann Peters in Santa Fe (501-3233; voicemail@hotmail.com) or Lance Hartwell (501-3233).

—Ann Peters
Tierra Axl Projects

Sign up online www.sierreclub.org/membership or return this form:

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MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

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This meeting was previously scheduled for 6-7 December 2003.

—Ann Peters

RIO GRANDE SIERRAN 15

November/December 2003
Connectedness

I have just returned from Arches National Park, where I spent a week on a National Sierra Club service trip. Being immersed in such a place is always special, but it was more so this particular outing because of the connectedness of the participants. We came from all over the country: New Hampshire to California, Texas to Maryland, and a local Ukiah who joined the Club only when signing up for it. We worked with the ranger responsible for vegetation issues, saving dominant shrubs in Salt Creek Wash by branch, and existing each time we got a large spreading tree down to a stump, upon which the ranger sprayed the herbicide that reliably kills the root. No one knew anyone else before the trip; during the last morning goodbye there were tears in some eyes, and the hugs were long and heartfelt.

What had happened in this short span of six and a half days to achieve such connectedness? For starters, we all shared the awe of this magnificent sandstone landscape, its hanging arches and cool, shadowy passage—those of us who already loved slickrock country, and those who had never been to Utah before. We had ample time to relax and play, hiking up to nearby Corona Arch on 3M trail, climbing ridges to craggy showers in Moab, making the pilgrimage to Delicate Arch. And we worked together, side by side under the hot sun and the dust from thick layers of dust, feeling good about making a small dent in this fast-spreading invasive species which crowds out the native vegetation.

While all outings create a sense of camaraderie, help us to stick it and healthy, and give us a deepened appreciation of our public lands, a work trip adds an additional dimension of hard physical labor undertaken for a shared goal of making the land healthier. I urge you to try out a service trip, be it a national or local Sierra outing, or one sponsored by another group, such as NM Volunteers for the Outdoors. And if you are aware of a need for volunteer labor, such as clearing burned trees off a favorite trail, suggest a project to your Group Outings Chair. Usually, public land managers are delighted with an offer of volunteer help, so our leaders are happy to add a dimension to their schedules, and you will feel good about making another contribution to the ongoing process of maintaining our environment.

—Norma McCallan

Selected Sierra Club Outings for November, December and January

Saturday, November 8 • Watershed-Thinning Field Trip—Easy/moderate hike to view the thinning project along the Sierra Fc Watershed boundary with guest leader Paige Grant. SF Watershed Association. Bob Meier (774-3157-Tue-C).

Saturday, November 8 • Coulter Canyon/Blond Canyon Bike Loop—16 miles, 1,300 elevation gain. Mike Di Rosa (663-4658-Los Alamos).

November 8 • Birding Walk in the Nut Grasslands Complex—Observe migratory birds with NMSU ornithologist Marcus Democrat. Margaret Wilson (744-5860-Tue-C).


Saturday, November 8 • White Sands Moonlight Backpack—Easy 2-miles ruck, suitable for beginners. Sleep on the dunce under the full moon. Lawrence Gibson (515-7992-El Paso).

Saturday, November 15 • Guadalupe Peak Dayhike—Strenuous hike in Guadalupe Mountains National Park up the highest peak in Texas. 8 miles, 3,000’ elevation gain. Mike Episcope (enposal@msn.com).

Saturday, November 22 • Queen Mary & Owni Mean below Los Alamos—Strenuous hike, mostly off-trail over volcanic tuff, with rock scrambling. 10 miles, 1,500’ gain. Stephen Markovci (515-7935-Los Alamos).


Friday-Sunday, November 28-30 • Bosque del Apoyo Birding/Camping Weekend—Contact the Rattlesnake Group. View the snowcaps of Canada geese, sandhill cranes and ducks that migrate here each winter. Rafters and lllc Black (605-2368-Los Alamos).

Saturday, November 29 • Test Rocks near Cochiti—Easy hike to this rock wonderland. Eka Schon (744-5464-Santa Fe).

Sunday, November 30 • San Miguel Ruins, Bandelier N.M.—Strenuous hike, some off-trail. 11 miles, 2,000’ elevation gain. Steven Splittko (744-4354-SF).


Saturday, December 6 • La Bajada to Tesilla Peak—Strenuous off-trail hike to this prominent landmark. 12 miles. Stephen Markovci (744-5853-Los Alamos).

Sunday, December 7 • Three Gun Spring Trail, Sandia Mountain Wilderness—Excellent conditioning hike to viewpoints. 6 miles, 1,500’ elevation gain. David Thiel (260-1553-Ash).

Saturday, December 13 • Tour of Better Fire, Poverty Creek and other areas—Join FS Black Range District Ranger Les Dufault, and see examples of the National Fire Plan in action. Some walking. Margaret Wilson (744-5800-Tue-C).

Saturday, December 13 • Mindful Trail to Guaje Ridge—Strenuous hike near Los Alamos. 10-12 miles. Mike di Rosa (663-0666-Los Alamos).


Saturday, December 20 • Owini Peaks/Buckhorn Meadow—Moderate hike. Some off-trail. 6 miles. Neibert Spielberg (744-4554-SF).


Thursday, January 1 • Snowshoe Trails to Celebrate New Year—Moderate. Hike if snow. Marcia Skillman (744-7414-SF).

Saturday, January 3 • Cerillos Hills Park—Easy hike, some off-trail, with guest mine historian Bill Batter. Norms McCallan (471-0095-SF).

Saturday, January 4 • Sierra Negra WSA near Aboquito—Moderate/strenuous hike in the badlands around the peak. Neibert Spielberg (744-4554-SF).

Sunday, January 17 • Mercedillo Canyon, near Los Alamos. Moderate off-trail hike to look at palepetals. 6-8 miles. Mike di Rosa (663-0666-Los Alamos).

Saturday, January 18 • Beginners Snowshoe Outing—Wherever snow is good. Marcia Skillman (744-7414-SF).

Saturday, January 31 • Ojo Wilderness Study Area, near San Taibao—Moderate off-trail hike in these beautiful badlands, hopefully soon to be designated as Wilderness (see page 1). Stephen Markovci (744-5853-Ash).

Please check the first Group page for more information on these trips, and for additional activities. All area codes are 505, except as noted.