



Rio Grande Sierran

Volume 57, Issue 3 News of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter: New Mexico & West Texas July / August / September 2019

Pollution is losing to solutions, destruction is giving way to protection, and persistent activism is on a winning streak

Energy transfer



Photo by Sonia Grant/San Juan Citizens Alliance

Indigenous youth led a 50-mile run to protest the June 20 BLM auction of Greater Chaco land to oil and gas drilling. Chaco protectors got lots of good news recently, including a Department of Interior leasing moratorium and a favorable court ruling. **Page 8**



Photo: Jim Robertson

A win for decency: Doña Ana County requires more humane control methods from federal wildlife-killing agency, thanks to wildlife proponents. **Page 9**



Photo courtesy Anni Hanna


Bernalillo goes beyond the bag: County passes ordinance to end distribution of bags and styrofoam takeout containers, thanks in large part to a kid-led effort. **Page 5**



Photo courtesy Neysa Hardin

El Paso nature advocates save the day: Sierra Student Coalition helps win a landslide victory to protect El Paso's Lost Dog Trail from developers. **Page 6**

EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET

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Santa Fe, NM 87505

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More inside:

Governor gives thumbs-down to Holtec

Lujan Grisham sends letter to NRC opposing proposed SE New Mexico storage site for all nation's high-level nuclear waste. **Page 6.**

El Paso, N.M. members help stop wall

Ruling on Sierra Club lawsuit, judge orders halt to construction of border wall in Rio Grande Chapter region. **Page 3.**

Ill-conceived Gila diversion plans scaled back

Report shows high expense, low water yield. **Page 3**

More: PNM files to abandon coal plant: **Page 7.** Central New Mexico Group: **Page 5.** Northern New Mexico Group: **Pages 12-13.** Pajarito Group: **14.** Hikes: **Pages 15-16**

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Editorial practices as developed and adopted by the chapter will be used in production of the *Sierran*.

Join the Rio Grande Chapter

You can join the Sierra Club now for only \$15! Just go to **riograndesierrclub.org/join**

Prefer snail mail? You can also send a \$15 check with your name, address **and the code 1700 in the memo line** to:

Sierra Club
Attn: Member Services
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Oakland, CA 94612

Do you have a membership question?
Call 415-977-5653 or e-mail membership.services@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 **riograndesierrclub.org/donate**, or send your check to:

Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter
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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 **riograndesierrclub.org** and subscribe to the chapter e-mail list, or write to monablaber@gmail.com and ask to be added to our opt-in list.

If you’d like to make a C3 charitable tax-deductible donation, write a check to “Sierra Club Foundation.” Please write “Rio Grande Chapter” in the memo line, and send to:

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Sierra Club members help stop wall

By Amanda Munro
Southern N.M. Group

The Trump Administration will not be able to use military funds to build his border wall, thanks to a lawsuit by the Sierra Club, Southern Border Communities Coalition, and American Civil Liberties Union.

On June 28, U.S. District Court Judge Haywood Gilliam Jr. permanently blocked the Trump Administration from using \$2.5 billion in military funds to construct border walls in Arizona, New Mexico and California. The administration's subsequent appeal was denied.

This is a huge win and a much-needed one for border communities and wildlife. For the past few years, we have been steamrolled by border-wall construction projects. The Department of Homeland Security has the authority to waive any and all laws when building border walls,

including the Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Native American Graves and Repatriation Act, Antiquities Act, and Clean Water Act. This is why 20 miles of new border walls went up in less than 10 months in Santa Teresa, NM, last year.

We have sued on border wall construction projects before and on the REAL ID Act, which gives the Department of Homeland Security this unchecked authority, with no success. In fact, the suit on the Santa Teresa construction is still pending, though the wall there has been completed.

Finally, a judge has drawn the line, ruling that despite Trump's "national emergency," he cannot circumvent Congress and rob funds from the military for his vanity project.

As a standing declarant on this successful lawsuit, I couldn't be more elated. This win is a glimmer of hope in a time when I was starting to feel powerless. This victory

inspires me to continue fighting for my community, including our local wildlife: the javelina, mountain lions, bobcats, wolves, jaguars, and other incredible creatures that call our border home and are threatened by the wall construction.

Now we just have to gear up for the fight ahead: making sure that our members of Congress do not appropriate any more funds for border walls, as they have every year of the Trump Administration so far. For now, it's time to celebrate this unexpected victory.

Amanda Munro is on the Rio Grande Chapter Southern N.M. Group Executive Committee and joined Liz Walsh of the El Paso Group as standing declarants on whose behalf the Sierra Club's lawsuit was filed. She is also a member of the Sierra Club Borderlands team and recently attended a DC fly-in where she lobbied to stop wall construction projects. She works at the Southwest Environmental Center in Las Cruces.

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Gila diversion scaled back after report

Allyson Siwik

Gila Conservation Coalition

After 15 years and \$15 million spent on planning, engineering studies, and lawyers, proponents of a plan to divert the Gila River were given a dose of reality when they realized that the project will cost too much and yield too little water.

The latest information in the Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement shows the diversion will cost more than \$100 million to construct and will yield about 3,000 acre-feet of water to irrigate 1,000 acres of farmland in the Cliff-Gila Valley, Virden Valley and along the San Francisco River.

Members of the New Mexico CAP Entity, the local group charged with design and construction of the Gila diversion project under the Arizona

Water Settlements Act, were in shock as they heard that it will cost more than double the amount of money in the Arizona Water Settlements Act construction fund to build the diversion, and project water will cost significantly more than irrigators' willingness to pay.

The Gila Conservation Coalition and Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter have been working for years to head off the ill-conceived diversion project, which could harm New Mexico's last wild river. The diversion project would be much more costly and benefit only a couple hundred irrigators, while cost-effective community water projects could secure a future water supply for the 60,000 people of southwest New Mexico.

The CAP Entity voted at its July meeting to scale back the diversion proposal to reduce the cost of construction by eliminating storage capacity in the Cliff-

Gila Valley and along the San Francisco River.

The Bureau of Reclamation has notified the NM CAP Entity that it is unable to meet the legally mandated deadline of Dec. 31, 2019, for a NEPA Record of Decision. Without an extension from the Secretary of the Interior, the group no longer has access to the \$56 million in reimbursable construction funding available under the Arizona Water Settlements Act. The NM CAP Entity will travel to Washington, DC, in August to ask for an extension.

A spokesperson for Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham reaffirmed her position to end work on the diversion. Communications director Tripp Stelnicki told the NM Political Report that "leadership at the Interstate Stream Commission and the Office of the State Engineer have been focused on fulfilling

contractual obligations while also aggressively shifting towards implementing the governor's vision for water management. This shift will be accelerated by the appointment of new members of the Interstate Stream Commission."

While the ISC has re-approved \$948,000 to complete the Environmental Impact Statement and the NM CAP Entity continues to throw money down the drain, local governments are searching for alternative sources of funding for local priority water projects that could be paid for with the Arizona Water Settlement Act funds. Loans acquired to fund the Grant County Regional Water Supply Project have raised water bills by \$20 per month for Hurley residents, many of whom are on fixed incomes.

For more information, please go to www.gilaconservation.org

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Tim DeChristopher, climate activist and co-founder of Peaceful Uprising

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OUR RIVER

OUR FUTURE



Standing up today, working toward tomorrow

It's not every day that we win. And these days our wins are tinged by loss, a loss of humanity.

In a recent conversation among the members of the Sierra Club's No Border Wall Program about the internment of immigrant children, we discussed whether it was appropriate to call the centers concentration camps. We discussed whether finding children in deplorable conditions, uncared for by adults in the region where we reside, could be compared to the internment of Japanese families in World War II.

Could the threat of mass arrest of working people in our communities be compared to the mass arrest of Jewish people in Europe? And suddenly it occurred to me that the very fact that we are asking ourselves



Camilla Feibelman
Rio Grande Chapter Director

these questions is a sign that something is very, very wrong.

My family's name is mentioned in a book called *The Oppermans* that was written by a German Jew named Leon Feuchtwanger before Hitler began the worst of his acts. The book's three chapters are yesterday, today and tomorrow. "Yesterday" describes the mundane lives of a family and its members whose personalities and approaches to life differ.

"Today" tells of the worrying changes, emerging fears and need to act that the family confronts and sometimes fails to. By "Tomorrow," the worst is upon the family and their reactions to terror seem totally disassociated from what you might have guessed of the people you learned about yesterday.

As I write this column, today implicates tomorrow. We are working to stop the border wall and have even had a win when the judge stopped action on the wall in New Mexico in a lawsuit brought by Sierra Club brought with ACLU and Southern Border Communities Coalition (see Page 3). Meanwhile, there are children caring for children in internment camps, where toys and diapers are rejected by guards,

where it's a question whether kids need soap and toothpaste, where parents have no way to reach their children, where staff are not allowed to hug them.

And here I type from the safety of my home, with all the food I and my children need, with safe disconnection of a tree-lined street. And yet I remind myself that my grandparents once fled, wrenched from their very normal lives. Tomorrow was not what they anticipated.

To make it even worse, we are forced to confront the impacts of a false crisis, while our government willfully ignores and purposely exposes us to the global climate chaos that is upon us.

President Trump invents a crisis of fear of our neighbors while ignoring humanity's end.

And yet with all the weight and sadness today brings us, we have at least our morality, our power to communicate, our conviction to act and the tools to do so. We are fighting for every win while working through the sadness and fear.

Because of our work together for tomorrow, we have a nation-leading renewable-energy requirement in our state, a kid-led bag ban in Albuquerque (Page 5), Chaco legislation that seeks to protect culture and communities from oil and gas destruction (Page 8), and the beginning of a process that will lead to state methane-pollution safeguards (Page 10).

Together we are making tomorrow something we can be proud of, something we can safely leave our children. Thank you for being part of that.

Rio Grande Green

By Louise Jensen
Fundraising chair

We, Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club members and donors, are amazing! We're a community working around a shared vision for our New Mexico and West Texas home both today and tomorrow.

It takes our generosity in time and money to make things happen, and this new Sierran column, Rio Grande Green, will regularly recognize and celebrate that generosity!

Here we go ... from January 2019:

Membership: 849 new members

Remember that when you join or renew your Sierra Club membership through the Chapter's donation page, it brings more money back to New Mexico!

Donations: \$104,234

These are gifts above and beyond annual membership. Fifty-four of these gifts were as monthly donations, which helps our chapter's work steadily throughout the year!

Volunteers: Sierra Club would not be Sierra Club without its grassroots volunteers working in so many ways, from leadership positions to walking the halls of the Roundhouse! The Rio Grande Chapter is asking all of its volunteers to begin tracking the time they spend helping. Those hours will speak volumes to elected officials and our partners! When we apply for a grant, those hours often count in real dollars as match for requested funds.

Meanwhile, we'll continue to

recognize volunteers throughout the Chapter!

In the future, we'll profile donors and volunteers so we can get to know one another better throughout our far-flung Chapter. We, also, will report on specific campaigns including goals and success! So, stay tuned!

Hooray for us all!!

From your very own Rio Grande Chapter Friend and Fund Development Committee, a heartfelt thank you.

Kabobs for cash! Save the date!

Saturday, Sept. 28, from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. at Chello Grill, 5010 Cutler Avenue, NE, Albuquerque (intersection of San Mateo and Cutler).

Support the Central New Mexico Group of the Rio Grande Chapter of Sierra Club by going out to dinner! Yes, that's right. This Persian restaurant with flame-grilled kabobs, vegetarian and vegan options, shaken iced-tea bar, baklava and more will donate 50% of net sales on Saturday, September 28, to help support the work the Central Group does to keep our main office up and running, as well as outreach in Albuquerque.

Just show them the event flier and your lunch or dinner tab will go into the fundraising till! The flier will be available for download as a PDF starting in late July, and, yes, we'll remind you!



"Puye Cliffs," by Jan Bartelstone.

Receive a Jan Bartelstone nature photo for your \$150 donation

Enjoy our Southwest natural heritage every day! Hang one of these sublime photos by photographer Jan Bartelstone in your office or home.

Bartelstone is one of the most dynamic fine-art photographers in New Mexico. Taken over the past 20 years, his grand-scale landscape series is legendary and reflects the awe and grandeur of our vast skies, mountains, rivers and canyons.

As a Sierra Club supporter, you already know how important it is to preserve these wild spaces for wildlife and people. The Rio Grande Chapter works diligently to do that work each and every day in New Mexico and southwest Texas.

For a \$150 donation to the Rio Grande Chapter, you can choose one of these 6 museum-quality, limited-edition prints. This is a special offer by the artist and is available for a limited time. Each print is 36 inches in its longest dimension.

Do not miss this opportunity to enjoy one of these iconic landscapes ... a daily reminder of all that we hold precious and work so hard to preserve.

You can choose from the following prints:

Above the Volcano

Mount Taylor, New Mexico

Blue Arch

White Rock, Los Alamos

Full Monty

Overlooking the Rio Grande from southwest Albuquerque. Many of the trees in the image burned in a fire shortly after the photo was taken.

Lady with Shawl

The Sandias — a view and perspective



"Blue Arch"

requested by the Sandia Pueblo

Puye Cliffs (shown above)

Santa Clara Canyon cliff dwellings, Española

Subtle Realms

Manzanos after a dry winter just before sunset

To make your donation, please go to sierraclubriograndechapter.org/fundraiser, and we'll follow up to confirm your choice of print and send it to you, carefully packaged, in the mail. Thanks for supporting our efforts to protect New Mexico!



Central N.M. Group office volunteers, from left in back row: Karen Canon, Central Group chair Fred Houdek, Tammie West. Front row: Laurie Marnell, Pat Duncan and Noemie Carroll. They and others enter chapter data and call members for events and endorsed candidates and legislation. In Albuquerque on a Wednesday? Contact miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org.



Take a walk with Bosque Action Team

By Richard Barish
Bosque Action Team Chair

Join the Central New Mexico Group's Bosque Action Team for walks to learn why we protect this precious recreational area:

Saturday, Sept. 28, 10 a.m., bosque walk with the Sierra Club/Bosque Action Team. The cottonwoods in our bosque are senescing, that is, they are old and dying. We are likely to see large die-offs of cottonwoods in the next 5-20 years, depending on water conditions in the river. I will lead this easy walk to help us enjoy the bosque and learn about the fate of the cottonwood canopy, what we can expect in the bosque in the future, and what we can do to ensure that the bosque continues to be good habitat and a great place to enjoy nature in the middle of the city. RSVP to richard.barish@gmail.com or 505-232-3013 for hike location.

Sunday October 6, 11am, Medicinal Plants of the Bosque Walk. Join herbalist and native plant conservationist Dara Saville for a stroll through the South Valley Bosque to explore medicinal plants. Meet at the Westside Community Center at 1250 Isleta Blvd SW at 10:45am for a short carpool to the trail head. This is an easy slow-paced walk, and all ages are welcome. Contact: Dara, dara@albuquerqueherbalism.com.

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Rachel Zulevi and Anni Hanna celebrate with Athena, Alex, Adrian and Arianna — Global Warming Express kids who testified for Bernalillo County's ban on styrofoam takeout containers and single-use plastic bags — after the 3-1 vote June 25.

Bernalillo takes zero-waste lead

By Anni Hanna

“Will it be expensive when our food chains are contaminated with microplastics?” asked Alex, age 11, of Bernalillo County commissioners.

“Will it be expensive when birds' stomachs are filled with bottle caps?”

Alex is part of the Global Warming Express program that teaches students climate science and advocacy. This year, it is students who have taken a lead role in asking the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County to pass ordinances banning plastics.

On a 3-1 vote, county commissioners passed an ordinance banning plastic bags and styrofoam takeout containers that will go into effect in January. Chair Maggie Hart Stebbins, Vice Chair Debbie O'Malley and Charlene Pyskoty voted in favor. Lonnie Talbert voted against and Steven Michael Quezada was absent. The ordinance is stronger than the City of Albuquerque's version in that it also bans styrofoam takeout containers. “This is a movement,” 8-year-old Athena said at the meeting. “We don't want New Mexico to be left behind.”

Bernalillo has taken the lead in New Mexico by also banning styrofoam takeout containers. In our hot and windy desert conditions, styrofoam breaks into microplastics that harm our

animals and our food chain. This is a win for our Rio Grande and Bosque ecosystem. From cradle to grave, extraction, refining, and degradation into microplastics, the plastics industry causes numerous health problems, including cancer. It is time for a global switch to compostable options.

Rachel Zulevi, founder of a Zero Waste group called WasteLess Life New Mexico, also spoke in support of the ordinance.

“This bag ban is an opportunity for our community to become just a little bit more aware of our consuming habits and less beholden to single-use plastics,” Zulevi said. “It's a good first step, of many steps we'll need to take, to reverse the devastating impact throw-away plastics are having on the local and global environment.”

It is very heartening to see students lifting their voices to create positive change in our community. As Commissioner Pyskoty put it, “The future belongs to the children. Their opinion of the future of this planet weighs heavy on the decisions we make.”

Thank you, Bernalillo County, for listening to the children and passing an ordinance that will help create a sustainable future.

Tips for living bag-free

By Camilla Feibelman
Rio Grande Chapter Director

In January, Albuquerque will go plastic bag free!

This is a great example of individual action gone viral. If you are like me, at home you are always thinking of little ways to reduce your personal impact. Maybe it's washing the dog in the kids' bath water when they are done. Or putting a bucket in the shower while you warm the water up. Maybe it's obsessively saving every mailing envelope for future reuse.

But the realities of our global crisis demand a scale of action beyond the sum of our individual, elective actions. And that's why it's so inspiring to see the mothers and kids who worked together to pass the Albuquerque ordinance ending distribution of single-use plastic bags at stores (of course we still have to get the straw and foam-container ban over the finish line.)

But when citizens move their governments to create the foundation for broad social change, we become closer to where we need to be to leave a livable planet for our little people.

Going bag-free will require some care and thought on the part of each of us. If we turn around and buy big plastic trash bags at the store as an alternative to small grocery bags for trash, we reduce the benefits of the lower demand for petroleum. So here are a few suggestions:

1. Start composting. If you can't do it yourself at home, use little-greenbucket.com, where Brad, a member of our Zero Waste Team, comes to pick up your compost each week. The rest of your waste will be easier to manage.

2. Recycle everything you can. Remember that cities don't want your recyclables in bags. The bags clog the sorter and slow the system down. There's a list of acceptable materials for Albuquerque at www.cabq.gov/solidwaste/recycling/acceptable-materials. Make sure your recyclables are clean. I suggest keeping a large bowl in your sink that captures water when you rinse items. You can use that water to rinse your recyclables without using fresh water.

3. To collect your remaining trash, use cereal boxes, mailing envelopes, and food bags. These bags can also be used to collect animal waste.

4. And of course, behind all of this trash management is the basic need we all have to reduce what we buy while pushing companies to reduce the unnecessary waste and packaging they feed us.

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Neysa Hardin

El Paso Group’s Sierra Student Coalition was key in helping protect Lost Dog Trail from development. A May ballot question to save the trail won with a whopping 89 percent of the vote.

People power saves El Paso’s Lost Dog Trail

By Laurence Gibson
El Paso Group chair

The May 4 Special Election win on Proposition A was the culmination of years, really, of effort to save 1,006 acres of prime land adjoining El Paso’s Franklin Mountains State Park from development.

We owe this final victory to a powerful coalition of El Paso’s mountain-biking community and environmentalists led by the Bonarts, Sharon and Rick. Even while practicing veterinary medicine, Dr. Bonart was a leader on El Paso’s Public Service Board of El Paso Water Utilities. This agency administers the thousands of acres El Paso Water bought more than 50 years ago to recharge the city’s underlying aquifer. There Bonart began to learn how politics shapes land use.

We spent hours in meetings over the past 20 years before the Public Service Board, where the future of our open space was decided by a powerful few. Just when we thought we had workable compromises over the future of pristine desert land, including the Lost Dog area, the mayor and other establishment figures would quietly “disappear” our proposals, lending credence to Jefferson’s quote “In the environment, every victory is temporary, every defeat permanent.”

A bit of background on Lost Dog: This great trail through El Paso’s West Side desert connecting to Franklin Mountains State Park had become a play-

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ground for all kinds of outdoor activities. It had also begun to appear in glossy brochures from El Paso developers showing planned residential communities promising “direct trail connections” to Franklin Mountains State Park.

So, when the city concocted its latest scheme to have taxpayers pay for otherwise unprofitable desert land development, Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones, and set up Tax Incremental Reinvestment Zone 12, encompassing the 1,006 acres around the Lost Dog Trail, Dr. Bonart, an avid mountain biker, gathered his biking community to fight the TIRZ. When it became apparent that the City Council, led by the developers’ mayor, was not listening to open-space advocates’ protests, he began the petition process to create a ballot Proposition A.

After the city certified the thousands of signatures on the petition and accepted the results, we were all very confused when they announced we would need a second successful petition to force a ballot issue. It took

us a few months more to come up with that second successful petition, but we beat their deadline. We sat at City Council, holding our collective breath while they went into “executive session” to strategize. They emerged, complaining that the special election we requested would cost \$400,000, to which Dr. Bonart replied that it was Council’s own fault for ignoring the will of the people.

The Proposition A ballot had some challenges: Bonart had to fight the city for clear language, and it was combined with a school board election that usually gets poor voter turnout. Here again we overcame. Despite full-page ads from El Paso Builders Association and the building contractors, the numbers were staggering, an 89% approval for Save Lost Dog! Thanks to the Bonarts. Thanks to the many donors, including us, the El Paso Group. Thanks to Neysa Hardin and our Sierra Student Coalition for poll watching. This victory was a long time coming, renewing our faith in our mission to Preserve and Protect.

Governor’s letter a turning point on NM nuclear site?

By Patricia Cardona
Chapter Nuclear Waste Team

On June 7, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham sent a letter to the Department of Energy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission opposing an interim storage facility for high-level nuclear waste in New Mexico.

Southeast New Mexico, where Holtec International proposes to build the storage site, generates \$3 billion a year in economic activity that could be endangered by the transport and storage of high-level radioactive waste, the letter said.

The letter puts the federal government on notice that New Mexico does not consent to the import and placement of high-level radioactive waste here. Past objections from other states have prevented such facilities.

Later in June, Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard sent Holtec a letter detailing safety concerns and saying Holtec falsely told the NRC it had secured agreements from oil and gas operators to restrict activities and drill only at certain depths when no such agreements are in place with the Land Office.

The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter and 10 other organizations continue our opposition to Holtec’s license at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission after the NRC’s Atomic Safety and Licensing Board in May rejected all of our challenges to Holtec’s application.

Among the Sierra Club’s rejected objections was that U.S. law prohibits nuclear waste being moved to interim facilities before a permanent storage site has been identified. No such permanent sites exist or are in sight in the U.S.

“This ‘interim’ storage facility could well become a permanent repository without the protections of a permanent repository,” Sierra Club attorney Wally Taylor said. “Now it is up to the people and public officials in New Mexico to protect New Mexicans from this boondoggle.”

Any accidental radiation release threatens lives as well as businesses in New Mexico. Yucca Mountain, which was designated as a permanent repository, has porous rock and water, making it unsuitable, and the site is strongly opposed by the majority of Nevadans. In addition, it is on Shoshone treaty land, and the tribe opposes the taking of their land and placement of radiation that causes cancer, genetic defects and birth defects near tribal members.

The aging out of nuclear

power plants as well as the availability of renewables at lower prices is making nuclear electricity less competitive, forcing the early retirement of many commercial reactors. Most of the plants are on the East Coast near rivers and lakes because the nuclear reactors need water to cool the rods. However, included in utility rates are funds set aside for decommissioning the power plants. This provides an opportunity for nuclear-waste companies to profit from moving the waste. Since there is no permanent repository, creating “interim storage” provides a business opportunity in accessing these ratepayer trust accounts.

Bills have been introduced in Congress to change the law that prevents federal funding of private “consolidated interim storage” facilities like Holtec’s.

The waste is currently stored on site safely, so there is no “emergency.” A temporary site means paying twice to move the nuclear waste. Holtec is proposing to transport the rods by rail. A Radioactive Waste Management Associates study found that 1,370 cancer fatalities could result from a rail accident involving radioactive fuel. The process of storing nuclear waste should not only include the technology for a permanent repository but also for considering locations closer to current sites, as well as improved storage measures.

The immediate benefit, according to Holtec’s application, is 40 employees and 15 security force personnel. The potential New Mexico jobs and revenue lost due to an accident outweigh the few jobs created.

There is no technology to “clean away” radiation or contain its release into the air, water or soil. Contaminated materials are simply moved. Radiation slowly ages away, which means in 10,000 to a million years, the fuel rods may be safe for human handling. Since no economic or political structure has lasted that long, the chance of abandonment is very high. The stated reason for the removal of high-level fuel rods and low-level waste from the sites is so cities hosting the reactors can do “economic development.” Investors are reluctant to invest in areas where high radiation levels are present. The question is: Where does this leave New Mexico?

The Sierra Club Nuclear Waste Team will continue to work with national and local organizations concerned by the risks of importing and storing high-level radioactive waste that threatens the Land of Enchantment.

PNM files to drop San Juan coal power

The next steps are to determine what replaces it — renewable energy, gas or a mix of the two?

Brittany Fallon
Rio Grande Chapter
Legislative Coordinator

On March 22, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed the Energy Transition Act (ETA, SB489) into state law, mandating 50% renewable energy generation by 2030 and 100% carbon-free energy by 2045. Now we must consider, how do we get there? Right now at the Public Regulation Commission, commissioners are preparing to hear the first major case relating to the ETA. The Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM) recently filed a case with three parts.

The first part requests the PRC's permission to abandon the San Juan Generating Station and get out of dirty coal, which currently supplies 30% or 490 MW of PNM's energy. The second part addresses securitization, or how PNM will finance abandonment via low interest AAA-certified bonds that save ratepayers money on their monthly bills. The third part of the case, and the one that is most important for the issue of combating climate change, deals with the energy mix PNM will add to their portfolio in lieu of the abandoned coal power.

PNM has offered four replacement portfolios for the PRC to choose from, with each scenario including a mix of solar, wind, battery, and natural gas. We break down the pros and cons of each scenario below. One thing that is important to know is that PNM already has 140MW of wind and 50MW of solar pending before the commission as part of a prior request.



Courtesy San Juan Citizens Alliance

On July 1, San Juan Generating Station owner and operator PNM submitted its filing to abandon the plant and mine (both pictured above). The Sierra Club will participate in the case and do its own modeling to advocate for the most equitable and cleanest possible transition from coal.

Scenario 1 (PNM's preferred-scenario): Adds 370MW of solar, 130 MW of battery storage, and 280 MW of natural gas located in San Juan Central Consolidated School District. According to PNM, this plan has the lowest probability of a loss of a power outage.

Scenario 2 (mostly gas): Adds 476 MW of natural gas in San Juan County, 20MW of solar.

Scenario 3 (Renewables and battery): Adds 500MW of solar and 410MW of battery, with 40MW in San Juan County.

Scenario 4 (renewables without battery): Adds 975MW of solar and 1,199MW of wind, but no new resources in San Juan.

There are many important factors to consider, including each scenario's overall climate impact; the number of jobs for New Mexicans; the impact on ratepayers; ensuring grid reliability to avoid outages; and environmental justice for

San Juan County. Overall, we believe these proposals offer a step in the right direction. PNM is currently at 13% renewable energy; with three of the four scenarios, they would reach at least 34% RPS in 18 months.

That's a huge victory for the climate, and it's because people like you have been working for years to end the pollution from San Juan. That being said, we still have a lot of work to do.

Replacing one dirty fuel in San Juan County with another isn't the answer. Utilities have resisted breaking away from the outdated utility model of the past, but science and economics tell us we can and must stop burning fossil fuels now. This is an opportunity to start fresh with clean, affordable solar and wind.

Sierra Club is looking forward to participating in the PRC process and doing our own modeling to find the best

scenario for the climate, workers and impacted communities.

The commission process will provide opportunities for us to analyze the best mix of replacement power. What is clear is keeping San Juan Generating Station open is the most costly option for our state.

The Energy Transition Act paved the path forward. New Mexico can create jobs with clean, renewable energy in the Four Corners region, at affordable rates. That's what we will advocate for in this process.

Here are some terms that may come up during the months-long process of the abandonment and replacement case:

Flexible gas: You may hear PNM use this term to describe the gas they want to invest in. What they mean is that this gas will not run around the clock, but will only ramp up when there isn't enough other electricity on the grid. This

PNM public meetings

Speak up for renewable energy and reinvestment in the impacted communities and plant and mine workers:

Thursday, July 18, 8:30-11:30 am, Albuquerque Museum

Tuesday, July 30, 1-5 pm, San Juan College School of Energy, Zia Room

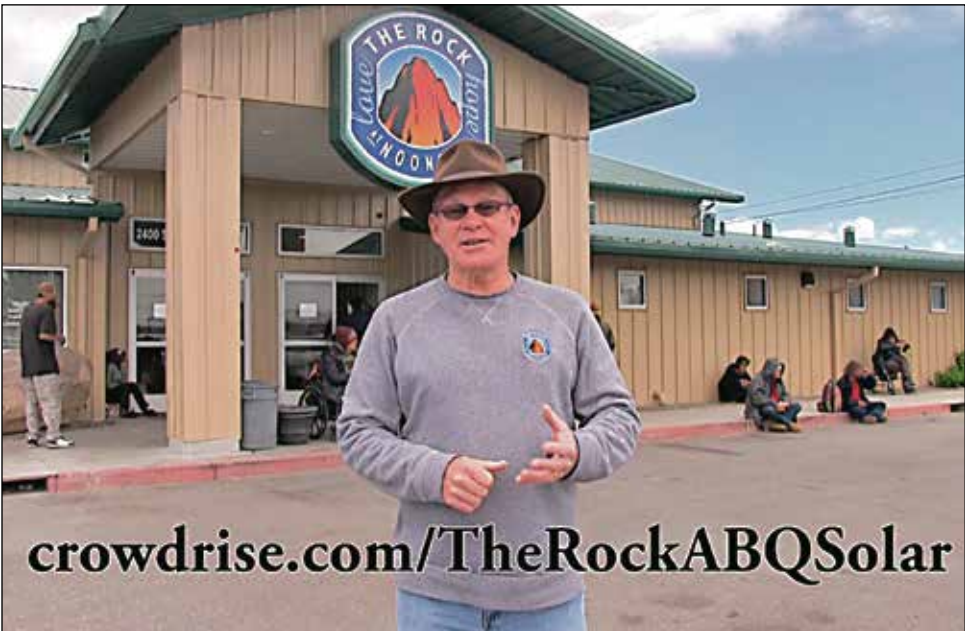
type of gas plant is also called a peaker plant.

Battery storage: Lithium-ion batteries allow us to store renewable energy for later use. This is especially useful when we produce more solar power, for example, than is needed at a given time. Battery technology is crucial for the wide-scale adoption of renewables.

Reliability: In utility terms, this means ensuring that there is sufficient power available at all times, including backup power in the case of outages. For each scenario, PNM has calculated an LOLE "loss of load expectation" value that indicates the likelihood of power outages. PNM uses the LOLE to make its recommendations as to which scenarios are viable.

Capacity: Because different power sources produce different amounts of energy on a daily and annual basis (coal produces about 65% of the time while solar production is about 25-30%), they will need a greater total of power production capability to meet their power demand. This doesn't make it more expensive, though, because renewables are cheaper per unit of energy produced.

Help NM homeless shelter cut costs with solar



By Troy McGee
New Mexico Solar Group

The Rock at Noonday stands against the destructiveness of homelessness and is New Mexico's largest feeding program, serving over 108,000 meals annually to adults and children.

After new security costs, the program's electric utility bill is its highest monthly expense. Because of current budget shortfalls they are struggling to keep essential services like showers.

Good news is The Rock at Noonday has the perfect roof for both Photovoltaic solar and Solar Thermal energy. Troy McGee (The Solar Evangelist) has pulled together help

from NM Solar Group, New Mexico Solar Energy Association, Amenergy and friends like the Sierra Club, PNM and APD to crowd fund the needed solar project. This is fundraising to buy capital equipment that will allow The Rock at Noonday to own their own electricity, saving them an estimated \$700 a month. Because of solar energy's very high return on investment, every \$1 donated will save The Rock more than \$3 in electricity expenses over the life of the equipment!

You don't have to look outside New Mexico to donate and save lives. Donate to and share this important project today — www.crowdrise.com/solarevangelist. Thank you!

Preserving Greater Chaco

Tide finally turning Chaco's way

By Miya King-Flaherty
Our Wild New Mexico Oil
and Gas Organizer

The battle to protect the Greater Chaco region has certainly reached new heights. There is a real chance that permanent federal protections may become law after our entire New Mexico congressional delegation reintroduced the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act of 2019 earlier this year. We can truly credit these gains to the persistent community-led effort and widespread support on all fronts.

State Land Office issues moratorium

On the heels of the reintroduced legislation, New Mexico Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard signed an executive order establishing a four-year moratorium on new oil and gas leasing on 72,776 acres of state trust lands within 10 miles of Chaco Park.

She also initiated the first of a series of Chaco Working Group meetings that included representatives from the All Pueblo Council of Governors, the Navajo Nation Council, local Navajo Chapters, the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, the offices of Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, and advocates from WildEarth Guardians, Sierra Club, Western Environmental Law Center and San Juan Citizens Alliance.

The working group is charged with advising the State Land Office on sustainable and responsible management practices on state trust lands in the Greater Chaco area.

The working group will also provide suggestions for potential land exchanges and improved land management practices in conjunction with tribal communities and the federal government.

Court win for Greater Chaco

Then in May, our coalition partners WildEarth Guardians and the Western Environmental Law Center won a partial federal appeals court ruling. The lawsuit questioned the environmental analysis of thousands of wells



Above: Sierra Club's Robert Tohe, center, joined a 50-mile run led by indigenous youth to raise awareness of BLM auctions of Greater Chaco land to oil and gas drilling.

Left: Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard, surrounded by Chaco protectors, signed a moratorium on leasing of state trust land near Chaco Park.

Sonia Grant/San Juan Citizens Alliance

approved by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Farmington Field Office.

The court reversed the approval of 25 drilling permits, and the case has implications for hundreds of drilling permits that have been approved and are currently under consideration in the Greater Chaco region.

It's clear that BLM is failing to analyze the significant impacts of oil and gas development prior to approving drill permits and leasing.

Making waves in Congress

In late May, Sen. Heinrich invited Secretary of Interior David Bernhardt to visit and tour Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Both were joined by Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Pueblo of Acoma Governor Brian Vallo. After the visit, Bernhardt imposed a one-year moratorium on new oil and gas leasing within a 10-mile buffer of the Park. The moratorium

also allows time for Congress to consider the pending legislation for permanent protections around the Park and stipulates that the BLM Farmington Field Office must complete its resource management plan for the region. However, the moratorium does not prevent the BLM from approving drilling permits on already leased lands.

Meanwhile, in June, U.S. House Assistant Speaker and U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Lujan introduced a friendly Chaco protection amendment to a House Appropriations package that passed. The amendment prohibits federal funding from being used for further mineral development within the 10-mile buffer around the Park. It essentially codifies the Secretary's moratorium decree into law for a year. We're hopeful that the appropriations bill passes in the U.S. Senate.

June lease sale day of action

We're gaining momentum

must also be protected.

Unfortunately, the BLM Rio Puerco Field Office recently leased over 37,000 acres at the June 20th on-line lease sale--an area larger than the Park itself.

In keeping with tradition and holding a lease sale day of action, the Chaco coalition supported and participated in a spiritual relay run. The 50-mile awareness run, led by indigenous youth, was from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rio Puerco Field Office in Albuquerque to the BLM state headquarters in Santa Fe. The run culminated with the delivery of protest letters to the BLM and a community meal with allies, families, and advocates.

The #RunningForOurLives run symbolizes the public's growing outrage against expanded oil and gas development throughout the Greater Chaco Landscape, and across New Mexico, while spreading awareness about climate impacts and environmental justice issues tied to fossil fuel development.

Special recognition goes to Eileen Shendo of Jemez Pueblo, the Native American Youth Empowerment runners, San Felipe Pueblo, Sierra Club senior organizer Robert Tohe, WildEarth Guardians, San Juan Citizens Alliance and others who made this a truly inspiring event.



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New wildlife management in NM

By: Mary Katherine Ray
Wildlife Chair

For the first time in history, the chair and vice-chair of the New Mexico Game Commission, both elected by their fellow commissioners, are women.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham’s seven appointees to the Game Commission took their seats at their first meeting June 14. Joanna Prukop, the new chair, has a long history of working in natural resource administration, having previously worked for New Mexico Game and Fish and as the cabinet secretary for the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department under Gov. Richardson. Vice chair Roberta Salazar Henry has also previously worked for many years for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

This commission sets policy for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, including important wildlife policies that matter to many Sierrans. While not a requirement to serve on the Commission, all seven commission members are hunters.

State law requires that there be one commissioner from each geographic quadrant of the state and one from Bernalillo County, accounting for five of the seats. Two seats are held at large: one who owns a farm or ranch containing at least 200 species of wildlife to be a voice for agriculture interests, and one

Upcoming Game Commission meetings:

- 9 a.m. July 24: Socorro at New Mexico Tech
- 9 a.m. Aug. 22: Santa Fe at the Roundhouse
- 9 a.m. Sept. 18: Cloudcroft at The Lodge, Pavilion room
- 9 a.m. Oct. 25: Farmington at Civic Center, Exhibition Hall
- 9 a.m. Nov. 21: Roswell at the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish office
- 9 a.m. Jan. 17: Santa Fe

by someone whose occupation is not at odds with wildlife conservation to be a voice for conservation interests, which is usually taken to mean not exclusively hunting and fishing based. This language dates back nearly a century to when the Commission was established in state law, despite multiple legislative attempts for reform that would make the Commission more representative for all wildlife interests.

The new at-large agriculture representative, Tirzio Lopez, refreshingly has said he supports the reintroduction of the Mexican wolf. The previous Game Commission appointed by former Gov. Susana Martinez completely withdrew the state of New Mexico from the Mexican-wolf reintroduction program and placed many obstacles in the way of success for our imperiled wild canine. There are 131 lobos left in the wild, and the reintroduction program includes introducing captive-bred lobos to sustain genetic diversity. Members of the public have urged that one of the

first orders of business for the commission be to rejoin the wolf program, and indications are that this possibility will be placed on a future agenda.

The new at-large conservation member, David Soules, also serves on the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance board of directors and is a co-author of “Exploring Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument,” lending credibility to his ability to represent conservation interests. This is a far cry from the previous commission, where this seat was held either by a trophy hunter or an oil and gas lawyer — the previous administration would not clarify to which commissioner the seat even belonged.

At the first meeting, the new commissioners indicated they will be examining the rules for hunting of bears and cougars, as well as for trapping, thereby completing all changes to existing rules prior to the next legislative session in January. Not only are trappers allowed to kill animals like bobcats, foxes,

coyotes, and badgers, but the previous commission allowed the trapping of mountain lions. Population information for these species is sparse at best. These rules, because they impact carnivore species, which we know to be essential to the integrity of biotic communities, are crucially important, to say nothing about safety concerns regarding the allowance of trapping on public lands.

At the first meeting, the commission indicated its commitment to increasing the transparency of its work and improving public engagement, which would be welcome developments. Comments from the public included the reminder that wildlife, under the public-trust doctrine, belongs to everyone but is owned by no one. The Game Commission members are the trustees responsible to all the species over which they have jurisdiction and to all members of the public, not just the purchasers of hunting and fishing licenses.

You can read more about each game commissioner at www.wildlife.state.nm.us/commission/meet-the-commissioners.

Please also note the details and agenda items for upcoming meetings. Consider going to see your Game Commission at work. Wildlife is a treasured asset that belongs to all New Mexicans. Public participation is crucial to help guide their future— and ours.

Counties attempt to rein in animal-killing agency

By Mary Katherine Ray
Chapter Wildlife Chair

Wildlife Services, the euphemistically named federal agency, kills native wildlife that come into conflict with people. Often the people who benefit are private, for-profit, agriculture businesses that can save on their own bottom line by foisting the cost onto the taxpayer.

Coyotes, rodents and other unprotected species are often the targets. And rather than trying to prevent conflict or abate it with non-lethal strategies known to be effective, the agency often resorts to killing the offending (and sometimes non-offending) animals with cruel and indiscriminate traps and poisons.

About 25 of the 33 counties in New Mexico contract with Wildlife Services to have this work done within the county. (The populous counties of Santa Fe and Bernalillo do not, nor do the less-populated San Juan, Sandoval, San Miguel, Mora, Union and Otero counties.) The funding comes from grazing fees paid to use federal land that is distributed back to the counties by the federal government to be apportioned by county commissions. It is meant to benefit the entire county and can also be used for noxious weed control, soil and



Amanda Munro

Advocates protest Wildlife Services’ killing methods at the July 9 Doña Ana County Commission meeting, after the commission had voted to restrict the federal agency to non-lethal methods, then reversed itself under pressure from anti-wildlife forces.

water conservation and maintenance and construction of secondary roads. Killing wildlife is not the exclusive purpose of this funding.

Two counties in Southern New Mexico, Grant and Doña Ana, are examining their contracts with Wildlife Services.

In April, the Doña Ana

County Commission passed a resolution 4-1 directing that these funds, when used to address wildlife conflict, be used only on non-lethal methods. Wildlife Services and its allies in the county vehemently opposed this action. County commissioners were led to believe that devices like leg-hold traps are

effective and humane despite voluminous evidence to the contrary. So much pressure was brought to bear that six weeks later, the Commission repealed the resolution and opted instead to require modest quarterly reports detailing what work was done. Tellingly, Wildlife Services opposed even this requirement.

County wildlife advocates, including many Sierra Club Southern New Mexico volunteers, pushed the commissioners to, at a minimum, adopt the provisions in a newly conceived “People’s Contract” that would require Wildlife Services using non-lethal measures first, prohibit all aerial gunning, leg-hold traps and M-44 cyanide poison, and require detailed and publicly available accounting of actions taken based on the contract. At the end of the commission’s July 9 meeting, which supporters on both sides attended, an amended contract was signed.

Wildlife advocates didn’t get all we wanted, but significant progress was made. The quarterly reports must contain information about where Wildlife Services is responding, what species are involved, how the situation was handled and how often entities make repeat requests. Even more, Wildlife Services will now be required to try two separate non-lethal measures before resorting to

killing offending wildlife.

The Wildlife Services contract is also under scrutiny in Grant County.

In the past two years, Silver City wildlife advocates have garnered a modest requirement for quarterly reports from Wildlife Services under the Grant County contract. In a surprise vote June 27, the Grant County Commission amended its contract to prohibit the use of leg-hold traps and cyanide poison bombs. But the victory was short-lived. Less than two weeks later, commissioners under pressure from Wildlife Services and its allies voted to repeal this amendment.

Public testimony ran 2-to-1 against repeal and larger questions include why a federal agency has so thoroughly inserted itself into local governance and how the county spends its own funds seemingly contrary to local opinion. This interference happened in both counties. One thing is certain, the practices of Wildlife Services are under scrutiny. Sunshine is the best disinfectant. Change, as we have seen with legislation that has not yet passed to ban traps and poisons from all public lands in New Mexico is requiring a long and difficult course to dislodge the status quo. But we remain confident that compassion and scientific reason will eventually prevail.



Earthworks

Earthworks uses infrared cameras to detect methane leaks from fracking and drilling. Oil and gas facilities leak and flare enough of the climate-damaging gas to heat every home in New Mexico.

Signs of progress on cleaning up methane

By Camilla Feibelman
Rio Grande Chapter director

As the Trump Administration reverses critical pollution safeguards, New Mexico is taking up the slack, announcing it will create rules to slash climate-damaging methane pollution from its booming oil and gas industry.

According to our partner organization Environmental Defense Fund, the 1 million metric tons of methane wasted by the New Mexico oil and gas industry has the same short-term impacts as 22 coal-fired power plants or 28 million automobiles. While that's only part of the total climate pollution that extraction in greater Chaco and Carlsbad produces, it's a problem we can solve now, with existing technology, improving health conditions for people living in close proximity to oil and gas operations.

When NASA discovered a methane cloud the size of Delaware over the Four Corners region in 2014, an array of groups convened to address the issue from a climate, health and waste perspective. Our hope was that national rules that were later enacted by the Obama Administration would force industry to take basic, good-neighbor actions in our state, especially because companies are removing a public resource from public lands for their own profit.

But the Trump Administration has gutted these rules, undermining our commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement. Though we continue to fight in court, Trump's EPA is now challenging its own authority to regulate methane after reversing leak,



San Juan Citizens Alliance

Operators burn off methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, in the process of fracking, but it can be captured and sold.

detection and repair requirements in the original rule.

So now, our New Mexico communities are confronted with not only the climate impacts of wasted methane oil and gas leaks, vents or flares but also the hundreds of thousands of tons of smog-producing volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that can trigger asthma attacks and worsen other respiratory diseases such as emphysema.

Rural counties including Eddy, Lea, San Juan, Rio Arriba and Chavez — home to 97 percent of the state's oil and gas wells — are all at risk of violating federal ozone standards. A recent study funded by Environmental Defense Fund, Diné CARE, Native American Voters Alliance and Grand Canyon Trust showed that tribal communities suffer from disproportionately high pollution levels.

Oil and gas operations also release hazardous air pollutants such as benzene and toluene that are proven to cause cancer, putting those living close to oil and gas operations at the greatest risk. More than 130,000 New Mexicans live within a half-mile of oil and gas development.

But there is hope. In January, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham

announced her intent to make New Mexico a national leader in cutting methane waste and pollution by adopting rules "to eclipse states that are successfully doing this work." In June her administration announced the beginning of the process to create methane-reducing rules. Republican- and Democratic-leaning states across the U.S. have proved these solutions are a win for the environment and economy. Colorado, Wyoming, Pennsylvania and Ohio all have state rules.

Make your voice heard for strong methane safeguards by attending any of three stakeholder meetings the state is hosting in July:

- **1-5 p.m. July 29**, San Juan Community College, Farmington
- **1-5 p.m. July 30**, University of New Mexico School of Law, Albuquerque
- **8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Aug. 7**, Nuclear Waste Partnership Building, Carlsbad

In Farmington and Albuquerque we'll provide lunch and orientation for those who are interested. In Carlsbad there will be an orientation on Aug. 5. Please email miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org if you'd like to attend or for more information.

Session over, but N.M. legislators are still working

By Brittany Fallon
Legislative coordinator

Even though New Mexico's 30-day legislative session is months away, the wheels are turning for new laws and bills now. The interim legislative session runs from June to November, and it consists of joint House-Senate committees that travel the state to hear about issues that will likely show up as legislation in 2020.

Often, the interim is used to introduce new legislation concepts and work out the kinks, as well as learn about issues. The first June meeting is for planning locations and discussion topics.

Agendas are released a few weeks before each meeting. You can see workplans for each committee at nmlegis.gov/Committee/Interim.

Here is a list of committees that typically hear environmental issues:

Revenue Stabilization and Tax Policy Committee. This committee sometimes discusses incentives and barriers to bringing additional industries to rural New Mexico and tax structures on oil and gas and other industries. Meeting dates: July 25-26 in Santa Fe; Aug. 28-29, Red River (Joint meeting with Legislative Finance Committee); Sept. 26-27, Santa Fe; Oct. 23-24, Santa Fe; Dec. 17-18, Santa Fe.

Economic and Rural Development Committee. This committee discusses ways to bring new economic development to rural New Mexico, which this year includes energy-sector topics from fracking to electric vehicles to ecotourism. Meetings: Aug. 14-16 in Las Vegas/Taos; Oct. 28-30,

Farmington; Nov. 12-14, Santa Fe.

Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee. This committee discusses everything from uranium to produced water to WIPP. Meetings: Aug. 23 in Los Alamos; Sept. 25-26, Hobbs; Nov. 4, Santa Fe.

Water and Natural Resources Committee. This committee covers a wide variety of environmental issues, from wildlife to energy to water. Meeting dates: July 30-31 in Truth or Consequences; Sept. 5-6 in Ruidoso; Oct. 17-18 in Silver City; Nov. 7-8 in Santa Fe.

Legislative Finance Committee. This committee hears every budget-related topic and meets frequently. Next meeting: Aug. 28-30, Red River.

Science, Technology, and Telecommunications Committee. This committee plans to address renewable-energy technology, STEM education and electric vehicles. Meetings: Sept. 3-4 in Alamogordo/Sunspot; Sept. 23-24, Albuquerque; Oct. 7, Albuquerque; Oct. 15-16, Las Cruces; Nov. 5-6, Santa Fe.

The Water and Natural Resources Committee is a particularly important committee for the Sierra Club because it focuses almost entirely on environmental resources. Their workplan includes a long list of issues, from wildlife to energy to water. Meeting dates: July 30-31, Truth or Consequences; Sept. 5-6, Ruidoso; Oct. 17-18, Silver City; Nov. 7-8, Santa Fe.

If you plan to attend an interim committee, call or email me! I would be delighted to introduce you to legislators who work on the issues you care about.

Chapter's MRGCD candidates win big

By Richard Barish
Chapter Political Team chair

All three candidates endorsed by the Rio Grande Chapter in the June 7 Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District election were victorious.

Barbara Baca defeated incumbent Board Chair Glen Duggins in the race for the "at-large" seat, representing Bernalillo, Sandoval, Valencia and Socorro counties, by a vote of 1,838 to 1,384. Barbara's win was driven by strong support in Bernalillo County.

Stephanie Russo Baca prevailed in a three-person race

for the Valencia County seat. Stephanie received more votes than the other two candidates combined, garnering 460 votes to 418 for her opponents.

John Kelly was unopposed in his bid for reelection to the Bernalillo County seat.

This is an election where voting and volunteering by Sierra Club supporters can really make a difference, and did make a difference, since so few eligible voters actually cast a ballot. Congratulations to all the candidates, and a big THANK YOU to all of you who voted or volunteered in this important election.



Where does the water go after it drains down your sink (or toilet)? Water is shunted along a fast-flowing maze at South Valley Wastewater Treatment Plant, through bar screens, grit chambers, clarifiers and aeration tanks (left) before going through an ultraviolet disinfecting chamber (middle). Cleaned water is released to the Rio Grande (right).

Zero Waste Team goes with the flow

By Carol Chamberland
Central New Mexico
Zero Waste Team

Like most city dwellers, I pay my monthly water bill with scarcely a thought for what happens downstream after each flush of the toilet. When Central Group staffer Cecilia Chávez Beltrán suggested we take a tour of the local wastewater treatment facility, I told her it was beyond the scope of our Zero Waste focus. But if she wanted to organize a tour, I'd go along. So, she did, and I did. Many thanks to Cecilia.

We lucked out with a sunny day in an otherwise rainy week. The odor hit me before I exited my car at the South Valley Wastewater Treatment plant. We assembled in a classroom for an overview of the operation and to don regulation hard hats and safety vests. The ABCWUA (Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority) is a political subdivision of the state, with board members representing Albuquerque's City Council, Bernalillo County Commission, the Albuquerque Mayor's Office, and the village of Los Ranchos. They have stringent EPA guidelines to observe as they treat 55 million gallons of wastewater per day.

As Chief Engineer Jeffrey Romanowski guided us around the base, we observed the process of filtering out solids and cleaning the water. I'd imagined lots of chemicals involved, but I was wrong. Gravity is a big factor and mechanical means predominate.

Wastewater flows through bar screens, grit chambers, clarifiers, aeration tanks, and final clarifiers, then passes through an ultraviolet disinfection chamber before being released into the Rio Grande. Sludge removed from the wastewater is concentrated and collected in anaerobic digesters, where it produces methane gas. The on-site co-generation plant uses the methane to meet 70 percent of the facility's electrical needs.

The aeration tanks are large pools of water that filter the brown stuff out while slow-moving arms scrape off the foamy, oily bits from the



Photo at aeration tank by Cecilia Chávez Beltrán; all others by Carol Chamberland.

surface. To capture the foul odors, most of these pools have been covered with metallic domes, giving the plant the semblance of a UFO parking lot. Water moves between successively cleaner pools, is shunted along a fast-flowing maze and subjected to UV light for disinfection. As we headed west, the odors diminished, and by the time we reached the Rio Grande, the smell was gone. It was a refreshing sight to behold; gallons of cleaned city water flowing into the high, muddy waters of the Rio Grande.

Meanwhile, the brown stuff is processed into a substance described as "the color and texture of chocolate cake" — an unfortunate analogy for cake-lovers. These biosolids are eventually loaded onto trucks and delivered to their sister facility on the West Mesa for composting. Some of the re-use water is sold to corporate and government customers for land-

scape irrigation. This product is not available for private citizens.

Now that they had my attention, I booked us a tour of the Compost del Rio Grande. Supervisor Joe Bailey gave us an intro and handed out hard hats and safety vests. I expected this site to smell like the wastewater facility, but I was wrong again. There's an odor, but it's the earthy smell of mulch, not human waste.

The compost facility accepts truckloads of untreated wood, food scraps, yard waste, horse stable bedding, and biosolids from the south valley plant. There is no charge to drop off materials, but the standards are high. If the load is unacceptable, the truck is reloaded and sent down the road to the city landfill, where they must pay to dump. Between 35 and 40 percent of the trucked-in biosolids are mixed with other amendments to make compost, and the remainder is spread out



Clockwise from top left: The Zero Waste Team observes the South Valley Wastewater Treatment Plant aeration tank; Compost del Rio Grande produces another finished product of our wastewater; the team donned hardhats for the compost tour; 'the scarab' turns compost as it cooks.

to amend on the open land. Dumped matter is exposed to the elements and aged for months in the open air. When preparing a new batch of compost, these ingredients are mixed in proper proportions and piled into great windrows in the shelter of a huge warehouse. They cook for months more, reaching temperatures that are precisely calculated to kill microbes and not create a microbial feeding frenzy. A large machine appropriately called the Scarab routinely turns the compost piles until they are cooked to perfection. The end product is offered for sale by the truckload. The resulting certified biosolids compost typically consists of 50% animal-stable bedding, 30% biosolids and 20% green waste. It sells for \$25 per ton and may be used in the

production of crops for human consumption. The Department of Transportation uses a special form of the compost to line highway shoulders. This product is heavy and does not blow away, so they seed it with grasses and flowers. Local wildlife loves this place. On chilly nights, coyotes burrow into the composting heaps to sleep in their warmth, then retreat into the surrounding desert when employees arrive in the morning. A nesting pair of great horned owls lives a comfortable life in the rafters of the giant warehouse, raising chicks and sending them on their way once they've fledged. There's a plentiful supply of rodents, lizards and snakes to keep the owls and coyotes happy and the employees on their toes.

Project aims to prevent catastrophe

Teresa Seamster
Northern Group Chair

The Sangre de Cristo Mountains behind Santa Fe look green this summer, with more growth and ground cover than usual due to early and heavier-than-average rainstorms. The dry timber and deadfall left by the long and still-present drought is hidden in the new green, but a few weeks of hot, windy weather will quickly dry out the tall weeds and tree stands.

For more than two years, Santa Fe National Forest, the city and county of Santa Fe, Tesuque Pueblo and collaborating groups in the Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition, have strategized and reached out to the public with a growing sense of urgency on how to prevent an unnaturally high-intensity fire in this potential tinderbox. There are many steps that forest professionals and the public agree need to be taken, and there are others where opinions are divided.

The Santa Fe Mountains Landscape Project is the proposed action the fireshed coalition is working on “to improve the resilience of a priority landscape to future disturbances such as high-severity wildfire, drought, and insect outbreaks by restoring forest structure and composition.”

According to the proposal, to increase the resilience of the forests, watersheds, and communities of the Greater Santa Fe Fireshed, there is a need to:

- Move forests and woodlands (including ponderosa pine, dry mixed conifer, aspen, and piñon-juniper) in the project area toward their characteristic species composition, structure and spatial patterns to improve ecological function;
- Reduce the risk for high-severity wildfire; create safe, defensible zones for firefighters in areas of continuous fuels and near valued resources that are at risk, and avoid negative post-fire impacts;
- Improve the diversity and quality of habitat for wildlife; and
- Improve soil and watershed conditions.

Today, the public is used to seeing densely forested slopes, with 500 to 1,000 or more trees per acre in some areas, and fewer grassy meadows and valleys. The proposed thinning and burning of selected areas in the 50,000-acre mountain project to 50-100 trees per acre is a concern for many residents, as they have seen thinning projects that have produced unsatisfactory results.

This spring, the Santa Fe Board of County Commissioners looked closely at the project and the years of work that have gone into identifying its need and purpose. Commissioners listened to public concerns and forestry staff presentations. The wording of their subsequent March resolution falls short of asking the Santa Fe National Forest to conduct an Environmental Impact Study but requests a full National Environmental Assessment Process to ensure the Santa Fe mountains are not damaged ecologically or altered to a condition the public opposes. Here’s the text:

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Board of County Commissioners of Santa Fe County, hereby supports the ongoing NEPA analysis process for the Santa Fe Mountains Landscape Resiliency Project with full public involvement to comprehensively and objectively assess environmental impacts incorporating a broad range of forest and fire ecology research, and to evaluate all



Photos by Teresa Seamster

Top photo: 2017 project site visit to Cougar Canyon rim before thinning treatment (see marked tree in center)
Bottom photo: 2019 project site visit to Cougar Canyon rim (see same marked tree) after treatment

reasonable alternatives before further actions are taken in the Fireshed.

Local conservation groups, including Northern New Mexico Group of Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife and WildEarth Guardians were encouraged to propose a Santa Fe Conservation Alternative. The SFC Alternative has been submitted to the Santa Fe National Forest and contains several measures starting with these recommendations:

1. Educate the public, especially those who live near the forest, to make fire-proofing changes on their properties and become “Firewise Communities,” and
2. Inform residents about emergency and wildfire preparedness. These are two critical areas the National Forest and fireshed coalition have been extensively involved in the past few years.

The conservation alternative also makes additional recommendations:

- Require a site-specific plan for each project within the SFMLRP that strategically targets fire prone areas to treat, creates buffered boundary areas to protect property and access roads, and safety zones to protect lives;
- Require that riparian areas and critical wildlife habitat receive additional restoration monitoring and mitigation procedures developed in collaboration with the Department of Game and Fish;
- Encourage public input regarding preservation of places, landscapes,

cultural sites and landmarks of local significance;

- Restore treated streamside areas, replant native vegetation, return beavers to appropriate areas and decommission non-essential roads.

To protect areas with acres of smaller trees, the conservation alternative recommends thinning up to 9 inches diameter instead of up to 24 inches, and to leave a higher amount of understory to maintain cover and forage for wildlife. To avoid attracting beetle infestation and spread, no slash larger than 3 inches (chip size) should be left on the ground during dry season. To evaluate the success of project treatment areas, it recommends test plots to monitor progress and type of post-fire re-vegetation and return of species.

The Santa Fe National Forest Preferred Alternative has been completed and is available to the public. Residents are encouraged to read the provisions carefully and make suggestions that they feel will ensure forest resiliency and improve the project.

The mountains behind Santa Fe are the watershed and environment that sustains the city and surrounding communities today. We are all deeply invested in the success of this project.

For more information: Santa Fe Conservation Alternative here and the Santa Fe Mountain Landscape Resiliency Project: [link](#)

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Sentinels kick off testing season

By Shannon Romeling
Water Sentinels

Retired high-school chemistry teacher, devoted Sierra Club member and activist, mentor, father, husband, friend, and many more terms could be used to describe Eric Patterson.

However, none of these things would fully explain the influential person and personality that is Eric. I've had the privilege of working with Eric for six years. As lead of the Water Sentinels, Eric trained me to manage the program, including organizing volunteers, choosing sampling locations and coordinating with the water-sampling lab. Eric and I also did field trips and in-class presentations/trainings together, and he helped me learn how to effectively speak to different ages about water quality.

After more than a decade of running the Water Sentinels Rios De Taos, Eric will be stepping down this year. Thanks to his hard work, we have a strong volunteer base and funding to keep the program going.

On May 29, 10 volunteers gathered at the annual Water Sentinels Training to learn the citizen science techniques necessary for our program. After a great session of interactive learning, we celebrated Eric and thanked him for his tremendous commitment to water quality, the Sierra Club, and education.

Water Sentinels Rios De Taos is a Sierra Club and Amigos Bravos



Top: Departing Water Sentinels coordinator Eric Patterson shows off his retirement gift.
Above: Shannon Romeling trains new Water Sentinel volunteers.

joint project whose mission is to monitor four rivers in Taos County three times a year and to use the data to bring attention and funding to impaired rivers.

To become a Water Sentinels Rios De Taos volunteer or to create a Water Sentinels group in your town, call 575-758-3874 or email sromeling@amigosbravos.org.

Young leaders head to SPROG

By Eric Patterson

The Rio Grande Chapter will be sending three young people to the week-long Student Sierra Club leadership training camp (SPROG) in Sausalito, Calif., this summer.

Stefanie Sorros and her husband farm in Taos County. She has been working the past 5 years to establish sustainable perennial gardens in Taos Valley for pollinator resource availability and aesthetics and is focusing on food sovereignty as she develops a sustainable homestead with chickens to provide for her family.

She has a background in anthropology and sociology studies. She is a master gardener and the mother of two lovely children.

Alicia Vigil will be a junior in a joint environmental program offered by UNM-Taos and New Mexico Highlands University. She is majoring in Forest Management with a minor in Archeology. She is employed by the Forest Service, supervising members of the Youth Conservation Corps.

Patrick Payne is a physicist at Los Alamos National Laboratory. He is doing a two-year appointment at LANL before graduate school, where he hopes to earn a doctorate in astrophysics.

These outstanding young people are already involved in our state's environmental activities. Their experience at SPROG should enable them to become outstanding environmental leaders.



Patrick Payne



Alicia Vigil



Stefanie Sarros

Volunteer profile: Alice Cox

Our volunteer interview this issue is with Alice Cox, the Northern New Mexico Group membership chair, who organizes terrific events large and small, writes letters to the editor and makes everyone around her feel special.

What is your role with the Sierra Club Northern New Mexico Group?

I am the Membership Chair going on 16 years

What's your work and career background? How does that help your role?

The hospitality industry. My work in hospitality and restaurants taught me the importance of making connections with people to achieve great results, whether with a memorable meal, or a celebration of achievement. Experience definitely helps with organizing successful parties.

The Northern New Mexico Group has incredibly high member engagement and volunteer activity level. How do you get people involved?

Since we're in Santa Fe, we're lucky to have many local members ready to contact their legislators on sustainable energy-transition issues. Our staff and volunteer lobby team welcome "new blood" and provide training. Our Northern New Mexico members are



Alice Cox, Northern N.M. Group volunteer chair extraordinaire.

very aware that environmental CHAMPIONS are necessary to protect and enhance our world and turn out to canvass for Sierra Club-endorsed candidates at every level, including city, county and soil conservation districts.

What do you like about volunteering?

My favorite thing about volunteering is knowing I made a difference and working with incredibly dedicated and accomplished staff and volunteers.

What would you tell someone who wants to get involved but doesn't know how?

For those who want to get involved I would say take a hike (if you are able) and experience the beauty of Northern New Mexico. It may lead to a desire to protect it.

Follow what the state legisla-

ture is doing, go to the training sessions for lobbyists, and make a difference. Go to Facebook (facebook.com/NMSierraClub) and see what we're doing. Right now you can go to public meetings on our methane danger (see Page 10).

What's your favorite Sierra Club memory?

My favorite SC memory is attending the first-ever Sierra Club summit in San Francisco in 2005. Marshall Ganz (who organized agricultural workers with Cesar Chávez) gave great classes on leadership ladders and training for organizing. We had invited Al Gore to speak, but he had a prior engagement at a conference on global warming in New Orleans. Then Katrina happened. It was a real "woke" moment for the looming climate disaster.



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Green Earth Club asks board to green schools

By Ravijit Khalsa
Hello, my name is Ravijit Khalsa, and I am representing the Green Earth Club at the Middle School.

Our mission is to keep the Middle School a more sustainable place to positively impact our planet. Our main focus this year was improving the eco-friendliness of our cafeteria.

We implemented recycling in the cafeteria and are hoping to spread education about recycling. To further our goal, we need to implement metal trays and silverware to reduce waste and pollution.

The main concern associated with this change would be the cost of the new utensils. While this is a difficulty, it should be among high priority, as the cost of pollution certainly outweighs this monetary cost. Yes, financial struggles can hurt our goals of a cleaner school, but we must strive past this temporary roadblock and look for solutions. For example, the company that works with our school cafeteria, Chartwell's, has already expressed interest in our idea. By arranging budgets in the new contracts with them, we can find some aid in our problems.

Also, monetary loss from waste costs can be cut by removing the need for unrecyclable trays and utensils.

I understand it is a struggle to budget and financially organize everything in the middle school from the teachers' pay to renovations and to other fees. But this adversity should not be a cause to throw away our ambitions!

Have adversities ever stopped the likes of Edison, who famously failed 1,000 times before the invention of the light bulb, or Howard Schultz, who was rejected for a loan from 242 banks before he went on to found Starbucks? Or Jack Ma, who was rejected from KFC and is now the richest man in Asia, or Malala Yousafzai, who was shot in the head by an extremist before becoming the youngest Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, or 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, who is leading the student environmental movement?

These persevering spirits are held within all of us, and I think we should use them to move past our issues and develop our goals. This goes for a cleaner cafeteria and for a cleaner school and for a cleaner community and for a cleaner world. Thank you.



Photo by Carrie Heavner

From left, Los Alamos County Zero Waste School liaison Josh Levings, Barranca Mesa Elementary student Aven Heavner and Ravijit Khalsa of the Los Alamos Middle School Green Earth Club asked the school board on May 23 to take steps to reduce waste at Los Alamos schools. "All the kids want the cafeteria to be green," Heavner said.



Selvie and Hari Viswanathan

Migrations: This spring, which followed a snow-filled winter, brought some beautiful visitors into Los Alamos: crossbills, Bullocks orioles, rose-breasted grosbeaks, yellow warblers, hepatic tanagers ... all captured on camera by Selvie and Hari Viswanathan's Crittercam, at a point where birds ride the thermals to lift between Bayo and Redondo Canyons, Selvie watched this indigo bunting for a few days in late May. The bird stopped to fuel up there before continuing on his journey. To see more of the birds of Los Alamos as well as communicate with the birders and photographers, subscribe at <https://peechnature.org/learn/interest-groups>.



David McGahey

Rio Grande Chapter members, including Pajarito Chair Jody Benson, standing at left, at the June Executive Committee meeting in Santa Fe. All members are invited to ExCom meetings. The next one is Sept. 14-15 at Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge. Contact camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org for more info.

Pajarito Group Directory

www.riograndesierraclub.org/pajarito

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Meetings and events

Genie Stevens presents: "How Kids Make Policy—the Global Warming Emergency," Tues., Aug 20, 11:45, Mesa Public Library. The Pajarito Group and League of Women Voters are cohosting Genie at Lunch with a Leader. GWE is the free, afterschool program that teaches kids about the environment, and then guides them on how to lobby to save the Earth. This is the group that got the single-use plastic shopping bag banned in Santa Fe, and started the process of eliminating single-use plastic in Albuquerque.

Volunteers needed for Adopt a Tree at the PEEC Bear Festival, Sat., Aug. 24. We'll need volunteers again for an hour or two from at 10 a.m. to 2 to inspire kids about the secret lives of trees and lead them on a short walk toward Kinnikinnick Park. Contact Jody at echidnaejb@gmail.com.

No plan for shortcut to Santa Fe

By Jody Benson
Pajarito Group chair

At an Employees All Hands presentation at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Triad Director Thomas Mason brought up the idea of bridging the Rio Grande in order to shorten the commute from Santa Fe and south to Los Alamos.

The Pajarito Group's subsequent inquiry to Los Alamos National Laboratory's Communication Office brought the response that the director was just sharing an informal idea and that LANL, in any event, doesn't build roads or bridges on its own and is in no position to forge ahead with such a plan.

We will keep our membership informed in case action is required.



From left, Melissa, Clara, Darcy (with dog June), Cecy and Excursiones a la Naturaleza Coordinator Cecilia Chávez Beltrán take a break during the Embudito Canyon Loop hike in June.

Delayed gratification

Here's an account of hiking Embudito Canyon Loop Trail with our Spanish-language hiking program, Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico, from a recent participant:

By Darcy Brazen

Call me Perpetual Lateness. I am always running a few minutes shy of expectations and, arriving for the June 9 Excursiones hike was no different. I pulled my sputtering 20-year-old Mazda truck into the last available space at Embudito Trailhead, the dirt cut-out alongside the bike rack. Fortunately, the Excursiones trip leader, Cecilia, and a couple other trekkers were still there, passing out minneola tangerines, checking on supplies of water, and signing consent forms. When the fifth hiker of our group ambled along, I felt blissfully pardoned of my transgression of lateness. We trudged up the well-worn path of Embudito Trailhead 192, a pack of six to include my dog, June. We were as warriors in the path of the sun's direct and blatant eastern rise of heat in the month of June. Other warrior

This is me when beginning any “longish” hike: a burning sense of regret that I have started out “too late,” and doubt that my aging body can carry me 100 yards, let alone up a mountain.

hikers bounded down past us, their mountain sojourn now wisely over, before the sun had baked them into expired spent cakes of mud. My sense of lateness and urgency ground into me further. This is me when beginning any “longish” hike: a burning sense of regret that I have started out “too late,” and I am further hampered by doubt that my aging body (58) can carry me 100 yards, let alone up a mountain. The gentle chatter of my hiking cohort surrounded me as we commented admiringly upon the blooms of thistle, barrel cactus, and cholla, and we soon had climbed east and slightly south to the first open plateau. Veins of granite and limestone shone like mica-infused charcoal and rose in sheets across the canyon, but closer up, these same geologic formations are riotously infused with dabs of lime-green, sky-blue and fire-orange

furry lichens. I had finally found my stride as our group continued upward. The 3.9-mile Embudito loop trail gains 1,200 feet in elevation and returns through an arroyo marked by a downed Ponderosa pine. We sat here for a bit, soaking in the whistle of the wind rocking these giant coniferous beauties and eating some truly slice-of-paradise Vietnamese ‘green coconut bread’ one of the Excursionistas shared with us. We followed the arroyo's path. Water sluiced placidly down and followed its well-known route across emerald isles of glistening moss. We wet our faces and necks. My dog bounded about, jubilant and child-like, with her enduring uneven gait. We greeted fellow humans and dogs, returning to the trailhead around 1:30. Thank you to the people of Sandia Nation for the honor of sharing the joys of Sandia's ancestral land base.

Hikes and events

from Page 16

2.5-mile hike that incorporates a one-hour outdoor yoga and mindfulness break midway. Includes 200 feet of elevation gain and amazing views of the mountains. Sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program, and everyone is welcome. Limited to 15 participants, and children over the age of 12 are welcome when accompanied by parent or guardian. To preserve the solitude of the occasion, only certified service dogs meeting ADA guidance will be permitted. Contact leader by Sept. 10 to RSVP and obtain location.

Trip leader: Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@comcast.net
Level: Easy
Location: East Mountains of Albuquerque
Sign up: riograndesierraclub.org/calendar (click on event and fill out form to register).

Sunday, Sept. 22: Autumnal Equinox sunset hike at Tome Hill Open Space. Meet at 6:30 p.m. at Mountain View Community Center, 201 Prosperity Ave. SE, to carpool. This three-hour hike, including drive time, is on steep, rocky trail to the crosses on Tomé Hill with an elevation gain of 360 feet in less than half a mile. The return trip is more gradual but still lose and rocky. Entire hike is 2 miles. A headlamp or flashlight is required since this is a sunset hike.

Join us at this popular open-space area near Los Lunas for a therapeutic dose of spirituality and sunset beauty, the perfect way to recognize the Equinox. Bring writing materials for introspection, journaling or your gratitude list. This steep uphill hike is appropriate for youth 8 and up accompanied by an adult. No dogs allowed. Recommended carpool driver donation is \$3. Contact leader no later than Sept. 20 to RSVP.
Trip leader: Carrie Ann Drinville, 505-369-9450; text is best, or email drinville@hotmail.com.
Level: Easy
Location: South of Los Lunas
Sign up: riograndesierraclub.org/calendar (click on the event

and fill out the form to register).
Sunday, Sept 22: Monuments to Main Street Hike, Picacho Peak. We will hike the Western Ridge trail to the top of Picacho Peak. At the top of Picacho Peak you will enjoy 360 degree views of the entire National Monument as well of views into Texas and Mexico. We will return via the original trail route. 3-4 miles round trip with 700 feet of elevation gain. Call trip leader for meeting time and place. Limited to 15 people.
Trip leader: Howie Dash, 575-652-7550, howiedash@aol.com

Level: Moderate
Location: Las Cruces, NM
Saturday, Sept 28: Monuments to Main Street Hike 2, Pine Tree Loop, Aguirre Springs. This is a beautiful hike in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. Will hike 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. Four and a half mile loop. Day use fee required for Aguirre Springs. Limited to 10 people. Call trip leader to RSVP.

Trip leader: Howie Dash, 575-652-7550 or howiedash@aol.com
Level: Moderate
Location: Las Cruces, NM
Friday, Oct 4: Easy/moderate hike along Las Conchas Trail in the Jemez Mountains. Carpooling recommended. No dogs or children under 12. After the hike, we will have lunch at Los Ojos in Jemez Springs. Details at Meetup site: meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Rio-Grande-Chapter. Sign up and RSVP by Oct. 1.

Trip leader: June Parsons, comicsilver@gmail.com
Level: Easy/moderate
Location: North of Jemez Springs

Sierra Club, Kirtland offer discounted wilderness first-aid class

The Sierra Club, Rio Grande Chapter in conjunction with Kirtland Air Force Base Outdoor Recreation will convene a Wilderness First Aid course geared toward our members. This course is in high demand and typically fills up months in advance. The SOLO Wilderness First Aid Course is a two-day course that provides training for anyone who hikes, skis or engages in other outdoor pursuits, or who just wants to know what to do when things go south. At the completion of the two-day course, you will be certified or re-certified in Wilderness

First Aid. Attendees must participate in all portions and hours of the course to obtain certification.
Why attend: People get hurt, sick, or lost. The temperature drops, the wind picks up, and it starts to rain. Would you know what to do? If you're ever more than an hour away from a hospital or a mile from any road, you need to know what to do. Many backcountry emergencies are preventable, and even when bad things happen, sometimes the wrong care can make things worse. By learning a few basic skills, you can make the difference between a good outcome and

a bad one — and maybe even save a life. The price for the course is \$115 per person for Sierra Club members, about 50% off the regular price for a wilderness first-aid course. Not a Sierra Club member but want to attend? Go to www.riograndesierraclub.org/join and become one for the discounted price of \$15.
When: Sept. 7-8 (participants must commit to attend both days and all portions of the training). Class times: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 7, and 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 8.
Where: Kirtland Air Force

Base, Outdoor Recreation Office, Albuquerque. Transportation onto the base will be provided for those without base access and additional information will be provided to paying attendees prior to the training dates. Attendees must be U.S. citizens to gain access to the base.
To sign up: Please respond to me at teowen@comcast.net if you wish to attend. Deadline to submit payment is July 19. I'll provide payment directions for those who've RSVP'd. Limit will be 12 students, and those seats are expected to go fast.

July-August-September outings

Saturday, July 13: High-altitude hike in the San Pedro Parks region, traveling past the San Gregorio Reservoir, crossing creeks and through evergreen and aspen forests, marshes, and open areas. Meet at 6:45 a.m. at North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center, 7521 Carmel Ave. NE in Albuquerque to leave promptly at 7 a.m. Drive time to the trailhead will be 2 hours. This in-and-out hike will be 7.1 miles roundtrip with an elevation gain of 783 feet and a total uphill of 806 feet. The minimum elevation will be 9,269 feet. The grade will be 5% at times. A raincoat or poncho are required in case there is a storm. The hike leader will cancel the hike if a thunderstorm is forecast. RSVP to the hike lead by phone or text. This hike will be limited to 15 hikers, including the hike leader. Seniors, please bring your National Park passes. Please no dogs or children.

Trip leader: Diane, 505-917-0556

Level: Moderate/strenuous
Location: East of Cuba, NM
Sign up here: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar (click on the event and fill out the form to register).

Saturday July 20: Piedra Lisa Canyon Trail-White Wash, meet at the trailhead at 13225 Menaul Blvd., Albuquerque, NM 87111 at 7 a.m. with an approximate end time of 10 a.m. No dogs please. Distance: 2.1 miles with an elevation gain of 954 feet. Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico. RSVP by July 18.

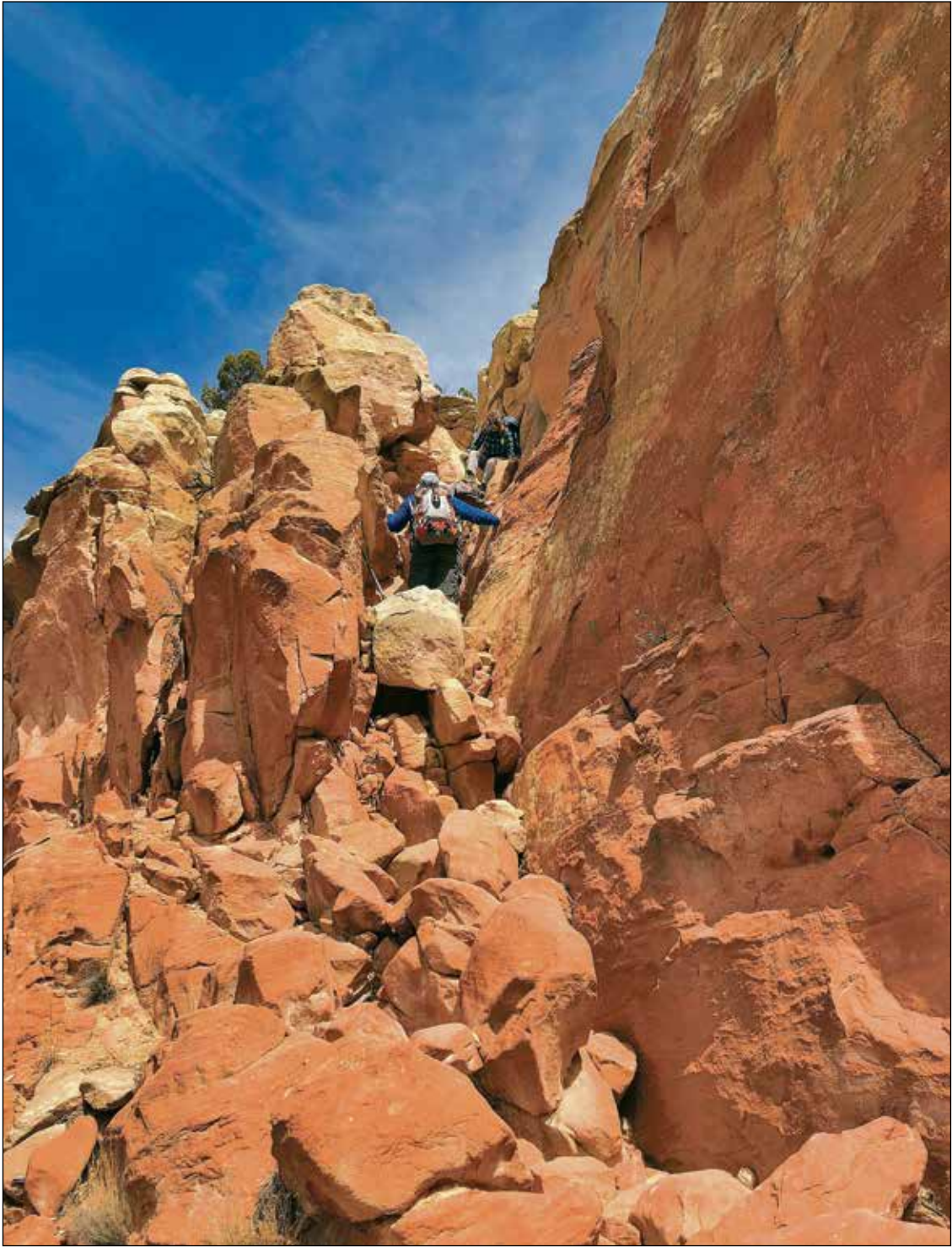
Trip Leader: Cecilia Chávez Beltrán, 505-243-7767, cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org

Level: Moderate
Location: East side of Albuquerque

Saturday, July 20: Carlito Springs Resort hike. Meet at 8 a.m. at Hobby Lobby on Juan Tabo to carpool. Join us to tour this oasis on the south slope of the Sandia Mountains. Great for beginners, and children over 10 years of age if accompanied by parent or guardian. Two miles round trip with a 350-foot elevation gain in under 1.5 hours. Locale has interesting historical significance. Dogs on leash OK. Carpooling encouraged (limited parking). Recommended carpool driver donation is \$3. Sponsored by the Military Outdoors Program and we welcome everyone. Contact leader by July 18 or sign up at the link below to RSVP.

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

Level: Easy
Location: East Mountains of Albuquerque
Sign up here: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar (click on event and fill out the form to register).



Susan M. Farmer

Participants scale up Kitchen Mesa Trail at Ghost Ranch this spring on a moderate hike. Each outing listing includes difficulty rating, and we offer hikes at all levels, from beginner to difficult.

Everything you need to know about Sierra Club 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.

All outings 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.
The Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program organizes outdoor trips for veterans, active-duty service members, reservists and their families, because we know that time spent in nature provides a unique opportunity to foster mental and physical health, emotional resiliency, and gives you the ability to spend time with others who understand. We

welcome all, regardless of whether you served or not, and chances are, there's an outing that's just right for you.

Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico is our Spanish-language outings program; promotes the enjoyment of natural spaces nearby. Nuestro programa de Excursiones le invita a venir a disfrutar de las áreas naturales cercanas — en convivio, sin costo, y en Español! We update outings in Facebook: Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico.

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, 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:

sierraclub.org/calendar (click on event and fill out the form to register).

Sunday, July 21: Woodsy, Meadows Cedro Peak Loop hike. Meet at 7 a.m. at Hobby Lobby on Juan Tabo to

carpool. This four-hour outing which includes drive time, is a 5.7-mile loop with 363 feet of elevation gain. Join us for this piñon-juniper-ponderosa woods hike, looping near historic Cedro Peak Lookout.

nying adult. Well-behaved dogs on leash are welcome. Recommended carpool driver donation is \$3. Contact leader no later than July 19 to RSVP.

Trip Leader: Carrie Ann Drinville, 505-369-9450 text message is best or email at drinville@hotmail.com

Level: Easy/Moderate
Location: Southeast of Tijeras
Sign up at riograndesierraclub.org/events-calendar/ -- click on the event and fill out the form to register. Sunday,

Aug 4: Armijo Trail hike. Meet at Sprouts Farmers Market parking lot, 13150 Central Ave SE, Albuquerque, NM 87123 at 8 a.m. with anticipated end time of 12 p.m. Near Cedar Crest, this is a lovely shaded area with a dry riverbed. Approximate roundtrip distance is 4.5 miles with an elevation gain of 790 feet. Drivers bring \$3 cash for Forest Service parking/amenity fee, or have appropriate pass. No dogs please. Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico. RSVP to leader by Aug. 2.

Trip leader: Cecilia Chávez Beltrán, 505-243-7767, cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org

Level: Moderate
Location: East Mountains of Albuquerque

Saturday, Aug 10: Armijo Trail and Cienega Spring Trail hike. Meet at 8 a.m. at Hobby Lobby on Juan Tabo to carpool. Come to admire the beautiful ponderosa pines and mountain wilderness right in our backyard. Suitable for children over 12 if accompanied by a parent or guardian. Five miles round trip with a 900-foot elevation gain in about five hours. Dogs on leash OK, Carpooling encouraged; recommended carpool driver donation is \$3. \$3 Forest Service parking/amenity fee in cash or Cibola Wilderness pass or other federal service pass is required. Sponsored by the Military Outdoors Program, and we welcome everyone. Limited to 10 people. Contact leader by Aug. 7 or sign up at the link below to RSVP.

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

Level: Moderate
Location: East Mountains of Albuquerque

Sign up at: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar (click on the event and fill out the form to register).

Saturday, Sept 14: Mountain Hiking and Blissful Yoga. Contact leader for location and we'll meet at the trailhead at 10 a.m. If you'd like to explore the wonders of nature, hiking and outdoor yoga in the company of really nice people, this is the hike! We'll embark on an easy