Zuni Wins Battle to Save Zuni Salt Lake

Salt River Project Pulls Plans Back for Fence Lake Coal Mine

Over two decades of battle to preserve the home of Ma’iiłkítłii’í (Salt Mother) has finally come to an end. Salt River Project (SRP) announced on August 4, 2003 to pull back plans on building the 18,000-acre open-stripe Fence Lake Coal Mine.

Salt River Project’s (SRP) Board of Directors voted to enter into contract with Powder River Basin (PRB) in Wyoming. According to SRP’s press release, the company will now relinquish permits and coal leases back to the state and federal regulatory agencies. Currently, prices of coal in the open market make it unfavorable to buy from PRB, as opposed to building the Fence Lake Mine. Coal from PRB contains higher sulfur and ash content that will help SRP in meeting future air quality requirements.

Salt River Project planned to strip-mine over 80 million tons of coal for an estimated 40-50 years. SRP also planned to construct a 44-mile slurry line to carry coal from the Fence Lake Mine to the Coronado Generating Station in S. Johns, AZ. Though Zuni Salt Lake fluctuates between 1.5 and 4 feet in depth, SRP planned to pump 85 gallons of water per minute from the Atsapat Aquifer. Over 500 human burial remains are located within the area.

On August 7, 2003, the Pueblo of Zuni held a press conference at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque, NM (see photo). Councilman Arden Kuatsi began the press conference thanking everyone for attending and gave the invocation. Governor Duke Zuercher publicly thanked all those individuals for assisting the Pueblo of Zuni to stop SRP, especially the New Mexico Congressional Delegates for stepping up to the plate in addressing Zuni’s concerns regarding Zuni Salt Lake. Governor Zuercher remarked, "This is a victory for all Native Americans." "There is still a lot of work to be done to finalize the close-out," said Head Councilman Carlos Albert, St. Councilman Edward Wenyeweyra rallied behind the words of his colleagues.

Also present during the press conference were Attorney Albert Gonzales, James Chavez (Water Information Network), Ron Solomon (CEO of Indian Pueblo Cultural Center), Mary Wiper (Sisters Club Associate Representative), and Barbara Don, Executive Director of the New Mexico Council of Churches, who represents over 600,000 members.

The decision of SRP pulling out was a major example to Indigenous tribes throughout the world.

Negotiations Continue to Try to Resolve Silvery Minnow Suit

In the wake of the decision of the 10th Circuit Court of Appeal in June 2003, the silvery minnow lawsuit has been much in the news. Albuquerque Mayor Marty Chavez, feeling no obligation whatsoever to keep the river alive, has spoon-fed blatant mischaracterizations of the court’s opinion to the media to make the flimsy case for conservation. The mainstream media has, for the most part, done an exemplary job of asking in line to promote the Mayor’s (and their own) unalloyed pro-development agenda in inaccurately portraying the decision and its consequences. Other politicians have joined in a chorus of righteous indignation as the effrontery of a bunch of primarily Republican judges in actually enforcing the law. As a predictable result, even people who identified themselves as environmentalists, when interviewed on television, said that the courts had gone too far this time.

Not surprisingly, the hysteria is not matched by the reality.

The decision of the 10th Circuit will not take 70% of Albuquerque’s San Juan-Chama Project water as stated by Mayor Chavez. In fact, the 10th Circuit’s decision did not require the use of any additional water. The decision merely affirmed that the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BoR)—the federal agency that, in essence, runs the river—has the discretion to consider using San Juan-Chama water, as well as native Rio Grande water, for endangered species purposes. Endangered species obligations could also be met by other means, including voluntary leaves of water.

The requirements for the silvery minnow are governed by a Biological Opinion (BiOp) issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The BiOp for the minnow was written this spring and now provides extremely minimal requirements for the fish. In dry years such as this one, the BiOp:

- requires that the river from Albuquerque downstream to the Isleta diversion dam be kept "wet" after June 15, and
- permits drying of the 100 to 80 miles of river between the Isleta dam and Elephant Butte Reservoir.

The problem with this approach is that almost all of the minnows are (or were) south of the Isletas.

(continued on page 9)
**Executive Committee**

Doug Fraser, Chair  474-7615
dfraser@unm.neulink.com

Doug Dahl, Vice Chair  544-6852
ddahl@frr.exxon.com

John Buckner, Conservation Chair  522-3807
jnbuckner@comcast.net

Laurence Gibson, Secretary  522-3807
lgibson@sierraclub.org

Brian Brown, Treasurer  522-3807
bbrown2@hotmail.com

Richard Babich  232-3013
rbabich@sierraclub.org

Jim Hasen  988-5700
jhasen@sierraclub.org

Ken Hughes  474-0559

Susan Martin, Council Delegate  522-3807

Norma Callum  522-3807
ncallum@sierraclub.org

Ted Merig  915/382-3011
tmerig@unm.neulink.com

Joe Blake, Pajarito Group  662-1268
jBlake@yahoo.com

Marvin Cooper, Central Group  842-0185
marlcooper@frr.exxon.com

Doug Fraser, Northern Group  474-7615
dfraser@unm.neulink.com

Jesse Escobedo, El Paso Group  915/751-1834
jesco662@hotmail.com

**Chapter Office**

Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club
621 Old Santa Fe Trail, Suite 10
Santa Fe, NM 87505
505/983-2708  * 505/983-9706
www.rigrande.sierraclub.org

**Sierra Club NM Office**

Mary Wiper, Associate Representative  210 5th Street, SW
Albuquerque, NM 87102-3337
505/243-7767  * 505/243-7771
marywiper@sierraclub.org

**Sierra Club Structure**

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

Central Group  PO. Box 25342  Albuquerque, NM 87125-5342
El Paso Group  PO. Box 9191  El Paso, TX 79998  * 915/594-7402
Pajarito Group  PO. Box 954  Los Alamos, NM 87544
Northern Group  621 Old Santa Fe Trail, #10 Santa Fe, NM 87501  * 505/983-2708  * 505/983-9706
Southern Group  PO. Box 7973 UPB, Las Cruces, NM 88003  * 505/983-3035
Southwest Regional Office  202 E. McDowell Road, Suite 207  Phoenix, AZ 85004  * 602/265-9936
Sierra Club National  85 Second Street, 2nd Floor  San Francisco, CA 94105  * 415/977-5500

**Conservation Issue Chair**

Energy  Gail Byba  595-9978  gbyba@sierraclub.org
Mining  Abe Jacobson  672-7659  abejacobson@worldnet.att.net
Climate/Lands  Clare Lessen  446-3228  clareless1@verizon.net
Range/Lands  OPEN
Sand & Gravel  OPEN
Sprawl Issues  Jan Kindel  474-7613  jkindel@frr.exxon.com
Trade  Richard Babich  232-3013  rbabich@sierraclub.org
Transportation  Ken Hughes  474-7613  bhughes2@sierraclub.org
Valles Caldera  Betty Baker  662-3566  beller@sierraclub.org
Wilderness  Martin Heinrich  232-3013  mheinrich@sierraclub.org
Wildlife  Liz Walsh  915/751-2641  ewalsh@sierraclub.org

**Activism Committee Chairs**

Elections  Michael Modl  884-3315  mmrtl@sierraclub.org
Fundraising  Richard Babich  232-3013  rbabich@sierraclub.org
Legal  Jan Kindel  474-7613  jkindel@frr.exxon.com
Membership  Ted Merig  915/594-3011  tedmerig@unm.neulink.com
Nominating Committee  David Farrell  895-3952  dfarrell@hotmail.com
Personal Committee  Blair Brown  259-7199  bblbrown@sierraclub.org
Political/Legislative  Gwen Wardwell  430-5609  gwwardwell@sierraclub.org
Seron Student Coalition  OPEN
Standing Rules  Laurence Gibson  915/594-7402  lgibson@sierraclub.org
Webmaster/Listserv  Blair Brown  259-7199  bblbrown@sierraclub.org

**Outreach Chairs**

Outings  Norma Callum  471-0005  ncallum@rmindspring.com
Inner City Outings  Ted Merig  915/594-3011  tedmerig@unm.neulink.com

**National & Regional Representatives**

Southwest Region Conservation Committee (SWRCC)  John Buckner & Ted Merig  Norma Callum (Alt)
Council of Chapter Leaders Delegate  Susan Martin, Ken Hughes (Alt)

**Sierra Club**

Editor/Layout/Ads  Mary Paskal  983-0004  * mpaskal@sierranews.com

The Rio Grande Sierra Club is published six times a year by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club as a service to Sierra Club members living in New Mexico and West Texas. The opinions expressed in signed articles in the Rio Grande Sierra are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club. Articles may be freely reprinted for non-profit purposes, provided that credit is given to the author and the Rio Grande Sierra (Please let us know if you reprint). Products and services advertised in the Rio Grande Sierra are not endorsed by the Sierra Club.

Contributions are welcome from members. E-mail contributions preferred. Contributions' names and e-mail addresses will be included in the article, as a source of more information, unless the contributor specifies otherwise. Send to the editor (mpaskal@sierranews.com). 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, stories and poems are also welcome. Letters and articles are subject to adjudgment.

Editorial practices as developed by the Grand Canyon Chapter and adopted by the Rio Grande Chapter will be used in production of the Rio Grande Sierra. Letters to the editor over 500 words will be edited for length or returned to the author for editing. Submissions of Rio Grande Chapter members will take precedence over other submissions. Contents of Group pages are the responsibility of the editors 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  22268 Wyoming NE, PM# 272  Albuquerque, NM 87112. Please allow 6-8 weeks for posting.

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415/977-5649  * address.change@sierraclub.org

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**A Question!**

The term "environmental justice" appears with increasing frequency in discussions that range from land pollution from ASARCO's smelter in El Paso, to advocacy on behalf of the tradition of grazing, to questioning the practice of charging fees for access to public lands. Sounds like a cross between environmental ethics and social justice. What do you think "environmental justice" means?

Send your comments to the editor (mpaskal@sierranews.com). We'll print them.

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**September/October 2003**
Political
Contact Information
President: George Bush
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500
202/456-1111 • fax 456-2601
president@whitehouse.gov

Secretary of Interior Gale Norton
1849 C Street
Washington, DC 20240
202/208-7251 • fax 452-5124
gale_norton@ceo.doi.gov

U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman
703 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510
DC phone 222/523-5521 • fax 224-2852
bingaman@bingaman.senate.gov

635 Silver SW, Suite 130
Albuquerque, NM 87102
705/236-6601 • fax 346-6780

U.S. Senator Pete Domenici
338 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510-3010
DC phone 224/6602 • fax 224-6601
pete_domenici@petedomenici.senate.gov
652 Silver SW, Suite 330
Albuquerque, NM 87102
346-6720

U.S. Representative Tom Udall
502 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
DC phone 222/546-6791 • fax 224-1831
www.house.gov/udall

811 St. Michael Drive, Suite 101
Santa Fe, NM 87505
505/984-8959 • fax 986-5047

U.S. Representative Heather Wilson
311 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
DC phone 222/546-6781 • fax 224-1831
www.house.gov/wilson

20 First Ave NW, Suite 603
Albuquerque, NM 87102
346-6724

New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson
State Capitol, Room 600
Santa Fe, NM 87501
505/827-0900

New Mexico State Legislature
Legal Council Services
505/985-6008

New Mexico State Senators
State Chief Clerk’s Office
505/986-4774

New Mexico State Representatives
House Chief Clerk’s Office
505/986-4751

A Note From the Chair
Certainly, the most exciting thing I have participated in over the years has been the development of the group and Chapter programs which are covered, starting with an overview by Blair Brown on page 6. The time spent by everyone, both Chapter leadership and the project managers, was way beyond anything I've seen previously. I particularly want to thank Blair Brown, Chapter treasurer, and Lawton Legate and Mary Wiper from national staff for their extraordinary effort. Indeed, it has been a great Chapter-wide effort. We've had the good fortune to benefit from a basically one-time allocation from the national Club—we have the funds and, as you will read, the volunteer commitment to take action to safeguard and restore our environment. I hope that you will be as proud of our people as I am, and please if you agree, give them a call and encourage them in any way that you can.

Secondly, please thank Governor Richardson for modifying his earlier opposition to the court decision on the albogy miners, which I talked to you about in our last issue. I am now taking a more positive approach in trying to negotiate a settlement which will ensure the protection of the miners and their families, as well as address the needs of those of us who live along the rivers.

In this vein, please read Richard Barh's update on the situation (page 1) and also the article that Bernard Fay (Conservation Chair for Sangre de Cristo Audubon) wrote regarding the minnow, which is a reprint from The Santa Fe New Mexican (page 9). It's the best discussion on this subject I have seen yet.

Next, the issue of mass transit is "moving along" thanks, in part, to the Governor's revival of the "bullet train," originally proposed by Governor Toosey Anaya. His funding for this project will help to address issues related to mass transit in the state of New Mexico. Rent Ken Hughes' open letter (page 4), and then join him in giving the Governor a big thank you and encouragement to continue along this "track."

The Club helped the Zuni Pueblo in their effort to preserve Zuni Salt Lake as nature envisioned (see our cover story).

A big thank you to Mary Wiper here. The Valley Caldera Board of Trustees is in the process of opening the Preserve to wider public access. Although there are fees for most of their access, there is also a free trail into the Valley Grass-and the staff and truants would like feedback. Please read Marty Paech's article on page 11.

Regarding the northwestern part of the state, which is often neglected in these pages (but never beyond our concerns), please read Glicks Paech's article on page 13. There was a long-time Forest Service employee. Club members brought her to Farmington for her perspective on sustainable guidelines that we and our public land-management agencies could be using to make much better decisions that have been made to date.

—Dean Foster

Ilse Bleck Has Been Active for Decades,
Contributing to the Protection of the Places She Loves
Ilse Bleck first discovered the Southwest in the late 1950s when she and her family moved to Boulder, Colorado. It was "love at first sight," particularly after becoming acquainted with the neighboring Indian Peaks Wilderness, where many weekends were spent camping and hiking with her husband Rainer and their two sons. Unfortunately, after only eight years, the Blecks left the Southwest as Rainer could take a position at the University of Miami. During those 25 years, Ilse taught high school and became involved in South Florida Sierra Club activities. Preserving the Florida Everglades from ever encroaching development was still a large issue. Ilse and Rainer led many canoe outings in the Everglades, introducing people to this threatened ecosystem and inspiring effective advocacy for regional environmental issues. When another move brought the Blecks back to the Southwest, this time to Los Alamos, Ilse immediately became involved in the Sierra Club's Pajaritos Group. She is still involved today, having served as chair, and currently acting as vice-chair, outings co-chair, and the Group's Representative in the Rio Grande Chapter. Her main interest is the Valles Caldera National Preserve (see page 11), and she represents the Chapter in the Valles Caldera Coalition, where she is co-chair of the Recreation Committee. "The public is very fortunate to have acquired this beautiful land, and I fully support the governing Board's efforts to apply science-based management to all public-use areas," she says. As more and more programs such as grunting and honking fall into place, she looks forward to expanded non-consumptive recreational opportunities in the future.

—Ilse Bleck
Senate Passes Failed Energy Bill from the Last Congress

in a last minute deal, the U.S. Senate resurrected and passed its failed energy bill from the last Congress—a bill that:
- gives billions of dollars in subsidies to dirty coal and dangerous nuclear power;
- increases America's oil dependence;
- includes virtually no progress on renewable energy; and
- eliminates safeguards that protect consumers from Enron-like failures.

Passage of this bill sets the stage for a conference with the bill that the U.S. House passed earlier this year which:
- is even more environmentally damaging and polluting; and,
- calls for drilling in the Arctic National 'Wildlife Refuge.'

With this maneuver, the Senate has short-circuited a much-needed debate on America's energy future and failed to provide a responsible energy policy for the nation. The Senate neglected to adequately debate and vote on important issues such as:
- closing the light truck fuel economy loophole;
- requiring increased use of clean, renewable energy sources; and
- providing consumer protections against energy market manipulation.

By passing this polluting energy bill in July 2003, the Senate bowed to special interests and failed to adopt solutions that would reduce America's oil dependence, save consumers money, and protect the environment. The Senate enacted the nation's energy policy to a conference committee where special interests are likely to rule. For a comparison of the two bills, see the chart on the next page.

"Americans deserve better from their elected representatives, and this bill will only get worse in conference committee. Americans should demand that Congress reject this wrong-headed energy bill,"

added Sierra Club Associate Representative, Mary Wiper.

"There's a better way for America. We can reduce our dependence on foreign oil with more efficient automobiles. We can cut pollution by producing more of our electricity with clean, renewable energy like wind and solar power. At the same time, we can protect our special places and ensure that corporations do their part to protect our health and safety," said Wiper. "Please contact our New Mexico Senators to reaffirm that this is our position.

For more information, contact Sierra Club Associate Representative Mary Wiper in Albuquerque (see Masthead, page 2), and see the energy pages on the Sierra Club web site (www.sierraclub.org/energy).

—Mary Wiper

An Open Letter to Governor Richardson—Thank You for Investing in Rails

Dear Governor Richardson:

On behalf of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, I want to thank you for dedicating $1 million to the proposed Belen-Bernalillo commuter rail and an additional $1 million to upgrade rail crossings and improve the track system that will one day provide service between Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

We also commend your state's support for additional rail initiatives including:
- intercity service between El Paso and Denver via New Mexico;
- intra-county service between downtown Santa Fe and the suburbs of Embudo and the urban light rail/rapid transit in Albuquerque.

Additionally, funding is secured.

The Sierra Club completely supports the concept of multimodalism and welcomes efforts by the Department of Transportation to implement its stated policy of multimodalism. Access to diverse forms of transport is vital to community health as species diversity is to forest health. Enrique Penelas, the former mayor of Bogota, Columbia, summed up this concept when he said that commuting to work must meet the test of happiness—the "peoples test," which is how far a seven-year-old can pedal or safely bicycle from home, buy a popsicle, and then cycle home again.

I have long dreamed of bicycling from my home in Santa Fe to the train station, boarding the train to Albuquerque's Alvarado Center, and walking to a meeting, lecture, or other engagement. Your actions and commitment to fully funding commuter rail service takes this dream one big step closer to reality.

Sincerely,
Ken Hughes
Rio Grande Chapter Transportation Chair

The governor's $2 million is from the $62 million that is New Mexico's share of the tax- cut bill. We urge you to write to the governor directly in support of this rail initiative.

Governor Supports Renewable Energy

Thank you, Governor Richardson, for supporting renewable energy in New Mexico!

At a press conference on 22 August 2003, Governor Richardson announced his decision to publicly support the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) for New Mexico. He also directed his staff to intervene in support of the RPS in the court case filed by El Paso Electric which challenges the RPS passed by the NM Public Regulation Commission last December.

The RPS requires utilities to obtain 5% of their electricity from renewables by 2006, and 10% by 2011. Although this rule went into effect on 1 July 2003, the Governor had previously remained neutral on whether such rules were required to jump-start the renewable energy industry in New Mexico.

This decision by the Governor represents a strong victory for the environmental community, which has sought for the past year to convince Governor that New Mexicans will benefit from a diversified and cleaner energy supply. Bob Gallagher, President of the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association, sat at the Governor's side during the press conference and spoke in support of the RPS, as well.

The Sierra Club, along with several other organizations, was recognized by the Governor at the press conference. Thanks to the Governor, and thanks to all of you who wrote or called the Governor on this issue in the past year.

—Gail Lyke
Chapter Energy Chair
A Comparison of the Senate and House Energy Bills

Drilling in the Arctic Refuge
• S 517 does not allow drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
• HR 6 opens the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas drilling.
• Drilling in the Arctic Refuge has been a cornerstone of the Bush Administration’s Energy Policy.

Cutting the Country’s Dependence on Oil
• S 517 increases the country’s dependence on oil.
  – Extends the “loophole” which allows automakers to earn fuel-economy credits for vehicles that can, but rarely do, run on alternative fuels. Extending this loophole increases our gasoline consumption by 9 billion gallons by 2010.
  – Exempts plug-in hybrids from any future fuel-economy improvement.
• HR 6 fails to cut the country’s dependence on oil. The only fuel-economy provisions direct the Department of Transportation to perform additional studies and develop alternatives to the current fuel-economy law.
• The Bush Administration has failed to provide the country with a policy that cuts our dependence on oil.

Renewable Energy
• S 517 contains a Renewable Energy Standard of 10% by 2020. However, the standard could count municipal solid waste incineration and some trees as “renewable energy.”
• S 517 provides some funding for renewables research and development (R&D).
• HR 6 does not contain a Renewable Energy Standard.
• HR 6 provides some funding for renewables R&D.
• HR 6 has failed to set a national Renewable Energy Standard, even though Bush signed similar legislation while Governor of Texas.

Oil and Gas Drilling on Public Lands
• S 517 does not contain any provisions to open new public lands to oil and gas drilling.
• HR 6 opens public lands to oil and gas drilling.
• HR 6 exempts oil and gas drilling sites from water-pollution requirements that other construction activities must follow.
• HR 6 creates incentives for logging national forests.
• HR 6 undermines provisions in existing law that provide participation in land-use decisions.
• The Bush-Cheney Energy Plan called for more oil and gas drilling on our public lands.

Electricity Market Manipulation
• S 517 repeals the 75-year old Public Utilities Holding Company Act (PUHCA), which is the cornerstone of consumer protection in the electricity market. Repealing this law will allow more Enron-like market manipulation to occur.
• HR 6 repeals PUHCA.
• HR 6 encourages further electricity market deregulation by facilitating “Standard Market Design.”
• Enron CEO Kenneth Lay was instrumental in shaping the electricity provisions of the Bush-Cheney Energy Plan, which leaves consumers vulnerable to the type of market manipulation and soaring electricity prices caused by Enron’s scheme.

Nuclear Power
• S 517 extends the Price-Anderson Act through 2012. This is bad news.
• S 517 instructs the Department of Energy to aggressively pursue construction of a new nuclear power plant by 2010.
• S 517 reverses a long-standing U.S. policy against reprocessing irradiated nuclear fuel—saying the refining process that North Korea is currently pursuing.
• HR 6 extends the Price-Anderson Act through 2017.
• HR 6 initiates the Bush Administration’s Nuclear Power 2010 program that aims to build 50 new nuclear reactors within 20 years.
• HR 6 reverses the long-standing policy against reprocessing spent nuclear fuel.
• The Administration’s Nuclear Power 2010 program showers billions of dollars in subsidies to the nuclear industry with the aim of building 50 new reactors by 2050, even though not a single new nuclear power plant has been built in the United States since 1973.

Ethanol
• S 517 sets a renewable fuels standard of 5 billion gallons by 2012.
• S 517 bans MTBE.
• HR 6 requires a renewable fuels standard of 5 billion gallons by 2015.
• HR 6 allows the use of the gasoline additive MTBE, which has been found to contaminate drinking water across the country.
• HR 6 provides a liability exemption for both MTBE and ethanol manufacturers that allows them to evade lawsuits stemming from their defective products.

Subsidies to Polluting Industries
• S 517 provides $4.9 billion to the coal industry, including subsidies for “clean-coal” technology. “Clean-coal” is a myth. Billions of our taxpayer dollars have already failed to bring us clean coal.
• S 517 provides $4.4 billion to the oil and gas industry, including tax credits that benefit coal-ash incineration development, which has already contaminated water and ruined land throughout the West.
• S 517 provides $1.1 billion in subsidies and tax incentives to nuclear power.
• HR 6 provides $2 billion to the coal industry, including subsidies for “clean-coal” technology.
• HR 6’s $18.1 billion dollar tax package includes credits for “marginal” well oil and gas production, allows royalty in-kind payments and royalty relief.
• HR 6 provides $1.7 billion in subsidies to the nuclear industry.
• The Bush Administration has championed its “Clean Coal” Power Initiative which seeks to channel millions of dollars in subsidies to the coal industry. Coal power plants are responsible for 40% of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, 66% of sulfur dioxide, 33% of mercury, and 33% of nitrogen oxide emissions. These pollutants contribute to global warming, asthma attacks, acid rain and smog.
• The Bush Administration has also championed increased subsidies for other polluting industries like oil and gas, nuclear, and utilities.

Say “No” to (No) Clear Skies
(see page 19)
GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

Chapter Approves Substantial Investment in Grassroots Projects

At its June 2003 meeting, the Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) tentatively approved spending $95,000 of our available funds on a wider range of projects over the next two years. Contributions and a change of policy at National Headquarters that increased the level of support to Chapters before the June meeting, the ExCom invited Chapter activists to submit proposals that could utilize these funds. Eleven proposals were presented at the meeting. As the total amount requested did not exceed the available funds, all were approved. These are described in eight summaries below.

The proposals must now refine their proposals to comply with the Club's Grant Policy, which requires increased detail on the nature of the work being proposed, the results expected and how we know that the intended results of the project are being met. Once the Matrix is substantially completed, the project will receive final approval and funds made available for planned expenditures.

—Mike Brown
Chapter Treasurer

El Paso Group

ASARCO Responsible for Contamination

On 22 July 2003, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released the results of studies conducted around the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO) smelter in El Paso. According to authorities who analyzed samples collected within three miles of ASARCO, "84% of the arsenic (arsenic) 53% of the lead was produced from emissions from a smelter source." Both the University of Texas at El Paso and the poor community of Anapra, Mexico are within the contaminated zone.

In the 1970s, ASARCO tried to avoid responsibility for lead contamination (see Sierra May/June 2003); the company is doing the same today. It is still deny, lead and arsenic around its property today is due to paint and pesticides. According to the EPA, the $7 million allocated so far for El Paso remediation is enough to clean up 210 homes. That leaves 540 contaminated homes unaccounted for. The total projected costs for residential clean up alone around the El Paso site is $27-37 million. It is uncertain where the rest of the money will come from. In a recent settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice, ASARCO agreed to pay $100 million for environmental cleanup around the ASARCO site.

Chapter funding will support the El Paso Group's campaign to educate residents on both sides of the border about how to prevent, detect, and treat lead and arsenic poisoning. If you are interested in helping this campaign in the form of donations (money or office supplies), or as a volunteer, please contact Jose Encobelo (see below). To apply for the paid position of project coordinator, please submit a cover letter and resume.

To see photos and maps, see the following pages on the EPA web site:

- www.epa.gov/earth1/60sf/pdf/lead/residential_locations.pdf
- www.epa.gov/earth1/60sf/pdf/lead/overview_map.pdf
- www.epa.gov/earth1/60sf/pdf/field/epa_photos.pdf

For more information, contact Jose Encobelo, Environmental Justice Chair for the El Paso Group (915/751-1834, encobelo25@hotmail.com).

-Jose M. Encobelo

Southern Group

Keep Otero Mesa Free of Oil and Gas

Proposals to drill in Otero Mesa represent the anti-environment, corporate agenda of the current administration (see Sierra May/June 2003). Our project goals are:

- to prevent drilling in Otero Mesa;
- to protect its rich ecological and cultural diversity.

Collaboration is central to our strategy. The Chapter's El Paso and Southern groups have been working closely with the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (NMWA), Rocky Mountain Energy Consortium (RMBC), Southwest Environmental Center (SWE) and others. We will now build on these relationships to generate extensive public comment, especially during the upcoming Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

We will concentrate on organizing public meetings, carrying out media education, and involving membership in letter-writing campaigns to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (the agency with jurisdiction over Otero Mesa) and legislators, urging Congressional protection of Otero Mesa. We will help SWEC monitor BLM leases to document compliance and ecological impact. We will also contribute to NMWA's efforts to educate the public about Otero Mesa's unique and rare ecological and cultural treasures.

We are also working together to monitor the flora and fauna, so that we have baseline data, in case drilling should occur. Wildlife ecology graduate students will help us carry out baseline aerial surveys of pronghorn antelope. Funds are available for four surveys, which are tentatively scheduled to begin in Fall 2003 and run through 2006. Please contribute your talents and energy to this important campaign. We need your help to convince the Administration to listen, stop raiding our last, wild places, and develop a sustainable energy plan.

For more information, contact Chapter Vice-Chair Don Desholt in Las Cruces (see本月号, page 2).

—Don Desholt

The Nut Grasslands

As the Bush Administration rolls back environmental regulations to favor the energy industry, New Mexicans are witnessing an unprecedented threat to their wild lands. The push to open up public lands for massive oil and gas development endangers special places such as Otero Mesa, Gila Lower Box, Little Bear Wildlife Refuge, and the Nut Grasslands.

This all-out assault is orchestrated by Cheney's Energy Task Force at the White House, Interior Secretary Gale Norton, BLM New Mexico Director Linda Rundell and others in key posts. Norton has struck deals with energy companies which, when implemented, will have devastating effects on New Mexico's lands and the cultures that are integral to our open landscapes.

In southern New Mexico, between the towns of Hillboro and Deming, a vast rangeland is now in the sight of the oil and gas industry. The Nut Grasslands is an 180,000-acre mosaic of state, federal and private land, still untouched by development. These Chihuahuan desert grasslands remain much the way they were when the first settlers moved into the area. With very little shrub encroachment and few roads, the rangeland still supports a large variety of wildlife as well as cattle from local ranchers. When word came in January 2003 that leases for oil and gas exploration on the Nut Grasslands were available, local residents were shocked—and determined to protect the grasslands. Residents, scientists, ranchers and landowners from Sierra and Luna counties asked organizations like the Southern Group of the Sierra Club and the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance for help—and we received educational workshops (see Sierra May/June 2003) and financial support to form the Chihuahuan Grasslands Alliance (CGA).

The Chapter has offered the Southern Group funding to run a campaign to draw public attention to the threatened Nut Grasslands. The Sierra Club will aid CGA with manpower, political connections and financial assistance. Through targeted mailing,
GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

radio spot and newspaper ads, CGA can broadcast its message, connect with policy-making individuals, and influence the national debate on energy policy.

We are promoting a vision that protects these lands—our children's inheritance—and develops energy policies that invest more in renewable energy. For more information, contact CGA Chair David Farrell in Hillsboro (805-335-2 defaf@bestemail.com).

Central Group

Sacred Lands Initiative

The Nov./Dec. 2002 issue of Stone highlighted threatened sacred lands in the United States, including three sites—Zuni Salt Lake, Petrified National Monument, and the Sandia Mountains—within the Central Group's area of influence. Inspired by that perspective, the Group voted to focus its efforts on Sacred Lands, because it seemed to be an issue that was of national concern to our membership.

Since then, there has been some good news. Last year, federal legislation protected the Sandia Mountains, and as we go to press, the Zuni people have sustained a major victory for the Salt Lake (see page 1). In contrast to Petrified National Monument, locals are working with SAGE Council, 1,000 Friends of New Mexico, and others to defeat a bond issue that would fund roads through the monument (see page 14-15). Sacred Lands are landscapes and sites (e.g., chapter, villages, cemeteries) that hold spiritual significance for many people—Indigenous and non-

Native alike. Sites that are threatened by development are of particular concern, but perhaps more important is our overall loss of respect for land as sacred and worth preserving.

Our mission is to help preserve and protect Sacred Lands in central New Mexico by raising awareness, and helping others understand the importance of these lands in our culture and spiritual beliefs. Threatened Sacred Lands are our first concern, but we are interested in preserving and protecting all lands held sacred in our area.

We will work to:

• raise political awareness in our area; and

• contact political figures who are people who are preserving their sacred sites;

• identify sites that are held sacred by one or more cultures, especially those that may become threatened in the future; and

• develop an understanding of how sacred sites are bellwethers for appraising human relationships with nature.

More specifically, we are looking forward to:

• forming alliances with others;

• preparing educational programs for teachers, students, and their parents;

• developing a media campaign; and

• using traditional Sante Fe Club activities (e.g., outings, general meetings, conferences) to bring in people into contact with the places and people involved in Sacred Lands initiatives.

We have decided to be supporters of Sacred Lands actions, rather than interventionists. We will lend support, including funding and legal action, when our support is requested. Certain, our ideas and this work plan will evolve as we become more familiar with the subject.

—Blair Brown

Northern Group

Exploration of the Variability of County Land-use Regulations in New Mexico as Applied to Sand & Gravel Mining

Land-use ordinances, zoning, and the like are painfully weak in New Mexico. For homeowners, this can result in finding that a nearby property has been converted overnight into a gravel pit. While there are regulations that control noise, dust, traffic congestion. It is not a site examined for suitability. Often, a site is simply abandoned, leaving a scar on the landscape and a continuing blighting of property values. The ease access to subsurface gravel has resulted in a landscape dotted with gravel pits.

While obtaining support for a statewide law similiar to the Mining Act of 1995 has not been possible, there appears to be an opportunity to correct this defect on a county-by-county basis. The Sierra Club, in conjunction with the New Mexico Environmental Law Center, has decided to pursue this approach. The first step is to describe the existing regulations in each of New Mexico's counties and examine the process in each county by which new regulations are promulgated.

The Chapter has authorized the funding of expenses for an externship for the fall of 2003. A University of New Mexico student will be selected to obtain and compile the relevant regulations and processes on a county-by-county basis within the state.

Of the 35 New Mexico counties, only two—Rio Arriba and San Miguel—have adopted adequate regulations. Surprisingly, almost all the remaining counties have adopted weaker regulations. It is expected that New Mexico counties with either the largest or the fastest growing populations will be most amenable to considering adoption of the Rio Arriba model in the future. That work is now under way.

Project supervision will be divided between:

• Clifford Latren, chapter mining issues co-chair (operations/budget); and

• Rod Vernon, staff attorney for the New Mexico Environmental Law Center (review of law/evaluation).

For more information, contact Chapter Mining Co-Chair Clifford Latren (see membership page).

Environmental Justice and Stewardship Project with Traditional Hispanic Communities

Traditional Hispanic communities manage a great deal of land in New Mexico. Most of these lands are what remain of the original land grants established by the Spanish and Mexican governments in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which gave New Mexico to the United States, the land grants were protected. A Supreme Court decision, United States v. Sandfort, invalidated many of the land grants, ruling that they had, in fact, been owned by Mexico or Spain. The U.S. government thus claimed some two million acres of land. Many New Mexico land-grant communities are seeking redress for these losses.

The Mexican Land Education and Conservation Trust (MLECT) is organizing a series of meetings between the New Mexico land-grant communities and environmental groups. These meetings will help build grassroots support for the protection of the land-grant communities' lands and prepare for the environmentally appropriate management of any new land they may acquire.

The long-term goal of this project—the New Mexico Community Land Grant Environmental Justice Project (NMCLGEP)—is to establish a lasting dialogue between the environmental community and traditional Hispanic communities to cultivate solutions for the environmental challenges faced by these communities. This project will help these communities determine how to best participate in environmental justice.

Domestic Well Regulation

Roughly half of the water used in New Mexico comes from aquifers, mostly in the Chupadero and San Miguel basins. An astonishing 90% of our drinking water comes from regional aquifers. If we find ourselves in the grip of a new drought cycle, and hopes of reclaiming our aquifers diminish, we must pay increasing attention to the demands that are placed on these resources.

Despite the need for caution, sprawling developments in suburban and semi-rural areas of the state have steadily increased the demand for domestic wells.

Over the past 50 years, New Mexico Statute 72-12-1 regulating domestic wells has provided that the state engineer must approve all domestic-well permit applications. New domestic well permits are currently issued only upon a finding of need for the water and approval by the state engineer of a new well design.

These permits are also issued on a water-per-use basis, with the limit set at a rate of one million gallons per working day—a total of nearly 6,000 per year.

Unfortunately, the current domestic-well statute also permits a right of use up to three times that of the preceding year. This generous and generally unregulated 3:1 right of use does not encourage the average consumer or an accurate analysis of permitted water consumption patterns.

Despite the increasing urgency to monitor and limit consumption by domestic wells in areas where they are having negative impacts, legislative initiatives to this effect have been defeated in the past two legislative sessions. Thus, the Chapter Conservation Committee has identified the adoption of domestic-well legislation as its top priority. In general, conservationists and agricultural communities support domestic well legislation. However, land developers and operators, other real-estate developers, and people who are protective of private-property rights vehemently oppose changes in current domestic-well regulations. The leading role of the Office of the State Engineer is key to changing current domestic well statutes. This agency's ability to bring forward legislation with convincing legal and policy arguments will be crucial to achieving success. Thus, the environmental community, and other allied organizations, should provide the Office of the State Engineer with the political and public-relations support that would be required to realize the changes.

In order to participate effectively in efforts to revise domestic-well statutes, the Chapter will support a workshop to

(continued on page 10)

RIO GRANDE SHERRILL
Colorado Residents Collaborate on Rio Grande Headwaters

Language is a slippery entity. The function of language is to convey our thoughts, ideas, and desires. However, we all filter language through our own experiences. The word "restoration" is tossed around like a beach ball. We play with it, but it is too large to really hold onto. "Restoration" is used today to describe myriad potential processes. We can restore riparian habitats to:
- accommodate wildlife, vegetation, stream flow, aquatic species, and aesthetic beauty;
- improve diversion structures and water delivery systems; and
- improve tourism and private recreation activities.

When I think of restoration, I think of restoring an area to its original condition. In the framework of our culture, society, and economic system, however, today’s concept of restoration identifies specific attributes of a degraded area and attempts to repair what mankind has done. The intentions are usually good, but the results are often devastating.

The Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project (RGHRP) started as a brainstorming session with landowners, ranchers, river authorities, and concerned citizens, officials, federal and state agencies, and environmentalists. We all wanted what we had before the days of multiple diversions, vacation homes crowding the rim of the river, cattle grazing down stream and species diminishing our perspectives.

This group hoped to create a plan to protect the communities threatened by floods. We dreamed of pristine gold-medal trout fishing rivers, wildlife corridors connecting wild places, and riparian wetlands supporting wildlife and providing habitat.

We looked at scarce areas that straightened portions of the river 60-70 years ago and cut off the sinuosity required to water the riparian zone and dissipate overflows during high water. We examined areas where vegetation had been either cut or grazed down, leaving behind concrete-hard banks and stream banks incised into four-foot walls. We identified degraded riparian habitats. We all realized Colorado’s immense responsibility to deliver on Rio Grande interstate Compact commitments. With this reality before us, the task at hand often seemed overwhelming, and meetings occasionally became a bit unwieldy.

The San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District obtained funding from the Colorado Water Conservation Board for a study of a 91-mile stretch of river beginning at the confluence of South Fork, Colorado, and ending at the Alamosa/Conception County line. Public meetings were held in each community along the river to determine the appropriate task force. Montgomery Watson Inc. was hired to carry out the study, with technical assistance from Agro-Engineering, Landscape and Associates, and SWCA Environmental Consultants. The scope of this work was:
- to conduct a river inventory;
- to examine specific river issues;
- to develop an enhancement and monitoring plan, and;
- to create a comprehensive report that would assist in the development and coordination of future objectives and projects.

Participants who had been active in the study process formed a Technical Advisory Committee. The group was an interesting mix of concerned individuals and groups that had to hash out our differences. Slowly, we began to recognize our similarities. While there are still some who refuse to join the conversation, the overwhelming majority of local citizens came to consensus on the project objectives to assess and enhance the ability of the Rio Grande to fulfill the following environmental functions:
- maintain channel and floodplain capacity;
- provide flood protection;
- maintain and enhance riparian habitat;
- deliver Rio Grande Interstate Compact commitments;
- improve irrigation diversions, and;
- improve channel stability.

We then developed a River Task Force and committee. The committee formed to examine potential structural projects (e.g., as flood protection, channel stabilization, and floodplain protection) and non-structural projects (e.g., as sediment management).

The San Luis Valley Ecological Council has also joined efforts of the Alliance for Rio Grande Heritage in supporting a rehabilitation and conservation campaign coordinator program of the project. The project has been underway for several years and has received widespread support from the public.

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The mission of the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Task Force is to
- restore and conserve the historical functions and viability of the Rio Grande as the optimal agricultural, water use, riparian health, wildlife habitat, community safety and interstate water obligations.

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Spraying the Rio Grande Is a Toxic Non-Solution

Before the end of September, if nothing is done to stop it, Northern Helicopter Co. will spray up to 15,000 acres of tamarisk (salt cedar) along the Rio Grande with an unregistered herbicide known as Arenal (Glyosul). This will be the second year of intensive spraying in an attempt to control tamarisk along New Mexico’s major waterways.

In 2002, the herbicide lobby successfully hijacked the entire $5 million appropriation for tamarisk eradication along the Rio Grande and Pecos rivers. At a result, alternative tamarisk-removal techniques were not researched. The New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts allocated $1.6 million to Northern Helicopter to spray 185 miles (9,100 acres) of private land along the Pecos River. Whole pastures were poisoned, forcing some ranchers to desist. Although the appropriation came with language that required development of reversion plans and monitoring, these are not yet exist. The key issue of maintenance was not even addressed.

Background

In 2002, Texas began to use the heat on New Mexico to fulfill its agreements and deliver Rio Grande and Pecos river water. The State Engineer’s office and the Interstate Stream Commission bought into science by Charles Hart of Texas A&M Extension Service—data has been questioned by others and recommended that the legislature fund spraying to remove tamarisk as part of the solution.

Before Hart’s study, a U.S. Geological Survey report (USGS Professional Paper 655-5, 2002) answered a crucial question for policy-makers: How much water does killing tamarisk release? The report summarizes studies that USGS had done to quantify the water savings that could be achieved by removing tamarisk—the equivalent of about 1.5-2.0 acre-feet per year. This study took into account:
- the water that replacement vegetation would consume, and;
- evaporation from nearly bare ground.

Include these factors, and the water saved by tamarisk removal is so small that it is within the margin of error—no statistically significant. Hart, however, omitted these factors and arrived at a figure of 5-7 acre-feet of water that could be saved for every acre of tamarisk that does not grow. This is the estimate upon which the State Engineer and the interstate Stream Commission based their decision to

(continued on page 10)
More Than a Minnow Is at Stake

Many are saying that saving the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow is in direct conflict with using water for drinking and growing crops—but is it?

The recent decision by the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals is being distorted by just about everyone. The first problem is that this simple dichotomy, so in many issues, is effectively wrong. The second problem is that most people hold to their beliefs, blissfully ignoring the history of the Rio Grande. The third problem is that a few of our elected officials seem bent on inflating emotions rather than proceeding on the basis of the facts. In the case of the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow, misinformation is abundant and wisdom is almost non-existent.

First, saving the fish does not require shutting down irrigated farming along the middle Rio Grande or taking water from the mouths of Albuquerque’s children,” as Mayor Chavez stated. It will, however, require farmers to use water more efficiently, however, not necessarily the idea. Huge amounts of water are wasted in leaky ditches and antiquated irrigation equipment and practices. Farmers seem to forget that the precious water they use belongs to the public; they are answerable to us, not merely themselves. Likewise, the City of Albuquerque could greatly reduce consumption with very little effort, instead of battling the ruling with ploying lawyers. With little cost and no pain, the City could:

- use only native grasses in landscaping
- recycle industrial water for manufacturing, and
- enforce strict rules for outdoor watering.

The City’s web site vows to cut today’s water use by almost half over the next 10 years; that will face up a substantial amount of water for use by wildlife. Ensuring future city water supplies will be easy if we go about it intelligently.

The major oversight in the “fish vs. farmers” dichotomy, however, is that there is much more than fish at stake. Water used to save the minnow will sustain hundreds of species of wildlife and nourish a drier riparian ecosystem that is unique and vulnerable. Collectively, these are assets that the public values extremely highly, and for which many of us are prepared to sacrifice convenience.

The second is the neglect of history. Those who find a cheap shot, the rhetorical facile may not realize that we already arrayed four of the five original Rio Grande minnows. Before we kill off the last minnow—once abundant from Española to the Gulf of Mexico and now hanging by a thread—perhaps we should step back and think. The most vocal critics of the court ruling are ignoring the fact that the San Juan-Chama Project, built or given expensive by the tax-payers, was intended to carry city water and to provide for fish and wildlife, as stated in the original legislation. And more recently in history, irrigators abruptly diverted the entire Rio Grande in 1996 without notifying wildlife officials or anybody else, forcing a hapless and costly rescue effort. That ignant act of abuse of public resources promptly the lawsuit against the federal government, drawing support from thousands of the most moderate conservationists.

The final problem is the knee-jerk response of some elected politicians, unelected irrigation officials, and editorialists who can’t be bothered to examine the facts. How much water will Albuquerque and Santa Fe realistically lose in the coming years as a result of this decision? There is no set amount, but it’s a good bet that it will be vanishingly small, depending on a host of economic, environmental and political factors. Since both cities are encouraging conservation, what is the prudent Responsible leaders should not resort to absurd hyperbole predictions and inflammatory threats. Instead, they should realize that business as usual is over, and water management must be Reformed.

It took a few centuries to drain, ditch, defoliate and nearly destroy the Rio Grande. We all participated in the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the State Engineer, cities and towns, farmers, ranchers and urban landscapers. Fixing the problem—or just turning back the damage is a little bit—demand cooperation, communication and conservation from all of us. That is the beauty of the lawsuit and the 10th Circuit decision: it is forcing all parties to the table to examine old assumptions and plan for the future, as never before in history. Senator Pete Domenici said that the decision, "threatens to undo water law... in much of the West." If he’s right, that’s not such a bad thing: after catastrophic losses to wildlife over the past century, our whole system of water management is in need of overhaul.

—Bernard Puy

 Conservation Chair, Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society

This article first appeared in The Santa Fe New Mexican on 12 July 2003. Bernard Puy can be reached at Santa Fe (505-101-0258; bhp@msn.com).

Silvery Minnow (continued from page 1)

Diversion Dam. For reasons that are not well understood, few minnow exist in the reach of the river that is to be kept wet north of the dam. The BOP acts to require that the river be kept wet only in a stretch of the river that does not provide adequate minnow habitat. The BOP act that appears to be a political, not scientific, document that is entirely inadequate to ensure the survival of the species.

However, because of the minimal nature of the requirements for the minnow, hot water will be needed than under the previous BOP. There is a significantly reduced likelihood that the BOP would need to take water from unwilling sellers to meet the requirements of the BOP. It now appears that no water from Albuquerque will be needed this year. Nonetheless, Senator Pete Domenici has had a rider attached to the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Bill that does two things:

- First, it prohibits the BOP from using San Juan-Chama water for endangered species purposes, unless the water has been purchased from a willing seller.
- Second, it legislatively declares that the BOP meets the requirements of the Endangered Species Act ("sufficiency language"), thus preempting the role of science and the courts.

The sufficiency language is probab not broad enough to exempt any present or future project in the middle valley from the Endangered Species Act.

Representative Heather Wilson also introduced a rider during the floor debate on the House Energy and Water Appropriations Bill. Wilson’s rider is even worse than Domenici’s:

- It prohibits use of San Juan-Chama water for endangered species
- It also prohibits the use of native Rio Grande water.

Wilson’s rider took everyone by surprise and passed after only five minutes of debate, with only Representative Tom Udall standing up and making a valiant effort to prevent its passage.

In the meantime, the Sierra Club and other parties to the minnow suit have been engaged in negotiations, conducted under the auspices of the office of Governor Richardson, in an effort to achieve a true solution to the minnow suit. As of mid-August, no resolution has been reached.

The best chance for the minnow under the present circumstances appears to be a combination of reasons. To keep a portion of the river wet, we must drastically improve the efficiency with which we use our limited water resources. All sectors must engage in some serious belt tightening:

- The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District—will deliver water to farmers in the middle valley—will divers from the river an extraordinary quantity of water compared to the amount actually needed by farmers.
- Possibilities must also be explored for on-farm efficiency improvements.
- Urban water-use improvements have stalled well short of the old goal of 175 gallons/day/person and nowhere near the new goal of 150 gallons/day/person as in line with other conservation-oriented southwestern cities.

In addition to efficiency gains, we can improve minnow habitat in the areas that will remain wet, and we can reintroduce minnows outside of the middle valley where there may be appropriate habitat.

The underlying concerns, if not the exaggerations, expressed by the City and farmers are legitimate and should not be dismissed. Albuquerque needs a reliable municipal water supply, and farmers need water for their livelihood and food production. But we need to find a way to meet those needs without degrading our beautiful Rio and bosque. Waste should no longer be an option. The question before us in the House is whether we can engage in serious water planning, conservation, flexibility and even sharing, so that the needs of some do not have to be sacrificed to meet the needs of others.

For more information, contact Chapter Legal Chair Richard Barish in Albuquerque (505-322-0313; rbarish@sal.org).

—Richard Barish

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2003
Zuni Salt Lake (continued from page 1)

New Mexico and Arizona must be protected. The sacred sites of New Mexico's indigenous people are an irreplacable and precious part of our heritage and I am committed to honoring that heritage.

My commitment to the protection of the sacred lake itself is absolute.

Gallup Mayor Robert Rosebrough, in a telephone interview, extends his congratulations to the people of Zuni: "I am very happy for the people of Zuni Pueblo. This is a historic occasion that has not been a threat to the Zuni people and the Zuni way of life."

The Zuni Salt Lake Coalition keeps ongoing campaign to stop the Fence Lake Coal Mine, which received support from hundreds of thousands of people across the country, who added their voices for the protection of Zuni Salt Lake. On July 19, 2003, the ZSLC hosted "The People's Hearing" in Zuni, where over 500 people attended to give testimony for the protection of Zuni Salt Lake. The Zuni Salt Lake Coalition consists of the Pueblo of Zuni, Center for Biological Diversity, Citizen Coal Council, Sierra Club, Water Information Network, To'oni'Teena, Seventh Generation Fund, etc.

"So many people have supported us in this struggle and there is no word that can express our appreciation to those who have given us help in the struggle. In my heart, I am glad we have come this far and have defeated SRP. It has been 20 years of mental anguish," said Head Councilman Carlton Albert, Sr. Elder. During the year, the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed the Zuni Salt Lake to the 2003 list of "America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places," which also led to a documentary aired on the History Channel.

July 1, 2003 New Mexico Congressional Delegates wrote to Department of Interior regulators expressing their concerns to temporarily suspend any further activity until hydrological studies could be verified and analyzed concerning the Apache Aquifer.

Chapter Funds Group Initiatives (continued from page 7)

- serve, in part, as a liaison with legislatures;
- build relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders;
- host an educational campaign;
- heighten the visibility of Chapter members and activists;
- conduct a focused media campaign; and
- explore new and creative ways to fundraise.

For more information, contact Chapter Conservation Chair John Bucchere (see Matlomah, page 2). -John Bucchere

National and State Elections

President Bush and the present Congress have succeeded in diluting or gutting a number of longstanding environmental laws and regulations. In order to reverse these and go forward with improved or new environmental laws and regulations, the Chapter Natural Resources Committee has plans to play our part in blocking the re-election of Bush and change the composition of Congress. We will be contacting all our members to make sure that we are registered, will vote, and will find at least five like-minded friends who will also register and vote. We will be asking for activists in communities throughout the state to identify important local issues and to help with the register and vote effort. Although the Sierra Club has not yet endorsed presidential or congressional candidates, we want to be ready to support any Club-endorsed candidates in the primary and general election.

On the state level, we are already working with other environmental and smart-growth groups to pass some important water-conservation bills and to defeat any bad environmental or growth bills.

At the close of the legislative session, we will review the environmental voting records of state legislators to help us determine whether the Chapter will endorse in the primary and general elections. Again, we will be asking all of our members to help identify local issues and elect endorsed candidates.

After the elections, we will turn our attention to making sure that our environmental champions are busy restoring, improving, and/or passing good environmental laws and regulations.

Busy, busy, busy! But we will not be alone. As one of 17 states with hundreds of miles of borderlines, we expect to be working with a broad national coalition of labor, environmental, and women's organizations, America Votes, and Americans Coming Together. Stay tuned. We will be calling you.

For more information, contact Chapter Political Legislation Chair Greg Wardwell in Santa Fe (438-3066; g.wardwell@worldnet.att.net).

-Greg Wardwell

Not Herbicides (continued from page 3)

 spray herbicides.

Those who doubt Hart's work argue that he used a questionable experimental design and that his significantly divergent findings should have led to further studies.

An Environmental Action (ETA) Task Force formed several years ago to study how much water tamarisk uses, drawing on advanced Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) technology from Los Alamos. The ETA's findings (about to be published) support the earlier USGS findings of 1.9-2.0 acre-feet of water saved per acre of cleared tamarisk. To date, the USGS has found no evidence that tamarisk removal has resulted in more water in the Deser River. (New Mexico taxpayers will soon be asked to pay up some $63 million to meet this obligation to Texas.)

According to group advocate Jack Noel (see Sierra May/June 2003), "The spray program proposed for the Rio Grande should be stopped. There is no justification for spraying tamarisk, an unregistered herbicide, on New Mexico's rivers and tributaries. Chemicals should only be used as a last resort, especially if there are less risky alternatives. And there are."

These vital riparian areas need holistic, long-term solutions that reflect the complexity of natural systems, including whole watersheds—not politically expedient quick fixes. Habitat and watershed-health analyses should be integrated into New Mexico's Water Plan. This plan should outline the state's visions and goals—and a strategy for achieving them. Money. With hundreds of millions of dollars earmarked for restoration by the Legislature in early 2003 (see Sierra April/May 2003), we have the chance to meaningfully address these challenges. We need to nudge New Mexico's waterheds and riparian ecosystems back to health with humility, good science and a willingness to work together.

For more information, contact Jack Noel in Monticello (743-0242; lastnoel@starband.net). -Jack Noel

RIO GRANDE SIERRAN

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2003

10
ISSUES

The Pajarito Group follows local environmental and political issues. We invite members to become involved in areas of personal concern.

Custruthotis Trust Reintroduction—Several agencies are working on reintroduction of the native custruthotis to the Jemez River; one method involves the use of the bisected fenced to kill competing (and all other) species. Contact Lee Blech (662-2308).

Pit Production—Five sites have been chosen for Pit Production Facilities, one is in Los Alamos (LA). These facilities will produce triggering devices for up to 430 nuclear weapons per year. Contact Jody Benson (662-4782).

Pesticides and West Nile Virus—LA County is formulating plans for mosquito abatement and pesticide use, specifically for the West Nile virus. Contact Sharon Seidley (662-7286).

Siting of New Landfill—The LA Landfill will soon reach its capacity. The U.S. Department of Energy and LA County are working on a new location. LA County is trying to include issues such as lifespan, recycling, litter spread, and pollution prevention. Contact Chuck Pegler (661-0169).

Wal-Mart—LA Schools and the County are negotiating a plan to transfer the schools' administration site to free up space for a "big box" store. (140,000-square-foot Wal-Mart Superstore is proposed). Contact Jody Benson regarding this and other sprawl and development issues (662-4782).

Valles Caldera Preserve—We have members on the Valles Caldera Coalition, which advises and assists the Valles Caldera Preserve on issues of concern and policy. Contact Carole Jacobson (672-9579).

OUTINGS

Thursday, September 18 • Fall Highway Cleanup—We will meet at Ponderosa Campground at 4:30pm and carpool up to the Valley. Bring work gloves; we have bags. It is a good time to work, watch the elk, and afterwards eat dinner back in Los Alamos.

Friday evening—Sunday, October 10-12 • 4th Annual Centezas Car-camp and Day-hike Weekend—We will meet Friday evening at a campground in the Cueva de Vale Valley. We will hike both Saturday and Sunday. Trail choices will match group preferences and the weather. It is a great time to be out in the southern San Juans! Guaranteed: No bug! Register by 3 October. Call Abe Jacobsen (672-9579) in September.

Odd Saturday, October 25 • Hike Acura and Frijoles Canyons—For a close-up look of the Rio Grande, join us on a descent through beautiful Acura Canyon to Acura Rapid. Continue hiking along the Rio Grande to the mouth of Frijoles Canyon, and return via the Falls Trail to the Bandelier parking lot. Meet 8:00am in the White Rock Visitor Center parking lot on Route 4. Moderate hiking, approximately 6 miles. Call Rainer and Lee Blech (662-2308).

For more outings in the area, see pages 12-13.

PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT

Valles Caldera Is Open for Business

For over 150 years, the 90,000-acre Baca #1 Land Grant in the Jemez Mountains was off-limits to the public, but its now public land and open for business as the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP).

Since mid-June 2003, hikers have had access to five very different trails and fisherman have been returning the solitude on the Upper San Antonio. VCNP managers anticipate developing many more recreational opportunities, as archeologists complete the prerequisite surveys, and as the staff and trustees assess the use, appreciation, impacts and economics of those preliminary programs.

For more information about recreational opportunities, to register for hikes and fishing, and to comment on these and other Preserve programs and activities, see the VCNP web site (www.vallescaldera.gov), or call the switchboard in Los Alamos (651-3833).

The VCNP is technically a unit of the National Forest System, but the enabling legislation set it up in late 2001 as an experiment in public-land management—the Preserve is a federally-owned corporation with a mandate to become financially self-sufficient within 15 years. The legislation also mandates that the Trust be managed to:

- protect the diverse resources of the ecosytem, including the cultural resources and areas of historic interest;
- provide for timber harvest, ranching/ grazing and recreation, including hunting and fishing;
- instead of being managed by the Forest Service, the Trust is managed by a nine-member board of trustees appointed by the U.S. president.

Environmentalists, concerned that this administrative structure and set of mandates could be a recipe for disaster in the wrong hands, formed the Valles Caldera Coalition in 1997. They are coordinating their efforts to influence the course of this experiment (www.vallescalderacoalition.org).

By all accounts, the VCNP staff and board are sincere, dedicated to their stated goals of adaptive, ecosystem management and, thus far, doing an exemplary (and cautious) job of gathering baseline data and launching pilot programs. The Board of Trustees is currently developing long-term management guidelines. They will welcome public input at a public meeting in Santa Fe on 12 September 2003.

—Marty Pelt
Valles Caldera Coalition Coordinator

RIO GRANDE SIERRA

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2003

MEETINGS

All meetings are held in the upstairs meeting rooms in the Mesa Public Library at 7:00pm and are open to the public. General meetings are on the first Wednesday; Conservation and Executive Committee meetings on the second Wednesday of each month.

OCTOBER 1

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Steve Capra of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance will give a slide presentation on Otero Mesa. His focus will be on energy. Special guest Mary Wipper, Associate Regional Field Representative for the Sierra Club, specializes in energy issues.

NOVEMBER 5

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Matthew Johansen and Danny Katzman of Los Alamos National Laboratory will present "A Burning Question: What happens to contaminants in the environment following forest fires?" They will focus on movement of contaminants by surface water following a landscape fire. Their information on this "hot" topic comes from many locations around the Western United States as well as from the Cerro Grande Fire of 2000.

Pajarito Group Directory

http://riogrande.sierramclub.org/pajarito/

Executive Committee

Carole Griffiths Jacobson, Chair
carole.jacobson@att.net 672-9577
Lee Blech, Vice Chair & Chapter Rep.
ibleich@yahoo.com 662-2308
Kim McCallie, Secretary/Treasurer
mcallie2@com 662-6163
Chuck Pegler, Conservation Chair
cpegler@sierra.net 661-6169
Abe Jacobson, Forest/Hiking/Political
carol.jacobson@att.net 672-9579
Mat Johansen, Geosci Engineering
mpjohansen@lulav.net 662-9763

Project Leaders

Lee and Rainer Blech, Outings Co-Chairs
ibleich@yahoo.com 662-2308
Janet Gerwin, Water
gerwin@lobueq.com 662-9568
Judy Benson, Publicity/Spokeswoman
judy@lobueq.com 662-4782
Position vacant, Webmaster
**NORTHERN GROUP NEWS**

**Tuesday, September 16, 7 PM**

**AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Common Causes

Russell Grider, CEO of Synergy Resource Marketing, progressive rancher and noted cowboy, will speak on Agriculture and the Environment, Common Causes, a discussion of how the two communities can collaborate to preserve and restore the natural resource base on which they both depend and defend against threatening global and national trends.

The perceptions of the environmental community about the agricultural community and vice versa are often based on misinformation and perceived conflict. Come see and hear what a real cowboy says about the local, national, and international trends that threaten us all. You may be surprised and enlightened.

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

Membership meetings are held at the Unitarian Church 107 W. Barcelona St. (between Galisteo and Don Gaspar).

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**GROUP COMMITTEE MEETING DATES**

**Tuesday, October 7, 7 PM**

**Tuesday, November 4, 7 PM**

**Water Font-Lach, Wednesdays, 6:30 PM, John Bucher’s house (820-2021)**

**September 19 – Cozy Hispanic, 1,080 Friends of New Mexico**

**October 16 – Bruce Gullah, E.R.O.S. and RISS Medicine**

**November 5 – TBD (suggestions)**

**YARD SALE**

While you’re doing your fall cleaning, start saving your elephants, both pink and white, for our yard sale to be held in the spring.

**SPECIAL SLIDE SHOW**

Norbert Spurlin 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 Bag, 328 South Guadalupe (at Montezuma).

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**NORTHERN NEW MEXICO GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB**

621 Old Santa Fe Trail, Plaza 621, Suite 10, Santa Fe, NM 87505
505-983-2703

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**SANTA FE RIVER NEAR DOWNTOWN**

**ADOPTED BY NORTHERN GROUP**

We are excited to have a new project—one that is easy for you to help the River with a little of your time. We will start by picking up trash and developing a management plan. As we move along, you will learn how to identify invasive species.

The Northern Group of the Sierra Club has adopted the stretch of the Santa Fe River between the DeFourt Street bridge and St. Francis Drive. In addition to providing $1,000 to help Santa Fe Watershed Association manage the entire River, we will be helping to clear trash, control invasive species, and lobby our government leaders to provide resources to help restore the river to a more attractive place for us to enjoy.

**Schedule for September and October:**

- **Saturday, September 13 – 9 AM-12 noon** – trash pick-up
- **Wednesday, September 17 – 5:30-7 PM** – development of management plan
- **Saturday, October 18 – 9 AM-12 noon** – trash pick-up

All of these activities will meet at the Closson Street footbridge over the Santa Fe River. You can park on Lower Alto Street, at the north end of Closson Street. For more information contact John Bucher (820-2021) or Chris Calvert (992-3097).

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**Chair – Jan Kiedel**

**Vice-Chair – Barbara Johnson**

**Secretary/Treas – Lionel Santos**

**Political Committee – Susan Martin**

**Membership/Activist Outing – Nenna McCullin**

**Newsletter/Publicity – Kay Carlson**

**Web Master – Gina Anduze**

**Phone Trees – Berta Hansen**

**Chapter Rep – Doug Fraser**

*Member of the SF Group Executive Committee*

Duties – Norbert Spurlin

- **Tobin O’Dea**
- **Stewardship**
- **Paul Fritts**
- **Kathy Parsons**
- **Cheryl Evans**
- **Jackie Roth**
- **Roger Peterson**
- **John Bucher**
- **Tanis-Jim Hanson**
- **Fledan H. Anderson**
- **Genevieve Engstrom**

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**RIO GRANDE SIERRAN**

**SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2003**
GROUP OUTINGS FOR 2003

Sat Sun September
6 Moderate/Strenuous Hike Deception Peak, Lake Peak optimal. 2000’ elevation gain. Leave 8 AM. Michael Goldey (620-7362)
7 Beginner Easy Hike on Aspca Vista Road. Fabulous views. No dogs. Hiking boots required. Leave 8 AM. Alan Karp (424-8764)
13 Moderate Hike on Carizzo Canyon Rd. 7 miles RT, 1000’ elevation gain. Limit: 15. Gall Bryant (1-505-757-6674)
13 Strenuous Hike Wheeler Peak, 10-13 miles, 3400’+; leave 7 AM. Limit: 15. Leave 7 AM. Must call Don Rostek (609-8957)
13 Santa Fe River Channel Picking up trash 9 AM-12 noon. See article on opposite page for more info. John Bucher (620-2661 or jebucher@comcast.net) or Chris Calvert (922-2097)
13 Cerillos Hills Park Bike & home day. 9 AM. Chris Reece (474-2074) or bkrice@escom.com
14 Moderate Hike in high country. Leave 8 AM. Art Judd (982-3212)
14 Easy Birdwatch Walk with Audubon Society, bring binoculars. Ron Duff (620-2660)
20 Strenuous Hike to Placero Mountain, highest point in Ortiz Mountains. Done jointly with Santa Fe Botanical Garden in their Ortiz Mountain Educational Preserve - 5 donation requested. Limit: 20. Stop stops, no trail, rough terrain. About 2000’ elevation gain, 7 miles RT, Elias Schmid (574-5846)
21 Moderate Hike Apache Canyon Loop, 6 miles RT, 900’ elevation gain. Some dogs allowed. Leave 9 AM. Lionel Serracino (938-0715)
21 Easy Flat steak Hike on Hyde Park Circle Trail. 5 miles RT, 1000’ elevation gain. Moderate pace. Dogs with leash allowed. Leave 9:30 AM. Bob McKenzie (471-0005)
21 Moderate/Strenuous Fall Color Hike in Jemez, probably in Cabezon Canyon, Cabeces Canyon area. Leave 7 AM. Call for meeting place Michael DiRosa (663-6645)
28 Moderate/Strenuous Fall Color Hike to Tentum Peak, up by way of Tentum Creek, down by ridge route. Dogs allowed. Moderate pace. Norma McClain (471-0005)
28 Cerillos Hills Park Tour 16th to 19th century mining techniques and history. Bill Baxter (424-5747 or w Baxter@elcom.com)

Sat Sun November
1 Santa Fe River Channel Remove brush and pick up trash 9 AM-12 noon. Meet Cloesson Street footbridge (parking along upper Alto). John Bucher (620-2661 or jebucher@comcast.net)
1 Easy/Moderate Hike on Chamisa Trail 5 miles, 1240’ gain. Leave 9 AM. Must call Michael DiRosa (663-6645 or 667-0095)
2 Strenuous Hike up Cabezon, volcanic plug NW of Bernalillo. Lots of off-trail scrambling and some exciting unroped rock climbing. 4 miles RT. Limit: 15. Mark Livezey (574-7414)
7 Easy Walk from Forest Road 79 via Arroyo Hondo to Watermarked Boundary, 6 mi. Guest leader Paige Grant, director of SF Watermarked at Anaqua (220-1094) will discuss the ongoing forest thinning project along the fence line to prevent catastrophic fires in our city’s primary water source. Meet 6:15 AM BLA Office on Rodeo Road to carpool. Dogs okay. Bob McKenzie (471-0005)
8 Bike Ride Leica on unpaved Cochiti Canyon and down Bandal Canyon, with a stop at the ghost town of Bandal 8 miles. 1300’ gain. Several very steep sections. Well marked with only minor reroutes. Moderate pace. Ruidoso DiRosa (620-2661)
9 Moderate Hike up Atalaya Mountain in town, 7 mi, 1800’ gain, dogs okay. Dan Rostek (666-9897)
15 Easy Birdwatch Walk jointly with Audubon Society, bring binoculars, Ron Duff (620-2660)
15 Easy/Moderate Hike Gall Bryant (1-505-757-5656)
22 Strenuous Hike Gila Vista Saltlick and Ghost Town Loop 12 miles, 2800’ gain, fairly fast pace. Alternative hike if snowed in. Tobin Crumb (320-2845)
15 Easy/Moderate Hike from Pino’s Corner along Penasco Ridge, 7.5 miles, approx. 700’ net. Moderate pace. Dogs okay. Leave 9 AM. Norma McClain (471-0005)
22 Strenuous Hike Queen Mary and Cielo Mesas below Los Alamos. New Mexico Inversion of Mesab slickrock! Approx. 10 miles, 1500’ gain; off-trail, significant exposure and some exposure. Fairly fast pace. Indian stops ascent optional. Leave 6 AM, must reserve people and dogs by 8 PM the night before. Stephen Markowitz (505-797-5823 stpmarkowitz@comcast.net)
23 Easy Hike Diablo Canyon, 5 miles RT, Victor Atayas (433-0343)
29 Easy Hike to Tent Rocks near Cochiti Pueblo, 2 miles, 300’ gain. Leave 9 AM. Dogs okay on leash. Eliza Schmid (474-8464)
30 Strenuous Hike Segu Mielus Reins in Bandelier, 11 miles, 2000’+ gain, rough terrain, some off-trail, Norbert Spethroth (474-4354)

Sat Sun October
4 Saturday, October 4, to Sunday, October 12 Moderate/Strenuous Day Hikes in the Meade District of Canyonsdial National Forest, UT; must reserve early. See complete writeup on Central (Albuquerque) Group page.
4 Strenuous Hike Jicarilla Peak (elev, 12,835’) in the northern Pecos Wilderness with possible side trip to Serpent Lakes, 11-12 miles, 2700’, fairly fast pace, limit 15, Levi Mathisena (995-8547 or lavinson@ix.netcom.com)
5 Moderate hike above SF Ski Basin. 7 AM 800 Art Judd (982-3212)
11 Strenuous Hike in Bandelier, Frijoles Canyon, Upper Crossing, fall colors likely, 13 miles, 1000’ gain. Norbert Spethroth (474-4354)
11 Cerillos Hills Park 9 AM. Sigmund Silber (silber@yamo.com)
12 Easy Hike Tiquip Pueblo ruins on Puye Mesa. Hike to pueblo ruins in tall deciduous forest in Santa Fe National Forest near Abiquiu, lunch on mesa ridge overlooking deep valley. The northernmost and largest of the Classic Period Pueblos (1200AD-1350AD). 5 miles RT, 800’ elevation change. Limit 15. Michael Goldey (620-7362)
Wednesday, October 15, to Sunday, October 19 Moderate/Strenuous Backpack in Pern Canyon and Buckskin Gulch, UT; must reserve early. See complete writeup on Central (Albuquerque) Group page.
18 Santa Fe River Channel Picking up trash 9 am-12 noon. Meet at the Cloesson Street footbridge over the Santa Fe River. Pique Lower Alto St, at the north end of Cloesson. Bring work boots and gloves. See article on opposite page for more info. John Bucher (620-2661 or jebucher@comcast.net) or Chris Calvert (922-2097)
18 Easy Birdwatch Walk jointly with Audubon Society, bring binoculars, Ron Duff (620-2660)
19 Very Easy Rock Hike looking at petroglyphs, leave 9:30 AM, Gall Bryant (1-505-757-6674)
19 Bike Ride Loop around Cabazon Peak, 23 mi, 500’ gain, rolling dirt roads in Pajarito Valley. Technically easy, very scenic, but long ride requiring an advanced level of biking fitness. Leave SC office at 8:00 AM. Must call Michael DiRosa (663-6645 or 667-0095)

October Hikes (cont’d)

19 Strenuous Hike up Pedernal, famous Abiquiu area mesa. Scrambling and rock climb at very top. 9 miles, 2000’ gain.
26 Saturday and Sunday, October 25 and 26 Massanag Mountains: Can Camp & 2 Moderate Day Hikes (1) Kayner Mill Trail/Orx Canyon with side trip to Massanaga. Peak, 8 mi RT; (2) Red Canyon/Crest Tri/Spruces Springs, 7 mi RT; about 1500’ gain each day. Moderate pace. Dogs okay. Stay at Red Canyon C.G., leave Friday PM. Norma McClain (471-0005)
25 Strenuous Hike up Gold Hill (elev 12,711’) above Taos, 10 miles, 4500’ gain. Early start, dogs okay. Dan Rostek (669-8907)
25 Moderate Hike SF area, dogs okay. Lionel Seassen (931-5275)
26 Easy Hike in the Cerillos Hills, under 1000’ gain, Victor Atayas (438-9343)
26 Moderate/Strenuous Hike to Nambro Lake, 7 miles and 2100’ gain, steep in places. Dogs okay, Les Draper (438-5356)

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.

Outings Rules - Unless otherwise noted, all outings leave from the Sierra office, 621 Old Santa Fe Trail, Plaza 640, just east of the historic church at the corner of Old SF Trail and Perno de Pata. Carpooling will be attempted. Each leader should come prepared to pay a $1 to the driver of the car in which they drive. Bring a lunch, water, sturdy hiking boots or shoes, and clothes suitable to the weather. Leader reserves the right to alter destination of hike or cancel trip due to weather, unforseeable conditions, or making number of participants. Unconciliated midwinters must make written permission from parents or guardians. All participants must sign permission form 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 ride a copy of the waiver, see http://www.sierrane.org/docs/bikingforms or contact the Outings Department at (415) 997-5525 for a printed version.

RIO GRANDE SIERRAN NOW ON THE "NET!!
http://www.riogrande.sierrane.org/sierrane/home.html
Update on the Threat to Petroglyph National Monument

Since the July/August issue, the threat to the Petroglyph Monument has worsened. In August, in an attempt to put the Petroglyph Road question squarely in the hands of the citizens of Albuquerque, a measure was proposed in the City Council that would have separated funding for the Petroglyph Road from the much larger Road Bond Issue that includes money for roads all over the City. Unfortunately this measure failed, in spite of the numerous studies that indicate a majority of the people in Albuquerque do not support roads through the Monument.

Therefore the election for voters to consider this Bond Issue will occur on Tuesday, October 29th. Between now and then, the Club will be working with groups such as the League of Women Voters, the National Parks and Conservation Association, all Indian Pueblo Council, 1001 Friends of New Mexico, SAGE Council and other groups to defeat this Bond Issue.

Financial considerations are the primary reason that the citizens of Albuquerque should vote against this Bond Issue. In this election, Albuquerque voters will decide whether to tax themselves $21.5 million dollars for this project. What they may not know is the $21.5 million dollar price tag is only the beginning of the $65 million dollars it will take to complete this project. This funding request comes at a time when basic city services are not being met, as evidenced by the Albuquerque Police and Fire departments asking voters for an additional 1/4 cent tax to help them meet basic services.

If built, these roads will fan-track new development West of the Monuments, leaving existing Albuquerque taxpayers to foot the bill for even more new roads and infrastructure, on top of an already existing $1.9 billion dollar infrastructure deficit. In addition, Albuquerque taxpayers will pay the full $66 million dollar cost since the city is refusing to respect federal matching funds (commonly at least $33 million), in order to avoid triggering the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

If that wasn’t enough, there are other reasons why the Petroglyph Road project should be abandoned.

- Albuquerque’s compliance with SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) is not in conformity with New Mexico State law.

As recently as May 19, 2003, Governor Richardson’s State Historic Preservation Officer, Mr. Katherine Slick, again alerted the city they have not yet done an in-depth study of the alternatives to the road, as required by New Mexico state law. Although, SHPO continues to notify the city of their legal obligations, the private developers and the Pre-roads Mayor Chavez are boldly moving ahead, ignoring New Mexico state law.

- The Environmental and Ecological Studies required for such projects are woefully inadequate. Former NM State Historic Preservation Officer Tom Meth, called the 1999 Environmental Impact Study (EIS) “woefully inadequate” citing numerous reasons that the EIS was not sufficient. Many other groups also weighed in on the insufficient information given in the original EIR.

How you can help save the Petroglyphs

- Vote Against the Bond Issue on October 29th
- Ask all your friends to vote against the Bond Issue
- Volunteer with the Central New Mexico Group or SAGE Council to defeat the Bond Issue. Call any of the ExCom members listed below to help.
- Call Mayor Chavez at 505-768-2000 and let him know that the Petroglyph National Monument is a National treasure that deserves to be respected and protected in its entirety. He’ll probably tell you that “not one Petroglyph will be harmed,” a statement which is hard to believe, considering that there are over 1,000 Petroglyphs that exist in the 8.5 acre corridor (according to the National Park Service mapping).

Call for Nominations to the ExCom

The Nominating Committee of the Central New Mexico Group is seeking candidates for election to the Group Executive Committee (ExCom). If you would be interested in being considered for candidacy or know anyone who is, please contact Nominating Committee members Michael Mudd, Blair Brown, or Richard Johnson (contact info below).

Volunteers Needed for Children’s Water Festival 2003!

This year’s Festival will be held on Saturday and Sunday, October 19th and 20th at the Albuquerque Convention Center. 1,000 4th Grade students will come to learn about water and its relationship to human and other natural resources in a fun and interactive atmosphere.

With so many students gathering, there are lots of things that folks can do, like be Guides for student groups, Assistants for activity processors, Photographers, Snack servers, Traffic managers and All around aider.

It’s easy (we’ll show you what to do) and lots of fun. If you can help, contact Carrie Chandler at 505-293-6699, or write carrie.chandler@sierraclub.com.

Editor’s Note: The Sierra Club is a financial supporter of the Children’s Water Festival.

General Public Meetings

Monday, September 15th at 7:30PM
V. B. Price, celebrated columnist with the Albuquerque Tribune, will share his views on some of the environmental and other challenges that confront Albuquerque.

Monday, October 21st at 7:30PM
Pam Flowers will present her slide show on the pleasures and challenges of Arctic Dog Sledding.

Monday, November 18th at 7:30PM
Hawka Abbot will present a slide show and a few of their feathered friends.

December - Salute Party
See the November/December issue for details.

We will be sending a reminder postcard to folks interested in attending, so email us at hblake2@siocl.com to be added to the mailing list. See you there.

All meetings will be at the First Unitarian Church on the corner of Carlisle and Ceresco in the Social Hall. All are FREE and open to everyone. Drinks and snacks are provided.
Sierra Club Endorses Martin Heinrich for Albuquerque City Council

It is rare that one of our own runs for public office and rarer still that a Sierra Club member or awesomely conservatised is considered the front runner for public office. In Albuquerque’s District 6, we are fortunate enough to have long-time environmental activist Martin Heinrich running for City Council. Even more exciting is that many community leaders, activists and political pundits agree that he is the likely front runner.

Martin was instrumental in the release of Mexican wolves into the New Mexico/Arizona borderlands in the 1990s and he ran Cerron Verde, a well respected environmental education program, for over five years. He has served on Albuquerque’s Open Space Advisory Board, his neighborhood association board, and is active on revitalization issues in Albuquerque. Martin has worked with groups as diverse as ranchers, labor unions, Native American tribes, and neighborhood associations. Part of his strength is that he has strong positions on matters ranging from urban planning to protection of the Bosque and defending Penagil National Monument from sprawl, he can still work effectively and respectfully with groups who do not share his views.

The City Council Election is Tuesday, October 28th.

BE SURE TO VOTE!

Peace Camp 2003

Working For Our Survival
Friday to Sunday, September 12-14

Peace Camp is an opportunity for people to meet and network to help influence our future. The Peace Camp invites groups and individuals committed to Peace Camp’s purpose, their families, and friends.

The program includes Workshops and Strategy Sessions on Economic Justice, Nuclear, Toxic, and Water, Creating Peace in Violent Times, Returning to a Sustainable Society, Non-violent Communication Training and Hands on Art.

Events include Community Building, Herb Walk, Kids’ space, Children’s Peace Pow Wow, Camping, Music, Food, and Campfire activities.

Peace Camp is free. Suggested donation of $5 or more. No one will be turned away. Wheelchair accessible. Dogs must be on leashes.

Cedro Peak Campground: From Albuquerque head east on I-40, south at Cerran Crest/Tijeras exit, onto highway 337, south 5 miles, turn east (left) on Juan Tomas Rd, north (left) at the Cedro Peak campground road. Robin Loop on the left.

Please RSVP to CARD at 266-2663 or 266-7567 as soon as possible. Cancellation posting can be arranged.

Note: The Central New Mexico Group is a co-sponsor of Peace Camp 2003.

Outings

Saturday, September 28th - Cat Mesa Crossover Hike
We will do a one way hike from a point in the Jemez River Canyon, South of Jemez Springs and end in San Juan Canyon to the North of Ponderosa. This will be a strenuous off-trail semi-exploatory hike of 8 to 9 miles in length and a cumulative elevation gain of at least 2000 feet.

The route will cover some of the prettiest landscapes in the Southern Jemez. We plan on doing this hike at a reasonable pace, so we can enjoy the sights along the way. There is a choice that we may return, so bring a flashlight.

Call the leaders for further info. Rick Hunley, 299-8401, sarsparinio@jol.com or Tom Peterson, 271-9928, tompt4eon@juno.com

Saturday, October 11th - Manzanos Fall Color Hike/Casalout
We will venture south and set up a car shuttle between two lesser visited trailheads in the North Manzanos Mountains (one will be the Bossage Trail, weather may determine the other) to experience New Mexico’s Fall Color (maple-red and aspen-yellow). Stunning views along the Manzanos Crest trail will be enjoyed. Bring water, lunch, hiking stick. Long pants for brushy trails would be handy. Rick is thinking about an informal cookout after hike (call for info). Hike: 7-9 miles (always allow extra time). Elevation: 1600’. Drive: ~60 miles, last portion on dirt road.

Contact Rick Hunley, 299-8401, sarsparinio@jol.com, David Thor, 240-1553, or Tom Peterson, 271-9928, tompt4eon@juno.com for meeting time/place.

Saturday, October 4th to Sunday, October 11th - Car Camp with Moderate/Stormy Dayhikes in the Mesa District of Canyonlands N.P., Utah.
We will do car camp for 7 nights at various campsites along the Spanish Bottom Road. We’ll be exploring the South and Pictographs Forths of Horseshoe Canyon, Slick Cliffs (in Canyon Creek, Faux’s Mesa, Emery County and its canyons), the Doll House area, and Spanish Bottoms in Catarina Canyons of the Colorado River. Our goal will be to be as relaxed as we can be of these places (can’t ->

Great News - Zuni Salt Lake is Saved

Salt River Project, an Arizona power company, has announced that they have abandoned plans to build a coal mine near Zuni Salt Lake, the lake held sacred by the Zuni’s and other Native American tribes.

This decision apparently brings to a close a two decades long battle that pit the Zuni’s, other tribes, environmentalists, religious leaders and - eventually - New Mexico’s congressional delegation against the power company and the federal government, which had granted mining permits.

The Zuni’s have long contended that the mine would jeopardize what the tribe believes is the home of Salt Woman, their chief deity.

The tribe said it’s the Zuni Salt Lake Coalition (the Sierra Club is a member), said a hard-driving publicity campaign and legal maneuvers in court to keep the mining venture at bay. Opponents of the mine got a major boost recently when members of New Mexico’s congressional delegation sent a letter to the Interior Department requesting a temporary suspension of the power company’s mining permit.

"Ongoing momentum got to a point of critical mass" said Jaime Chavez of the Zuni Salt Lake Coalition. "And that critical mass was the power of native tribes coming together, the power of spirituality, the power of people with convictions coming together."

"There’s going to be a party" Zuni Lt. Gov. Carmelito Sanchez said after the utility’s decision.

Tribal and coalition leaders say they will continue working to keep the salt lake area made a sacred area near the Salt River Project or some other company does not try to mine there in the future.

during our time there. About 100 miles and 5000 feet of elevation change. The total permit fee will be shared equally between the group. Designed for adventurous, energetic, sociable, and spiritual hikers. The permit is limited to 6 hikers and 3 4WD, high clearance vehicles.

Contact Tim Vito, 345-9923, treedblond@attglobal.net

Wednesday, October 16 to Sunday, October 19 - Moderate/Stormy Backspell in Puar Canyon and Buckskin Gulch, Utah.

This hike is a canyons country classic. We’ll start at Wire Pass trailhead and make our way down the 12 mile long spectacular narrows of Buckskin Gulch to its confluence with Puar Canyon. From the confluence, we’ll explore the upper narrows of Puar before starting our 30 mile walk down beautiful and photogenic Puar Canyon to Lee’s Ferry by the Colorado River. We’ll be walking through lots of mud, especially in Buckskin, so expect to wear footwear that will probably be trashed by the end of the hike. For those who enjoy a good mud bath, this hike should not disappoint. We’ll also do side hikes to places like Weather Arch one of canyon country’s largest. About 40 miles and 1700 feet of elevation loss. The total permit fee will be shared equally between the group. Designed for adventurous, energetic, sociable, and spiritual hikers. The permit is limited to 6 backpackers.

Contact Tim Vito, 345-9923, treedblond@attglobal.net.

Saturday, October 25th - Embara Trail to South Peak, Sandia Mountain Wilderness.

This is a somewhat strenuous but rewarding hike to the highest point of the south Sandias. Approx. 8 miles round-trip, 3500 ft. elevation.

Contact David Thor at 266-1513.
NEWS FROM THE CHAIR

Don Dearholt

There are many good things going on now, in spite of BLM's lack of foresight and good judgment on their EIS for Otero Mesa. The response of the chapter and our group will be determined soon, beginning with discussions taking place at the chapter ExCom meeting on September 6 and 7.

PLANNING MEETINGS

Wednesday, September 10: ExCom and interested members and guests of the SNM Group, 6:30 p.m. at the new Southwest Environmental Center (SWEC) location at 275 North Downtown Mall (1/2 block south of Coa's My Bookstore), just south of Las Cruces Avenue on the mall. Please enter the west door, just south of Day's Hamburgers. We have a long and important agenda, including the three foci recently decided upon—the Nut Grasslands, Otero Mesa, and assessing that the current representative to congress from District 2 is retired after one term.

Wednesday, October 8: ExCom and interested members and guests of the SNM Group, 6:30 p.m. at the new Southwest Environmental Center (SWEC). For directions, please see the preceding paragraph.

PROGRAM MEETINGS

We expect to have a fantastic program in October, one which is co-sponsored by other organizations as well, but have not settled on a time and place yet. The topic is narrowed to either global climate change, or ANWR. Please watch for the publicity as October nears, and come and bring friends!

OTERO MESNA HAPPENINGS:

Saturday, September 13th: Community Organizing Event in Carlsbad, NM. This event will last all day. Perhaps a tour of Otero could occur on Sunday the 14th of September (for more info. about this event, please contact either Nathan Newcomer or Stephen Capra, at 505-843-8696).

Beginning Friday night (campout) the 24th, Saturday & Sunday, September 27-28th: Science Research weekend. This, in my opinion, would be the perfect opportunity for all to not only get a sense of Otero Mesa, but to also help in gathering important data on the fragile black grama grasslands, and the habitat of songbirds, raptors, and prairie dogs (for more info. about this event, please contact Nathan Newcomer or Stephen Capra, at 505-843-8696).

Saturday, October 4th: General outing to Otero Mesa, exploring the petroglyphs and fantastic plant diversity on Alamo Mountain (for more info. about this event, please contact Greta at greta@nrnwild.org, or 505-327-9962).

October 17-19th: Otero Mesa Religious Retreat & the creation of an Interfaith Advisory Statement. This will be a time of prayerful reflection and working as a group to better comprehend and express Otero Mesa's value and meaning (for more info. about this event, please contact Stephen Capra, at 505-843-8696).

OUTINGS

October 18 (Saturday): Hike to Sawyer's Peak. Meet at the general store in Hillsboro at 8:30 a.m. This will be a slow, easy hike appropriate for arthritic knees, although having arthritis is not a prerequisite! Call Margot Wilson if you'd like more information, at 505-744-5800.

There is another and new opportunity to get out in our wonderful southwestern countryside, and here is some information on letting four legs do the "work" instead of just two!

Fall Trail Rides 2003: Celebrate the Desert

Billy Prewitt, Medicine Hat Basin Horse & Mule Company
Mike Coombs, High-Range Equestrian Connections

From Saturday October 18th through Sunday December 14th, the Medicine Hat Basin Horse & Mule Company plan to run 1/2 - 1 day rides into the mountain desert west of the Mesilla Valley. Living in the green fertility of our irrigated valley, we can forget the true nature of this Country. Just beyond our planned suburban streets, with their illusion of limitless water, electricity and access, lies the real Southwest.

The Mesilla Valley has long been a place of respite: from the Jornada Del Muerto or Mexican Chihuahua desert; from the Tularosa Valley or fractured landscape of the Basin and Range Province. Travelers would always be aware of the fragility of their 'cajas'. In modern times, however, it is all too easy to ignore the desert context of our lives.

The mountains west of I-25 are a perfect place to become reacquainted with the desert; and the Fall is the perfect time to do it. We are planning rides on BLM land, including: * landmarks on the Butterfield Trail - the canyons of the Sierra De Las Uvas, the Sleeping Lady Hills, Cooke's Peak, the Pough and Ready Hills, and * landmarks of El Camino Real-Tonala and the Robledo Mountains.

At this time, we plan to take groups of 4 - 10 persons at a cost per person of around $50 for a 1/2 day and $100 for a full day. A meal can be provided at the trail head at a small additional charge.

If you would like to join us, please call Mike Coombs at 382-7510, or email him at mcm@higstream.net. Since there are many possible formats for a ride, we would like to hear from you and plan the trip to suit your specific interests. No riding experience is necessary; we have gentle stock.

Billy Prewitt was born in Hatch and moved to Fresno CA to make a life in the trucking business and as a cowboy. He is now retiring back to New Mexico to run his Horse & Mule trail business and introduce those new to the desert to the landscape of his childhood. Mike Coombs was born in London UK and moved to the Computing Research Laboratory at New Mexico State University. He became acquainted with desert riding while conditioning English horses.
The Battle for El Paso: Chapter II

The JOBE Antitrust Issue

by Taylor Moore

Where does a polluter get the guts to capture governmental regulation? Part of JOBE Concrete Products' clout comes from illegal monopoly power.

The antitrust laws of the United States, Texas and New Mexico all provide that every contract, combination, or conspiracy in restraint of trade or commerce is unlawful. Substantial civil and criminal penalties can and should be imposed for violation of those statutes.

In 1989 JOBE Concrete Products, Inc. acquired El Paso Sand Products, Inc. for approximately $12 million and obtained a monopoly on El Paso's sand and gravel market, the study mixed concrete market, and the hot mix asphalt market. JOBE paid for the purchase of El Paso Sand with hot check. JOBE was not prosecuted for antitrust violations, but Bradley Jole, the father, and others were prosecuted and convicted for money laundering. Stanley Jole served six months in jail. He was pardoned on President Clinton's last day in office.

In 1995 JOBE's monopoly was sold to The RMC Group, the largest ready mixed concrete company in the world, which is reported to have a market value of $2.3 billion. RMC paid $16.8 million to acquire JOBE and Reube Sparks Ready Mix.

RMC has a long, checkered history of antitrust violations. In 1979 it was caught violating Europe's antitrust laws and was ordered to cease such activities. The company promised not to do it again, but walked out of the courtroom and continued to collude with its competitors. The fine imposed on RMC's companies for this offense was far greater than the fine imposed on any of its competitors. The judge stated that continuation of the agreements into the 1980s showed a "clear, persistent and widespread disregard of court orders which strikes at the heart of the rule of law and the public interest." He called the situation "intolerable" and reined in the competitors' defense that they were engaged in a "necessary" commerce.

In 1995 RMC was caught in Germany. While promoting the German regulators it had stopped its antitrust practices, RMC was busy acquiring the JOBE monopoly in the El Paso-Southwestern New Mexico region.

Today, antitrust activities by building materials firms are a worldwide phenomenon and are the subject of unprecedented probing by antitrust authorities. But not in El Paso. As recently as October 31, 2002, RMC eliminated another competitor by acquiring substantially all of the assets of Rio Grande Materials, which operated in Texas and New Mexico. An internal RMC continued to attempt to preserve the illusion of competition by telling the company name over the order when it made the acquisitions—ignoring mounting criticism of this technique.

Has this polluter captured the regulatory agencies in your community too? If so, what are you doing to go about it?

El Paso Group Activist Taylor Moore is a retired Wisconsin lawyer who speaks and writes frequently against corruption in government and industry.

Selected Outings

Sept 13: Railroad-Gallinas Canyon Loop Dayhike
Place: Gila National Forest west of Kingston, NM
Class: Strenuous
Length: 13 miles
Elevation gain: 1000 feet
Leader: Carl Horkowiz (505) 750-2605 (M) chorkowiz@msn.com
Just over Ensey Pass from Kingston, the Railroad Canyon trailhead offers easy access to beautiful streamside trails leading up to the crest above the wildest part of the Gila wilderness. Bring a lunch to eat at the wilderness boundary as we traverse over to Gallinas Canyon for our descent back to the trailhead.

Sept 27-28: Argentine Canyon Backpack
Place: White Mountain Wilderness
Class: Easy/Moderate
Length: 7 miles
Elevation gain: 1200 feet
Leader: Caroline Greenwood (915) 594-7342
The White Mountain Wilderness above Billboard Lake is one of the wonderful treasures available to El Pasoans. High altitudes with great vistas over the Tularosa Basin enable a city dweller to "get away from it all" in short order. This great loop backpack extends steeply up through Argentine Canyon to the error, then descends gently using the spectacular Cross Trail to the Spring Cabin area, featuring huge grassy tent sites under stately pines. Descend to the trailhead is through picturesque Little Billboard Canyon.

Oct 4-6: Wheeler Peak Backpack
Place: Wheeler Peak Wilderness, NM
Class: Moderate
Length: 20 miles loop
Elevation gain: 3000 feet
Leader: Mike Episcopo (505) 594-9322 mepiscopo@unm.edu
We'll stay in the Santa Fe area Friday night, continuing early Saturday to the East Fork trailhead within Carson National Forest. After a night camping below Horsetooth Lake, we will rise early on Sunday and dayhike 3 miles to the peak. Our return is via the Lost Lake trail.

Oct 17-19: Twenty-Five Yard Spring Backpack
Place: Apache Kid Wilderness, San Mateo Mountains, NM of Ochiltree, NM
Class: Moderately Strenuous
Length: About 12 miles
Elevation Gain: 2200 feet
Leader: Rollin Wickenden 855-6697 rowick@cox.com
We will depart Friday evening and drive to Sprinetime Campground, 17 miles west into the mountains on FR 225 feet 1-2 at the Red Rock exit. The planned hike leaves from Sprinetime campground on Saturday morning and ascends trail #43 to the crest of the San Mateo's at Bill Phillips saddle. The trail then turns north, descend into Smith Canyon. We will continue north to Twenty-Five yard spring, our backcountry campsite. In the shadow of Apache Kid Peak, Sunday we will reroute our way to the escarpment on the campsite. This is a hike into a remote area that we have not done in several years. The color change of the leaves should be evident, with the aspen turning a burnished gold color. Come join us on a moderately strenuous hike to a remote corner of the San Mateo Mountains, one of New Mexico's least-visited mountain ranges.

Liability Waiver Reminder
All participants in Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the liability waiver before you choose to participate in an outing, please go to: http://www.sierrclub.org/outings/chapters/ elpaso/, or contact the Outings Dept. at (415) 971-5528 for a print version.

2003 El Paso Regional Group Directory (Area Code 915)

Chair
Laurence Gibson 594-7342
lgibson@utep.edu

Vice Chair
Jim Gibbons 593-0506
jgibbons@uotelcom

Secretary
Ann Falkner 833-9162
afalkner@wsc.net

Treasurer
Kathy Sunday 584-9301
sunday@ziolnet.com

Editor
Laurence Gibson 594-7342
lgibson@uotelcom

http://texas.sierrclub.org/elpaso

ExCom Members
Ted Merlitz 852-3011
tmerlitz@earthlink.net
Jos Escobedo 751-1834
jescobedo25@hotmail.com
Greg Lawson 532-7273
vegetexan@iol.com
Liz Walsh 584-1471
ewalsh@uotelcom

Chapter Delegate
Jos Escobedo 751-1834
jescobedo@hotmail.com

Chap Delegate Alternate
Liz Walsh 584-1471
ewalsh@uotelcom

Inner City Outings
Ted Merlitz 852-3011
tmerlitz@earthlink.net

Outings
Laurence Gibson 594-7342
lgibson@uotelcom

Outings
Rollin Wickenden 855-6697
rwick@cox.com

Membership
Ted Merlitz 852-3011
tmerlitz@earthlink.net

Webmaster
Terry Sunday 584-9301
sunday@ziolnet.com
Apply Sustainable Paradigms in Public Land Management

Globally, locally, the principles of sustainability are the same. Science, experience and historical evidence have helped us understand the interconnections that sustain the earth and its ecosystems, and when we apply these principles to traditional industry and the management of public lands, new perspectives show us alternatives to current unsustainable practices. The first step, though, is to acknowledge that the existing practices are unsustainable.

That is challenging when we are asking the wrong questions or using the wrong analytical tools. For example, we measure short-term cash flows but don’t examine the long-term relationships between people and natural systems. We speak as if maintaining the supply and quality of natural resources were a thing of the past. Clearly, the supply and quality of natural resources are central to public lands management. In reality, however, our performance in managing growth and consumption actually affects what happens today. Natural systems are collateral damage.

The traditions of the largest land-management agencies—the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM)—are similar:

- conservation
- multiple use, and
- sustainability.

The sustainability mission is inherent, since federal lands are intended to benefit the public in perpetuity. No other land stewards have the legal (and moral) obligation to manage for future generations. Unfortunately, this responsibility is frequently abrogated for decisions that favor oversimplified economic goals, the desire for quick returns, and mitigation efforts that are merely band-aids.

This decision-making approach readily sidesteps long-term impacts and the cumulative, downstream consequences of policies. No one has to wait to cash in a check at the bank. As a result, our bank of natural capital is overstated—a direct violation of the mission and mandate that direct federal land-management agencies to protect and conserve resources for future generations.

Why? Our society craves rapid gratification, and all natural resource decisions are social decisions. Thus, we continue to sustain growth and consumption rather than natural systems.

The effects of Social Pressure on People

Within public agencies, people are interpreting mandates and making decisions. The responsibilities of a line officer call for vision and leadership skills—courage, integrity, honesty and the ability to bring the best in others. When these qualities give way to concerns of career preservation, ego and political “flexibility,” sustainability of the natural resource is the first casualty.

Most agency employees are professionals, dedicated people, but they are overworked, bewildered by internal change, computer-bound, budget-driven, under-appreciated and threatened. For instance, a recent Executive Order requires BLM employees to report any mitigation measures, public-involvement processes or other “obstacles” that slow energy permitting—and they must list their name as the responsible official. Meanwhile, the Forest Service and Park Service are busy “outsourcing”—turning career positions over to the lowest bidder in the private sector (see Sierra July/August 2003).

Employees who would pursue sustainable practices face an uphill struggle inasmuch as:

- they lack training;
- there is no social or institutional emphasis on or reward system for sustainable practices; and
- they face increasing management complexity.

“Our bank of natural capital, however, is overdrawn, in violation of the missions of our land-management agencies.

Why? Our society craves rapid gratification, and all natural resource decisions are social decisions.”

Residents Getting More Informed and Involved in Northwest New Mexico

Northwest New Mexico is a region where extensive oil and gas exploration and development have been occurring for years (see Sierra July/August 2003). Residents are increasingly concerned about related air pollution, surface and groundwater pollution, grassland and habitat destruction, and other social impacts.

The San Juan Citizens Alliance was instrumental in bringing Gloria Flora to speak to residents in the Farmington Bloomfield area in July 2003. Jan Res reveals, “With the decisions we will be facing in the future, those of us concerned about air quality in San Juan County need to be informed and vocal. I would welcome the opportunity to visit with other concerned Sierra Club members.”

The online pages of NMED’s website (www.clovis.nm.stat.nm.us/ocncert/index.html) may be of interest to those who like to dig deeper. They include:

- PowerPoint presentations;
- the non-binding list of some control strategies that was submitted in June 2003 to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as part of the Early Action Compact; and
- a copy of the compact.

For information about ozone, including a brochure developed by the University of New Mexico Community Environmental Health Program, see the San Juan Citizens Alliance website (www.sanjuancitizens.org).

For information about the Four Corners Ozone Task Force, contact Steering Committee member Jan Res in Bloomfield (505-813-949; jrees@comcast.com). Anyone can become a member of the Task Force.

—Jan Res

Bite-sized, employees see public involvement as simply inviting more work and more conflict. Again, the path of least resistance beckons.

The internal politics and pressures that drive policy remain largely hidden from the eyes of the public. The frustration of trying to introduce change hints at the magnitude of the forces that support the status quo. History shows us that calls for sustainability are ignored until decades of legal challenges command attention. Community witness continues, incremental, irreversible losses of landscapes and lifestyles that agencies dismiss as necessary trade-offs (with no value attached) to create jobs or achieve targets. No wonder there’s so little trust.

Regulation Without Ecological Awareness

Although Congress has enacted a plethora of environmental laws over the past 140 years, few in Congress actually understand:

- the nature of those laws
- how they are being administered
- what the ramifications of those laws are.

Public-opinion polls and election-cycle politics drive policy, but neither the public nor the politicians understand ecosystems and their vulnerabilities. When Congress does try to affect change, it too may be frustrated and resort to cherry-picking, punitive management through budget hijinks and demanding reports in infinitesimal detail. Occasionally, they target individuals; the list of relocated line officers is long.

U.S. politics is swift with oil. George W. Bush is a multi-millionaire thank you to oil. Dick Cheney receives millions annually in severance pay from Haliburton (a global oil-industry player that is equally at home in Farmington, NM and London!) for his leadership of lobbying for and representing industry. Gale Norton heads the U.S. Department of the Interior. Her assistants are Steve Grile, a recent lobbyist for the coal and oil industries, and Rebecca Watson, a pro-industry lawyer.

In the U.S. Department of Agriculture, there’s the same strong support for industry and, with one exception, a significant lack of natural resource experience—agricultural economist, a timber lobbyist, and a young lawyer who has never worked outside the Beltway hold the top three positions.

It’s no surprise that we are seeing dogged pursuit of unsustainable practices, bulldozing of environmental regulations, and a disquieting exclusion of the public from decision-making.

Incomplete Economics

Our ability to achieve sustainability is on thin ice, because we use incomplete economics to measure the costs and benefits of policies and projects. When we fail to account for associated environmental and social costs, we are left with expensive realities—Superfund sites, disease, habitat destruction and species loss are uncounted costs of many projects.

It has become routine to justify unsustainable activities by citing job creation and industry profits. The public hears assurances that stipulations, regulation and monitoring will protect the environment as these activities proceed, but a line officer can waive stipulations upon request—and they do, 89% of the time, according to a recent study. Monitoring occurs rarely, even when it does, declines in ecosystem quality rarely trigger penalties.

Carrots-and-sticks regulations are fundamentally flawed and have limited effect on environmental protection. Incentives and subsidies are based on the assumptions of unlimited supply and demand (willingness to pay); instead of encouraging better (continued on the next page)
practices, they encourage consumption. Punitive regulations encourage adversarial "cops and robbers" relationships. Entire staffs of lawyers work to circumvent agencies while the damage continues.

Regulations meant to discourage environmental destruction are effective only when applied consistently and when fines for infractions are large enough to hurt. The degree to which regulatory requirements are currently applied and enforced depends on the political and economic clout of the offender, rather than the letter of the law. Threats of job loss bring swift agency action.

In summary, most environmental regulations rarely keep pace with social dynamics and, as implemented:

- are profoundly influenced by industry;
- fall to account for the triple bottom line;
- are activated by violence, not compliance;
- have an inconsistent basis in science; and
- have no relationship with sustainability.

Industrial Use as a Priority

Despite the mantra of multiple use, agencies are now directed to give higher priority to industrial use, especially energy development. Trying to move toward sustainability with that directive is akin to wearing snowshoes for a swim.

The industry model takes a utilitarian view of resources. With economics as a yardstick, obtaining raw materials with as few limitations as possible is a logical goal. Revenue and growth are the primary indicators of success. Regulations mitigate the minimal environmental behavior that is acceptable. Do less, if the savings offer the fine, or better still, if you can get away with it. Logical yes, sustainable no.

The economics-only paradigm rewards short-term profits and a strong quarterly bottom line. Industry disavows or covers up the cumulative destructive effects of its actions. Mergers, bankruptcies and highly-paid lobbyists obfuscate the trail of responsibility, in part by using political contributions to buy regulatory changes.

Ethics aside, this focus on economic returns assumes that natural capital and the services that nature provides are free and in infinite supply. The value of a tree's ability to produce oxygen and absorb CO₂ is not part of the economic equation in a

tounder.

The values of groundwater and of cryptogamic soils to retain erosion are not part of the economic equation when we consider drilling for natural gas. Toxic wastes and by-products "disappear" under a thin layer of dirt. There is no value placed on people's relationship with landscapes, our sense of place.

The other fundamental flaw of the economics-only paradigm is this assumption: All growth is good. Natural systems temper growth by maximizing ecosystem health—we don't. Growth in the United States requires increasing consumption of natural resources. The overall trend worldwide is a decline in productive habitats juxtaposed to an ever-increasing population with greater demands for natural resources. If this is so obvious, why haven't we, as a society, asked logical questions about the industrial paradigm that dominates our public lands—our national treasure chest of natural resources.

The answer isn't easy. We really don't want to change our own lifestyles. When we do try, we don't find super-efficient transportation and housing; clean, renewable energy; comprehensive recycling and re-use programs; or local, organic produce readily available.

Action Based on Sustainability

When we apply the principles of sustainability to public lands and traditional industry, we can act in effective ways:

- First, demand better alternatives. Be insistent and persistent. In the meantime, demand that agencies follow the law and the mitigation measures prescribed in environmental documents, including monitoring.
- Second, stay politically aware, and vocal, and involved. Vote.
- Third, vote again, this time with your dollars. Manage your consumption: stop buying what you don't need. Every dollar you spend sends a message that you support and condone what was done to others and the environment to enable you to have this produce.

Public land-management agencies will change when society does. Only then can we ensure that our public natural capital principle is well protected and that we are living off the interest—sustainably.

For more information, contact Gloria Piana, executive director of Sustainable Obtainable Solutions, in Helena, MT (406/495-9651; gloria@o-solutions.org).

—Gloria Piana
© Sustainable Obtainable Solutions
August 2003

Say "No" to (No) Clear Skies

Enforcement of the Clean Air Act 1970, has significantly reduced emissions of major pollutants, resulting in tremendous improvements in air quality across the United States. On 20 August 2003, however, the Bush Administration issued a rule that exempts oil and gas plants from a requirement that they install modern pollution-control technologies when they release changes that increase the pollution they produce.

For more information, see the Clean Air page on the Sierra Club web site (www.sierraclub.org/climate).

—Mary Wiper

Rio Grande Chapter Quarterly Meetings

The Rio Grande Chapter will meet next on 6-7 September 2003 at the Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge just north of Socorro. The Conservation Committee will meet on Saturday; the Executive Committee will meet on Sunday morning.

All members are invited. If you would like to attend, please contact Chair Doug Fauber at 992-7783, or at Doug.Fauber@ USDA.GOV.

The Chapter's winter meeting is scheduled for 6-7 December 2003, also at Sevilleta.

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### Rio Grande Chapter 2003 Election Schedule

The Executive Committee (ExCom) is required to specify dates and deadlines for the unit election. They are as follows:

- ExCom ratified a Nominating Committee (NomCom: D. Farrell, Chair; K. Hughes, M. Mudd, T. Merrig, A. Jacobson) and an Election Committee (M. Mudd, Chair) at the June 2003 Chapter meeting.
- NomCom must receive names for consideration by 9/15.
- NomCom must receive names to ExCom by 9/15.
- NomCom must receive names to ExCom by 9/15.
- Candidate petitions and ballot-issue petitions must be signed by 12/22.
- Chapters must deliver eligible voter lists to printer by 10/18.
- Ballots must be printed and mailed by 10/18 (allowing at least four weeks for return).
- Returned ballots must be postmarked on or before 11/20.
- Ballots will be counted at 7:00 AM, 11/24 in Albuquerque.

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### Membership Categories

- **Introductory:** $25
- **Regular:** $39
- **Supporting:** $57
- **Contributing:** $150
- **Life:** $1,000
- **Senior:** $29
- **Student:** $24
- **Limited Income:** $24

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support our effective, science-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include $9.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and $1 for your Chapter newsletter.

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**Join Us!**

www.sierraclub.org/membership

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#### Box ______________

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#### Sierra Club

#### P.O. Box 5296

#### Boulder, CO 80322-2968

#### Please charge my [ ] MasterCard [ ] Visa

#### Cardholder's Name ____________________________

#### Card Number ____________________________

#### Exp. Date ______ / ______

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Sign up online
Let the Great Outdoors Play Its Part in Fitness and Well-being

Several months ago, I received a call from a graduate student who was part of a UNM team working with the New Mexico State Parks Division on its five-year update of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*. Numerous public meetings failed to draw many people, so she was calling representatives of a number of organizations, including the Sierra Club, to get our input directly. The first of the four questions she asked was: How have trends in New Mexico outdoor recreation been changing? After thinking about it, I concluded that the biggest change (all over the country, not just in New Mexico) is that America’s love of machines and speed is spreading further and further over the land. Besides the ubiquitous car and pickup trucks, SUVs, ATVs, meteors, motor boats, jet skis and snowmobiles are eating all over the countryside spreading fumes and noise, polluting the air and the water, eroding fragile landscapes and consuming large amounts of gasoline. The impacts in this manner have become political and the Bush Administration embroils itself in complexities like Middle Eastern politics and user scare tactics about dwindling oil reserves to open all of our public lands to drilling, even some of the last wild places, like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This type of recreation impacts more than environmental health, it also impacts human health. The driver may be recreating and enjoying the outdoors but s/he gets little or no exercise through these motorized pursuits. Article after article in recent months has pointed out that we are becoming a nation of the chase. Our very technological successes and breakthroughs over the past 50+ years have made many of us unfit and overweight.

Now I am sure that many of you don’t fit this stereotype, but you probably have friends who do. And even when people are fitness-minded, many drive to gym and health spas. Not to diminish these activities and businesses that play a useful role in keeping our bodies firm and supple, but these are indoor and often costly pursuits. Simply walking and hiking on a regular basis can maintain our health and sanity. One can, of course, tramp over the hills alone, and we all have done it on countless occasions. But participating in a group outing provides not only good exercise, but also good camaraderie, and the opportunity to learn about our heritage and see new scenery (hopefully unobscured by clouds of exhaust smoke). Check out one or more of our Sierra outings, and bring along a friend! Hiking has one of the least impacts on the land of any outdoor activity. It’s free, and gets us outside under that deep blue sky.

Norma McCallan

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*SCORP is also soliciting individual comments through its online survey at www.woodstate.org/ourspatial PAGES/scorp/SCORP.htm

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### Selected Sierra Club Outings for September, October and November 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, September 6</strong></td>
<td>Chihuahua Grasslands Field Trip</td>
<td>Visit Jim Winder’s ranch near Newport, NM. Includes: Ecoregion field trip, and hands-on experience with local wildlife.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, September 13</strong></td>
<td>Railroad/Collarup Canyon Loop</td>
<td>A strenuous hike along the railroad tracks, passing through some of the most scenic railroad cuts in the state.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, September 13</strong></td>
<td>Wheeler Peak</td>
<td>A moderate hike along the railroad tracks, passing through some of the most scenic railroad cuts in the state.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday, September 18</strong></td>
<td>Fall Highway Cleanup</td>
<td>Join us for a day of environmental stewardship and community service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, September 20</strong></td>
<td>Plateau Mountain, Oraibi Range</td>
<td>A strenuous hike along the railroad tracks, passing through some of the most scenic railroad cuts in the state.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, September 27</strong></td>
<td>Cebolla/Cabezas Canyon</td>
<td>A moderate hike along the railroad tracks, passing through some of the most scenic railroad cuts in the state.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, September 27</strong></td>
<td>Argentia/Little Benito Canyon</td>
<td>A moderate hike along the railroad tracks, passing through some of the most scenic railroad cuts in the state.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday, September 28</strong></td>
<td>Willis White Trail</td>
<td>A moderate hike along the railroad tracks, passing through some of the most scenic railroad cuts in the state.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, October 4</strong></td>
<td>Wheeler Peak</td>
<td>A moderate hike along the railroad tracks, passing through some of the most scenic railroad cuts in the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday, October 6</strong></td>
<td>Timpio Pueblo Ruins</td>
<td>A moderate hike along the railroad tracks, passing through some of the most scenic railroad cuts in the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday, October 12</strong></td>
<td>Conejos River</td>
<td>A moderate hike along the railroad tracks, passing through some of the most scenic railroad cuts in the state.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please check the five Groups’ pages for more information on these trips, and for additional activities. All areas codes are 505, except as noted. Watercolor on this page is by Carolyn Kotula. For more of her work, see her web site (www.carolynkotula.net).