Remake History

Women make up a record number of local candidates, and our endorsements, in 2018. We’ve identified a dynamic slate of champions for our climate, drinking water and a safe future for our families. Learn more about them — and how you can make a difference. **Election and volunteer guide: pages 6-9.**

**Victory on solar energy**
New Mexico’s Public Regulation Commission removed a monthly fee that had a chilling effect on Eastern N.M. solar installations. **Page 3.**

**Chaco-area air testing: Results are in**
A Health Impact Assessment committee installed air monitors on homes in Navajo Nation Counselor Chapter. **Page 12.**

**Time to renew recycling efforts**
With recycling companies cracking down, our Zero Waste teams are ramping up efforts to educate on new rules. **Page 11**

**More: Methane safeguards: Page 3. Central New Mexico Group:** Page 10. **Northern New Mexico:** Pages 12-13. **Hikes:** Pages 15-16
Vote on your chapter and group executive committees

Voting in the Chapter election is for Sierra Club members only. Please use this ballot so your member number appears on the mailing label on the other side. Two-member households can each vote, using both boxes. Each member should vote one in the executive committee election and one for your local group. Candidate statements for the chapter Executive Committee will be available at www.riograndesierraclub.org. El Paso Group ballots will be mailed separately (but El Paso Group members may vote online). Ballots will be emailed to members in November if you wish to vote online.

El Paso Group ballots will be mailed separately (but El Paso Group members may vote online). Ballots will be emailed to members in November if you wish to vote online.

El Paso Group representative: Open

Mona Blaber, 505-850-3369, karl@sierraclub.org

El Paso: Chair: Da-vid Coss. Members: Laurence Gibson, John Buchser, Shannon Romeling

Pajarito Group: Chair: Al-lixson Siwik, allysonsiwik@gmail.com

Central New Mexico Group: Howie Dash, howiedash@aol.com

Northern New Mexico Group: Tom Gorman, Howie Dash, howiedash@aol.com

Pajarito Group: Chair: Celia Chavez-Beltran, cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org

Northern New Mexico Group: Karen Miller, Karen Miller@sierraclub.org

Nominating:
Fujitsu: Lynne Fischer, Mona Blaber

Local Boards:
Organ Mountains Desert Peaks:
Sandrine Gaillard, sandrine.gaillard@sierracl

CBO:
Santa Fe: Raymond Greenwell, rgreenwell@sierraclub.org

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Office of the President:
Pajarito Group:
Northern New Mexico:
Southern New Mexico:

Nona Girardi

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Bosque Action Team: Richard Barish, richard.barish@gmail.com, 505-232-3013

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Northern New Mexico Group: Howie Dash, howiedash@aol.com

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Northern New Mexico Group, 1807 Second St., Unit 45, Santa Fe, NM 87505, 505-983-2703; Chair: Teresa Seamster, ctc.seamster@gmail.com, 505-466-8964.

Pajarito Group, P.O. Box 945, Los Alamos, NM 87544, Chair: Jody Ben-son, echiadba@gmail.com

Southern New Mexico Group, P.O. Box 735, Mesilla, NM 88064; Chair: Howie Dash, howiedash@aol.com.

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Nuclear-Waste Cleanup: John Buchser, Patricia Cardona, Richard Barish, Don Hancock

Wildlife: Chair: Mary Katherine Ray, 575-772-5665, mray@comcast.net

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Zero Waste: Northern New Mexico Group: Joe Eigner, 505-570-0883, joseigner@gmail.com, Central NM Group: Carol Chamberland, pictograph@comcast.net, 505-341-1027

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Legislative: Chair: Patricia Cardona, Melinda Smith, Brittany Fallon

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Cover banner photo by Mary Katherine Ray

The Rio Grande Sierra is published four times a year, in January, April, July and October, by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club as a benefit for members in New Mexico and West Texas. The opinions expressed in signed articles in the Sierra are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club.
Victory for rooftop solar in N.M.

By Mona Blaber
Chapter communications director

I t is an exciting time for rooftop solar access in New Mexico. We're on the cusp of a new era of clean energy, with solar power now cheaper than utility-scale power and rooftop solar systems becoming more affordable for everyone.

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Sierra Club’s Washington, D.C., office have been advocating for solar access policy reforms at the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (NRPC) for years. Our efforts have paid off in the form of several recent victories, including the reversal of the New Mexico Public Service Commission’s decision to impose a new monthly fee on solar customers.

The recent decision to reverse a solar access policy is a significant victory for rooftop solar in New Mexico. However, there is still work to be done to ensure that all New Mexicans have access to clean, affordable energy.

Climate safeguards axed

By Camilla Freihelman
Chapter director

I n the space of just eight days, the Trump Administration gutted two key pieces of U.S. climate commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement. You may remember that Trump announced the U.S. would leave the agreement. And though we never formally did, the administration’s actions in September gut two of the key ways we’d drastically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

On Sept. 11, Environmental Protection Agency acting Administrator Andrew Wheeler proposed weakening the EPA’s Methane Rules, which have been in force for almost a year, for the oil and gas industry. When first proposed under the Obama Administration, more than 27,000 New Mexicans commented in favor of these rules meant to require companies to regularly do leak detection and repair and use technology to prevent the leaks from happening.

These common-sense safeguards limit the release of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, from oil and gas infrastructure, and also protect communities from harmful pollutants released alongside methane, such as benzene and volatile organic compounds. Residents throughout New Mexico are impacted by this pollution and in many cases live within sight of working wells or with wells on their property.

“I want to ask acting Administrator Wheeler, man-to-man, why he is proposing to cause more harm,” said Don Schreiber, a rancher in the Four Corners area who has the studies that show how kids suffer the most from methane pollution and in many cases live within sight of working wells or with wells on their property.

“Landowners and their families all my ranch and thousands nearby. Landowners and their families all over New Mexico will suffer when the New Source Performance Standards are weakened, and I think he needs to answer each one of us. It is morally outrageous that a former Washington energy lobbyist is about to put the health of our children at risk, exactly the opposite of what EPA is supposed to do.”

Things got even worse on Sept. 18, when the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) reversed its Methane Waste Rule. The agency’s own analysis has found that rolling back the standards will cost Americans more than $1 billion in wasted natural gas and pollution. Methane is the main component of natural gas, and the methane wasted by industry could heat every home in New Mexico.

Secretary Ryan Zinke’s gutting of the BLM’s methane-waste standards fails to meet the BLM’s legal obligation to protect the American taxpayer and western communities, despite bipartisan opposition in Congress and a half-million Americans submitting comments in opposition to the roll-back. A legal challenge to Zinke’s repeal of the BLM methane waste rule is almost certain. The EPA rules will be subject to a 60-day comment period when they hit the Federal Register and there will be a hearing in Denver, though the date has not yet been announced.

“Navajo communities are already overburdened with over 40,000 existing oil and gas wells that surround their communities in northwest New Mexico, and new industrialized fracking now threatens more than 55,000 acres slated for sacrifice this December,” said Carol Davis, Diné Citizens Against Ruining our Environment, Coordinator. “We already suffer from exposure to noxious odors, and these rollbacks for the oil and gas industry will only make our communities unlivable.”

Holtec nuclear problems: Is list of 25 enough?

By John Buchser
Chapter Water Chair

T he Sierra Club in September filed an intervention with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, legally challenging the NRC to answer a lot of questions about Holtec International’s proposal to store all the nation’s used nuclear-reactor fuel rods in a “temporary” location near Hobbs for up to 120 years.

There is no need to rush the facility that Holtec is proposing. The Holtec proposal calls this “consolidated interim storage” proposal safer than storing the waste at the site of production but provides no evidence.

Transportation is not considered in the proposal, and even worse, if a shipment arrives that is leaking radioactivity, it is shipped back to where it started! The list goes on...

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club has approved pursing an intervention with the NRC on the Waste Control Systems site that sits on our border with Texas. The proposed site sits on top of a low ridge, with the potential of contamination flowing into the Pecos River.

If you’d like to contribute to the legal and expert-witness fees, please go to sierradessertes.org/holtec. We could use your financial help!

Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board meets in Albuquerque Oct. 24: If you want to learn what Sandia National Laboratory is doing to help us understand technical issues associated with the nuclear waste problem, there is an all-day meeting at jbuchser@comcast.net for details, or go to the the www.nwtrb.gov website. The meeting will be webcast at Oct 24 in Albuquerque at the Marriott. Contact me for more.

After months of evidentiary hearings and testimony, the commission’s hearing examiner agreed, saying that Southwestern Public Service hadn’t justified the fee and that it was using the fee to recoup costs in a way not allowed by law. She pointed out that evidence showed that solar customers do pay their fair share, and that SPS’s study that supposedly justified the fee was “riddled with errors.”

But the final decision belonged to the five PRC commissioners, and they spent weeks on the case, which involved several contentious issues. There was confusion around the costs and benefits of solar rooftops to the grid.

After several weeks of debate, commissioners did vote to impose SPS’s solar penalty, which was a big step forward for SPS current and future solar customers. Nonetheless, the Commission seems to have relied on an incorrect interpretation of state law on this issue, leaving the door open for SPS to provide more evidence next time to support these fees and for PNM and El Paso Electric to adopt similar fees. An appeal is expected, and the Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy will likely participate to urge reversal of the incorrect legal interpretation.

The commission also ordered a study to determine the costs of solar rooftops to utilities and other customers. A study could guide the way for improved policies for boosting solar integration in New Mexico’s grid, but our chapter and Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy will participate to make sure the benefits, not just costs, of solar are included. Thank you to everyone who contacted their commissioner and helped defeat this solar-stifling policy.
Mining, fracking and groundwater

Fracking endangers basin water

By Mike Neas
Central New Mexico Groundwater Issues chair

G

as companies have set their sights on fracking in the south-

east region of Sandoval County, and Bernalillo County might not

be far behind. Fracking in this part of the state is especially risky and dangerous. Large parts of Bernalillo and Sandoval counties are underlain by what geologists call the Albuquerque Basin, which is within the Rio Grande Rift. The geology of the Albuquerque Basin is filled with fractures and faults in the rock. These fractures provide easy conduits for polluted fracking chemicals to enter the groundwater.

The rock is off the fault lines, so the Mancos shale, which stores oil and gas, may abut other layers, including the aquifer. “Unconventional” fracking, which combines horizontal drilling with hydraulic fracturing, allows for drill depths of a mile or more. The horizontal drilling may go directly from the Mancos shale into the aquifer, polluting the aquifer in that way.

The geology of the Albuquerque Basin is very different than the geology of the San Juan Basin, in the northwest part of the state, or the Permian Basin, in the southeastern New Mexico, where most of the state’s oil and gas extraction now occurs. Drilling in the Albuquerque Basin is much, much riskier. Retired oil-company geologist and executive Don Phillips has concluded that pollu-
tion of the Albuquerque Basin aquifer, a drinking-water source for nearly 800,000 people in central New Mexico, is all but inevitable if drilling is permit-
ted in the Albuquerque Basin.

This is a critical issue, not just for residents of Sandoval County but also for Bernalillo County. Water flows downhill. Pollution in Sandoval County may also pollute groundwater in Albuquerque and Bernalillo County.

Earlier this year, as reported in the Jan/Feb/March 2018 Sierran, an indus-
ty-backed ordinance that would have permitted drilling in the Albuquerque Basin was defeated. This ordinance was only defeated because citizens like you turned out in large numbers to express their outrage. That ordinance is now back for reconsideration.

We all need to be Water Protectors! We all should contact our local elected officials and candidates regarding the creation of oil and gas ordinances that will ensure protection of water in the Albuquerque Basin. NOW is the time to speak up. See the accompanying article by Miya King-Flaherty for updates and for actions you can take to protect our water!

For more information on how to protect your water in the Albuquerque Basin contact Miya King-Flaherty, miya.king-flaherty@sierradub.org, or Mike Fracking endangers basin water

Sandoval drama resumes

By Miya King-Flaherty
Our Wild New Mexico

Sandoval County is again at risk of passing an oil and gas ordinance that threatens a water source that nearly 800,000 people depend on.

In March, Sandoval County commis-
sioners voted for a citizens working group to develop an ordinance to ensure the protection of aquifers, groundwater and surface water, and prioritize citizen input and meaningful tribal consultation.

However, things quickly changed. There are now two citizen groups drafting ordinances. One, called “the Science Team,” is co-led by Planning and Zoning Commissioner Peter Arango and former Planning and Zoning Chair John Arango. The other, called the “Ordinance Team,” is co-led by Mary Feldblum of Earthworks’ Oil and Gas Accountability Project.

Complicating matters more, other ordinances have been developed, including one by County Commissioner Jay Blake. This has resulted in discord and discouraging developments at recent Planning and Zoning meetings.

On Aug. 28, Planning and Zoning commissioners voted 4-2 on a motion to recommend three oil and gas ordinances to the County Commission by the next meeting. The recommended ordinances were the Science Team’s, the Ordinance Team’s, and Block’s ordinance. However, at the Sept. 25 meeting, commissioners did not follow through on their motion to recommend these three ordinances, instead recommending only the Science Team’s ordinance and a completely new measure called the Baseline Ordinance. The ordinance developed by the other citizens group was not even considered.

The Baseline Ordinance, a revamped version of the Sandoval County basin water ordinance that was rejected last year, does not offer adequate aquifer protections or health safeguards, nor does it include tribal input. It divides the county with different approval processes and allows the Planning and Zoning director to approve drilling permits without public hear-
ing or input in the western part of the county.

The Baseline Ordinance also lacks requirements for hazardous-waste disposal and allows drilling within 1,000 feet of sacred and cultural sites.

Let’s not repeat last year’s flawed process. Urge county commissioners to consider only the ordinances developed by the citizens groups. Send comments to: PublicComment@sandovalcoun-
tynm.gov, and attend the Oct. 18 County Commission meeting.

Ask state not to issue copper

By Max Yeh
New Mexico Copper wants a permit to transport 8 billion gallons of contaminated waste every year that could threaten Southern New Mexico’s water supply.

The New Mexico Environment Department held a public hear-
ing on the proposed permit Sept. 24-28 in Truth or Consequences, where Sierra Club members and other concerned citizens voiced their opposition to the permit.

The permit for Copper Flat Mine outside Hilltops would allow New Mexico Copper Corp. to discharge 24 million gallons per day of contaminated wastewater that “may move directly or indirectly into the groundwater” and “may contain water contaminants or toxic pollut-
ants elevated above the standards” of New Mexico’s Clean Water Act.

The discharge will be contained in a 600-acre tailing pond behind a sand dam. Even a minor break in the retaining dam or its synthetic liner can cause catastrophic damage to surface and groundwater east and south of the mine, endanger-
ing Caballo Reservoir and the Rio Grande and therefore all Mesilla Valley municipal and agricultural water users. This threat to people and the economy will exist until two decades past closure, where the 24 billion gallons of wastewater (that once was drinking water) is evapo-
\r\nItineraries

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A Multimedia Documentary

KiMo Theatre

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October/November/December 2018
Chapter’s Barish wins national award

By Mona Blaber
Chapter communications

O n Sept. 29, our own Richard Barish won the national Sierra Club’s 2018 Special Service Award.

The award honors a Sierra Club member for strong and consistent commitment to conservation or the Club over an extended period of time.

That’s Richard: In his 31 years volunteering, Richard has put in countless hours as the Rio Grande Chapter’s brilliant compliance officer, but he’s also the Bosque Action Team chair and the Central New Mexico Group political chair.

Richard has served the Rio Grande Chapter for years, but this year his persistence and commitment was exemplified in his leadership of guiding us through our endorsement process,” said Chapter Chair David Cox. “He led dozens of endorsements, helping craft thoughtful questionnaires, coordinating candidate interviews, navigating the complex politics of primary endorsements, tracking each moving part of the final votes and coordinating volunteers and fundraisers to get us over the finish line for candidates who can help us protect New Mexico’s environment.”

“Richard is the kind of volunteer that makes running a Chapter possible,” said Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman. “He seems to put more hours into his volunteer work than into a full-time job. His work inspires that of other volunteers, and his leadership has created space for new leaders. Richard has vision and details persistence which together make him incredibly effective. I regularly think to myself, ‘thank goodness for Richard.’

“Richard has been a persistent, dedicated, and strategic leader with the Sierra Club’s effort to help the Bosque. He has brought both a deep love of nature and a background in law to share with the group,” said Sarita Streng, Bosque Action Team member and Bosquitos leader.

On top of it all, he’s kind and a true pleasure to work with. Thank you, Richard! And congratulations!

The club’s top award for public officials, the Edgar Wayburn Award, went to another New Mexican, Sen.

Sierra Club President Loren Blackford, left, and director Ramón Cruz, right, present Richard Barish with the Special Service Award. Susan Martin, who nominated Barish, also attended the Denver ceremony.

Lifetime member: Madeline Aron

On our 55th anniversary as a chapter, we ask our lifetime members to share their stories of why they belong to the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter. In this issue, we celebrate Madeline Aron of Albuquerque.

The first 10 years of my life were spent in the Berkshire Hills in Lenox, Massachusetts. My parents were 1st-generation Eastern European Jewish-Americans. They established a culturally and racially inclusive hotel and arts center that helped change the discriminatory practices of the area.

My love of nature, the arts and social justice were inextricably entwined in my being. I joined the Sierra Club because of its dedication to Nature, and its willingness to support environmental justice causes and the need for diversity in grassroots environmental activism.

Sierra Club and Root Beer to focus on immigration discussion

By Cecilia Chávez Beltrán
Excursions coordinator

6-8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 2, Sierra Club & Root Beer at Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice.

Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico invites you to take a walk through the mosaic of Albuquerque. It is indeed a controversial theme nowadays, but it’s a very real and present part of life for many people.

In December last year, Excursiones visited Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and appreciated the beautiful view of birds enjoying their migration. Flying freely, moving from one sky to another according to their seasonal needs … oh, the freedoms! Then, I contrast that with what I feel and experience when volunteering with a group providing legal information to migrants at the Cibola Detention Center just 70 minutes west of Albuquerque. If it was not for those volunteers, the imprisoned migrants would have no way to understand how to navigate the immigration system.

Myriad reasons make us human beings migrate; to leave the well-known surroundings, the loved people, the comfort of our language, idiosyncrasies, culture and the understanding of how things work. Facing intense change ahead, people move forward in life for political reasons, economic reasons, social reasons, religious reasons. Local volunteers, including grassroots leaders, an attorney (or two), activists and others in the community — either on their own or as part of not-for-profit organizations — will give us a glimpse of their work at the local level, to counteract the unjust, inhumane and unpredictable immigration system.

Can you do something about it? Yes. You can find out how you can get involved at the next Sierra Club and Root Beer on Friday on Nov. 2. And then you choose. Any question, idea or comment can be directed to Cecilia.Chavez.Beltran@sierraclub.org

Donate to the Rio Grande Chapter; it’s easy!

When you contribute to the Rio Grande Chapter, your entire donation stays here in New Mexico and West Texas to protect our climate, land, water and wildlife. You can donate at riograndesierran.org/donate, or send your check to: Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter 1107 Second Street, Unit 45 Santa Fe, NM 87505

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible.

To stay updated on issues you read about in The Sierran, go to riograndesierran.org and subscribe to the chapter e-mail list.

Donate Your Vehicle Today!

Support our efforts to protect and improve the environment around us by making a significant contribution to our vehicle donation program.

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Sierra Club & Root Beer series

6-8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 2, Sierra Club & Root Beer at Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice.

Excursiones visits Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge.

The Sierran is the monthly newsletter of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, published in English and distributed in New Mexico.

Rio Grande Sierran publication information

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Contributions are welcome. Send to riogrande.chaptersierran@sierraclub.org. Submissions by Rio Grande Chapter members will take precedence. Articles chosen to be published are subject to editing.
The Sierra Club Los Alto Chapter sends questionnaires to and interviews eligible candidates, and two chapter committees must approve every endorsement by a two-thirds vote in order for a candidate to be endorsed. (Incumbents can be judged by their public record rather than a questionnaire). These pages list only our endorsed candidates who have opposition in the Nov. 6 general election. The chapter could add endorsements after press time.

Our chapter political action committee runs a grassroots, volunteer-based effort to elect environmental champions. We recruit volunteers for key swing races, canvass, inform our membership and run ads to promote great candidates. Helping these candidates win is the best way to impact your local government, and you’ll have fun and meet great people.

Get in on the action! To learn how to volunteer or donate to our winning efforts, please write to Camilla Feibelman at camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org or losaltos.chapter@sierraclub.org.

## A note about Sierra Club endorsements

**By Susan Martin**

**Chapter political chair**

The most powerful way to protect our water, wildlife, land and climate is through good environmental policy, and the most powerful way to ensure good policy is to elect pro-environment candidates.

The Sierra Club Los Alto Chapter sends questionnaires to and interviews eligible candidates, and two chapter committees must approve every endorsement by a two-thirds vote in order for a candidate to be endorsed. (Incumbents can be judged by their public record rather than a questionnaire). These pages list only our endorsed candidates who have opposition in the Nov. 6 general election. The chapter could add endorsements after press time.

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### Volunteer profile: Tom Gorman

By Mona Blaber

Tom Gorman is a Sierra Club volunteer. His work is focused on canvassing and ensuring candidates who win in tough races, and it makes it worth it to see strong environmental candidates elected.

What would you tell people who want to get involved but aren’t sure about going door to door or talking on the phone?

Regarding canvassing, I say give it try, you might decide it’s not as difficult as you think. Go out with an experienced canvasser. Calling is also really important and can provide the information and motivation to turn out voters. Try it!

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### County Commissions

#### Bernailllo

Charlene Pyskoty

Charlene Pyskoty is running for an open seat in the Northeast Heights and East mountains that was vacated by Wayne Johnson. Pyskoty, who’s been a Sierra Club volunteer, displayed excellent knowledge of environmental issues and said she would prioritize renewable energy, sustainable development and water conservation on the commission.

#### Santa Fe

Rudy Garcia

Long-time land-use manager Rudy Garcia is a dedicated local professional familiar with all aspects of county planning and the need to carefully weigh all impacts of new developments on water, infrastructure and quality of life in Santa Fe County. He also helped draft the county’s strong oil and gas drilling ordinance, a model for other counties.

#### Sandoval

Katherine Bruch

Katherine Bruch has been active in opposing legislation that would fast track fracking in the Albuquerque Basin in Sandoval County, where there is an extremely high risk of pollution of groundwater due to the highly fractured geology. As the commission goes through the process of crafting an ordinance again, Katherine will give residents a voice in county decision making.

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### Doña Ana County: Lynn Ellins, Shannon Reynolds and Karen Trujillo

**Lynn Ellins (District 1)** proved to be a champion for voting rights during his tenure as county clerk from 2008 to 2016. Ellins was the first clerk in the state to grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples and ran an efficient, transparent elections office.

Ellins also committed to protecting Doña Ana County’s natural resources as commissioner. He said among his top concerns were funding for law enforcement, affordable housing, flood mitigation and humane treatment of animals.

**Shannon Reynolds (District 3)** is an Air Force veteran who had good ideas for water conservation and protecting land and wildlife as a commissioner.

**Karen Trujillo (District 5)** is director of a teachers’ learning alliance at New Mexico State University and an educator with more than 20 years’ experience. Trujillo showed a depth of knowledge on local water issues and supports public lands and policy that protects our natural resources for future generations.

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### West Texas

**O**ur Rio Grande Chapter includes not just New Mexico but also Hudspeth, Culberson and El Paso County in Texas. Our El Paso Group and the Lone Star Chapter have vetted some great candidates for El Paso members to support Nov. 6.

**U.S. Senate: Beto O’Rourke**

We know Beto O’Rourke well from his great work as El Paso’s Congressional representative. He managed to pass protections for Carstens Range in the Franklin Mountains in 2017 even under an anti-environment administration. O’Rourke has heart and dedication, and Texas would benefit greatly with him as our U.S. senator.

**Governor: Lupe Valdez**

Texas can’t afford having climate-change denier Greg Abbott leading the state. Texas produces more wind energy than any other state and is rapidly increasing solar. Valdez wants to invest in this future and make Texas a clean-energy superpower.

**Lieutenant governor: Mike Collier**

Collier wants to hold Texas businesses to a high standard of environmental safety and believes Texas should be the leader in technological innovation and commercialization of clean energy.

**Attorney General: Kim Olson**

Olson has a natural-organic certification from the Texas Organic Research Center. She is a Master Gardener who provides ‘beyond organic’ foods and is committed to sustainable eco-agriculture.

**Rancher: Roman McAllen**

The Railroad Commission regulates oil and gas, and McAllen wants to bring science-based decisionmaking back to the commission.

**Attorney General: Justin Nelson**

Nelson would be a breath of fresh and ethical air as opposed to indicted Ken Paxton, who’s never seen an EPA investigation he didn’t want to kill.

**State Rep. Joe Moody, in District 78,** is a lawyer and incumbent who authored a bill increasing the penalty for offenses involving cruelty to animals.

**State legislative environmental champions Mary Gonzales, in District 79, Poncho Nevarez, District 74, and Lina Ortega, District 77,** are unopposed.

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October/November/December 2018
**Torres Small: Building consensus**

It's pretty clear when you meet Xochitl Torres Small that she is a special candidate: She's deeply knowledgeable about a wide range of issues, she's energetic, she listens to everyone, but most of all it's clear that she truly cares about people.

The daughter of a teacher and a social worker, Torres Small grew up in Las Cruces, where she lives now. She worked her way through college and graduated cum laude from Georgetown University in just three years. Growing up in the desert, Torres Small knows that our future depends on protecting our drinking water. She emphasizes the importance of working together to find community-driven solutions, and as a water-rights attorney, she works with local governments, farmers, developers, and conservationists to best use our shared resource.

Torres Small is running to replace Steve Pearce, who took every opportunity to gut climate and water safeguards and diminish New Mexico's national monuments. If Torres Small can win this newly competitive Southern New Mexico district, a true turnaround for the better is in store.

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**Haaland devoted to preserving resources**

Deborah Haaland speaks sincerely and passionately about environmental justice and protecting people by protecting their access to clean water and a safe climate. She advocates for bold action to prevent climate disaster and boost our economy.

“We need to act fast to counteract climate change and keep fossil fuels in the ground,” Haaland has said. “I pledge to vote against all new fossil-fuel infrastructure and to fight instead for 100% clean energy — including tens of thousands of solar-energy jobs for New Mexicans.”

If she wins, Haaland would become the first Native American woman in Congress. This Albuquerque-area seat is being vacated by U.S. Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham (see left). Haaland will make an excellent successor to an excellent people's representative.

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**Luján does N.M. proud**

Sen. Martin Heinrich championed the creation of the Rio Grande Del Norte and Organ Mountains Desert Peaks national monuments and stood up to the Trump administration's attempted land-grab. He helped pass legislation expanding public access to the Valles Caldera National Preserve and putting the National Park Service in charge of its management.

Heinrich also led the fight to keep a rule limiting natural gas waste to protect the climate and reduce the waste of taxpayer-owned natural gas.

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**Balderas fought for climate-saving rules**

Attorney General Hector Balderas last year joined forces with California AG Xavier Becerra to file suit against the Trump administration over its suspension of a common-sense rule to limit methane pollution from oil and gas drilling.

The Attorney General's Office also appealed the implementation of New Mexico’s “Copper Rule,” which expressly allows pollution under copper mines and was passed after the Environment Department’s Ryan Flynn disregarded his own technical staff and replaced a draft written by a technical committee with a rule implementing every change requested by copper giant FreePort McMoRan.

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**Lujan Grisham’s track record speaks for itself**

This is it, folks. The Rio Grande Chapter and all Progressives are putting in the calls, knocking on doors, making donations, working with allies and making sure their friends and family vote.

Our Chapter’s all-volunteer political team has endorsed a great set of strong candidates who can lead New Mexico forward. After eight years of stagnation and attacks on our land, water and communities by our current governor, we are even more determined to vote.

I am especially excited that Michelle Lujan Grisham will be our next governor. Michelle is experienced, tough, energetic and committed to a progressive future for our state.

Michelle is traveling the state, listening to New Mexicans and making the commitments to move us forward. She has endorsed a renewable portfolio standard for electricity in New Mexico of 80% by 2040. Imagine having a governor who understands the importance of renewable energy to our planet and economy instead of a governor committed to climate denial and the profits of polluters.

This election is one of the best chances we may ever get to stop the extremist represented by Michelle’s opponent, whose reckless actions we can see the tragic effects of here in New Mexico. Michelle will be this governor if we work hard to elect her. She will stand up for our wildlife and for protection of our air and water. Sweetheart deals for polluters can be ended. Abuse of our environment and our communities can be curtailed.

We can have a state government that cares about us, instead of an administration interested only in implementing the Koch brothers’ agenda. Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham will fight to protect New Mexicans — women, Latinos, immigrants, workers, children — from the Trump administration. Her opponent has been a cheerleader and remains another silent enabler of a morally corrupt and dangerous administration.

Michelle is working hard, and so are we in the Sierra Club. If we get her elected, we can move on to a resilient, sustainable future for ourselves and for our communities. Make sure you vote, and please contact us to volunteer if you can spare any time at all. This is it, folks!

— David Coss, Rio Grande chapter chair

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**Heinrich an ally on Chaco, methane**

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**Colón promises to fight waste**

As chair of the New Mexico Democratic Party, Colón oversaw adoption of a platform with a key focus on the environment and energy. As auditor, Colón promises to fight waste and abuse while utilizing the available tools to protect the environment, public lands, and wildlife within the State of New Mexico.

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**Join us every weekend on canvasses near you or learn other ways to help**: 505-243-7767, camilla.fibelman@sierraclub.org.
Election 2018: Remake history

N.M. House of Representatives

**District 8: Mary Jo Jaramillo**
Mary Jo Jaramillo believes our environment supports life. She supports state laws to protect resources and prevent pollution to make up for the federal EPA’s failures and she firmly opposes fracking and the use of millions of gallons of our precious water in the process.

**District 15: Dayan Hochman**
Making New Mexico a leader in renewable energy is a top priority for Hochman, who wants to work with state and local agencies to minimize human-caused climate destruction. She is particularly concerned about fracking on tribal lands and the massive amount of water use by extractive industries.

**District 17: Debbie Armstrong**
Armstrong has been a steadfast protector of air, water, land and wildlife as a legislator. As a public-health advocate, she says, “Clean water and clean energy have a direct impact on the health of communities and residents. I will continue to support all initiatives that clean up the environment.”

**District 20: Abbas Akhil**
Akhil is an engineer who retired from Sandia National Laboratory before forming his own energy consulting business. He has spent his entire career in clean-energy storage and innovation. His expertise would be invaluable in the Roundhouse to craft a sustainable-energy future for New Mexico.

**District 22: Jessica Velasquez**
A Sierra Club member, Velasquez lives in the East Mountains and has been involved with the North 14 Deep Well Protect Group of homeowners to fight the assignment of new water rights to a company for the development of 4,000 homes and two golf courses in the area.

**District 33: Micaela Cadena**
Cadena is the research director at Young Women United, a New Mexico nonprofit, leading statewide policy initiatives and cultural-shift strategies. She has also worked as an advocate for women in correctional facilities.

**District 35: Angelica Rubio**
Rubio has a deeply ingrained understanding and passion for the issues, particularly those issues relating to environmental justice and environmental racism. In her first term she proved her dedication and leadership.

**District 37: Joanne Ferrary**
Ferrary’s first term in the Legislature proved she is a true ally for protecting our climate and people, and she emerged as a leader on the Energy and Environment Committee. Her election is critical to keeping a pro-environment majority.

**District 38: Karen Whitlock**
Whitlock brings not only critical knowledge and expertise as a former compliance officer for a copper company, but also her dedication to clean drinking water and clean air. She was an outstanding advocate in the Legislature.

**District 39: Rudy Martinez**
Martinez, an incumbent with a strong environmental voting record, supports keeping the Gila River free-flowing. He is defending a tough swing seat in Southwest New Mexico that he lost in 2014 and regained in 2016.

**District 43: Chris Chandler**
Chandler has a proven track record in Los Alamos of supporting environmental policies. The longtime Sierra Club member pledges to strengthen methane and water-use standards while supporting public lands and wildlife conservation.

**District 44: Benton Howell**
Howell, a former physicist, is a committed volunteer for the Rio Grande Sierra Club and 350. Org. Howell worked hard among a large coalition of volunteers to help defeat an ordinance that would have paved the way for fracking in Sandoval County.
Secretary of state

Maggie Toulouse Oliver

Perhaps the greatest threat to our democracy is the steady assault on voting rights. In many states, legislators have made it increasingly difficult for young adults, people of color and the elderly to vote. In North Carolina in 2016, county elections commissions severely reduced the number of early-voting sites only in heavily African American counties, in one case from 15 to 2. In Wisconsin, not only did lawmakers pass a voter-ID law based on debunked fears of voter fraud, but it barred college students from using their student IDs, often their only IDs, to vote.

In New Mexico, we are lucky to have an advocate for voter rights, not voter suppression, as our secretary of state. Maggie Toulouse Oliver was a two-term Bernalillo County clerk, increasing efficiency and transparency. After taking office in a 2016 special election, she developed the Native American Voting Taskforce, charged with identifying ways to boost voter registration, education and election participation in tribal communities.

New Mexico has numerous opportunities to increase civic engagement, and Maggie Toulouse Oliver is the experienced, dedicated public servant who will lead us there.

Land commissioner

Stephanie Garcia Richard

Stephanie Garcia Richard has a plan, a thorough plan, she wants to carry out as our Land Commissioner. It involves active work for better protection of our aquifers, promulgating smarter efficient grazing practices, and promoting wind and solar installations on public lands.

It would be refreshing to have the Office of the Land Commissioner have a forward-looking, data-based approach on climate change and its impact on our state. Garcia Richard’s election would ensure that decisions were made that worked for all stakeholders. She has already demonstrated her commitment to the best use of our resources in her three terms as a state senator. She sponsored legislation on renewable energy and solar power development, and she recognizes the need for public lands to produce revenue for our education system, and stands the need for public lands to produce the revenue for our education system.

Garcia Richard will prohibit the use of cruel traps and poisons on all 9 million acres of New Mexico State Trust Lands because they kill indiscriminately. This means that wild animals like bobcats, foxes, badgers and even coyotes, all important species for the balance of nature, will be safer on our state trust lands but so will inadvertent victims like the endangered Mexican wolf. While in the Legislature she consistently voted to outlaw coyote killing contests and as land commissioner will prohibit State lands from being used for this heinous purpose as well.

I have known Stephanie since her first run for the Roundhouse. She’s well-known and greatly appreciated here in Grant County, where her mother was a teacher and Stephanie went to school. Like her mother, she is also an educator. She understands the need for public lands to produce the revenue for our education system, and she knows we need to fund early childhood education as well as K-12.

Stephanie is proud, I know, of her Sierra Club endorsement in this race. And I, as a Sierra volunteer, am most proud to support her.

Land commissioner

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Public Regulation Commission 5

Stephen Fischmann

Steve Fischmann has been a consistent environmental champion since running for the state Senate Conservation Committee and on the boards of Conservation Voters New Mexico and Southwest Environmental Center.

He also co-founded the Southwest Energy Alliance, which championed renewables and energy efficiency.

The Public Regulation Commission has more power over New Mexico’s energy mix than any other body. It’s critical to elect a clean-energy and consumer advocate like Fischmann.

Fischmann has an extensive corporate finance background that will be valuable in assessing the $8 billion in plant and power-line investments that New Mexico’s major utilities plan over the next five years. He believes electric bills can be reduced over time with well-designed incentives in the renewable portfolio.

Treasurer

Tim Eichenberg

Tim Eichenberg sees oil and gas waste in the form of methane pollution as a state Treasury issue. He has signed on time and again to protect important methane safeguards. He is also working to promote environmentally friendly investment and works with CERES promoting green bonds.

District 50: Matthew McQueen

Rep. McQueen has become one of the Legislature’s most informed and passionate champions for a safe climate and protecting people. As chair of the House Environment Committee, he has taken the lead to improve and vet import-
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Global Warming Express takes off

By Genie Stevens, Global Warming Express

The Global Warming Express, based in the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, is taking off on its biggest journey yet, bringing after-school programs to 15 schools in Los Alamos, Santa Fe and Albuquerque. In August, new mentors will be with us for six months to encourage students to put climate science into action.

Brittany Fallon, right, on her research assignment in Uganda, joins the Rio Grande Chapter as conservation and legislation organizer. Derrick Toledo, below, is our new Clean Energy Fellow.

Chapter welcomes new staff

By Camilla Feibelman

The beauty of the Sierra Club is its people. We benefit from strong partnerships with staff supporting our incredible volunteers. This fall brings us two new staff people.

Brittany Fallon started with us as a volunteer and called when she was hired by a lobbyist. "But aren't you a researcher?" I asked. "Yeah, and I love that, but I really want to be an advocate," she replied. And with a mouth full of words, Brittany has already hosted a dinner for legislators at an interim committee meeting, helping us get to know both Democrats and Republicans and sharing information about our most urgent issues.

Derrick Toledo is our new Clean Energy Fellow and will be with us for six months to help us focus on climate action.

Brittany Fallon

Dr. Brittany Fallon is our new conservation and legislative organizer. It may seem odd that Brittany's previous job was as a research professor in linguistics at the University of New Mexico, where she focused on wild-chimpanzee communication and language evolution. Brittany has always felt a pull to politics and a desire to put science into action. Toward that goal, she took a short leave from her academic job to work the 2018 legislative session as an aide to state Sen. Bill Tallman.

Brittany served as assistant director of the Budongo Conservation Field Station in Uganda, where, in addition to doing research, she helped lead community-based conservation efforts, such as a project to provide farmers with a sustainable alternative to pesticide sprays. She also taught conservation education in schools bordering the forest.

Before we hired her, Brittany brought her knowledge of forest conservation as a volunteer with our Bosque Action Team, where she helped develop our save-the-bosque.org website. She is leading an upcoming outing to the Albuquerque Zia Tree to teach the Bosquitos how the tree in the forest. She also taught the Bosquitos a song about a tree in the forest. She taught them about the importance of protecting trees and the beauty of the Sierra Club.

Brittany grew up in Rhode Island and moved to New Mexico with her partner Seth. Brittany's dream is to help others protect the environment. She is working towards that goal.

Derrick Toledo

Derrick Toledo is our new Clean Energy Fellow. Through his six-month fellowship, he will work with the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter to bring climate solutions to the state of New Mexico. Derrick is currently a second-year graduate student studying renewable energy policy at the University of New Mexico. He has a keen interest in renewable energy policy and is excited to bring his expertise to the Sierra Club.

Derrick's research interests include the role of community engagement in renewable energy projects, and he is particularly interested in the intersection of technology and policy. He is passionate about creating a just and sustainable energy future for all Americans.

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The program will bring science, climate science and sustainable solutions to 8- to 12-year-old students throughout the fall term. Students learn about renewable energy, conservation and the role of people in creating a sustainable future.

One of our young GWEers helped to kick off the People’s Climate March in Albuquerque in September. Nine-year-old Emily gave a wonderful speech about her involvement in the Global Warming Express. Some excerpts from Emily’s speech:

“Once a group’s goal was that we wanted to get solar panels on our school. Then we found out that there were already solar panels on the school. That was exciting! But then we found out that they were only making 10-15% of our school’s energy...”

“I think that we needed to make a bigger change because it is an emergency! It’s an emergency for the earth because we are destroying the planet and it is the only planet that we can survive on. I care about me and other kids’ futures, so we need to do something now. 10-15% is not enough! My friends and I are working to get more solar panels. What are you doing?”

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El Paso Group; Zero Waste

El Paso: Contamination in recycling is costing us

By Laurence Gibson
El Paso Group Chair

D id you know? Friedman Recycling Companies washes cans and plastics three times before they are loaded for shipment to China: once locally, once in Phoenix and once in Los Angeles! Just a quick rinse at home is enough. Friedman handles recycled materials for several cities in New Mexico as well as Arizona and West Texas at plants in El Paso, Tuscon and Phoenix.

Did you know? El Paso has a 3.3% contamination rate of recyclables, 10 times more than Las Cruces! This is calculated at a quarterly “audit,” where materials are weighed, then spread out onto a warehouse floor, then separated into bins of useful stuff and trash for the landfill, which is then weighed. Friedman’s fees are adjusted after each audit. Garden hoses and diapers (all kinds of diapers!) are among the most frequent contaminants in El Paso. Even dead animals show up.

Did you know? Complaints to City Council representatives from households having their blue recycling bins confiscated (for contaminating) put a halt to El Paso’s Environmental Services Department using this tool to reduce the contamination rate. Now offenders get an “Oops” tag.

Did you know? When El Paso began recycling a few years ago, Friedman was paying the city. Now the city is paying Friedman $800,000, and Friedman is demanding to renegotiate the rate several times a year.

El Pasoans: Did you know we are no longer allowed to recycle plastic bags? We were the only place I know of allowed to collect individual bags into one large bag and throw it into the blue bin for vacumming up on the single-stream conveyor. And Environmental Services no longer wants any paper smaller than a half-page. This is a real heartbreaker: seems smaller pieces of paper, even a grocery receipt, fall out of the bags, blowing around and cluttering up the landscape.

Most of these changes are driven by China, which has for several decades has bought a third of the world’s recyclables. Their recent ban on mixed paper and mixed plastic has created a glut of paper worldwide. This, coupled with their June 2018 0.5% contamination standard, has increased the quality requirements for recyclables everywhere. They don’t want “just any old trash” anymore. Until new markets develop, local recycling programs will need even more help — including yours!

El Paso Contacts
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Neha Haridin, 227-5154,
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Exempt from the ban are single-use plastic straws, and generating energy from trash. We’ll advocate for responsible corporate and commercial recycling programs. A variety of creative solutions are needed for our high-desert environment.

Other American municipalities have made great strides in this direction. We see no reason why Albuquerque cannot become a forward-thinking community as well.

We are a small group of concerned citizens from varied backgrounds. Those who have expertise and/or creative ideas along these lines are invited to join the effort. Email Carol at pictografis@comcast.net with the subject line Zero Waste. We’ll need all the help we can get.

Reducing comes first; let’s start with straws


One thing that really struck my mind was that the average American family throws out four tons of trash every year! I realized that this is partly because many people can’t be recycled at all. One example is juice boxes. Juice boxes are made out of plastic, paper, and metal smashed together. That is called a composite material, and you cannot recycle composite materials.

My research showed that one of the biggest littering problems is single-use plastic straws. Single-use plastic straws are one of the main kinds of trash found on beach cleanups. One of the reasons they are found all over is because people like the feeling of sucking — it is an addictive habit. There are some solutions to this problem, such as corn-based straws and reusable straws. I don’t want to completely ban straws because for some people they can be very useful or necessary. A corn straw is made out of cornstarch and can be composted. I personally think that paper straws are not a good solution because it means chopping down more trees, and

Northern N.M. Zero Waste Team zeroes in on plastic

By Joseph Eigner, Zero Waste Team

The efforts of the Zero Waste Committee to persuade Santa Fe County staff and commissioners to increase recycling at county drop-off facilities have not been successful. While the county has had an ordinance since 2005 that requires all users at the drop-off sites to recycle, it has been unwilling to enforce it. Our proposal to develop an implementation plan and a means to fund it were rejected. Solubalization and transportation are the county’s sustainability priorities for the coming year.

Our goal for 2019 will instead focus on educating the public on the difficulty of recycling single-use plastic items and packaging and the dangers they cause to the environment when they are not sent to the landfill.

Our team continues to work with Sierra Club, Eldorado/285 Recycles, Vista Grande Public Library, Eldorado Fire & Rescue, and the Eldorado Community Improvement Association to make all events at which food and drink are served true zero waste. Crucial to success has been the cooperation of local commercial compost Reunity Resources in composting the food waste and compostable plastic serving items that we collect at these events.

Amelia Babic is a Global Warming Express participant; her mom, Sarita Streng, runs our youth Bosquitos program.

El Paso Group; Zero Waste

In late August the El Paso Group delivered six boxes containing 10,372 letters plus a list of 4,628 names of people to Carter Smith, Texas Parks and Wildlife executive director, to support a plan to return wolves to the wilds of Texas.

El Paso Group Chair Laurence Gibson

By Carol Chamberland
Central NM Zero Waste

The Central Group has recently initiated a new action team dedicated to reducing waste in the Albuquerque area.

We aim to divert trash from the local landfill by increasing general usage of the existing city recycling program and by promoting city-wide communal composting.

We plan to research and encourage post-collection processing of recyclables and compostables into useful, marketable products. We’ll look at banning plastic bags and straws, and generating energy from our trash.

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Exempt from the ban are single-use plastic straws, and generating energy from trash. We’ll advocate for responsible corporate and commercial recycling programs. A variety of creative solutions are needed for our high-desert environment.

Other American municipalities have made great strides in this direction. We see no reason why Albuquerque cannot become a forward-thinking community as well.

We are a small group of concerned citizens from varied backgrounds. Those who have expertise and/or creative ideas along these lines are invited to join the effort. Email Carol at pictografis@comcast.net with the subject line Zero Waste. We’ll need all the help we can get.
Restoring a dying river: Rio Fernando de Taos

By Shannon Romeling

Rio Grande Chapter/ Amigos Bravos

Dry sections, E. coli, bacteria concentrations, degenerating acequia systems, limited in-town access and bank impairments and degradation are just a few of the issues plaguing the Rio Fernando de Taos.

The Rio Fernando is the major drainage for the Taos basin and plays a key part in sustaining wildlife, recreation, and agriculture in the area. It has become an important way for bird migration and habitat for river otters, coyotes, and beavers. For generations, Taos Valley community members have recreated in its upper watershed of Taos Canyon. Its waters are as critical today to supporting irrigated agriculture and human communities in Taos Valley as they were 300 years ago.

Despite its importance to Taosieros, the health of the Rio Fernando has deteriorated. Fortunately, we are working diligently to combat these threats.

Formed in 2017, the Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Collaborative is a dynamic group with a long-term plan to restore the river.

The group includes Amigos Bravos, Taos County, Taos Land Trust, Taos Valley Acquecia Association, New Mexico Conservation, Town of Taos, US Forest Service, the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District, and Trout Unlimited. Projects under way include: Water-quality sampling in partnership with Water Sentinel; Amigos Bravos and Water Sentinels have been sampling the Rio Fernando since 2007. Our sampling has shown numerous exceedances for E. coli, dissolved oxygen, and specific conductance. You can volunteer for this project! Contact me at sromeling@amigosbravos.org.

Repairs to the main Rio Fernando Acquecia Headgate: The Taos Valley Acquecia Association has identified priorities for repairing the aging acquecia systems of the Rio Fernando. The first project involves upgrading the pumphouse (with some small improvements used to divert the acquecia at the headgate).

The Vigil y Rama Acquecia Education: The Taos Valley Acquecia Association is also working to restore the work on the Vigil y Rama Acquecia and organizing education efforts on acquecia and the importance of their use for the water table.

Watershed-based planning: Amigos Bravos has been working on water-quality issues on the Rio Fernando de Taos for more than 12 years. In 2016 Amigos Bravos received funding from the New Mexico Environment Department to do extensive monitoring of E. coli, source identification, and watershed-based planning in the Rio Fernando watershed. It will be completed in 2019.

Microbial Source Tracking of the Rio Fernando: This project will analyze species of E. coli contributing to the river and improve the quality of the Watershed Based Plan to be completed in Summer 2019. This is a project of the Rio Fernando de Taos Revitalization Collaborative and while there are three goals of the Collaborative, members agreed that bacteria contamination is a public health issue that should be dealt with immediately.

Rio Fernando Park Planning: The new, 20-acre Taos Land Trust Park on the Rio Fernando is starting year two of their master planning process. The new park borders Fred Baca Park and includes 7 acres of wetlands plagued with invasive species. Restoration on these wetlands is part of the Park Plan. Sign up at www.taolandtrust.org to attend their events, provide your input on the Park Planning process, and volunteer at the park.

Rio Grande Water Fund La Jara Wetland Restoration: La Jara was identified as one of 10 Wetland Jewels in the Carson. In November, Amigos Bravos received a grant from the Rio Grande Water Fund for restoration.

How you can help:

— Inspect your septic tank every 3-5 years.
— If you rely on a domestic well, water, conserve.
— If you have surface-water rights, consider irrigation.
— Recycle.
— Dispose of trash properly.
— Minimize off-road vehicle crossing.
— Clean up your pet waste.
— Contact Judy Torres, Taos Valley Acquecia Association (575) 758-9461 taosacqueciass@gmail.com, or Rachel Connelly, Amigos Bravos, (575) 758-3874 rconn@amigosbravos.com to volunteer or learn more.

Other responsibilities

Chapter Representative: Tom Gorman

Membership: Alice Cox

Volunteers: Open

Office: Jerry Knapczyk

Outings co-chairs: Tobin Oruch, 505-820-2844, tobin.oruch@yahoo.com, and Alan Shapiro, 505-424-9242, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Phone Support: Jerry Knapczyk

Publicity: Open

Book Sales: Janet Peacock 505-988-8929, sfdayhikes@gmail.com.


Public lands: Tom Gorman, 505-570-0583, joseigner@gmail.com; Karen Sweeney, 505-466-9797, kswourney99@comcast.net.

Regional Contacts

Las Vegas: Joann Spencer, 505-454-0551, gisgopher@cybermesa.com.

Taos: Eric Patterson, 575-776-2833, expat@gmail.com.

Restoring a dying river: Rio Fernando de Taos
Wildfires in our state have two major ignition sources: lightning strikes and human-caused fires. Part of the human ignition comes from downed power lines that spark in often remote mountain forest locations and burns unnoticed for hours before the alarm is sounded.

Proactively, many power-line corridors have been cleared so falling trees due to storms and high winds no longer pose a threat. One such corridor runs for a few miles through the Chaparral Girl Scouts camp outside Cuba in the Jemez Mountains.

Every fall, Pastor James Therrien of Lybrook Ministries in Counselor Chapter locates public or private forested lands that permit woodcutting by his volunteer crew of sawyers. This team of experienced cutters comes to the Navajo chapter every year to cut firewood for elderly residents. The goal is eight trailer loads a day for three days, or about 24 cords (5,000 pounds per cord).

This year, Pastor Therrien contacted the Northern Group, which called State Forester Todd Haines, who decided the closest place to Counselor was the year-old power-line corridor project at Chaparral. Girl Scouts of New Mexico Trails CEO Peggy Sanchez Mills gave permission to cut and haul as much free wood as the church could take over the following week.

More than 25 residents showed up to cut some 50 cords of firewood that will heat rural homes this winter for elderly residents in Counselor. And the Girl Scouts have a cleaned-up, “fire-proof” corridor.

Celebrate a Year of Enjoying, Exploring and Protecting — the Environment!

Northern New Mexico Group Holiday Get-Together

December 1st, 2018
Museum Hill Café
On Museum Hill in Santa Fe
5 to 7 p.m.

Come join in the food & fun and a brief but gorgeous photographic journey to the Okeanano Wildlife Preserve with the Northern NM Group of Sierra Club

Come early and do some unique season’s shopping at the Museum of International Folk Art bookstore and handmade-gift shop as well as the Museum of Indian Arts shop of renowned artists jewelry, fetishes, books and prints.

RSVP: Alice Cox 505-780-5122
Email: auntiealice@cybermesa.com

Reservations Required. $15/person
Cash Bar
Space limited to 85
Discovering the secret lives of trees

By Jody Benson

What is a tree thinking when you're not around?

What is life like for a tree? You might think that because a ponderosa pine just stands there, it's not doing anything. But if you pay attention to that pine — or any other tree — you'll see that although it just stands there with roots in the ground and branches in the air, it is actually holding up the world.

The Pajarito Group introduced kids to this idea during the group’s activity at the Pajarito Environmental Education Center’s Bear Festival. On the Kiinlulinni Trail, group members led gaggles of children out to meet trees, to compare a spruce needle to a limber pine’s and a Russian olive leaf to a Siberian elm's. They identified many of the life-supporting assets trees share with humans: medicinal species, from providing fruit and shade to making oxygen and offering shelter for every kind of animal. They figured out that without trees, “We would have to live in tents,” and “We would need to use scuba-diving tanks for air.”

They stopped to feel the bark and hold onto the trunk of the biggest ponderosa as they looked straight up into the crown. On the rim of Acid Canyon, this “mother tree” takes care of the younger ponderosas rooted around her.

They learned mother trees have a mycorrhizal (fungal) network that connects their root systems to neighboring trees, and through which the mother can direct distress signals in smaller neighbors. When “she” detects distress, she will increase the flow of nutrients through her roots into the mycorrhizal network, thereby shifting the excess sugar the bigger mothers can produce.

In the tangle of elms and apricots the kids felt the ground where the elder trees were, and when they grow thick, they grow strong. We — like the trees — will give homes to the next generation, and protect them where we’re rooted so we can grow. And when we’re grown big, we — like the trees — will give homes to the next generation, and protect them where we’re rooted so we can grow.

A major figure in American conservation, Udall was a descendent of Mormon pioneers, a decorated World War II pilot, outdoorsman, presidential confidant, prolific writer, and poet. Perhaps no other public official has ever had as much success in environmental protection, natural-resource conservation, and outdoor-recreation creation as Udall. As U.S. Secretary of the Interior under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, he helped create the Wilderness Act, Endangered Species Preservation Act, and Wild and Scenic Rivers System, along with establishing dozens of new national parks and wildlife refuges. Udall also spent significant time in the 1980s and 90s defending Navajo uranium miners. Some of your older Sierrans may have worked with him on conservation issues after he moved to Northern New Mexico. He has a connection with Los Alamos in that he was interested in LANL’s Hot Dry Rock geothermal initiative.

Too much of today’s youth lack understanding about current government and so-called leadership. Their Youth is suspicious of politicians. We need to make a change.

The Pajarito Group is partnering with PECC, 2600 Canyon Road, for our Sierra Club Presentations. Please watch your emails for announcements on future talks. In addition, are you interested in giving a presentation? Have you taken a journey, photographed flowers, collared elk, recorded wildlife? The Pajarito Group has many talented people doing remarkable things. If you are interested in giving a presentation, contact Jody Benson, echidnae@gmail.com.

The talk is hosted by the Northern New Mexico and Pajarito Groups of Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter.

Pajarito Group Directory
http://pajarito.rgiograndesierrachurch.org/node/13

Executive Committee
Chair/Secretary: Jody Benson, echidnae@gmail.com, 505/662-4782
Howard Barnum, hnbarnum@aol.com
Cheryl Bell, belltranche@gmail.com, 505/672-9657
Irish Chung, itlchung@hotmail.com
Michael DiRosa, mddibnn@gmail.com
Nona Girardi, nonamg@aol.com
Carene Larmat, carenelarmat@gmail.com, 505/920-5675

Committee Chairs
Bag Ban: Treasurer: Mark Jones, jonesmm1@comcast.net, 505/662-9443
Conservation: Michael DiRosa, mddibnn@gmail.com
Global Warming: Charles Keller, alfanso@cybermesa.com, 505/662-7915
Mining: David Torney, dtorney@valnet.com, 575/829-3433
Newsletter Editor, Publicity, Sprawler, Transportation, Endangered Species: Wildhike: Jody Benson, echidnae@gmail.com, 505/662-4782
Open Spaces, Caldera Issues: Howard Barnum, hnbarnum@aol.com
Political, Cool Cities, Membership: Mark Jones, jonesmm1@comcast.net, 505/662-9443
Water Issues: Barbara Cafel, bcfcfel@yahoo.com, 505/662-3825

Meetings and events
The Pajarito Group is partnering with PECC, 2600 Canyon Road, for our Sierra Club Presentations. Please watch your emails for announcements on future talks. In addition, are you interested in giving a presentation? Have you taken a journey, photographed flowers, collared elk, recorded wildlife? The Pajarito Group has many talented people doing remarkable things. If you are interested in giving a presentation, contact Jody Benson, echidnae@gmail.com.

Next presentation:
Black Bears, Wildlife, and Forest Restoration Treatments in the Southwest Jemez Mountains
7 p.m., Friday, Oct. 19
Dr. James Cain, USGS, New Mexico Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Ecology, New Mexico State University.

Decades of fire suppression, logging, and overgrazing have altered the conditions of Southwestern forests, resulting in degraded ecosystems. Around the world, for wildlife and more frequent and severe wildfires. These changes have resulted in an increased need for forest-restoration treatments to restore historic forest structure, plant species composition, and fire regimes. Cain will present his research.

The talk is hosted by the Northern New Mexico and Pajarito Groups of Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter.
By Sarita Streng

The Bosquitos are the youth-oriented group of the Bosque Action Team with a mission to learn about Albuquerque’s Bosque, the animals and plants that live there, and ways to take care of the Bosque and our earth as a precious natural space.

During the spring and early summer we held three outings. In March we visited Valle del Oro for the “Birding and Breakfast” program. We had a wonderful time eating a breakfast catered by students from Artrosis Heritage Academy. Then we went out to the refuge with guides Teresa Skiba and bird guide Becky. We saw a wonderful variety of wildlife and birds including sandhill cranes, kestrels, bald eagles, junkos, crows, ravens, and a coyote. We observed many different tracks and looked at crayfish habitat. We learned a bit about the different types of calls that birds make including alarm calls, location calls, and territory calls. Teresa and Becky also helped us learn how to use binoculars.

In April we visited the Rio Grande in Albuquerque with civil engineer Aubrey Harris. Aubrey’s walk and talk focused on learning what features of the Bosque are human-made, “natural,” or a combination. She also helped us identify basic features of the Bosque that engineers consider when dealing with river management issues.

Aubrey helped us learn how to define what a watershed is through observation, question, and answer. We learned about the history of jetty jacks and how before the jetty jacks the river moved around a lot more. We learned about levees. We discussed the complicated interactions between people wanting water rights for different uses and also how river management issues and human use affect other species. At the end of the walk, Aubrey Bosquitos did a scavenger hunt with an introduction and Q&A with Dave Parsons. For more information about our group, please contact Sarita Streng at saritastreng@yahoo.com.

Training for outings leaders

If you love the outdoors and you want to share that love with others, or it’s approaching four or more years since you completed Outings Leader Training, you want to! The Rio Grande Chapter will be offering Outings Leader Training (OLT-101) from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 3, at the Albuquerque office.

This training is required for those wishing to begin leading outings, and is required for existing outings leaders if they’re approaching four years since they last attended. This refresh is required to retain their certification.

The requirements to become a certified outings leader are:

■ Be a current member of the Sierra Club and at least 18 years old.
■ Complete the Sierra Club Outings Leader Application, available online.
■ Complete first-aid and CPR certification classes.
■ Complete the Basic Sierra Club Outings Leader Training, OLT 101.
■ Complete a provisional hike with a certified outings leader.

This training opportunity will provide you with the tools and information you need to lead a safe, inspiring and fun outing.

Attendees will receive a resource packet that includes the Outings Leader Handbook, updated forms and ideas for planning your own outings. It’s also a great opportunity to meet others that share your passion for preserving our natural world.

Upon completion of the Outings Leader requirements, attendees will have the opportunity to plan and lead at least two outings within 12 months.

For further information, contact Terry Owen at 505-301-4349, teowen@q.com.

Military outings program still serving

By Terry Owen

Military Outings program

The Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program is here to serve our brothers and sisters who served our nation. It is led by military veterans Terry Owen and Jeff Link, who know and respect the extraordinary wild lands in the Land of Enchantment. Our goal is to teach what service members, veterans and their families have the skills, exposure, knowledge and confidence to access the great outdoors. They understand that time spent outdoors in nature can help quiet the mind and heal the spirit. Moreover, in our accelerating society where we’re plugged in 24 hours a day, spending time in the outdoors has been found to be beneficial to everyone.

The Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program conducts outings of various lengths and difficulties, and everyone is welcome to join. Terry notes, “on average just over one-third of our outings participants are associated with the military. The remaining two-thirds are people who just want to get a healing dose of nature.” John and I guide them into the wilderness and we can quickly see the transformation in their demeanor, and their stress level as it melts away. Knowing that everyone who’s testing and enjoying one another’s company on the trail.

If you’re interested in getting a dose of nature, you’re invited to join us on a Military Outdoors program outing. This quarter, several easy outings are planned that are also handicap accessible. You’ll find them on Meetup and at www.riograndesierraclub.org. Contact Terry Owen, teowen@q.com or 505-301-4349, for more information, or if you’re a military veteran interested in becoming a Sierra Club outings leader.

Hikes and Events

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December

Saturday, Dec. 1: Petroglyphs at Piedras Marcadas Canyon Trail: off Golf Course Road at Jilli Patrick Street. Easy to moderate hike in volcanic landscape, 9 to noon Children OK. $2 parking fee. Contact Facebook page: Excursions a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico, 505-967-2477.

Saturday, Dec. 22: Solutice petroglyph hike along Rinconada Canyon Loop Trail in Petroglyph National Monument near Corrales. Due to restrictions on the site there are about 300 petroglyphs to be viewed. Easy hike: 2.2 miles and 250-foot altitude change. The outing starts at 8:30 a.m., last about 2 hours and include information on the petroglyphs as well as some gentle yoga.

OK to bring dogs on leash and children over the age of 10 if accompanied by a legal guardian or parent. To RSVP and obtain additional information, contact NLT Dec. 20, Aubrey Parsons, 832-723-4535, comicolorve@gmail.com, or Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@q.com.

Cross-country ski and snowshoe outings will be scheduled for December. See Meetup (www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings), Trail Mix email or riograndesierraclub.org/ outings for updates.

Outings updates


Know before you go: For status of fire restrictions and burn bans across New Mexico, visit firerestrictions.us/nm. Updates are also in our weekly email — send an email to Listserv@lists.sierrane.org with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS.
October-December outings

Saturday, October 6: 9 a.m., at White Mesa Bike/Hiking Trails parking area. White Mesa is a bizarre, lovely and fun place to hike, due to rocky outcrops and exotic colors. Here the geology of the land is on full display! Moderate hike. The 3.5-mile trail is full sun, so be prepared with sunscreen and water. Contact Carrie Ann at drnvilel@hotmail.com.

Saturday, October 6: Oucing to the Albuquerque BioPark Zoo with Dr. Brittany Fallon, 2 p.m. We will visit the zoo with Rio Grande Chapter’s Brittany Fallon to learn about primate behavior. Fallon is a primatologist and UNM research assistant professor who has researched chimpanzees, both in captivity and the wild, for 11 years. She will lead the Bosquitos through the primate exhibits in the Albuquerque Zoo, and discuss the different types of forest each species lives in and how they compare to the forests of New Mexico. We will visit orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees, siamangs, and lemurs on the trip. Please meet at the entrance to the zoo. We are asking that participants pay their entrance fee. However, if that is a hardship for you, please contact Sarita Streng and 505-288-8713 and we may be able to provide some financial assistance.

Saturday, October 6: Moderate hike along part of the Chama River Trail: this hike is just over the Colorado border above Chama. It is a 10-mile round-trip, out-and-back with 900 feet of elevation gain. Hiking is both on and off trail. This is some of the most beautiful country in the area with fall colors and waterfalls. With stream crossings, bring a pair of water shoes. Also, for the stream crossings, hiking poles are helpful. This will be a long day with the nearly 120-mile drive to the trailhead. Please see the Northern New Mexico Group’s Meetup pages for sign-up and more details: www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/ Call Robert Reifel at 505-690-6169 to sign up.

Saturday, October 13: Moderate hike in the Sandias: up 3 Guns and down Embudo Trail. Car left at bottom of Embudo Trail. Round trip about 5 miles and elevation change 5,300 feet. Gorgeous views. Additional information: Odile, 505-433-4692, odile@ptot.org.

Saturday, October 20: Easy/moderate hike along the Alamo Vista trail from the Aspen Vista Picnic Ground above Santa Fe. This is a short but steep 2.5-mile round-trip hike through aspen trees up to the top of the Santa Fe Ski Basin’s quad chairlift, offering views and colors. Please see the Northern Group’s Meetup pages for sign-up and more details. www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/ Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Saturday, October 20: Docent-led tour of the Art Museum Sculpture Garden at 9:45 a.m. Sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome. Easy, handicap-accessible outing: less than a half-mile round-trip.

They are featured in the Albuquerque Museum Lobby. $4 for seniors and $5 for all others. Children under 10 accompanied by parent or legal guardian are OK. Certified service animals only. Contact NLT by Oct. 18 to RSVP and obtain additional information. Terry Owen, 505-301-3439, teowen@q.com.

Saturday, October 20: Strenuous hike to Deception Peak. This 6-mile hike climbs about 2,500 feet starting at 10,250 feet to reach our shortest route from Santa Fe to get above tree line and superb views. Details on www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe- Sierra-Club-Outings/ Call Robert Reifel at 505-690-6169 to sign up.

Saturday, October 27: Petroglyphs at Boca Negra Canyon Trail (off Unser Boulevard, one-fourth mile north of Montaño Road NW). Easy walk in volcanic rocky areas. 9-11 a.m. We will see petroglyphs, flowers and animals that live in the area. Children OK. $2 parking fee. Contact RB: Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico, Paulina 505-967-2477.

November

Saturday, November 3: Moderate loop hike at Canjilon Lakes: this 8-mile hike follows the Continental Divide Trail part of the way. About 800 feet of elevation gain. All hiking on trail with beautiful meadows and super views as we hike along the edge of this escarpment and summit Canjilon Mountain. This is a 90-mile drive to the trailhead, so a long day. Please see the Northern Group’s Meetup pages for sign-up and more details. www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/ Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com.

Saturday, November 10: Petroglyphs at Rinconada Canyon Trail. Meet at trailhead parking lot (intersection of Unser Boulevard NW at St. Joseph Ave). Easy to moderate but in volcanic rocky areas. Children OK. $2 parking fee. 9 a.m. to noon. Contact Facebook page: Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico, Paulina 505-967-2477.

About these hikes

Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter outings are free and open to the public. Level of difficulty is listed in hike descriptions. All mileages are round-trip.

Participants must sign a liability waiver. Bring water, lunch, sturdy hiking boots or shoes and clothing suitable for the weather. Leader reserves right to turn away anyone whose experience or equipment appears unsuitable.

Leader may alter destination or cancel trip due to weather, conditions, or insufficient number of participants. Unaccompanied minors need written permission from a parent or guardian. Ask leader for form.

Dogs permitted only if noted in write-up.

Always contact leader before the outing to confirm participation and details. Please see riograndesierraclub.org/outings for up-to-date hike information.

Our weekly outings e-mail: Our weekly outings e-mail: Sierra Trail Mix, provides outings updates plus useful outdoor information such as trail conditions. Send an email to Listserv@lists.sierraclub.org with any subject and a message that says SUBSCRIBE RIO-NORTH-OUTINGS. You can also visit the Northern New Mexico Group Meetup page for updated outings: www.meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/.

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