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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 riograndesierraclub.org/donate, or send your check to: Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter 1007 Second Street, Unit 45 Santa Fe, NM 87505 Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible.

‘Rio Grande Sierran’ publication information
The Rio Grande Sierran 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 Sierran are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club. Products and services advertised in the Sierran are not necessarily endorsed by the Sierra Club.

Contributions are welcome. Send to riograndesierraclub.org. Submissions by Rio Grande Chapter members will take precedence. Articles chosen to be published are subject to editing. Letters to the editor may be up to 400 words, subject to editing, and are printed at the discretion of the editorial board. Editorial practices as developed for the Rio Grande Sierran are used in production of the Sierran. Articles chosen to be published are subject to editing. Articles chosen to be published are subject to editing. Articles chosen to be published are subject to editing. Articles chosen to be published are subject to editing. Articles chosen to be published are subject to editing. Articles chosen to be published are subject to editing. Articles chosen to be published are subject to editing. Additional dues may be charged.

Poetry corner
What are these gods that
Who paint this land
Who lend their strength to all the rocks
Who paint this land
Let us stay a while longer and try”
—Ruth A. Ives

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Cover banner photo by Mary Katherine Ray
Central New Mexico and Youth Action

**Albuquerque: beyond bags?**

By Derrick Toledo

Rio Grande Chapter Clean Energy fellow

Environmental champions on the Albuquerque City Council are working on a Clean and Green Ordinance to end the proliferation of single-use plastic bags and straws as well as styrofoam because of the huge role they play in global pollution.

Cities around the world have already begun similar bans encouraging the use of recyclable and compostable bags. This specific ban will also include styrofoam used by restaurants in takeaway containers. If passed, the ordinance will allow restaurants one year to plan and adjust to new business practices to best serve the environment.

The Rio Grande Chapter is enlisting support for the ordinance as a similar measure has already passed in Santa Fe. Sierra Club teams have been active with phonebanking, petitions, ally collaboration and social-media outreach.

The City Council is scheduled to consider — and perhaps vote — on Clean and Green at its meeting 5 p.m. Monday, April 15, at the Vincent E. Griego Chambers in Albuquerque.

For more information of how you can help, send an email to derrick.toledo@sierracan.org or call/text 505-401-7932.

Chapter endorses in MRGCD races

By Richard Barish

Chapter Political chair

The Sierra Club has endorsed John Kelly and Barbara Baca for the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District Board of Directors.

The election will be on June 4 (but see below for information on early and absentee voting). If you own property within the boundaries of the MRGCD (essentially, the Rio Grande Valley) and if you are an MRGCD ratepayer, you can vote in this election.

The MRGCD owns most of the land that comprises the bosque and is a key player in management of the bosque. It is a major user of our limited water resources. The District is controlled by the elected board of directors. It is important that we have board members who are responsive to our environmental concerns! This is an election where your vote can really make a difference, since few people vote in this election.

John Kelly is running for re-election to a Bernalillo County seat. John has consistently been a supporter of our issues regarding the bosque, and he has been a strong voice for transparency and efficient user of water by the District. He brings his expertise as an engineer to the board. MRGCD voters in Bernalillo County can vote for John.

Barbara Baca is running for the "at-large" seat, meaning MRGCD voters in Sandoval, Bernalillo, Valencia and Socorro counties can all vote for her.

The election is on June 4, but you can vote early from May 20 through Saturday, June 1. Early voting is on weekdays except May 27 and on Saturday, June 1, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Locations include the MRGCD office, 511 Second St. SW, Harrison Middle School, 3912 Isleta Blvd. SW, and Los Ranchos City Hall, 6718 Rio Grande NW, all in Bernalillo County; 800 South Hill Rd. in Bernalillo; 444 Luna Ave. SE in Los Lunas; and Belen City Hall, 100 South Main. A full list of early and Election Day voting locations can be found at mrgcd.com, along with information on how to obtain an absentee ballot.

Please vote for John Kelly and Barbara Baca if you are an MRGCD voter! For more information, contact Richard Barish, richard.barish@gmail.com.

**Global Warming Express**

By Genie Stevens

Rio Grande Chapter Global GWE coordinator

The seventh year of Global Warming Express is shaping up to be the busiest. Below, some of what GWE has been up to:

**Jan 28:** Global Warming Express from Mountain Mahogany School in Albuquerque were invited to attend the Albuquerque City Council’s press conference on the Clean and Green ordinance (see article, above right)

**Jan. 9:** GWEers attended the Finance Committee meeting of the City Council on the proposed ban on single-use plastic bags, straws and styrofoam take-out containers. The committee moved the measure to the full City Council.

**On the same night, GWEers attended the Clean Energy Conference in Santa Fe. GWEer Emily introduced keynote speaker Destiny Watson, the 2016 Goldman Prize winner for her Environmental Activism. Emily stayed up super- late to hear all that Destiny had to say and to get a photo with her hero.**

**Credits, clockwise from top left:** Theresa Palmer, Zubin Stillings, Anni Hanna, Suki, Asilah and Sierra.

**Clockwise from top left:** Global Warming Express participants with Clean Energy Conference keynote speaker Destiny Watford; at the Roundhouse; U.S. Rep. Deb Haaland sitting with kids and watching Sierra at the Green and Green at its meeting 5 p.m. Monday, April 15, at the Vincent E. Griego Chambers in Albuquerque.

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El Paso students organize for wolves

By Patrick Nolan
Friends of OMDP

You are cordially invited to celebrate the five-year anniversary of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. On May 21, 2014, President Barack Obama signed an executive order establishing the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument. This was the culmination of the tireless work of our community and officials to protect our lands for generations to come. We raised our voices loud enough for the president of the United States to hear us, and that is a remarkable thing.

To mark the five-year anniversary, the Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks will be hosting a celebration on May 18 at the Las Cruces Convention Center to commemorate the transformative impact the monument has had, and will continue to have, on our community. We are pleased to announce that Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham will be our keynote speaker.

In the past five years, we have seen visitation to the monument nearly double, bringing with it an increase in tourism to the Mesilla Valley.

The business community has benefited from this new spotlight on our area, with everything from wine, food, and clothing being branded in relation to the monument. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the monument’s designation has been one of the most consequential events to occur in our region both for our economy and community at large.

We hope you will be able to attend this celebration of a place we all cherish and love.
Central New Mexico Group

Zero Waste recycling tour

By Carol Chamberland
Central NM Group Zero Waste Action Team

Our group began in July 2018 with the idea of promoting a greener Albuquerque. We focused on recycling as an area where we might be able to have a positive impact, but quickly realized that we needed more information. We embarked on an educational focus by speaking with professionals and researching related topics. Our little group continued to grow.

Jill Holbertt, associate director of Solid Waste Management Department, came to speak with us in October. She reported that Albuquerque has a 20% residential recycling rate, as is reflected in the old plan and goals; the new administration hopes to review a proposed plan before adopting it. Their accomplishments to date:

- closed the city processing facility and moved commingled recycling to the Friedman facility, which has greater capacity
- initiated curbside recycling city-wide, doubling the volume to 38,000 tons per year
- offers pickup services to commercial businesses on a voluntary basis
- now focusing on outreach and education via social-media campaigns
- green waste is picked up twice annually
- Recyclers collects and delivers used clothing to the APS homeless children’s barns
- glass recycling has contamination issues and few markets
- there is currently no reporting of over-all recycling volume in the city

In December, we took a tour of the city’s recycling contractor, Friedman Recycling. After donning hardhats, neon vests and goggles, we watched the city trucks dumping recycled materials and workers loading it onto conveyor belts, where it is sorted automatically. When plastic bags wind up in the mix, workers do their best to pull them out as they work, but inevitably some bags get into the machinery and jam it to a standstill. The workflow stops while some bags get into the machinery and jam it to a standstill. The workflow stops while some bags get into the machinery and jam it to a standstill. The workflow stops while some bags get into the machinery and jam it to a standstill.

After donning hardhats, neon vests and goggles, we watched the city trucks dump-recycling centers from around the city. We learned that the Friedman facility processes yard waste, horse manure and food waste into rich compost, which they sell for a profit. We strode among pyramids of compostable materials in varying degrees of becoming soil. They offer pickup services for food-processing facilities so that their food waste becomes compost instead of going into the landfill and generating methane gas. Our Zero Waste Action Team envisions a time when composting becomes an official city policy and companies like Solutions are an integral part of the process. Kudos to the youngsters of the Global Warming Express, who appeared before Albuquerque’s City Council, on a school night in January, to present their case against the proliferation of plastic bags.

Their powerful testimony compelled four councilors to draft the Clean and Green Retail Ordinance, a ban on single-use plastic bags and other non-recyclable items such as Styrofoam takeout containers. The resolution went before the Council’s Finance Committee, where the youngsters appeared again to make their case. Zero Waste Albuquerque Team members were on hand to speak in support of the proposal. The ordinance is awaiting financial analysis of the issues. We will be on hand again to support the proposal April 15, when the City Council considers it.

Our research has yielded examples of cities doing things right or getting things terribly wrong. We’ve learned that plastics are a much bigger problem than we’d initially realized. We found other groups in town working along similar lines, and we hope to join forces with them.

We continue to educate ourselves with tours and speakers. This month we’ll have a presentation by Ralph Wrons, who recently headed up the recycling program for Sandia Labs. Next month, we’ll visit the city’s Water Treatment facility. We hope to visit a glass-recycling plant as well as an electronics recycler in the near future.

Now we’re getting into action. After much discussion, we’ve arrived at a list of concrete action items and designated people to work on each one. Our monthly meetings provide lively discussions and thoughtful solutions. Our group represents a wide range of ages and backgrounds. We welcome energetic volunteers with creative ideas for minimizing our impact on the planet. If you want to get involved, contact Carol Chamberland at pictorgrafics@comcast.net.

Central NM Group needs you!

By Fred Houdek
Central New Mexico Group chair

The Rio Grande Chapter’s Central New Mexico Group is seeking a few volunteers to fill some important leadership positions. If you are interested or want more detailed information on the responsibilities, contact Fred Houdek at (505) 809-4234 (ext. or call) or fjhoudek@gmail.com.

Membership/volunteer Chairperson: Reach out to new and old members and volunteers to educate them on the Central Group activities and determine their points of interest.

Volunteer Coordinator: Register the Club for community events at which to table and rally to attend. Schedule volunteers to table at events.

Set-up crew: We also need volunteers to set up and take down our tabling displays at community events.

All these positions will work closely with Keely Scheffler, our intern, and me, Fred. Join us — you’ll have fun, meet new people, and make a difference for the planet!

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ABQ RIDE free on Earth Day

ABQ RIDE will be offering free bus rides on Earth Day, April 22.

The agency would like to encourage the public to consider commuter bus and other alternative forms of transportation such as trains, biking, walking and carpooling instead of single vehicle occupancy in order to reduce traffic congestion, air pollution and carbon emissions.

ABQ RIDE says it hopes the event will familiarize commuters with the bus system. Go to www.abqride.gov/ transit/routes-and-schedules for more information.

CLIMATE DISRUPTION: HERE NOW!
FILMS & CONVERSATION
Saturday, April 13, 9:00 am - 5:30 pm
South Broadway Cultural Center (SECC)
1926 Broadway Blvd. SE, Albuquerque
(Phoenix Rising in a Sustainable World)
Federal environmental policy

What the Dirty Water Rule means for New Mexico

By Rachel Conn

On Feb. 14, the EPA released a draft rule that reduces the amount of waters that are protected under the Clean Water Act. The comment period on the draft rule is only 60 days and ends on April 15.

This Dirty Water Rule has serious impacts for New Mexico's waters. Water is precious in New Mexico. This move by the Environmental Protection Agency reverses years of work to ensure that New Mexicans have the clean water they need for drinking, irrigating, and recreating.

The proposed 2019 Dirty Water Rule would negatively impact New Mexico more than any other state in the nation.

The proposed rule would remove Clean Water Act protections for ephemeral and maybe intermittent waters. The New Mexico Environmental Department Estimates that 96% of New Mexico's surface waters would be left unprotected. Below is a list of some of the impacts:

- The entire Gila River and other interstate waters would lose Clean Water Act Protections. The rule proposes to get rid of inter-state waters as a category protected under the rule, and because the Gila runs dry at the bottom stretch, it does not connect to a traditional navigable water.
- Wetlands with no apparent surface connection to other nearby water bodies would lose protection as well (this is well over half of New Mexico's wetlands).
- Important New Mexico tributary streams such as the Santa Fe River, Gallinas and Rio Fernando provide water for our acequias, wildlife and recreation, but do not always flow year-round. These waters need protection from unregulated dumping and pollution!
- Twenty percent of the state's vertebrate wild-life depend upon waters that would no longer be protected.
- At least 280,000 people in New Mexico receive drinking water from sources that rely at least in part on these tributaries.
- New Mexico is a non-delegated state, meaning that EPA administrators and issues pollutant-dis-charge permits in New Mexico. Unlike many other states we do not have a state program in place to control surface-water discharges into state waters.
- The Clean Water Rule was developed in 2015 by EPA and Army Corps of Engineers to clarify what waters are protected by the Clean Water Act in response to confusion after Supreme Court rulings in 2001 and 2006. It was finalized after more than 200 days of public comment (as opposed to only 60 for the proposed Dirty Water Rule).
- The Clean Water Rule restored protections that once existed for a variety of water bodies, including tributaries to traditionally-navigable waters.

This rule ensures that the tributaries to these river systems are protected under the rule.

The proposed Dirty Water Rule would replace the Clean Water Rule nation-wide.

Historic legislation for our public lands

Nearby 100 years ago, a forester working in New Mexico named Aldo Leopold recognized the beauty and irreplaceable value of protecting the untrammeled landscapes that we have grown to treasure as wilderness. More than 50 years ago, New Mexico’s Sen. Clinton Anderson led the effort to pass the Wilderness Act into law.

I am so proud to announce that we have successfully passed a landmark package of bipartisan legis-lation that I championed to build on that legacy.

The public-lands package that passed Congress in February establishes 13 new wilderness areas in New Mexico on a scale we have not seen since the New Mexico Wilderness Act of 1980.

We advanced community-driven conservation visions for New Mexico's two newest national monuments: the Río Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. These two monuments protect places New Mexicans have long recognized as national treasures. We are now protecting the most rugged and unique habitats in each monu-ment as wilderness. We also established the Ah-shi- sle-pah Wilderness and added to the Bisti/De-Na-Zin Wilderness in northwestern New Mexico.

The public lands package also includes my biparti-sian bill, the Every Kid Outdoors Act, which will allow every fourth-grader in America to visit our nation's parks, forests, wildlife refuges and public lands free of charge — and bring their families along with them. I am so excited that we are encourag-ing a new generation of youth to explore the rich natural and cultural history on display in our parks, forests and monuments.

We also permanently reauthorized what I believe has been one of America's most successful conserva-tion programs: the Land and Water Conservation Fund. In New Mexico, LWCFC has used a portion of the reve nues from offshore oil and gas drilling to protect iconic landscapes like the Valles Caldera, Ute Mountain, and Valle de Oro, without costing taxpayers a single dime. It has also provided for community projects like baseball and soccer fields, playgrounds, and picnic areas.

Now we will no longer need to worry year after year about renewing this clearly successful program.

In a state that proudly calls itself the Land of Enchantment, we all know how much our public lands mean to us. These are the places where genera-tions of families have gone to explore our natural wonders and learn about our rich history and culture. They also fuel a thriving outdoor recreation economy that supports nearly 100,000 jobs in our state. That's why this legislation is so important.

In a frustrating political time in Washington, when it can be difficult to find any areas of agree-ment, I am pleased that we have found a way forward on these measures. And I am so thankful to all the New Mexicans who played a role in getting these conservation victories over the finish line. I have no doubt that these measures will go a long way toward ensuring that the outdoor places we all treasure will be protected for future genera-tions of Americans to enjoy.

Udall will leave legacy of conservation

By Camilla Feibelman

After 10 years in the Senate, Tom Udall announced his retirement last month. Sen. Udall has been a true defender of public lands and a champion for native people.

Sen. Udall took the lead in creating and defending Obama-era monuments, including Organ Mountains Desert Peaks and Río Grande del Norte. In addition to Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante in Utah, he also filed federal legislation to withdraw lease availability near Chaco Culture National Historical Park, a sacred site for Navajo and Pueblo nations. Sen. Udall has stood in strong defense of common-sense methane stan-dards and was instrumental in the fight to stop an attempt to nullify the BLM Methane Rule in 2017.

As ranking member of the Interior, EPA and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, he has defended key programs, fending off anti-environmental riders and deep budget cuts to environmental programs.

He is one of the original cosponsors of the Arctic Wilderness Bill and helped lead the fight against including language in the Senate budget bill to allow drilling in the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge.

The coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge is one of America’s last wild places and sacred to the Gwich’in, Alaska Natives who live adjacent to the area.

Sen. Udall was a key voice in opposing the nomination of Scott Pruitt for EPA administrator, and has continued to lead on the response to the scandals surrounding Pruitt during his tenure. Sen. Udall was also very proactive in opposing ransoming the lives of DACA recipients for President Trump’s $25 billion border wall and continues to be an outspoken advocate for Dreamers and border communities.
Big win for decency, ethics, coyotes

By Mary Katherine Ray
Chapter Wildlife chair

Killing contests outlawed, but legislation to end trapping on public lands stalls in House

What happened to all the wildlife bills in the 2019 New Mexico legislative session? Before we begin, it is worth reflecting that of the 1,370 bills introduced, only 309 actually passed both chambers to go to the governor for her signature — a rate of 22.6%.

No matter who is in charge, passing a bill is still not easy. Most bills didn’t make it, and this was true of the wildlife bills as well.

House Bill 366, Roxy’s Law sponsored by Reps. Matthew McQueen, Christine Chandler and Roberto Gonzales, banning traps and poisons from New Mexico public lands, regrettably did not pass. But it did make significant progress! For the first time ever, it passed two House committees, reaching the House floor. So many people came to testify in support, a dream team of outdoor and wildlife enthusiasts, wildlife biologists, veterinarians, artists, canine search-and-rescue teams, hunters, farmers and professionals of many backgrounds. Many more made phone calls and sent emails. Every single action taken by every person who participated helped to get the bill as far as it did! For that, thank you!

One got to the full House, advocates worked to secure positions from New Mexico’s 70 state representatives but could not find support from enough lawmakers for the bill to pass.

We are working to gain support of those who are hesitant. And because of the progress made this year, we know which legislators and House districts on which to concentrate for the next go-round. Because the bill has never gotten out of committee, most representatives have never had a chance to even think about the issue of trapping.

We’ve made sure it’s now on their radar!

“The fight to stop reckless, cruel, commercialized, recreational trapping on New Mexico’s public lands is feeling very similar to the effort to end cockfighting, which took 17 years. We are now seven years into the trapping bill and hope it won’t take that long! Once

the needle starts moving (and it has now, thanks to all of our efforts including yours), it’s hard to stop.

Senate Bill 76, banning coyote-killing contests thrallingly and gratifyingly did pass! Sponsored by Sens. Mark Moores and Jeff Steinborn, it is one of the 281 bills that Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has signed into law. Coyotes, as the victims of both traps and killing contests, occupied a great deal of the discussion about both bills, revealing how much misinformation about our native and charismatic song dog is believed by some, including legislators. Scientific evidence shows us that coyotes are not controlled in any beneficial way by random mass killing. This fact will need to be repeated often in the next couple of years!

The killing-contest legislation, a simple two-page bill that prohibits organizing or participating in coyote-killing contests anywhere in New Mexico, was also a multiyear effort. It had previously passed both houses, but not in the same year. Nevertheless, passage was still hard-earned. The hearings went on late into the day, and so many of you set through to make this happen. Given the odds against passing any bill, we were enormously proud and heartened that this one did get through. We will no longer have to suffer the terrible images of stacks of dead coyote carcasses often dumped in the desert after the contest is over. Coyotes won’t have to suffer such senseless and wanton violence taking their lives for momentary entertainment or so a killer can win a prize.

SB 228, the Wildlife Corridors Act, sponsored by Sen. Mimi Stewart, also passed both chambers and has been signed by the Governor. It directs New Mexico Game and Fish and the New Mexico Department of Transportation to examine where roadways and wildlife travel corridors overlap and to develop an action plan to mitigate obstructions to wildlife passage.

SB 383, allowing the state Game Commission to consider fair-chase principles for hunting when setting policy, was sponsored by Sens. Pete Campos and is the third and final wildlife bill that passed the legislature and has been signed by the governor.

HB 263 would reform the Game Commission. This bill, sponsored by Rep. Matthew McQueen, defined the qualifications for people who serve on the commission to make it more diverse and representative of the New Mexico public. It also gave some of the appointees of the seven-member board to the Legislature in order to diffuse the political nature of this body. The bill passed the House and Senate Conservation Committee, but was vetoed down in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Even so, Gov. Lujan Grisham, who has the authority to appoint all seven members, has asked the current Game Commission — appointed by her predecessor — to resign.

She will be appointing a new commission soon, and we would very much like to resign. This year, it passed the Senate and House committees, but when it reached the House Floor, it was stopped by a Republican filibuster the last day of the session in a move that was entirely politically motivated to stymie progress.

It can be frustrating that we have to wait another two years to try again on bills that didn’t pass. But try we will! Before then, we will have another election.

We would never have passed the coyote-context ban without all the hard work we did to elect environmental champions.

Between now and 2020, talk with your legislators and with candidates. Tell them wildlife is important to you and that you care about responsibly, compassionately and ethically managing the many creatures with whom we are so fortunate to share our state. You might also express thanks to sponsors mentioned above (visit http://www.nmlegis.gov for their contact information) and thank Gov. Lujan Grisham for signing the wildlife bills that made it to her desk. (www.governor. state.nm.us/contact-the-governor)

The legislature is a complicated and sometimes perplexing institution. But we made progress for wildlife this session, and we vow to keep making it!
Landmark energy law puts NM first

By Mona Blaber
Communications director

W hat a difference a year and an election make. When Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed the Energy Transition Act on March 22, New Mexico emerged from eight years of backward-looking energy policy to commit to 100% carbon-free electricity and the nation’s strongest renewable-energy law.

With coal the worst climate offender among energy sources, it was a big victory. But when the announcement was made in February 2022, it was clear that the project, named the San Juan Generating Station, would need a new source of 425 jobs and millions in taxes.

With the closure of coal power plants, the day has come. In the Roundhouse, the legislation has passed the Senate committee hearing. Thousands of New Mexicans contacted legislators to urge passage.

This year, we worked for key bills, grassroots lobby programs in New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light, the American Voters Alliance and New Mexico Environment Coalition, to ensure that our families are not left behind in the emerging green economy.

— Marcela Diaz, Somos Un Pueblo Unido

For “New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light, work on the Energy Transition Act was a transformative opportunity to address climate-change public policy in a way that will have many positive ripple effects. Care of our Sacred Creation, care of our communities and our neighbors who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and just transition for workers and communities must be a part of our energy policy. We move forward. No one can be left behind.”

— Sister Joan Brown, N.M. Interfaith Power and Light

“San Juan Citizens Alliance (SJCA) was able to contribute to the energy transition funding piece ($30 million for clean up and decommissioning, and $40 million for economic diversification) for the Four Corners to be run by New Mexico energy companies. Somos members in southeastern New Mexico have worked hard to ensure that our families are not left behind in the emerging green economy.”

— Mike Eisenfeld, San Juan Citizens Alliance

Buildling foundation for victory from grassroots

By Camilla Feibelman

The Sierra Club’s Grassroots Lobby Program has steadily grown to over 500 partners and supporters become highly effective advocates for environmental legislation at the Roundhouse. This year, we worked for several months with a large coalition of organizations and people to plan the Clean Energy Conference in Santa Fe at the beginning of the legislative session. More than 400 people attended, ready to learn about legislation, give feedback to legislators and practice talking about complex issues. Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham spoke. Twelve legislators attended and worked on their legislation with participants.

The next day, dozens of participants attended the Clean Energy Lobby Day at the Roundhouse. In addition to speaking to legislators about key bills, grassroots lobby- ists “Sounded the Alarm” on climate change. Participants set their alarms to ring at 12:12 p.m. The Roundhouse filled with sound as 60 Global Warming Express kids dropped “climate ribbons” from the gallery above. The ribbons had been gathered by $9000 in the year’s fees from people who’d written on each about what they love and hope never to lose to climate chaos.

That same morning, the governor signed one of the strongest climate executive orders in the United States since Donald Trump took office. It sets a target of 45% greenhouse-gas reduction from 2005 levels by 2030, and orders a state methane rule, new building codes, increased renewable portfolio standard, and reducing auto emissions. This year’s Land, Water and Wildlife Day featured a panel headlined by Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard and others who primed grassroots lobby- ists on our bills. The noon event featured a workshop on freeing your pet from wild- life traps. Partner lobby days, from the New Mexico Basin to Uranium Workers Day to Environmental Justice Day, all helped bring a huge array of critical issues to light for legislators.

Your Roundhouse presence and calling and writing to legis- lators make a real difference to passing game-changing legisla- tion. We hope you’ll continue to participate.
I imagine a 100% carbon-free future, where New Mexican homes are powered largely by renewables, with reduced energy demand due to efficiency measures, and where increased access to charging stations means we can drive electric vehicles all over the state. The 60-day 2019 New Mexico legislative session paved the way to realizing that vision, and I want to congratulate each of you on historic climate wins. In total, 21 bills were introduced, only 28 were signed into law this year, and we had some HUGE wins among them.

New Mexico is the third state in the nation to pass 100% carbon-free legislation, with perhaps the strongest mandate of the three, and I hope you all can truly feel how significant that is. I thank you, wholeheartedly, for every call and e-mail on every bill. You have built one of the most dynamic grassroots forces in New Mexico.

Below, I’ve included our wins and future wins – just because something didn’t pass this year doesn’t mean it will never will. It can take several years to pass game-changing legislation, as was the case for many of the bills passed this year. Sometimes legislation needs time to mature, both in committee and on the House floor, and something might dovetail with current law (or even with other bills going through the process at the same time). For example, some legislation didn’t pass but was heard in committee and amended in ways that make it stronger for the future. And sometimes a complicated legislation requires a multiyear process to engage all stakeholders – especially this year, as many of you were getting new cabinet secretaries and new staff.

Additionally, legislators need time proving new ideas. Your activism causes the wheels of change to turn. That’s why the truly important work becomes following up and building relationships with your legislators – and, in cases where minds cannot be changed, why elections are key.

So what’s next? The interim legislative session starts in late summer, and I am looking ahead at legislation we want to support again — for example, community solar — and new legislation. Do you have ideas for ways to improve the new law? Contact me at brittany.fallon@sierarchal.org.

Celebrate! Energy Transition Act (SB489): Forging a path for the closure of the San Juan coal plant, creating a safety net for coal workers, and supported New Mexico’s interconnected community and requiring 100% carbon-free electricity by 2045 – making New Mexico one of the first states to do so, along with Hawaii and California. This is momentous legislation that sets a benchmark for our neighboring states and paves the way to a liveable planet for future generations.

Energy Efficiency Act (HB295, SB136): Removes disincentives for utilities to invest in energy efficiency, the cheapest and most effective way to reduce carbon pollution. It’s a wonky issue but a very big deal for greenhouse emissions from electricity. The law requires utilities to carry our programs that benefit ratepayers like home energy audits, and it increases utilities’ requirements for saving energy.

Electric-vehicle Infrastructure (HB521): This clears the way for companies to install EV-charging stations across New Mexico and requires investor-owned utilities to develop transportation electrification plans, including access to EV-charging infrastructure in the state, a critical step in accelerating adoption of electric vehicles. The tax credit for buying EVs did not pass, but getting the infrastructure in place makes the path a lot smoother for that legislation.

Oil Conservation Division Fees (SB553): This establishes rules to create a new schedule of administrative filing fees, application fees, and permit fees, helping to increase badly needed funding to the Oil Conservation Division, which regulates oil and gas drilling in New Mexico.

Produced Water and Oil Conservation Division Fees (SB546/SB186): HB546 pertained to liability and jurisdiction for produced water. We were still evaluating the implications of this bill when, in a surprise late-session move, Senate Judiciary added in language from SB186, a bill we had tirelessly supported which died in committee. We strongly supported SB186 because it restores the Oil Conservation Division’s authority to penalize oil and gas violations. Now, for the first time in a decade, the Oil Conservation Division will be able to assess penalties. We’ll work on raising the fine limits in the next session.

Ending coyote-killing contests in New Mexico (SB76): More than 1,000 of you wrote to Gov. Lujan Grisham to ask her to outlaw coyote-killing contests. Your years of activism are what finally got this bill over the finish line. See Mary Katherine Ray’s article on Page 7 to read more about this and all wildlife legislation this year.

Water Data (HB651): Improves water-data integration, transparency, and tools for state water planning. Allows state agencies to collaborate on water data.

Outdoor Recreation (SB462): Creates an Office of Outdoor Recreation and Outdoor Equity Fund, as well as infrastructure and plans for getting all New Mexicans kids outside. A huge deal for the future of New Mexico tourism and for equity in outdoor recreation.

Healthy Soil Act (HB204): Promotes soil-health stewardship by creating a program to provide ongoing trainings and facilitate workshops, grants, and educating the public about the importance of soil health stewardship.

Solar Energy Improvement assessments (HB440): Improves the framework for counties and cities to work together in order to pay the upfront costs of solar for individuals, which is then paid back through property tax assessments.

Not yet: A few of the following bills had a good chance to become law this year, so their loss is disappointing, but our proactive new governor and progressive freshman legislators produced a massive volume of bills, and there just isn’t time to pass them all in 60 days. Other bills were blocked by intransigent legislators, a reminder that state senators weren’t up for election in 2018, but they will be in 2020 ...

Study energy-extraction impact on tribal people (House Memorial 73): This memorial requested a study of the economic, health, environmental and social costs of extractive and fossil fuel impacts to indigenous communities. The study proposed in the memorial can still go forward if we and partners can find funding for it.

Climate Resilience for New Mexico (HB428), requiring state agencies to make sustain- ability, energy-efficiency and climate-resiliency plans, died in the Senate Finance Committee, but sponsor Rep. Melanie Stansbury included a salary for a chief sustainability officer in the final budget, implementing key aspects of this bill.

Solar Tax Credits (SB518): Restoring expired tax credits for residents and businesses who install solar, this bill sailed through committees only to stall out on the last day on the House floor due to Republican filibustering. Many positive bills died on the House calendar in the final day or so because of this spiteful tactic.

Competitive procurement (SB456): SB456, which would require utilities to issue requests for proposals on all new energy sources to ensure they are providing the lowest-cost solutions for new sources of electricity, was tabled by the Senate Corporations Committee. The Public Regulation Commission has an open inquiry on how to require such competitive procurement of utilities.

Environmental Review Act (HB206): Would have required a review process before permitting major projects or going through state agencies. Other agencies would need to involve and inform the public, conduct environmental analysis, and consider possible alternatives to their proposals before making a decision.

Fracking moratorium (SB459): Would have stopped fracking for four years while state agencies studied the impact of fracking on public health and state waters and land. Th was heard in Senate Conservation but was never scheduled for floor vote.

H15-5, amending the New Mexico Water Quality Act to clarify that groundwater-quality standards must be met throughout the aquifer, therefore protecting all groundwater in the state. It would have effectively overturned provisions in the Maricopa County’s Copper Rule that gave mining companies a license to pollute groundwater.

HB175, extending the New Mexico Mining Act to phase out the use of risky corporate guar- antees from affiliated companies (such as parent companies in other states) as financial assurance to ensure proper closure and reclamation of hard-rock mines.

There isn’t room to list all the important environmental legislation that passed or will pass in the future. Persistence, preparation and strategy in the legislative key, and we must use the power we have as constituents and voters to change our world.

Above: At the March 14 Climate Strike, students converged on the New Mexico Roundhouse and held a sit-in to urge bold climate action.

Photos by David McGarthy

Legislative Session in Review

By Brittany Fallon Rio Grande Chapter lobbyist

I
Dutch Salmon, who died in March at 73, was a co-founder of the Gila Conservation Coalition as well as an author, fisherman and homesteader.

Conservationist, Gila River champion

Allyson Siwik  Gila Conservation Coalition

The conservation community lost one of its long-time heroes in March with the passing of M.H. “Dutch” Salmon at 73 after a brief illness.

Dutch’s storied career spanned more than 35 years in the Southwest. His professional and personal pursuits were many: author, publisher, hunter, fisherman, home-steaders, and conservationist.

Dutch’s name is synonymous with the Gila Conservation Coalition, the organization he co-founded and chaired for more than 35 years to protect the free flow of the Gila and San Francisco rivers and the wilderness characteristics of the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness areas.

Dutch and his fellow advocates were successful in defeating the Hooker and Conner dams and Mangas diversion in the 1980s and 1990s, closed the San Francisco River to motorized-vehicle use, and also kept the East Fork of the Gila River closed to motorized vehicles. Since 2001, he had been a leader in the fight against the current Gila diversion threat under the Arizona Water Settlements Act.

His books and innumerable magazine and newspaper articles have been an inspiration to so many far and wide who have shared in his love for New Mexico’s last free-flowing river and our state’s special Nevada. They have lived vicariously through his writings of his many adventures, including the book Gila Descending about his epic 1983 trip down the Gila River from the headwaters at Bear Spring to Safford, Ariz., with his dog and his cat.

Dedicating his life to conservation and environmental protection, Dutch also served on the boards of the Quivira Coalition, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, New Mexico Wilderness Coalition, Water Dialogue and Gila Resources Information Project. He was also a member of the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission and the New Mexico Game Commission.

Dutch’s steadfast commitment to protecting the Gila River and his unending love for our wild river and our wild places have been an inspiration to all of us. He will be remembered always for his tireless work to protect and conserve New Mexico’s water, released last year, the governor stated she will “end work on the Gila River Diversion Project” given that “there is little to show for the millions of dollars spent on staff, lawyers and studies” with only one year left to secure approval of the project. She supported use of the Arizona Water Settlements Act diversion funds for conservation projects.

We encourage Gov. Lujuan Grisham to take the additional steps to finally end work on this project, redirect funding instead of funding community water projects to secure a secure water supply for everyone in south-west New Mexico.
Up close and sickening

Our tour with Commissioner Garcia Richard was particularly alarming in terms of the emissions and the number of sites where we all smelled strong, gassy odors and often experienced headaches and nausea.

“We have viewed methane emissions as a lost revenue stream for our school children, but they also pose significant public health and safety issues for our communities,” Commissioner Garcia Richard said. “We’ve minimized the environmental impacts for far too long and have missed repeated opportunities to pass meaningful regulation to stop methane leaks and waste. With the impacts of climate change knocking on our door, now is the time to act. My office is committed to working with industry to find proactive solutions while fighting to guarantee that real actions are taken to solve this crisis.”

Earthworks uses the same FLIR GF320 camera that regulators and oil and gas operators use to find and document pollution at wells and facilities. Our thermographers have taken industry-standard training to interpret the images. The camera detects 20 climate- and health-harming pollutants associated with oil and gas, including methane, a climate pollutant 86 times more powerful than carbon dioxide, and other volatile organic compounds like benzene, a known carcinogen.

A full list of our findings are available on YouTube at bit.ly/CEP-NM. For more information, please contact me at neddy@earthworks.org.

PNM may join energy market

By Chuck Noble

PNM may join Clean Affordable Energy

On Aug. 22, PNM filed a request with the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission asking for approval to make expenditures necessary for it to join the Energy Imbalance Market (EIM). The Energy Imbalance Market is a real-time energy-trading market that allows participating utilities to sell excess energy into a broad market, or to purchase from that market as needed at market prices. Participation in it will allow PNM, and all the utilities who participate, to integrate higher levels of renewable generation on their systems, because they would be assured of cost recovery and is expected to allow the Commission to reconsider its decision. Without some indication that it will be able to recover its costs, PNM may be unwilling to make the investment.

The actions of public utilities are often adversarial to our goals of increasing clean energy and reducing emissions from fossil fuel. However, when a utility acts consistently with our environmental goals, we believe it is important to support that effort, even as we oppose efforts that are adverse to our goals. In this case, we support a finding by the commission that it is reasonable for PNM to make the necessary expenditures to join the EIM.
Where the wind blows no good

By Teresa Seamster, Counselor Health Impact Assessment Committee

The strong winds of spring usually bring clear, warming skies and the “breath” of new growth and green grass to the high desert of the San Juan Basin.

This past year, the odor of new drilling rigs and flaring stacks blew across the central grasslands of the Navajo Nation Counselor Chapter, next door to Chaco Culture National Historical Park, and started moving down the U.S. 550 highway corridor toward the Navajo chapters of Ojo Encino and Torreon.

The Counselor air-monitoring team, Samuel Sage, Kendra Pinto, Marlene Thomas, Mario Atencio, Dr. Val Wampler and I, hit the road in early April 2018, delivering air monitors to community residents interested in measuring their local air quality and taking a survey to identify if their health symptoms were similar to residents of other oil and gas communities.

Six homeowners, a resident church minister, and the Chapter House participated in the project. In May, the monitors were picked up and shipped to the Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project for downloading and analysis by Celfa Lewis, Ph.D., and Sujiro Jigotipally, M.D., members of the project team. These results have been compared to others that the Health Project has reviewed in communities near shale gas and oil operations in New York, Ohio, California and Pennsylvania.

The results from Counselor were different in several ways and showed overall higher levels.

When the team members were asked to give some of the reasons for the higher levels of both PM2.5 (particulate matter in the air that are 2.5 microns in size) and formaldehyde, they replied: “Many homes in Counselor are located closer than a mile to one or more operating oil and gas wells. The recommended setback distance between occupied structures and wells is now 6,600 feet, or 1¼ mile. Many homes are “downwind” of wells that emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and formaldehyde, which can be formed from methane emissions in the presence of sunlight. Counselor has areas of open plains with numerous homes situated where the wind tends to blow towards the houses from a nearby pollution source. On sunny days with no wind, pollutants will rise quickly upward away from houses. On cloudy days with no wind, pollutants move and mix slowly with the air; keeping emissions closer to the ground and more hazardous for residents. On windy days (over 12 mph), pollutants from nearby wells can reach downwind homes quickly, staying in a concentrated plume, before chemicals disperse.”

The highest concentrations of polluted air were recorded at a home on an open sagebrush flat about a quarter of a mile from an active oil well. Wind directions showed hazardous concentrations of pollutants (in red) blowing from the southwest and southeast.

Evidence of exposure to hazardous levels of VOC concentrations is very short-lived in the bloodstream, and blood samples must be taken within hours of the onset of a symptom. Most communities have no facility that can provide this highly specialized blood test, and residents who cannot take time to take a sample are unable to provide this crucial evidence if they try to file a formal complaint.

There are some 600 chemicals that can be used in the production of gas and oil, and sites can use different types of chemicals and combinations. However, there are several pollutants common to unconventional oil and gas development, such as volatile organic compounds, PM 2.5, and formaldehyde.

The Environmental Health Project uses these three as “indicators” because scientists have measured and estimated the amounts of these chemicals emitted from unconventional oil and gas development sources. If these indicators are present in air samples, it is likely that other chemicals of concern are present.

The air samples were tested for 125 chemicals. Three VOCs were detected on May 25 and seven on May 30, 2018. All chemical levels were at “Permissible Exposure Limits” except for formaldehyde, which was at elevated levels (requiring mitigation) at all sites.

Impacts from long-term chemical exposure

When a source of air pollution is present, nearby, high levels of PM2.5 and formaldehyde combined with varying levels of VOCs can cause increased health symptoms in residents. Chemicals from the source may combine with the particulate matter and travel to the deep regions of the lungs to cause respiratory problems or gain access to other parts of the body through blood-gas exchange. Inhalation of toxic particles is the most common form of exposure and has the greatest impacts on the head and respiratory system. Children are more severely affected as they have higher respiratory rates and breathe in more toxins per pound of body weight than adults. Their brains are still developing, and many toxic volatile organic compounds are known to interfere with developmental processes within the brain.

80 respondents were asked to indicate if they lived within 5 miles or within sight, hearing or smell of wells (84%) or gas and oil pipelines (66%). Respondents then recorded all the health symptoms they experienced in the past year.

Short-term exposure to VOCs can cause eye and respiratory-tract irritation, headache, sleep change, fatigue, sinus problems and joint pain.

Above: Of the 20 symptoms listed in a health survey taken by Navajo Counselor Chapter members, 80% of respondents said they experienced sore throat, cough, headache, sleep change, fatigue, burning eyes, sinus problems and joint pain.

 Respondents then were asked to indicate if they lived “near” (within 5 miles) or within sight, hearing or smell of wells (84%) or gas and oil pipelines (66%). Respondents then recorded all the health symptoms they experienced in the past year.

80% responded were asked to indicate if they lived “near” (within 5 miles) or within sight, hearing or smell of wells (84%) or gas and oil pipelines (66%). Respondents then recorded all the health symptoms they experienced in the past year.

Of Counselor’s population of 700 members, 11% percent participated in the health survey. Out of the 20 listed symptoms, 80% of respondents said they experienced sore throat, cough, headache, sleep change, fatigue, sinus problems and joint pain. Surveys conducted by the Environmental Health Project in other communities have shown less than 50% of respondents reported these same symptoms.

The Counselor Health-Impact Assessment is a community project undertaken to provide local data and answer local questions about how safe the open air is and what is causing the health complaints and joint pain. Surveys conducted by the Environmental Health Project in other communities have shown less than 50% of respondents reported these same symptoms.

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March 28 lease sale. In all, 37 parcels of land totaling to triple the 10,000 protests opposing the state office in Sante Fe. Food and Water Watch comments that we hand-delivered to the BLM roots groups collected more than 33,000 protest letters, public health and safety, and cultural value of public lands and highlight how rallied together with hunters and anglers at the grassroots groups, tribal leaders, and allies substantially reduced from 30 to 10 days. sales a year. Furthermore, the formal period to public lands has become a priority and now each Administration has taken over, development on sales so that each office was responsible for hold wild drilling and hydraulic fracking. The cumulative impacts of multi-stage horizon Management Plans, which fail to account for the region. However, this move is perplexing, because it is the third time in two years that the office has identified parcels in the close proximity to Chaco Culture National Historical Park only to pull them before the sale. Although some parcels in the region have been spared from development, the Bureau of Land Management has not completed a thorough cultural review or analysis of cultural resources in the region — the reason former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke deferred the March 2018 lease sale.

Meanwhile, the neighboring BLM Rio Puerco Field Office has started up its oil and gas leasing program. Both offices are still in the process of updating their regional Resource Management Plans, which fail to account for the cumulative impacts of multi-stage horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracking.

During the Obama Administration, BLM New Mexico offices rotated their quarterly lease sales so that each office was responsible for holding at least one lease sale a year. Since the Trump Administration has taken over, development on public lands has become a priority and now each BLM office is under pressure to hold four lease sales a year. Furthermore, the formal period to protest and comment on the lease sales has been substantially reduced from 30 to 10 days. On Feb. 20, environmental and indigenous grassroots groups, tribal leaders, and allies rallied together with hunters and anglers at the Roundhouse on Public Lands Day to celebrate the value of public lands and highlight how oil and gas development impacts the environment, public health and safety, and cultural resources. Feb. 20 also marked the end of the 10-day protest period for the March lease sale. Environmental, citizen and indigenous grass-roots groups collected more than 33,000 protest comments that we hand-delivered to the BLM state office in Sante Fe. Food and Water Watch submitted more than 27,000 protests, helping to triple the 10,000 protests opposing the December 2018 lease sale. The BLM did press forward with the March 28 lease sale. In all, 37 parcels of land were sold in the Greater Chaco and Greater Carlsbad regions. In protest, the Sierra Club, along with allies and members of the Chaco Coalition, peacefully demonstrated in front of the BLM state headquarters striking for the climate, while drawing connections between oil and gas leasing and climate change. The lease sale also included some parcels in Oklahoma. In all, the sale resulted in an anemic $15 million — nearly half of what the December 2018 auction drew. Although the lease sales have been relentless, 2019 presents new opportunities to address the impacts of fracking in the Greater Chaco region. Newly elected New Mexico Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard announced on Public Lands Day that she plans to issue an executive order for a moratorium on leasing state trust lands in Greater Chaco. She is working closely with the Navajo Nation, All Pueblo Council Governors, community leaders, environmental groups, and congressional delegates to ensure that cultural and pristine resources on state trust lands are protected from expanded development. At her Green New Deal town hall, U.S. Rep. Deb Haaland recognized the work of the Greater Chaco coalition and committed to working with tribal leaders to address the impacts of expanded oil and gas development in the region.

On April 9, Haaland, U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Lujan and U.S. Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich re-introduced federal legislation to protect the Greater Chaco area. The Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act of 2019 is a much-improved version from the 2018 original, acknowledging the Greater Chaco landscape spanning four states, affirming the need for meaningful tribal consultation, calls for additional public health measures, and expands the mineral withdrawal to include additional oil and gas leases.

Chaco Coalition groups presented 33,000 protest comments to the BLM.

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Chaco Coalition groups presented 33,000 protest comments to the BLM.
Zero Waste efforts all over Los Alamos

By Jody Benson
Jody Benson Group chair

While the whole world lives in the whirlpool of the American administration's moods — while POTUS is like the kid pulling the cloth off the Thanksgiving table, ruining everybody's hard work just to be the center of attention — Los Alamos is working to create a sustainable community.

The Los Alamos County Environmental Sustainability Board created a Zero Waste Team to help reduce, reuse, and recycle all the trash in town. A lot of Pajarito Group members are on that Team.

Here's what's going on:

The bag-free effort: Los Alamos High School EcoClub leaders and members of the Zero Waste Team met with local Smiths manager Isaac Chavez to discuss banning the bag — as well as decreasing food waste — at Smiths.

Kroger has a corporate goal of zero waste by 2025 in both food and single-use plastic shopping bags. The second-largest general retailer in the nation realized that their responsibility to the Earth also helps their bottom line.

Although this is a stated goal, the only food-zero-waste locations are in Kroger Headquarters towns — Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio, where churches and local service organizations created food banks to which Kroger stores donate food.

As for the bag, corporate Kroger says, “The best partner is the customer as we ease the transition” to reusables. “It will take customer education.” Neither Los Alamos Smiths has the guidance or resources to initiate the zero-waste program. It’s up to us to help bring the vision to Los Alamos.

To those ends, the LAHS EcoClub plans to help educate shoppers about the absolute stupidity of using life-sucking plastic bags. The Pajarito Group can help with providing reusable bags to the students in their campaign. And of course you can help by (1) eschewing plastic bags, (2) remember why you roll the loose stuff in your cart to your car, and (2) reminding people why they need to extinct the bag before bags extinct everything else.

As for food waste? If you are part of a church or service organization with ideas for distributing the waste, contact Jody Benson and the Zero Waste Team to brainstorm your ideas.

Restaurants are eager for the county’s proposed food-waste composting; for now, if you have pigs, goats, or chickens, you can arrange with a restaurant to pick up their food waste. Many want the county to re-offer energy audits to give them a measure of current energy use as a baseline for comparing progress.

As for food waste, most don’t have much uneaten portions, but if there were, they’d like a service organization or church to arrange for daily food pickup. Currently one Los Alamos Living Treasure picks up leftover Ruby K bags for the High School.

Restaurants want: more plastic dumpsters more conveniently located; cardboard recycle for every business; near-site glass recycling for bars; and more frequent pickup of all recycling. The county charges for recycling; dedication to green costs the business money.

Plastic/disposables waste: Blue Window owner Melissa Paternoster has recommendations for restaurant managers. Starting with education, reduction, and replacing plastic with biodegradable:

(1) proper food purchasing, (2) attention to portions, (3) menu flexibility to repurpose tomorrow what isn’t cooked today, (4) no unrequested straws (so far, any straw solution costs five times more than plastic), (5) biodegradable takeout boxes and utensils, and ask if the patron needs utensils. (7) Initiate the county-wide composting ASAP.

Restaurants would like a county-specific Green Restaurant Certificate to announce their commitment to the expensive, complicated, and strenuous requirements of being an Earth-friendly eatery.

Fast-food restaurants? The team didn’t tackle any yet. But we can bring our own kit with cup, plate, cutlery, and leftovers box everywhere.

Schools: Kids in all the schools understand that there is no Planet B.

Elementary schools: Chamas in White Rock is the Green Team Queen. They revamped their entire lunch program by exchanging disposable Styrofoam trays and plastic single-use utensils for reusable, and providing recycling and compost bins. Most importantly, their teachers and students volunteer at trash stations to sort waste, reduce contamination and promote diversion.

Other schools want this model. It requires champions, education, and the leadership to sustain the program.

Los Alamos Middle School Green Earth Club: The eighth-grade Green Earth Club members have plans — make the LMMS cafeteria waste-free: (1) stop using disposable food trays, plates, cutlery, (2) initiate recycling, (3) eliminate bottled water. These GEC goals were, in fact, what initiated the county’s involvement with the schools. Their sponsor called for mentors; the ESB’s Schools Team showed up; the team heard the goals and took them to county and schools leadership.

Consciousness is rising faster than global warming. Charnwells, the contractor for all the schools’ cafeterias, say “Yes please! We must very much want to go green — we already serve the Chama Green Team cafeteria!” But, for the Chama school is model to be every-where, the schools-wide contract must include requirements for sustainability.

The initial investment to implement green cafeterias in every school would open a $200,000 void in dishwashers and reusable serving items. Superintendent Kurt Steinhaus is definitely on board, but — it’s always the money thing. We supporters can help find money lacking in the schools budget to initiate the program.

Los Alamos High School: Students are working Big Picture through establishing governmental policy. They say: “Change is coming, whether we like it or not.”

In everything we do, from reducing consumption to establishing smart building codes to establishing life-supporting global energy policy, let’s make this change one that values life over corporate profit, because we all agree, the lives of these kids are worth the effort. Along with The Bag Ban, they’re joining millions of students worldwide to tell governments ‘The Time is Now. You. Do you want to get involved in zero waste, plant a tree, lead a hike, write an article, teach a kid? Contact any of the Pajarito Group (see box). We will join you with your life-changing, life-enhancing project.”
My first Excursion

I t all started at the library, where I saw a flyer announcing an excursion to the Piedras Marcadas Canyon; intriguingly, it was written both in Spanish and English. Since moving to Albuquerque around a year ago, I have tried to find a hiking group without much luck. Sometimes they focus on strenuous hikes (I am in not-so-stellar shape); sometimes they hike too far from where I live. And almost always they meet at the trailhead: without a car, and given how limited public transportation is in Albuquerque, this is hard for me to do.

Beltrán, and explained my predicament. She kindly offered to give me a ride, and so I found myself at the Piedras Marcadas Canyon Trail on a Saturday morning. I have hiked with other groups before—I lived for many years in Portland and Seattle, where hiking is very popular—and my fellow hikers had ... not very diverse. This but group included people of color, people who only spoke Spanish, young and young at heart, and people who, like me, weren’t wearing expensive outfits.

Military Outdoors Program wants you!

By Terry Owen

Military Outdoors Program chair

Are you a military veteran or on active duty or in the reserves or a family member? Did you enjoy or perhaps you are now long for the special bond that people who served? Then the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program wants you! Join us for monthly outings to some of the most beautiful wild areas in the Southwest. Regardless of your background or fitness level, there’s an outing that’s right for you. Additionally, most outings are free!

I’m a retired U.S. Navy officer who plans, organizes and leads outings of varying lengths and skill levels each quarter and can assist you in choosing the right outing; advise you on what you should bring; offer tips on how you should prepare and how to maximize your enjoyment by moving efficiently and safely. Co-chair and former U.S. Air Force physician John Link said, “The safety and well-being of participants is first and foremost on each of our outings, and that includes the sense of mutual trust that is felt among the participants.”

The objective of this program is to give our military and former military personnel the opportunity to feel the healing effects of nature while in the company of other people who have shared the same experiences.

In the past year, the program has featured a range of activities, including snowshoeing in the surrounding mountains, hikes in Petroglyph National Monument and easy walking tours of museums and sculpture gardens.

Upcoming events include easy hikes in the Albuquerque Open Space, full-moon night hikes and an opportunity to embark on a short overnight backpacking trip in the wilderness. Tips for packing light, trip planning and navigation will be combined with fun and awe-inspiring beauty.

If you’d like to learn more about the Military Outdoors Program, contact Terry Owen, teowen@comcast.net.


Outings Leader Summit! Mark your calendar! If you are a current or prospective Sierra Club outings leader or you’re curious about what being an outings leader entails, we hope you’ll join us on May 4 for a Sierra Club Outings Leader Summit.

Outings leaders from across the entire Rio Grande Chapter are encouraged to attend. Beginning at 8:30 a.m., we’ll start by giving back by perform-
April-May outings

April

Saturday, April 20: Easy Earth Day hike in the John A. Milne & Gutierrez Canyon Open Space. Meet at 9 a.m. at Hobby Lobby on Juan Tabo to carpool. This two-hour outing is approximately 2.5 miles round trip with 250 feet of elevation gain. Join us in this piton-juniper-covered canyon near Cedar Crest for a dose of nature, solitude and camaraderie. Children over 12 and maximum of two dogs. This is the perfect way to celebrate Earth Day. Sponsored by the Military Outdoor Programs, and we welcome everyone. Contact leader no later than April 18 to RSVP.

Trip leader: Terry Owen, (505) 301-4349 or teowen@comcast.net

Location: Albuquerque area

Saturday, April 20: Excursions Earth Day Hike. 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Embudito Canyon Loop Trail. Montgomery Blvd. NE toward the mountains, past Tramway Blvd. NE, left on Glenwood Hills Drive NE to Trailhead Road NE. Guerero (adventurous children) welcome.

No dogs please.

Trip leader: Cecilia, cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org, (505) 319 7556

Location: Albuquerque area

Saturday, April 20: Strenuous hike of Vicks Peak (505) 319 7556 chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org, (505) 301-4349 or teowen@comcast.net. Come join us as we celebrate our amazing open space. Meet at 09:30, at the Home Depot parking lot (close to the antennas). Note that the hike will be changed if the hike will be changed due to limited visibility footwear. No dogs. No children under 12 years old.

After the hike, we will return and have lunch at Los Ojos Restaurant in Jemez Springs. Details, updates and sign-up for this Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter event at Meetup Site. Sign-up and RSVP no later than May 5, 2019.

Trip leaders: June Parsons and Terry Owen, teowen@comcast.net or (505) 301-4349

Location: location of Los Alamos

Saturday, May 11: Excursions easy walk along the Rio Grande. 9 a.m. to noon, starting at Rio Bravo Riverside Picnic Area (south side of Rio Bravo Blvd, east side of the river). We will walk north as much as the river allows. Shady, peaceful pleasant walk. Children welcome. No dogs please. Facebook.

Trip leader: Cecilia, cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org, (505) 319 7556

Location: Albuquerque area

Saturday, May 18: Easy hike tour of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument with a hike on the Pine Tree Loop Trail in the newly created Organ Needles Wilderness Area. Spectacular views of the Organ Mountains and the Tularosa Basin to the east. This is a moderate hike with elevation gain of 1,000 feet. 4.5-mile loop. Day-use fee required for Aguirre Springs. Trip leader: Howie Dash (575) 652-7550 or howiedash@aol.com

Location: Las Cruces

May

Saturday, May 4: Albuquerque Open Space Cleanup. Come join us as we partner with the Albuquerque Open Space Division to pick up trash, maintain trails and celebrate our amazing open spaces. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the designated open space area. Bring water, sunscreen, gloves, hat and a snack, and wear closed-toe shoes. This is a great activity for families with children. Contact leader no later than May 2 to RSVP and obtain location or view our Meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra Club-Outings. Information.

Trip leader: Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@comcast.net

Location: Albuquerque area

Saturday, May 4: Outings leader summit. The objectives of the Outings Leader Summit are to give the ability to meet one another and collaborate, and share new information, knowledge and ideas. It will also include a community service project. More information to follow as the plan unfolds.

Trip leader: Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@comcast.net

Location: Albuquerque office, 2209 Silver Ave SE, Albuquerque

Friday, May 10: Easy/moderate hike along the Las Conchas Trail in the Jemez Mountains. We will meet at 9 a.m. at the farthest northwest area of the Home Depot parking lot at 7700 US Hwy 550, Rio Rancho, NM. Carpooling is recommended due to limited parking at the trailhead. Round trip hike is 2.5 miles with about 100 feet total elevation gain. Beautiful mountains in the pine forest along the trout-filled Jemez River. We will also pass through the heaven-through-the-mountain Gilman Tunnels on the way to Las Conchas Trail. car is not handicapped accessible. Cameras and binoculars are recommended. Dress in layers, bring water, snacks, and we encourage water resistance. No dogs. No children under 12 years old.

After the hike, we will return and have lunch at Los Ojos Restaurant in Jemez Springs. Details, updates and sign-up for this Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter event at Meetup Site. Sign-up and RSVP no later than May 5, 2019.

Trip leaders: June Parsons and Terry Owen, teowen@comcast.net or (505) 301-4349

Location: location of Los Alamos

Saturday, May 11: Excursions easy walk along the Rio Grande. 9 a.m. to noon, starting at Rio Bravo Riverside Picnic Area (south side of Rio Bravo Blvd, east side of the river). We will walk north as much as the river allows. Shady, peaceful pleasant walk. Children welcome. No dogs please. Facebook.

Trip leader: Cecilia, cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org, (505) 319 7556

Location: Albuquerque area

Saturday, May 18: Easy loop hike at the top of the Sandias. Meet at 09:30, on the East side of the Albertson parking lot at Tramway Blvd. and Academy Road; or, at 10:30 at the Sandia Crest Parking lot (close to the antennas). Note that the hike will be changed to a different one if conditions are bad. Optional pot-luck after the hike for those who are interested.

Trip leader: Odile, odile@pitot.org or (505) 433 4692

Location: northeast of Albuquerque

Saturday, May 18: Easy hike and tour of a portion of the Army Corps of Engineers’ bosque restoration project in the South Valley. This is different area than was visited in February. Meet at the Valley High Street SW access to the bosque at 8:30 a.m. which is 1.5 miles south of Rio Bravo off Second Street to see an excellent example of successful restoration of our beloved bosque. If we’re lucky, this year the restored area may be flooded, so prepare for a somewhat muddy trail. This outing is approximately two miles and 50 feet of elevation gain over 2 hours. More information will be available as the trip progresses. Contact leader.

Trip leader: Mark Rudd, mark@markrudd.com or 505-270-5449

Location: Albuquerque

Saturday, May 18: Moderate hike of Pino Tree Trail to Aguirre Springs. Let’s celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument with a hike on the Pine Tree Loop Trail in the newly created Organ Needles Wilderness Area. Spectacular views of the Organs Mountains and the Tularosa Basin to the east. This is a moderate hike with elevation gain of 1,000 feet. 4.5-mile loop. Day-use fee required for Aguirre Springs. Trip leader: Howie Dash (575) 652-7550 or howie dash@aol.com

Location: Las Cruces

June

Saturday, June 8: Moderate/ strenuous hike at high alti- tude in the Pecos region to view wildflowers on the mesa. The hike will pass through pine and aspen forest. Meet at 6:45 a.m. at North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center located at 7521 Carmel Ave. NE in Albuquerque to leave promptly at 7:00 a.m. Drive time to the trailhead at Iron Gate Campground will be 1 1/2 hours. There will be four miles of dirt road to the camp- ground. High-clearance vehi- cles are recommended although not a necessity. The in and out hike will be 5.7 miles roundtrip with an elevation gain of 737 feet. The total length will be 1070 feet. The minimum elevation will be 9,370. The grade will be 6% at times. Great views of the Pecos Wilderness peaks from the mesa, where we will eat lunch. A raincoat or poncho is required in case of a storm. The hike leader will watch a thunderstorm is forecast and/or the four-mile road to the trailhead will be impassable.

Continued on Page 15

Participants take a break on a moderate hike up Kitchen Mesa Trail at Ghost Ranch in March. Difficulty levels are included on each outing listing.

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 reserves right to 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 riograndesilouerclub.org/outings for up-to-date hike information.

Our weekly outings e-mail. Sierra Trail Mix, provides outings updates plus useful outdoor information such as trail conditions. Send an email to Listerv@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: meetup.com/Santa-Fe-Sierra-Club-Outings/.