

Covering all the bases

2019 was full of victories and setbacks in our campaigns to protect our climate, wildlife, water and public lands. Your energy keeps us moving toward a safer, healthier, more beautiful future.



Clockwise from top left: New Mexico finally outlawed **coyote-killing contests** in 2019. But the state still allows trapping, and our wildlife is regulated by an all-hunter commission. See Page 6. **Gila River** advocates got a year-end gift from the Department of Interior, but Gila National Forest is still targeted for Air Force training flights. See Pages 3 and 12. All year, **Sierra Club volunteers** typed, called, planned and advocated. See trainings, Page 8. Passage of the **Energy Transition Act** accelerates our path from coal to clean, but the community benefits of the law — and now even the retirement of the San Juan coal plant — are in jeopardy. See Page 7. **Year in Review: See** Page 9

EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET



Rio Grande Chapter Sierra Club 1807 Second St., Unit 45 Santa Fe, NM 87505 Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Albuquerque, NM Permit No. 612

Inside:

New Mexico gains second national park

White Sands draws more than 500,000 visitors a year. Page 3.

Terrero Mine threatens Pecos River system

Local activists and elected officials organize in opposition to proposed mine close to site of reclaimed El Molino mine. **Page 5.**

Court victories on border wall

Sierra Club and other groups are making legal progress in our efforts to stop constructin of the border wall. **Page 11**

More: Zero Waste: Page 10. El Paso Sierra Student Coalition: Page 11. Pajarito Group: Page 12. Northern NM Group: Page 13. Excursiones, Global Warming Express: Page 14. Hikes and outings: Pages 15-16

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Cover banner photo of Angel Peak by Jim Klukkert

'Rio Grande Sierran' publication information

Join the Sierra Club

The *Rio Grande Sierran* is published four times a year, in January, April, July and October, by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club as a benefit for members in New Mexico and West Texas. The opinions expressed in signed articles in the *Sierran* are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club. Products and services advertised in the *Sierran* are not necessarily endorsed by Sierra Club. Contributions are welcome. Send them to riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org. Submissions by Rio Grande Chapter members will take precedence. Articles chosen to be published are subject to editing.

Letters to the editor may be up to 400 words, subject to editing, and are printed at the discretion of the editorial board.

Editorial practices as developed and adopted by the chapter will be used in production of the *Sierran*. You can join the Sierra Club (your membership is to both the national group and the Rio Grande Chapter) for only \$15! Just go to **riograndesierraclub.org/join** or send a \$15 check with your name, address **and the code 1700 in the memo line** to:

Sierra Club Attn: Member Services 2101 Webster St., #1300

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Do you have a membership question? Call 415-977-5653 or e-mail membership.services@sierraclub.org



2 Rio Grande Sierran

Chaco Protection Act passes House

By Miya King-Flaherty Our Wild New Mexico

In December, Congress passed an appropriations package that bans new oil and gas leasing for a year within 10 miles of Chaco Culture National Historical Park until an ethnographic study for the region is completed. The Navajo Nation and pueblos will have significant control over the study, so this is a great step in the right direction.

Additionally, passage of the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act in the U.S. House in October brings hope to a region already besieged by over 40,000 oil and gas wells. The bill withdraws unleased federal minerals from new oil and gas leasing within a 10-mile buffer around Chaco Culture National Historical Park. The next hurdle will be passage in the U.S. Senate. Although the bill has received broad support and incorporates recommendations provided by the Greater Chaco Coalition, including the need for additional studies on public-health impacts of oil and gas development in the area, it has its fair share of opposition, including from industry.

If passed, the federal Chaco bill would prevent oil and gas drilling and leasing on more than 300,000 acres of a 909,000-acre area. The bill, however, does not prevent new drilling on already leased lands in the buffer, nor does it prohibit Navajo allottees from developing their mineral rights within the buffer should they wish.

Oil and gas drilling in the Greater Chaco region has already sowed discord within communities and families. Many homes still lack running water or electricity and there are few options for viable employment. Although industry provides some community members with economic options, it has also come at a cost to so many others. Communities experience diminished air quality

The bill would prevent drilling and leasing on more than 300,000 acres but does not prevent new drilling on already leased lands.

through venting and flaring, increased vehicular traffic and accidents, dangerous road conditions, the loss of cultural sites, and much more.

As federal legislation to protect the immediate vicinity of the Park is pending, the Bureau of Land Management still approves drilling permits and is gearing up to lease over 1,300 acres at a Feb. 6 lease sale. Over 90% percent of public lands managed by the BLM in northwestern New Mexico are already leased.

The formal 10-day protest period to oppose the February lease sale was Dec. 9-18, and more than 600 of you answered our call to lodge a protest comment.

Just recently, the BLM finally responded to public protests submitted opposing the December 2018 lease sale. It took nearly a year for the BLM to respond to a high volume of comments the public submitted, demonstrating that our tactics are having an impact. The BLM must resolve all protests before it can release lands for actual development.

Some groups are challenging the BLM's decision to resolve protests, further delaying oil and gas development on the leased parcels. Until the BLM imposes an immediate moratorium on all fracking-related activities, engages in meaningful tribal consultation, initiates a full environmental, social and health impact assessment, and provides communities with alternative economic development opportunities, we'll continue to prioritize environmental justice and protection of ancestral tribal and public lands.



Photo courtesy U.S. Air Force

F-16s would be dropping 15,000 magnesium/teflon flares like those in the photo above during training flights over the Gila National Forest under one of the Air Force's proposals.

Public blasts Air Force proposal on test flights

By John E. Wilks Life member, activist

A decision by the U.S. Air Force to permanently expand the airspace for F-16 flight training in Southern New Mexico is imminent. The Pentagon will choose one of four options in the draft environmental impact statement published in October, as New Mexicans have voiced vehement opposition to the option of sorties over Gila National Forest.

Hundreds of people attended December public hearings held by the Air Force in Socorro, T or C, Silver City and Las Cruces — all in opposition to military training over the Gila.

Although the hearing process has concluded, the Air Force will accept written comments from the public until Jan. 31. Unless a "No Action" option is adopted, depending on which of the other three alternatives are elected, the military could gain access to the skies above up to 9 million acres of largely public land for military training. Although the Air Force has acknowledged that current airspace is adequate for F-16 combat training, it would like to add more and desires a "backyard" training area that it

The Air Force plans to use the expanded airspace to fly at least 10,000 sorties annually on areas containing four national forestss.

exclusively controls. Apparently, asking the Army for use of White Sands Missile Range and a portion of Fort Bliss instead is no longer ideal. The Air Force plans to use the expanded airspace to fly no fewer than 10,000 sorties annually, while dropping 15,360 magnesium/teflon flares and 15,360 bundles of metallic chaff on areas containing four national forests, one wilderness area, one wildlife refuge, designated critical habitats for threatened species and innumerable sacred Native American sites. Flying at 500 feet to 51,000 feet from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday, F-16 fighter jets would practice combat maneuvers, occasionally breaking the sound barrier.

Not a single job would be created by this expansion, though nine counties in New Mexico and two counties in Arizona would suffer the effects of noise, pollution, litter, fire, reduced quality of life and diminished recreation opportunities. Additionally, the adverse impact on wildlife and grazing herds, including threatened species like the Mexican spotted owl, which depends on its hearing for hunting, has not been quantified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Finally, management of any wildland fires stemming from flares or aircraft crashes would be the responsibility of local jurisdictions that don't have the financial or human resources to fight them.

To learn more, visit www. peacefulgilaskies.com or www. nmwild.org or Draft EIS for SUA Optimization to Support Existing Aircraft at Holloman AFB, NM. Comments to the Air Force must be submitted by Jan. 31. Write: Holloman AFB EIS, c/o Cardo, 501 Butler Farm Road, Suite "H", Hampton, VA 23666, or go to actionnetwork. org/petitions/f-16 to send a

comment that will be delivered to the Air Force.

Please weigh in — training flights over the Gila are not a done deal. Go to riograndesierraclub.org/f-16 to learn more.

White Sands to be NM's second national park

By Mona Blaber Communications director

U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich and U.S. Rep. Xochitl Torres Small on Dec. 17 hailed final passage of legislation to designate White Sands National Park in southern New Mexico.

The provision was included in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, which passed the Senate by a vote of 86 to 8 and was

January/February/March 2020

slated to be signed into law.

"For the first time since 1930, New Mexico will be home to our newest national park. This prestigious recognition of one of our state's most remarkable natural wonders is an enormous victory for nearby communities and for all New Mexicans," said Heinrich. "White Sands National Park will put

southern New Mexico squarely on the map as a must-see destination for

park-seeking travelers and will be a major boon to the whole region's economy."

Heinrich and Torres Small introduced the bill in March.

"I am proud that America's newest national park will hail from my district. National parks preserve our country's greatest treasures and serve as the engines of the local economies that surround them. White Sands National Park will solidify southern New Mexico's role as a major tourist attraction for visitors nationwide," said Torres Small.

White Sands National Monument was established in 1933.

For the last two decades, White Sands has seen more visitors than any other National Park Service site in New Mexico — an average of more than 500,000 each year.

It's your chance to make the legislation

hat do hot dogs and really good climate laws have in common? If you like them, don't go watch 'em be made ... although it's probably best for society that we witness the process. Watching hot-dog production should be enough to convince the hardiest meat eaters to go vegetarian as the climate crisis requires. But what do we get out of the sometimes difficult and fraught legislative and regulatory processes? To start, this year, thanks to Gov. Lujan Grisham's leadership, we got nation-leading climate legislation.

The legislative process went as it should, with lots of meetings with stakeholders, public hearings, debates on the floor of each chamber and on the editorial pages, changes based on public input and ultimately a vote of both the state house and senate in favor of



Camilla Feibelman Rio Grande Chapter director

the Energy Transition Act. There were amendments and clarifications and ultimately there was what there always has been: legislative guidance to the Public Regulation Commission about how to regulate the state's utilities.

One little-known fact about the Energy Transition Act is that it removed previously legislated loopholes for utilities on complying with their renewables requirements. Indigenous communities and labor wanted amendments to the bill, and legislators made the changes. Now it's time for the PRC to implement the law, and we very much hope to see their leadership here.

In December, the PRC heard the case for PNM closing San Juan Generating Station and is considering the use of low-rate bonds to make this cheaper for ratepayers while providing \$40 million in worker and community recovery funding.

The Sierra Club is a party to the case and are working hard to communicate the complexities of utility regulations to our members and the public to show that despite the technical details being worked out at the commission, there is a clear and obvious goal that we all need to keep our eye on: moving from coal to clean energy, supporting communities' transition from old technologies to new opportunities, and ultimately moving from the question of clean energy produced here to the next big question of how to wean our state off oil and gas income.

Next year we will continue to advocate for innovative solutions to move our state off oil and gas. A key part of that will be electing a president willing to drastically reduce the access of oil and gas companies on public lands. It will require restrictively regulating the use of fresh and "produced" water for oil and gas. It will require diversifying our economy and uncoupling our education system from the very fossil fuels that put our kids' future at risk.

So while I won't encourage you to eat hot dogs or see them made, I will invite you into the legislative and administrative sausage-maker. We all have to do our reading, do our homework and participate. (One place to start, by the way, is at our upcoming grassroots lobby trainings. See Page 8 for details!)

Last chance for a Bartelstone:

Do not miss this opportunity to receive a rare print of a Jan Bartelstone photograph of iconic New Mexico landscapes (right) as a thank-you for your \$150 donation or more. Go to www. riograndesierraclub.org/ fundraiser to donate. Prints will no longer be available after Dec. 31, 2019.



Rio Grande Green: Our numbers

By the Friend and Fund Development Committee

inter is upon us, and New Mexico sparkles with crisp blue skies and snow on the mountain peaks.

The new year holds promise and challenges for us all. We will be working together on critical elections to support our endorsed candidates, continuing to advocate for legislation that will tackle the challenge of the climate crisis, and reaching out to educate youth and adults and to engage more people in the outdoors.

We hope you'll renew your membership in the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club through the Chapter's

"Join."

Donations: \$58,496

These are gifts above and beyond annual membership. If you aren't already a monthly donor, consider becoming one. A gift of \$10 or more each month, which is about the cost of a fancy coffee twice a month, can make a real difference. Go to www.riograndesierraclub.org and click "Donate" and then 'Regular Donation." Be sure to check the box for monthly donations.

Volunteers: 1,394 hours/fourth quarter

Sierra Club is a grassroots organization! We volunteers make the wheels turn with the support and leadership of our outstanding staff. Just to put these hours in perspective, the IRS values volunteer time at \$25.43/hour. The hours donated this quarter were worth \$35,450. Wow! If you'd like to get more involved, please give us a call at (505) 243-7767 or go to our website at www.riograndesierraclub.org/ and click on 'Action' and then 'Volunteer' to see all the ways in which you can help. photo incentive with a \$150 or more donation: \$2,500

On-line Auction: \$4,597

Volunteer Hero: David Coss

I'd just moved back to New Mexico to be the chapter director of the Rio Grande Chapter when I heard that former Santa Fe Mayor David Coss would be running for our board. David's experience leading a city, bringing its river back to life, and prioritizing the environmental legacy of the nation's oldest capital city was just what our chapter needed to clarify our priorities.

David takes the care and calm he

New chapter, group board members elected

By Mona Blaber Chapter communications director

E ach year, Rio Grande Chapter members vote for members of the chapter's volunteer Executive Committee, as well as for the executive committees for the groups where they live.

One third of the members of the chapter board are up for election every year. Chapter "ExCom" members serve threeyear terms, and group members serve two-year terms.

Voting is held by mail ballot and online. Thanks to all of the excellent candidates who ran and to everyone who voted!

The Rio Grande Chapter ExCom welcomes two new members — Dale Doremus, a former Environment Department water expert, and former chapter staffer Derrick Toledo.

Winners are listed below. Congratulations to all!

Chapter Executive Committee:

Dale Doremus Shannon Romeling Derrick Toledo

Northern New Mexico Group: John Buchser Alice Cox Susan Martin Shannon Romeling

website to achieve all this together.

In March, our annual appeal will offer an opportunity for you to become a donor or to increase your gift. Your generosity goes a long way in the fight to protect and preserve the landscape and resources right here in New Mexico and West Texas.

In the meantime, hope you're going outside to hike, snowshoe or ski. 'Tis the season!

By the numbers

(January-November 2019)

Rio Grande Sierran

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Membership: 890 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! Go to www.riograndesierraclub.org and click "Actions" and then

Update on recent campaigns

Thanks to your support, here are the results of our Autumn 2019 fund raising efforts.

Cello Grill 'Kabobs for Cash' (Central Group) \$ 505

Global Warming Express "Back to School" Appeal: \$1,100

Saving Our Enchanted Lands —

uses as an outdoorsman to the work he does with the Sierra Club and the community. He is thoughtful and deeply dedicated to social justice. He has helped guide our chapter in its values of justice for immigrants and workers.

David isn't just dedicated to his beliefs and his causes — he's also such a caring family person. He lost both of his dear parents last year all while caring, with his wife Carol, for their grandchildren on a regular basis. We've gained so much by having the mayor with us, but as he retires from our Executive Committee in January, we cede him to the people who need him most, his family.

Thank you David!

— Camilla Feibelman

Central New Mexico Group:

Heather Kline Diane Reese Mark Rudd Ray Shortridge David Ther

Southern New Mexico Group:

Kurt Anderson Cheryll Blevins Dan Lorimier

Pajarito Group:

Howard Barnum Iris Chung

Mining

Toxic Pecos past could repeat itself

How many potential Superfund sites can Pecos River Canyon sustain?

By Teresa Seamster Northern NM Group Chair ecos River Canyon is a priceless natural gem. Clear rushing water in a narrow canyon is surrounded by steep slopes and feeding into tranquil Monastery Lake a few miles north of the town of Pecos.

It's a fisherman's dream spot, with rare cutthroat trout and undisturbed sections of river to cast into. It's a cabin dweller's dream of quiet trails and green mountains and soaring hawks and owls at dusk. It is a place that attracts thousands of out-of-state tourists who find what they cannot easily find in Texas, California or Ohio – solitude, natural beauty unchanged in places since time began, and freedom from the developed world.

Unbeknownst to visitors is that one of the strangely barren but vegetated mountain slopes that rises above Willow Creek is actually the reclaimed site of El Molino. This huge mill operated for decades in the first half of the 20th century and processed more than 1.2 million tons of zinc, lead, copper, silver and gold from the nearby Tererro Mine, becoming the largest employer in New Mexico.

Today, El Molino's 34-acre reclamation site, on Highway 63 beside the Pecos River, is fenced and still toxic.

Fast-forward to the 1990s. The old abandoned El Molino pads, trailheads and at the mine — halfway up the Pecos River between Pecos and The concentration of metals Cowles — experiences an into the fish and agricultural unusually high spring runoff food web was starting to be event. Floodwaters pulse down documented. the Pecos River washing across The extent of the contamwaste containment ponds holdination was enormous. ing contaminated mill tailings along Alamitos Creek and Discussions between industry, government agencies sending it downstream into th fish hatchery, killing more than and community stakeholders







90,000 fish.

The massive fish kill of 1991 brought attention to the ongoing contamination draining from the mine and mill sites, creating "a perfect storm" of media attention.

A US Fish and Wildlife report found high levels of zinc and aluminum in Pecos fish, macro invertebrates and small mammals. Toxic waste rock was deposited in Willow Creek and in the Pecos River floodplain creating fears for farmers and fishermen. Suddenly, concerns about human health surfaced about the long-term use of mine waste as fill material for roads, campgrounds, camping Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery.

concluded that corrective actions were mandatory but that Superfund listing should be avoided. In a description from one 1995 report (Robinson) — the community wanted "a Superfund level of cleanup without the perceived cost and delay problems of a Superfund."

The corrective actions were extensive, eventually going through the steps of a Health and Environmental Risk Assessment; a community-relations plan, a Natural Resources Damage Assessment, Feasibility Study for remediation, and cleanup design and ongoing mitigation that continues to this day.

The cost-sharing agreement between AMAX Resource Conservation Company and the state of New Mexico eventually cost the state 20% of the \$7 million in cleanup and mitigation.

Today, this same scenario could be repeated. The entire

Above left: El Molino ore mill, overlooking the Pecos River in the 1940s. Above right: The reclaimed but still toxic site today.

Left: At the December hearing, **Pueblo of Tesuque Gov. Robert** A. Mora Sr. said "We told you at our council meeting that we are standing opposed to this project."

Photos courtesy NM Environment Dept. and Teresa Seamster

> sheds, river, tributaries and floodplain could be re-contaminated due to a recent application by the Australiabased New World Cobalt Mining Company that has a small limited-liability group, Comexico, LLC, filing for exploratory rights in the old Tererro Mine area.

This exploratory permit requests Santa Fe National Forest to allow primitive road access to a large area of old bore holes for Comexico to conduct exploration drilling of 30 or more wells to test for additional ore deposits that may be commercially profitable for a mining company to purchase from New World Cobalt. If mine leases are sold, some 4,700 acres of Jones Hill area above the Pecos River would be restripped and developed.

Opposition from the residents and county governments of Santa Fe and San Miguel has been swift and widespread.

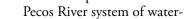
scoping meeting, Gov. Robert A. Mora Sr. of the Pueblo of Tesuque stated, "We support the community over here in opposition."

San Miguel's Board of County Commissioners has passed a resolution asking for a moratorium on new mining until a hard-rock mining ordinance similar to the one recently passed by Santa Fe County can be drafted and passed. Much higher levels of land-use protection and financial assurance are part of the new requirements in the Santa Fe County ordinance.

Residents, Upper Pecos Watershed Association, Pueblo leaders from Tesuque, Pecos and Jemez, NM Acequia Association, farmers, fishermen, outdoor enthusiasts, hunters, hikers, conservation organizations and local business owners have all attended community meetings and contacted elected officials and Santa Fe National Forest with their concerns.

Gov. Michelle Lujan-Grisham has written a letter of opposition to the Forest Service that this project is unsuitable for this location, for this recreation-based economy and for this critical watershed.

A repeat of the 1991 disaster would be unconscionable. The cost of ruined natural resources and livelihoods in Santa Fe and San Miguel Counties is too high a price to pay.



At the December public



Photo courtesy Gila Resources Information Project The pit where the former Copper Flat Mine hit groundwater and water filled the pit.

January/February/March 2020

Copper Flat a step closer to reopening

By Max Yeh and Allyson Siwik

Community groups continue to try to fend off New Mexico Copper's attempts to reopen its Copper Flat Mine near Hillsboro, N.M.

Gila Resources Information Project, Turner Ranch Properties and Hillsboro Pitchfork Ranch have appealed the water-quality discharge permit for reopening the mine at the NM Court of Appeals. Represented by NM Environmental Law Center, the appellants disagree with the Water Quality Control Commission's decision that the mine does not pose an undue risk to property and that the pit lake that will form at the mine is not a "surface water of the state" and therefore surface-water quality standards do not apply.

At the same time, the litigation over the mine's

claimed ownership of water rights is proceeding through the Court of Appeals. The Sierra Club's friend-of-the-court argument on the negative social impacts of mining have been accepted.

The Sierra Club has also been notified that Copper Flat Mine's application for transferring leased water rights for operational use at the mine is being processed by the State Engineer.

If approved, the mine will have enough water to begin construction and start operation in a year or two, even if it loses the litigation over its claimed water rights. Formal protests, however, will be considered in a hearing by the State Engineer to determine whether the proposed transfer will damage other water-right holders, will injure public interest, or will contravene water conservation.

Wildlife

Commission does little to reform trapping

By Mary Katherine Ray Chapter Wildlife Chair

s expected, the New Mexico Game Commission voted to approve the rules for hunting bears and cougars for the next four years at the Roswell meeting on Nov. 21.

The number of bears that can be legally killed each year remains at 804, as it has been for the last four years despite questions about the size of the bear population, what constitutes primary bear habitat and whether the bear population is dwindling. Forty percent of the kill can be female.

At the September Game Commission meeting, there was an unusual moment of debate about the proposal to disallow cougar trapping for sport. One of the commissioners moved to continue to allow it on private land. A disappointing three commissioners voted in support of this motion, but three voted no, leaving a tie to be broken by the commission chair, who thankfully voted no. So the proposal barring cougar trapping stood.

In addition to disallowing cougar trapping, the cougar kill quotas have also been slightly reduced. So, beginning with next year's trapping season, while cougars will undoubtedly continue to be trapped and potentially injured by the devices, trappers will not be allowed to purposefully kill them.

While this change for cougars is welcome, it nevertheless places the commission in a strange moral and ethical position about trapping in general. The commission decided that the trapping of cougars is not acceptable, yet the trapping of smaller animals such as bobcats, foxes, and badgers by the thousands every year for recreation and profit is fine. The presentation about the proposed trapping



The newly appointed New Mexico Game Commission outlawed sport trapping of cougars on a tight vote but left bear-killing quotas the same.

Trap Free NM has already recorded two dogs and two endangered wolves caught in traps so far this season.

Game and Fish has repeatedly claimed that trapping is humane (despite the direct experiences the public has had with traps that tell a different story), that trapping comports with the North American Model of Conservation against commercial exploitation of wildlife because it is regulated (despite the tenet of the model calling for the elimination of markets for game, not their regulation), and that the trapping rules are democratically decided (despite every single member of the Game Commission being a hunter, which is representative of only about 4% of the New Mexico population). Moreover, while the commission sought out public comment, comments seem to have been given little consideration by either the Game and Fish Department or the commission. More than 2,400 New Mexicans commented on trapping

or response beyond counting them was offered or discussed. This reason-defying dichotomy between cougar trapping and furbearer trapping is nothing short of bewildering.

At the November Commission meeting, there were no motions to alter the proposed changes to the trapping rule as presented by the department. This means that in January, it is very likely that trapping will be approved to continue on most public land. The Sandia Mountains, the Organ Mountains, buffer areas around official trail heads and two short segments of roadway, one near Taos and one near Santa Fe, will be closed to trapping. These small changes are welcome but don't go near far enough to protect the public and wildlife. Except for the Sandia Mountains, where conflict with trapping is common, it is unclear why these specific

while leaving other places with common trapping incidents involving the public open as usual.

Please note that the current trapping season is underway now with no modification. New rules will not take effect until November 2020. In fact, the TrapFree NM coalition, with which our Rio Grande Chapter participates, has already recorded the trapping of two dogs, neither of them in areas that will be subject to closure, and the trapping of two endangered wolves in the Gila region, where traps will also continue to be allowed. One of the wolves was taken into captivity to treat the trap injury; the other escaped with the trap still on her leg. Attempts at capture as of this writing have not been successful, though she has been observed missing part of her foot and no longer dragging the trap.

You are invited to visit www.trapfreenm.org for information on how to open a trap if your dog is caught and how to report trap inci-



Roxy's trapper goes free

By Mary Katherine Ray

In October, a court dismissed the case against the trapper whose illegally placed snare captured and killed the dog Roxy while she was walking with her person.

New Mexico Game and Fish law enforcement botched the gathering of evidence, resulting in this unjust and crushing outcome.

In total, the trapper had 34 counts of illegal trapping filed against him, but all have been dismissed. When such a clear case of law-breaking cannot be enforced, the claim that trapping is well regulated seems to ring very hollow.

Southern NM Group

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rule changes by New Mexico rules alone, but no analysis areas were chosen for closure dents.

Club-endorsed candidates win 9 of 11 city races



Michael Garcia Tessa Stuve



Kasandra Gandara

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Kurt Anderson

By Richard Barish Chapter Political Chair

ayoral and City Council candidates endorsed by the Sierra Club were winners in 9 of the 11 races where we endorsed.

In Santa Fe and Las Cruces, our endorsed candidates won every race. In Santa Fe, Renee Villareal was unopposed for re-election, and newcomers Michael J. Garcia and Jamie Cassutt-Sanchez prevailed in their races.

In Las Cruces, Mayor Ken Miyagishima was re-elected, and Kasandra Gandara, Tessa Stuve, and Johana Bencomo were elected or re-elected to City Council.

In Albuquerque, incumbent Pat Davis was easily re-elected, and incumbent Ike Benton also prevailed after a hard-fought race that needed a runoff to finally settle. The Sierra Club also endorsed in races in two traditionally Republican bastions, but we were unable to break through in either of those districts despite valiant efforts by the candidates and the volunteers supporting them.

Maurreen Skowran lost to incumbent Trudy Jones in a Four Hills/far Northeast Heights district, and Ane Romero lost after a runoff election in another far northeast district.

In the races for Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District supervisor, Sierra Club volunteer and Executive Committee Member Kurt Anderson beat the incumbent chairman, an ideologue who had moved the district's focus to conspiracy theories and resolutions denouncing the designation of Organ Mountains Desert Peaks as a national monument. Christopher Cardenas, also endorsed by the Club, lost in his race.

Thanks to everyone who donated their time to help in these races and to everyone who voted for these candidates!

Coal and Clean Energy

Will San Juan continue burning coal?

By Mona Blaber Chapter communications director

Sincy July, New Mexico's Public Regulation Commission has been questioning whether it should apply an energy law that would ease retirement costs for PNM's San Juan coal plant, and now the commission's staff is questioning whether PNM should be allowed to stop using the plant's coal power at all.

The city of Farmington and a corporation called Enchant Energy have proposed to keep the aging San Juan plant running as a carbon-capture facility, an expensive and risky scheme. Carbon capture at a power plant has been done at only two power plants in the world, and the owners of those two projects have said they will never do another carbon capture project because of the large costs. This summer, the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis released a report saying Enchant Energy's carbon-capture pitch offers false hope to Farmington — as well as major fiscal risk.

Now, staff at New Mexico's regulatory authority is opposing PNM's plan to get out of San Juan by saying that PNM should have evaluated carbon capture in more detail.

If the Commission agrees with staff and denies PNM's abandonment application, PNM would be forced to continue to run San Juan meaning ratepayers would lose out on the nearly \$400 million in savings from abandoning San Juan and replacing it with low-cost renewables and batteries. And denying abandonment could mean that PNM is forced to spend billions of ratepayer dollars to fund a risky carbon-capture project at San Juan.

Denying PNM's request to exit the plant would also





Nicole Horseherder of Tó Nizhóní Ání (top) testified at a Dec. 9 PRC hearing about the lack of on-the-ground transition support when other coal plants have closed. Jim Mackenzie, 350NM advocate and retired IBEW electrical contractor, also stressed the need for worker support like that the ETA provides.

delay cleanup of San Juan's pollution, deprive plant and mine workers of the funding and transition support offered by the Energy Transition Act and stymie New Mexico's transition from dirty coal to renewable energy.

The other major question the Public Regulation Commission is considering, whether it will apply the Energy Transition Act law to the San Juan case, brought many New Mexicans out to a public hearing Dec. 9 to give heartfelt testimony on providing an equitable transition and putting an end to the plant's deadly emissions.

Many New Mexicans spoke of the benefits of the ETA not just its renewable-energy mandates but the refinancing it authorizes that will reduce ratepayers' current costs and create severance and reinvestment funding for San Juan plant and mine workers and Four Corners communities. Nearly every person who testified spoke in support of closing and cleaning up the plant and ending its deadly emissions.

Some opponents of the Energy Transition Act spoke about the pollution created by the coal plant, but it's important to note that the Energy Transition Act does not limit PNM's responsibility to clean up pollution at the plant.

PNM's cleanup responsibilities will be determined separately by the Environment Department and EPA. The PRC will then decide how much of those costs will be borne by PNM shareholders or by ratepayers. The ETA does not limit PNM's liability for those costs in any way. It allows PNM to sell bonds for \$30 million in additional decommissioning funds, but that is a limit on what customers, not PNM, are responsible for. PNM already has a larger fund for decommissioning expenses, and if that fund and the additional \$30 million are not sufficient to remediate the plant, PNM will continue to be liable until the EPA and Environment Department are satisfied.

Sierra Club and other groups have forced PNM through litigation to reduce its emissions and to remove coal-ash and other pollution around the plant. We will continue to hold the utility accountable for its messes.

If the commission decides not to apply the ETA law, the danger is that plant and mine workers will lose the severance and job-training funds the law's securitization enables. The commission doesn't have a way to require funding for mine workers or for the community. Sierra Club will continue to advocate for implementation of the ETA to ensure an equitable transition to a safer climate for our kids.

Testimony in favor of the ETA

"The ETA brought together labor unions, environmental activists, the Navajo Nation, community organizations, businesses, and utilities in support of this landmark legislation. Like the innovative and forward-thinking ancestors of this land ... we modern people are called to the same extraordinary vision of being deeply connected with all of creation."

— The Rev. Vincent Chavez, St. Therese Catholic Parish, Albuquerque

"The closure of San Juan is a small but critical step in the right direction. Delaying that for any reason is foolhardy."

— George Weston

"It is way past time to act boldly and put things right. ... By using securitization, the San Juan Generating Station can be closed, the site can be cleaned up, workers retrained for jobs in renewable energy, local school districts supported, and ratepayers' electricity bills reduced. This is amazing. Everyone wins in this scenario."

— Ruth Striegle, Interfaith Power and Light

"I have been talking and listening to communities throughout the Navajo Nation, and there are a lot of needs being raised, things like healthier communities, job security. We know that the ETA's not perfect, but it's a step forward. We can use the \$40 million to help our Diné communities start the transition. ... The community truly wants to make sure that we get it right and we do the right thing. We support the ETA to ensure a healthier community."

— Joseph Hernandez, Diné energy organizer, Native American Voters Alliance

"I support the Energy Transition Act as it is written. It is revolutionary, practical and urgent. The ETA, I believe, is our best hone moving forward."

Renewables offer best price to replace coal

By Mona Blaber Communications director

S eparate from the case concerning retirement of San Juan coal plant and how remaining debt will be financed is the case for replacement power — how PNM will replace the coal power to keep customers' lights on.

The Sierra Club is participating in both cases, and our attorneys and experts have been analyzing which energy scenarios would provide the best climate benefits at the lowest cost to consumers.

When it filed to retire the San Juan power plant in June, PNM proposed four scenarios with varying amounts of renewable energy and gas. Its preferred scenario included gas and renewables.

January/February/March 2020

After months of analysis, Sierra Club on Dec. 13 filed testimony by Michael Goggin, a utility and clean-energy consultant who found that the cheapest replacement for the 497 MW of San Juan coal is a mix of renewable energy and battery storage.

There is some dispute over whether the Energy Transition Act requires 450 MW of replacement resources to be located in the same school district as the coal plant (to help replace the plant's tax contribution). Goggin recommended one portfolio if the ETA is interpreted as requiring 450 MW in the school district and another if the location restriction is not imposed. In both cases, Goggin's top recommendation contained no new gas. One of Goggin's recommended scenarios cost less than PNM's favored gas-and-renewables portfolio. And across most reliability metrics, Goggin's top scenario is actually more reliable than PNM's preferred portfolio. Goggin's alternate recommendation is more reliable than PNM's preferred option across some reliability metrics.

The Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy also recommended two replacement scenarios, neither of which included gas.

This is all very good news for our climate; but in order for any of these all-clean scenarios to come to fruition the Public Regulation Commission must allow the retirement of San Juan Generating Station to move forward.

best hope moving forward." — Carla Lanting Shibuya

"The thoroughness of the process created a bill that provides a path which is realistic, doable, and just."

— Deborah Krichels

ETA was debated with great pain and compassion by the Legislature and passed with great difficulty. We should not be debating San Juan emitting CO2 again. We must act.

— Marlene Perrit, Sister of Mercy

"It's right to help our neighbors. And as New Mexicans, we have to be there for each other more now than ever."

— Derrick Toledo

2020 New Mexico legislative preview Much to accomplish in not much time

By Brittany Fallon Chapter legislative organizer he 2020 Legislative session kicks off on Jan. 21, and this year Environment Day will be on Jan. 28. As you may know, 2020 will be a short 30-day session, the purpose of which is to enact the state's budget.

This year, though, because our governor has made climate a priority, the Legislature will be hearing several clean-energy-related bills in addition to the state budget.

First, the electric-vehicle tax credit is long overdue in New Mexico. With the federal tax credit dwindling, there will be few to no tax incentives for Americans to electrify unless they live in one of 19 states that have an EV incentive such as a rebate or tax credit. Electric vehicles represent less than 1% of sales in New Mexico — in part because the state did not have many charging stations to support traveling EV drivers, and in part because the state has not yet adopted emission standards requiring automakers to produce EVs.

Thanks to the EV-infrastructure legislation in 2019, which you helped to pass, and to Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's commitment to adopting low- and zero-emission-vehicle standards in 2020, that is changing. Add to the mix an electric-vehicle tax credit, and New Mexico will be poised to be a leader in transportation electrification.

The bill likely to be introduced will include a fee for EVs to contribute to the road fund (non-EV drivers contribute with a fee at the gas pump), and the tax credit doubles if you make less than \$50,000 a year.

Second, we have been working to get state funding for home energy efficiency for low-income New Mexicans. When nearly 20% of New Mexicans live in poverty and low-income households have an energy burden three times that of other households, it's important for the state to support money- and energy-saving weatherization efforts. This includes things like sealing leaky windows, patching roofs that allow heat to escape, and replacing old, costly appliances with those that cost much less to run and save energy.

Third, you may recall that state Sen.





Mimi Stewart's solar tax credit ran out of time to be heard in 2019. She and the governor are introducing it again, and this time our coalition of environmental and community groups aims to get it over the finish line.

As we head to press, there are also new developments on community solar that seem extremely promising. We are working hard to see this bill introduced again in 2020, and it will be our top priority if it is. Everyone in New Mexico should have access to solar, regardless of economic status.

Finally, last year you all helped us fight for increased agency budgets to the Oil Conservation Division and Energy Conservation Management Division, to help our regulatory agencies protect our environment. This year we will be doing the same for divisions of the Environment Department and

Climate measures on tap at Legislature:

Community solar and tax credits for rooftop solar and electric vehicles, including a double EV credit for buyers with income below \$50,000, are among the bills that Speaker Brian Egolf and Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham plan to champion during the coming New Mexico legislative session.

Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. Without proper staff and funding, the cabinet secretaries and their staff cannot do the important work of making sure our air, water, and health are protected.

Still unfolding is possible legislation on habitat preservation for wildlife; electric grid modernization to help move us toward 100% clean energy; and Public Regulation Commission reform.

I look forward to keeping you all informed with our open-to-the-public calls on Monday of each week at 5 p.m. during the legislative session. Email me at Brittany.fallon@sierraclub.org to sign up for our legislative email list, Rio Lobby, to keep informed as bills come up for votes and move through committees during the session.

You can be a lobbyist

As we embark on the 30-day budget session at our state Legislature, we will again carry out grassroots lobby trainings throughout the state. These trainings will provide you with an overview of key bills that our environmental community will be pushing forward (and in some cases pushing back on). You'll hear from actual, local elected officials about their experience at the Roundhouse and about what they think makes for an effective grassroots lobbyist. The training will help you learn how you can play a role in passing environmental legislation.

Santa Fe: Monday, Jan. 6, 6-8 p.m., Southside Public Library, 6599 Jaguar Dr., Santa Fe

Albuquerque: Wednesday, Jan. 8, 6-8 p.m., St Mark's Episcopal Church, 431 Richmond Place NE, Albuquerque.

Las Cruces: Thursday, Jan. 9, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Branigan Library, 200 E Picacho Ave, Las Cruces.

Silver City: Tuesday, Jan. 14, 6-8 p.m., Church of Harmony, 609 N. Arizona St., Silver City

Aztec: Wednesday, Jan. 15, 6-8 p.m., Step Back Inn on 123 West Aztec Blvd., Aztec, NM 87410

Please RSVP at tinyurl.com/ Lobby2020.

We'll put our skills to the test on Tuesday, Jan. 28, at Environment Day at the Roundhouse. We'll have information tables up and down the Halls of History at the Roundhouse. We'll provide several informational panels on the bills that we are promoting, in addition to a couple of short lobby trainings for people who want a refresher before we go in groups to speak with legislators. We'll visit Committee Hearings where our priority bills are being heard. And we'll have an event at noon in the Rotunda to hear from our elected environmental champions. You can also sign up for this event at tinyurl.com/ Lobby2020. Last year, more than 400 of you joined us in the Roundhouse advocating for environmental legislation, and we saw some huge wins thanks to your efforts.

Hundreds attend meetings on reuse of fracked water

By Brittany Fallon Chapter Conservation organizer

We have been working hard on the issue of "produced water," which is fracking wastewater, in New Mexico.

Last time we wrote, the New Mexico Environment Department was hosting listening sessions around the state prior to considering treatment standards for possible uses of fracking wastewater outside of the oilfield. Thanks so much to the hundreds of you who attended the meetings or submitted written comments. I heard from many of you!

As we wait for the agency to announce next steps, we

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continue to advocate for industry to keep its wastewater in the oilfield.

In the listening sessions, the Environment Department discussed its plans as a two-phase process. Phase I includes "public meetings, tribal engagement, and collaboration with technical experts to fill science and technology gaps." Phase II is to "propose draft regulations for formal rulemaking before the Water Quality Control Commission, including public notice and comment period and opportunity for tribal consultation."

The department laid out its path as follows: 1) Develop rules that prohibit untreated produced water use(s) outside of the oil and gas industry; 2) Develop rules that require companies to analyze and disclose the chemical constituents in produced water intended for treatment and use outside the oil and natural gas industry; and 3) Over time and as the science dictates, develop rules for the "discharge, handling, transport, storage, and recycling or treatment of produced water or byproduct thereof outside the oilfield."

In 2019, the Legislature passed a bill that removed disincentives for oil companies to reuse wastewater when fracking rather than using fresh water. This will reduce the amount of freshwater used in environment-harming extraction.

The bill also clarified that any use of fracking wastewater outside the oilfield would have to be permitted by the Environment Department. The bill requires the Water Quality Control Commission to set treatment standards for things like agriculture or livestock watering.

Finally, the legislation restored the Oil Conservation Division's ability to fine oil and gas companies for violations. A previous court case under the Martinez administration had stripped the division's ability to fine bad-neighbor companies.

The Sierra Club's position is that not enough is known about

fracking wastewater to determine if it is safe for outside use, even after it is treated.

Along with high levels of salt, there are many hundreds of potential other chemicals, heavy metals, and even radionuclides in produced water. Before even considering treatment standards, we need much peer-reviewed research testing how the contents of the wastewater might impact crops, soil quality, or surface and groundwater.

For now, industry should focus on reusing wastewater within oilfields to stop using freshwater. We will continue to advocate for ending fracking entirely in the face of the climate crisis.

2019 Year in Review

January

■ Joined by Global Warming Express kids, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signs a Climate Executive Order requiring robust rules to reduce oil and gas methane pollution; a 45% reduction in statewide greenhouse emissions from 2005 levels by 2030; directing a Climate Change Task Force to develop a state climate strategy; ordering state agencies to evaluate climate impacts and integrate mitigation tactics; and ordering development of legislation to increase the state's renewable portfolio standard and energy-efficiency standards.

February

Representatives of a small mining company called Comexico meet with Santa Fe National Forest officials to discuss their proposal to explore for precious metals in the Upper Pecos Watershed. The project area is on Jones Hill close to the Superfund site of the old Terrero Mine in Pecos Canyon.

The Energy Transition Act is introduced in the New Mexico Senate by Sens. Jacob Candelaria and Mimi Stewart. The bill raises the state's renewable-electricity requirement to 50% by 2030, 80% by 2040 and 100% carbon-free by 2045 and authorizes low-rate financing to ease costs of coal retirement for utilities and ratepayers and fund transition support for workers and communities.

Public-lands package championed by Sen. Martin Heinrich passes Congress, establishing 13 new wilderness areas in New Mexico and permanently reauthorizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

March

■ Energy Transition Act is signed into law by Gov. Lujan Grisham.

■ Other victories for land, wildife and the climate from the legislative session include:

The EV Infrastructure Act passes, clearing the way for companies to install EV-charging stations across New Mexico.

Energy Efficiency Act becomes law, removing disincentives for utilities to invest in energy efficiency, the cheapest and most effective way to reduce carbon pollution.



New Mexicans jammed the Roundhouse in 2019 to support legislation like electric-vehicle infrastructure and the Energy Transition Act as well as bans on coyote-killing contests and trapping. Much of it passed (see March-April), and we get a crack at the rest in 2020 and 2021.

Roundhouse on oil and gas impacts to sacred sites and air quality in New Mexico.

■ Albuquerque City Council goes bag-free. Councilors banned distribution of singleuse plastic bags starting in January 2020.

■ Gov. Lujan Grisham vetoes \$1.698 million for planning and design of the Gila River diversion, sending a signal that the Gila will stay wild.

■ The American Lung Association's State of the Lung **Report** gives San Juan County an F on ozone, which escapes with methane and is a major contributing factor to respiratory disease.

■ The Doña Ana County Commission prohibits use of the county funds to pay the federal Wildlife Services agency for lethal removal of wildlife. Wildlife Services, a euphemistically named agency whose main purpose is killing wildlife, often using cruel means, goes on a campaign to reverse the vote.

May

■ After years of effort to save prime land adjoining El Paso's Franklin Mountains State Park from development, voters overwhelmingly reject taxpayer-funded development around the Lost Dog Trail, a favorite of local outdoors enthusiasts. Americas High School Sierra Student Coalition members, as well as Sierra Club El Paso Group volunteers, campaigned for the protection, which won with a whopping 89% of the vote

construct an interim storage facility for high-level nuclear waste in Lea County.

June

■ After impassioned testimony from Global Warming Express students, Bernalillo County Commission bans distribution of single-use plastic bags and Styrofoam (polystyrene) containers in unincorporated areas of Bernalillo County outside Albuquerque.

■ The Chaco Coalition sponsors a 50-mile Chaco Awareness run led by indigenous youth from Bureau of Land Management offices in Albuquerque to the agency's Santa Fe headquarters to bring awareness to continued drilling in the Greater Chaco region.

Grant County Commission amends its contract with Wildlife Services to **prohibit** the use of leg-hold traps and cyanide bombs.

■ The U.S. House passes an appropriations package that includes language secured by Rep. Ben Ray Lujan imposing a one-year spending limitation on new oil and gas drilling and leasing within a 10-mile radius of Chaco Culture National Historical Park.

■ Gov. Lujan Grisham announces stakeholder meetings to precede a state rulemaking reducing methane pollution from oil and gas drilling. ■ U.S. Sen. Tom Udall and U.S. Rep. Raul Grijalva file an amicus brief challenging the Trump Interior Department's decision to effectively reverse the BLM's Methane and Waste Prevention rule.

and California. Several Sierra Club Southern New Mexico members are standing declarants in the suit.

■ New Mexico Gov. Lujan Grisham sends a letter to the Department of Energy and Nuclear Regulatory Commission opposing an "interim" storage facility for high-level nuclear waste in New Mexico.

July

■ Just two weeks after a vote to prohibit Wildlife Services from using cruel leg-hold traps and cyanide bombs to remove wildlife, Grant County commissioners, under pressure from the federal agency, repeals its pro-wildlife amendment.

■ PNM files application to retire San Juan coal plant and use Energy Transition Act bonds to pay off debt. The Public Regulation Commission files the financing portion of the case under a docket that it created before the legislative session (that was then stayed by the state Supreme Court during the session), suggesting commissioners may not want to apply the new law to the case.

■ Doña Ana County waters down its decision to prohibit payment to Wildife Services for killing wildlife, allowing lethal action but only after nonlethal methods are attempted.

yield too little water.

August

■ U.S. Forest Service announces a 90-day public comment period on draft management plans for the Cibola, Carson, and Santa Fe National forests. The plans have not been updated in over 30 years. New Mexicans attend Forest Service open houses and comment on the draft plans, encouraging more wilderness designations.

Doña Ana County caves to federal Wildlife Services agency, watering down even further its requirement to try non-lethal means before the agency is allowed to kill wildlife.

September

■ Thousands turn out at strikes across New Mexico on Sept. 20 to demand climate action, many led by our Global Warming Express and Sierra Student Coalition students.

■ Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announces that New Mexico will join 14 other states in adopting clean-car standards requiring new cars sold here to emit fewer greenhouse gases and mandate an increasing percentage of cars have zero emissions.

■ Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller signs Executive Instruction to **electrify the** city's fleet of cars.

October

■ Chaco Heritage Protection Act passes in the U.S. House with bipartisan support 245-174.

■ Inaugural Rio Grande Chapter Military Outdoors outing in the Four Corners held on Oct. 18-19.

■ State announces public meetings to discuss regulations on reuse of fracking wastewater (see Page 8).

■ Sierra Club and coalition partners submit comments from in support of expanding wilderness in Cibola, Carson, and Santa Fe National forests.

November

■ Sierra Club-endorsed

candidates win 9 of 11 municipal races and a key spot on

Outdoor Recreation Act

creates an Office of Outdoor Recreation and Outdoor Equity Fund.

April

■ Gov. Lujan Grisham signs into law a ban on coyote-killing contests.

■ Members of the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee, including U.S. Rep. Deb Halaand and Assistant Speaker Ben Ray Luján, tour oil and gas sites in Greater Chaco and Chaco Park and hold a hearing at the

■ U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette introduces the Methane Waste and Prevention Act to reduce methane waste and pollution from oil and gas operations on public lands. U.S. Reps. Ben Ray Luján and Deb Haaland are co-sponsors of the bill.

■ The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board denies all requests by Sierra Club and other petitioners to conduct a hearing challenging Holtec International's application to

■ San Miguel County Commission passes a resolution opposing Terrero Mine.

■ In response to a Sierra Club/Southern Border Communities Coalition lawsuit, a U.S. District Court judge blocks the Trump Administration from using \$2.5 billion in counter-drug, military pay and pensions funds to construct **border** walls in Arizona, New Mexico

■ Supreme Court allows the Trump Administration to, for now, use diverted counter-drug funds to build a **wall along** the U.S.-Mexico border while a Sierra Club/ACLU lawsuit goes through the appeals process. A district court had blocked wall construction using the diverted counter-drug funds.

Newly appointed Game **Commission** proposes to bar sport trapping of cougars but also to leave dangerously high bear-killing quotas.

■ Proponents of a plan to divert the Gila River were given a dose of reality when an Environmental Impact Statement revealed that the project will cost too much and the Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District (Page 6).

Thousands of New Mexicans and more than 60 elected officials submit comments opposing Trump administration's plan to gut EPA methane safeguards.

December

■ Department of the Interior denies extension of funding deadline for proposed Gila **River diversion**.

■ A federal court rules in the Sierra Club lawsuit that President Trump's diversion of \$3.6 billion in military construction funds for the border wall is unlawful. (See Page 11).

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Zero Waste

Fix-it clinic makes old stuff new again

By Rachel Zulevi

Central NM Group Zero Waste Team t happens all too often that when an item becomes damaged, breaks, or otherwise stops serving its purpose: It is banished to the landfill and replaced with a brand-new thing.

The truth is that relatively simple repairs could extend the useful lives of many out-of-commission items, but most of us have no idea how to approach those repairs and don't have the time to figure it out. So into the trash bin broken things go, and off to Target or Amazon we go for replacements. Communities around the country and globe are addressing this lamentable waste of resources by presenting Fix-It Clinics — pop-up gatherings where folks with broken stuff can get help from folks who know how to fix stuff.

The city of Albuquerque offered its first local Fix-It Clinic at Fuse Maker Space on Nov. 16. Skilled volunteers were available to troubleshoot and repair a wide range of items. As clients walked in toting their things-needing-fixing, friendly and enthusiastic Keep Albuquerque Beautiful staff members offered a warm greeting and asked them to sign in.

While the organizers requested advance registration to help them prepare, walkins were welcomed, too. Event staffers escorted new arrivals to the appropriate station, where experts were ready. Stations included: computers/phones, sewing, small appliances, skateboards and bicycles. In my



Volunteers help fix broken items at Albuquerque's first Fix-It Clinic in November.

short visit, I saw a DVD player, popcorn air popper and inflatable ball get repaired very quickly, and a ShopVac, electric toothbrush and sewing machine were being examined.

City organizers consulted with the Santa Fe Fix-It Clinic, a quarterly event hosted by Santa Fe County Sustainability Office and MAKE Santa Fe, to learn and adopt best practices right from the start. Within the first hour of the clinic, Solid Waste Department staff were already feeling positive about the response and hopeful that Albuquerque could host a Fix-It Clinic again soon, perhaps even on a regular basis like our neighbor to the north. To express your appreciation and support of this type of city-sponsored service, please reach out to Keep Albuquerque Beautiful, Mayor Tim Keller, and to your City Councilor to congratulate them on the success of the first run and let them know that you want to see more Fix-It Clinics in Albuquerque. This type of program can not only keep useful items out of the landfill, it also empowers and educates community members in the art of repairing versus replacing. If you have a fix-it skill to share, donating a few hours of your time at a future clinic could have a big impact in our community.

Visit Rachel's Zero Waste Facebook page,

Zero Waste tips and tricks

Want to help but you don't know how? Here are some easy tips from our Zero Waste Team members. If you have clever tips, let us know so we can share them.

Email pictografix@ comcast.net with the subject line "Tips to Reduce Waste."

Refuse

■ Just say no to plastic straws.

■ Don't buy produce wrapped in plastic.

■ Use cloth napkins.

Reduce

■ Bring your own containers and buy bulk produce at the grocery store.

■ Going out for dinner? Bring your own leftover containers. Or order something that can be easily wrapped in aluminum foil.

Dump your trash and yard waste directly into the trash bin. It doesn't need to be in plastic bags.

Reuse

■ Going out for coffee? Bring your own reusable cup.

■ Bring your reusable bags when you go shopping.

■ Forgot your bags in the car? Wheel your groceries to the car in the shopping cart.

Recycle

Learn how to recycle properly – don't contaminate your neighborhood's recycling.

■ Don't put your recyclables in plastic bags.

■ Download the Recycle Coach app from Albuquerque's Solid Waste Management Department: Go to cabq.gov, search "recycle coach app," find the green box that says "Get the FREE Recycle Coach App," and click on the Apple box or the Android box to download the app for your device. It has complete recycling and solid waste information and schedules for the city of Albuquerque.

How they do Zero Waste Down Under

By Carol P. Chamberland Zero Waste Team Ush fires, earthquakes and terrorist attacks — that's the news we get from Down Under in the American mainstream media. While working on my Bucket List this fall, I enjoyed a six-week visit to Australia and New Zealand. Even though I was on vacation, my Zero Waste antennae were up.

First, the good news. Recycle bins are common in public places and most hotels. No plastic bags are visible — in trees, on streets, anywhere. If you don't bring your own, stores will charge 15 cents for a reusable plastic bag, a dollar for



All the outlets in Australia and New Zealand have on/off switches.

countries has two flush buttons – one full blast and the other half-blast, depending upon your needs. And every electrical outlet comes with an on/off switch. Every single outlet. Some restaurants serve food in cardboard plates with bamboo or cornstarch utensils. They make shirts and socks from bamboo, too. Some hotels participate in a program to recycle partially used bath soap. One gelato shop even recycled their tiny plastic spoons. We often encountered wayside stations for refilling your own water bottle.

On a broader scope, pretty much all major museums and national parks offer free admission. Melbourne has a free public tram that circulates folks around the city center. Darwin's Festival of Lights featured a large installation of plastic water bottles converted into lights along the waterfront.

The federal government leases Aboriginal-owned land, and they cooperatively manage it as national parks. Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta are good examples of this arrangement. And finally, after decades of the questionable practice, tourists at Uluru are permanently banned from climbing the sacred rock. They can still visit; they just can't climb. Aboriginal folks celebrated this longawaited victory on Oct. 26. Now the rest of the story. Despite record droughts and bush fires, the government in Canberra seems to be in

denial about climate change. Environmental groups are protesting in the streets, blocking traffic and raising a ruckus. Farmers are reduced to selling their stock at low prices because their feed crops have failed. They buy a daily delivery of water just to survive, though they now have no income. Ancient Aboriginal methods of land husbandry have been routinely ignored for 200 years in favor of European crops and livestock incompatible with the Australian terrain.

The lovable koala is deemed vulnerable to extinction due to habitat loss, domestic dogs, road accidents, and excessive bush fires. New laws will protect koala trees. New Zealand appears in better condition because they get plenty of rain. Piped-in American oldies were ubiquitous, music that I grew up with. Now I know where pop music goes when it drops off the charts. It goes Down Under to retire.

a nice cloth one.

There are free, clean public toilets at convenient locations. Some even feature music! Imagine a symphonic version of "What the World Needs Now Is Love, Sweet Love" when you lock the door for privacy. Just about every toilet in both

Frequently asked questions on Bernalillo/Albuquerque bag ban

Thanks to so many of you, especially kid members of the Global Warming Express, both the city of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County passed plastic bag bans that take effect Jan. 1.

Going bag-free reduces litter and the demand for oil and gas. The city provided us with a list of frequently asked questions that will help you navi-

10 Rio Grande Sierran

gate this change:

Which plastic bags are banned?

Any single-use plastic bag including compostable bags, less than 2.25 millimeters thick. This is equivalent to about two sheets of stacked copy paper.

Can't we recycle plastic bags?

Plastic bags can't be recycled in your blue cart. Plastic bags can be recycled in cardboard receptacles located at many local retail stores.

How will I carry my groceries home?

Switch to reusable bags. Some retailers give rebates to customers who bring their own bags. Others will charge a small fee to give you a paper bag.

Can restaurants provide bags?

Yes. The Albuquerque ordinance does

not apply to food-service establishments. I use plastic bags to pick up my pet's waste. What will I use instead?

Local pet stores can sell waste bags. Existing pet-waste stations on trails and in parks will continue to provide plastic bags for discarding pet waste. (Sierra Club tip: We save our bread and tortilla bags to use for poop collection.

El Paso Group

El Paso students hike, learn, protect

By Neysa Hardin El Paso Sierra Student Coalition

The Americas High School Sierra Student Coalition of the El Paso Group would like to extend heartfelt gratitude to the El Paso Sierra Club and the Rio Grande Chapter for their continued support. We had a great and productive year:

January: We joined forces with El Paso nonprofits on MLK'S National Day of Service to clean up litter on Trans Mountain Road. The students ended the day by hiking the Lost Dog Trails to see first-hand open-space areas that the city wanted to destroy through development of shopping strips and housing.

February: SSC sledded down the sand dunes at White Sands National Monument. Prior to the trip, we conducted a book study on *Red* by Terry Tempest Williams and shared passages from the book as we watched the sunset over the mountains.

April-May: SSC students worked diligently on voter registration drives, voter data mining, petition drives, social-media blitzing and poll sitting to save wildscapes in our Lost Dog Trails in the Franklin Mountains from being bulldozed and concreted. Our efforts paid off with a resounding 89% voter approval! This was a crowning achievement for the community!

May: We hiked to Osha Trail in the Lincoln National Forest; students were assigned an organism found within the forest. Each student represented their organism as an art form from poetry to paintings,



Photo by Neysa Hardin

Students of the Americas High School Sierra Student Coalition participated in outdoor adventures and service projects and helped organize a resounding victory for Lost Dog Trails in 2019.

El Paso Executive Committee

elpasosierraclub.org Laurence Gibson, Chair, (915) 309-5419 laurenceagibson@gmail.com Ann Falknor, Secretary, (915) 833-9162 afalknor@sbcglobal.netv Liz Walsh, (915) 342-7630 ewalsh@utep.edu Neysa Hardin (915) 227-5154, nrhardin@yahoo.com Francesca Wigle (512) 497-5026 fwigle@gmail.com

music, etc., and presented their pieces in a sharing circle while relaxing in the Osha Trail meadow.

August: We hiked Dripping Springs Trail in the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument and learned about water issues by taking pH, temperature, phosphate/nitrate readings, and measuring dissolved oxygen levels in the Rio Grande at Leasburg Dam State Park. September: Students investigated the unique geology of Franklin Mountains State Park by exploring the abandoned Prospect Mine, which is dazzled in lapis, malachite, and pyrite.

Students volunteered at an El Paso Zoo lecture on the Black Bear of Big Bend National Park as a community-service project sponsored by the El Paso Group.

October: AHS Sierra Student Coalition was invited to speak at the El Paso Community Foundation's Cultivate Speaker Series. Three students presented on the impact of connecting young people to nature and the importance of being environmental stewards.

Students created an altar for Día de los Muertos on endangered species in Texas and New Mexico. The altar paid homage to endangered animals and plants and was used to inform their peers on the current administration's attacks on the Endangered Species Act.

November: Students spent the day hiking the amazing fall foliage under big tooth leaf maples in the Guadalupe Mountains National Park. We read "Thinking Like a Mountain" from Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* and discussed land ethic issues with park rangers.

December: The students have an upcoming trip on

Fighting the wall in court, on the ground

By Antoinette Reyes Southern NM organizer

As President Trump has circumvented Congress and diverted funds from other budget items to build his border wall, Sierra Club activists and attorneys have continued to stand up for our borderlands



You can help stop nuclear dump

By John Buchser Rio Grande Chapter Water chair

S outheast New Mexico has been targeted to become a Chernobyl wasteland! Our nation needs to constructively confront the radioactive waste our nuclear power plants are generating. We need a sound long-term disposal solution. There is not a need to ship waste to Southeast NM like Holtec is proposing, potentially getting stranded there forever.

We need your help to insure the strategy the US pursues is sound, and will keep us safe during the 100,000+ years it will take for this waste to become safe.

We need faster deployment of wind and solar. We don't need nuclear power. Existing plants should be shut down when their licenses expire. New technologies like better battery storage are progressing quickly. Nuclear power plants generate radioactive waste that we do not have the technology to keep safe.

We lost our legal case questioning the legality and safety of Holtec's near-surface 'temporary' storage facility near Carlsbad. We are appealing to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

— but the NRC's role is to promote nuclear energy. Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and State Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard are objecting to this facility, please extend your thanks to them. Tribal governments in NM object to the movement of waste given the high risk.

There is pressure from citizens to move this radioactive waste away from their communities. The Club is finalizing recommendations to expand our nuclear policies to address the challenges we are facing. Minimizing movement of waste is one important recommendation. Many of the other recommendations mirror those of the Fall report of the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board there's a lot to be done to insure safety, and we need time and money to do so. To donate to the Rio Grande Chapter's Holtec legal fund, please go to riograndesierraclub.org/ donate and choose the option for "Stop the Holtec waste facility."

and families to stop the wall.

In October, El Paso Judge Briones ruled that the Trump administration illegally diverted billions of dollars for wall construction. This suit was brought by El Paso County and the Border Network for Human Rights. On Dec. 10, Briones issued a nationwide injunction stopping the Trump administration from diverting \$3.6 billion from the Department of Defense's military construction fund to erect 175 miles of border wall. However, the judge's order does not stop the administration from continuing to use up to \$2.5 billion from the Department of Defense's counter-drug and narcotics fund, nor does it stop the more than \$3 billion appropriated by Congress for border walls since 2017.

In another case, the Sierra Club is being represented by the ACLU. The court

January/February/March 2020

Photo courtesy Nuestra Tierra

Nuestra Tierra hosted an October border campout near Coronado National Forest, an area in Hidalgo County threatened by border-wall construction. Contact antoinette. reyes@sierraclub.org to get involved in grassroots efforts to stop the wall.

previously blocked the use of \$2.5 billion from the counter-drug program, as well as military pay and pension funds, for border construction. But in July, the Supreme Court stayed the injunction, allowing wall construction in Southern New Mexico and places like San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge to continue as that case moves through the appeals process.

We made progress on Dec. 11, when US District Judge Gilliam ruled against the use of emergency funds. The ACLU argued that the emergency funds are an abuse of emergency powers to build a border wall using funds Congress explicitly denied. The court temporarily stayed an injunction to halt using the military construction funds because of the ongoing appeals process in this case.

The Trump administration is expected to appeal the December rulings. As Sierra Club and others continue legal attempts

Funds for Gila River diversion blocked

By Allyson Siwik Gila Resources Information Project ila River advocates received great holiday news Dec. 20 as the Department of Interior denied a deadline extension on the Gila River diversion, cutting off access to more than \$50 million in construction funding for the project that would harm New Mexico's last wild river and divert money from local communities with critical water supply needs.

The Department of Interior letter says "The slow pace of progress by the State since the passage of the Act shows a lack of urgency and priority by the State for delivering water supplies to rural communities that could be served by the project. Even today, a feasible project with necessary funding and contractual commitments has not been identified to enable project success. After careful consideration, I regret to inform you that due to the State's failure to make progress, an extension of the deadline identified in Section 212(i) of the Act will not be granted."

Planning for a Gila River diversion



Photo by Dennis O'Keefe

The Interior Department's Dec. 20 decision means it's more likely — but not a sure thing — that the Gila River will remain wild.

has gone on for 15 years and wasted \$15 million without producing plans for a viable project.

It's well past time to move on and focus our attention and the tens of millions of dollars in funding available to New Mexico under the Arizona Water Settlement Act on community water projects that can bring real water security to everyone in southwest New Mexico.

Sen. Martin Heinrich, Sen. Tom Udall, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and Lt. Gov. Howie Morales all have supported protection of the Gila River and use of Arizona Water Settlement Act funding on cost-effective non-diversion projects. Additionally, they opposed an extension of the deadline for the diversion. We appreciate their hard work to protect the Gila.

And thanks to you for being with us every step of the way over the past 15 years and doing your part to support Gila River protection!

We look forward to working with the governor in 2020 to determine the best way to spend New Mexico's Arizona Water Settlement Act funds on local water projects and protect the Gila for future generations.

However, it's not over 'til it's over. The New Mexico Central Arizona Project Entity, which was formed to plan, construct and maintain a diversion project, is expected to continue its efforts to build a diversion. Although it lost \$50 million in construction funding with the Interior Department's decision, it is eligible to use New Mexico Unit funding under the federal law if approved by the Interstate Stream Commission and if it can obtain a Record of Decision under the National Environmental Protection Act. There is currently \$60 million in the NM Unit Fund, with \$18 million more to come from

Los Alamos Youth Earth Team has big plans

By members of the Los **Alamos Youth Earth Team 7**ou might say "What is the Los Alamos Youth **L** Earth Team?" We are a middle-school group that helps the environment and does proj-

ects that help Pajarito the plants and animals Group around us.

We have many goals in mind and we hope to be able to complete a few this year. We have done many things already to help the environment, but with not a lot of funding, there's not much we can do.

That is why we would like you to help us!

We are planning on making the court at the middle school more eco-friendly by planting grass, trees, and possibly a pond. We also went to the Valles Caldera to test the water. Watershed monitoring is important because it makes sure that water quality, fauna, chemical balance, and volume is sufficient for our wildlife. We have also gone to a recycling fair where they teach about recycling.

We have planned many things, but without your help,

Pajarito Group Directory

riograndesierraclub.org/ pajarito

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Executive Committee

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we cannot do it.

You can help in many ways: Anyone can spread the word about the right way to recycle and what you can recycle. Anyone can also help in their

community and do things like pick up trash. You can help the environment if you do simple things. If you're interested in donating to our projects, we are always in need of funding. You

can donate at gofundme.com/f/ los-alamos-youth-earth-teamfundraiser.

We are focusing on having the whole club working towards a common goal.



SAVE MONEY!

Save your family \$1,500 per year

\$1,500

Save the County (that's YOU) \$65,000 per year currently spent to take food to the landfill.

HELP OUR ENVIRONMENT!

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Water Issues: Barbara Calef, bfcalef@yahoo.com, 505/662-3825

Address: 520 Navajo Road, Los Alamos, NM, 87544

Join the Pajarito Group:

Contact Jody Benson at echidnaejb@gmail.com or 505-662-4782.

5.000 Food waste prevention could reduce our community's carbon footprint by 5,000 TONS of greenhouse gases.

Buying and using food wisely can preserve the 25% of our freshwater, 80 million acres of productive land (larger than the area of New Mexico!), and 300 million barrels of oil that are used every year in the US to produce food that is never eaten.

FEED OUR COMMUNITY!

Donating unwanted but edible food to our food banks can help alleviate hunger in Northern NM.

Want to reduce your wasted foodprint, save money and help our environment and our neighbors? Check out our food waste prevention tips at lacnm.us/gogreen S ALAMOS **Environmental Services**

January/February/March 2020

Network watches out for public health

By Teresa Seamster, Northern New **Mexico Group Chair**

n the past two years, state environmental organizations and medical practitioners and researchers have found a common sector of growing concern — the impacts of environmental pollution on public health.

Northern New Mexico Group members Denise Fort and Teresa Seamster are members of the Environmental Public Health Network, with projects in water quality and community impacts planned for 2020.

At a recent network gathering in Albuquerque, keynote speaker Ruth A. Etzel M.D, Ph.D., presented a number of tragic examples of toxic environmental exposure affecting New Mexico children. Possibly the most shocking case was the accidental poisoning of a large rural family given some unlabeled grain, tainted with mercury, which they fed to hogs that were also their family's food supply.

After three months, the three youngest children fell gravely ill — all became weak and were unable to walk or talk. The youngest daughter became permanently blind. The other children and parents did not suffer serious side effects, but the levels of mercury in the youngest and smallest were high enough to cause lifelong catastrophic effects.

This cautionary tale from Alamogordo decades ago, is being repeated in varying degrees today throughout New Mexico.

Oil and gas methane emissions are at an all-time high in the Permian and San Juan Basins. Childhood asthma has doubled since 2015 to almost 50,000 cases in the state, and billions of gallons of radioactive produced water from fracking operations are being injected into wells and held in impoundment ponds while the New Mexico Environment Department studies how to safely dispose of this new hazardous fluid.

New Mexico has a long history of legacy waste from the mining industry, the contamination from two national laboratories, the Air Force bases, and the oil and gas fields. Rural communities are often the most



Research tying public-health impacts to oil and gas development in New Mexico is increasing. Earthworks thermographers are using infrared cameras to find leaks of methane and volatile organic compounds at oil and gas wells. This camera shot shows a leak of methane and volatile organic compounds, invisible to the naked eye, near **Counselor on the Navajo Nation.**

impacted and the least served by medical facilities equipped to provide testing, diagnosis or treatment to residents exposed to toxic emissions or contaminated water or soil.

As the Trump administration seeks to reverse Environmental Protection Agency climate safeguards, health impacts from climate disruption are another common concern for medical practitioners and environmental groups.

Srikanth Paladugu, chief of the Environment Department's Environmental Health Epidemiology Bureau, spoke to the Environmental Public Health Network gathering about new climate-related illnesses that are also on the rise. Heat stroke, dehydration and accidental death due to outdoor occupations of firefighting, forestry, agriculture, ranching, pipeline and highway construction are affecting greater numbers of employees in these areas.

The body of research tying publichealth impacts to the still growing oil and gas development in New Mexico is also increasing. The use of FLIR (optical

gas imaging) cameras by thermographers working for environmental groups such as Earthworks now is able to document specific venting and gas leaks from well equipment and provide accurate emission violations when filing complaints with the state Environment Department.

In one day in October, certified thermographers filmed seven well locations in Rio Arriba and Sandoval counties that violated operational standards.

The rural Navajo chapters of Counselor, Navajo City and Nageezi were all areas being polluted with these illegal well emissions that are invisible to the eye. Routine well inspectors, who rely on smell and visible emissions, could not have detected these violations.

The Environmental Health Network is made up of concerned professionals and practitioners who are working to document and mitigate the impacts of environmental pollutants on New Mexicans. The network seeks to protect public health through educational advocacy for environmental

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Other

responsibilities

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Northern NM Group Holiday celebration

By Teresa Seamster Northern NM chair This has been a year of constant ups and downs. In January, we vere elated over the signing of the Wildlife Corridors Act; the next month we heard of a poorly crafted trapping rule at the state Game Commission. Mid-year we celebrated the State Land Office's drilling moratorium on trust lands in the Chaco buffer, followed by the Santa Fe National Forest announcing an exploratory drill permit for a new mine on the Pecos River. This has also been a year that has seen many serious illnesses within our Executive Committee "family." Our end-of-the-year holiday party mirrored that cycle; first celebrating some landmark legislation and progress in protecting some of the most



Rep. Matthew McQueen and Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth. They discussed legislation and answered questions from an informed and engaged audience. Examples of successes and failures were given that showed their different strategies and consensus-building needed to get bills through the Legislature and signed by the governor. Since members often attend committee hearings at the state legislature as well as city and county meetings, the topics they raised covered the spectrum. Our legislators showed their deep local connections, knowledge and possible solutions to pending developments like the Tererro Mine project in nearby Pecos, a proposed asphalt plant in western Santa Fe County and Santa Fe's drafted 2100 Water Plan. Attendance and spirits were

Photo by Camilla Feibelman

State Rep. Matthew McQueen, left, Northern Group Chair Teresa Seamster and Tom Gorman talk about the year's accomplishments and challenges at the holiday party.

vulnerable people and places in New Mexico, followed by our announcement of the sudden passing of long-time group leader and ExCom member, Paul Paryski. Paul was a great Sierra Club colleague and friend whose lifelong involvement in water and climate issues continued until his death on Nov. 25. He will be greatly missed.

The highlight of the evening was the tag-team discussion by our two keynote speakers, state Publicity: Open

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

Sales backup: Ann Anthony, anrascal@gmail. com, 505-795-7472. Hiking book: Aku

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January/February/March 2020

Central New Mexico Group and youth activism

Excursiones: creciendo en el 2019

By Cecilia Chávez Beltrán

Excursiones stablecido en Julio 2017, nuestro programa está dirigido a promover el disfrute de la naturaleza entre la comunidad de habla hispana. Podemos decir que la respuesta ha sido bastante satisfactoria. Tocando puertas de organizaciones no-lucrativas que trabajan con la comunidad hispanohablante en ABQ, continuamos ofreciendo Excursiones a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico.

Las Excursiones son variadas respecto al país de origen, y el esfuerzo físico y nivel de experiencia de nuestros participantes. Indudablemente, más emocionante que los números o estadísticas son las reacciones de nuestros excursionistas, quienes mientras caminamos recuerdan un lugar de su niñez/juventud en tierras lejanas, se alegran de haber logrado más de lo que pensaron les sería posible, platican de sentirse a gusto explorando en grupo. La naturaleza al alcance de todos.

Entre las 25 excursiones del 2019 tuvimos:

Paseos en el bosque del Rio Grande, a pedido específico de varias organizaciones que trabajan con y para la comunidad hispanohablante en la educación para adultos, desarrollo de liderazgo, transformación de las vidas de sobrevivientes de violencia doméstica y de violencia sexual, y derechos de los inmigrantes.

Un educativo y entretenido día en el Rio Grande Nature Center con niñas y niños de una guardería. Coordinado con Paulina Díaz, nuestra voluntaria líder bilingue.

Un relajante paseo en el bosque, con madres de una escuela elemental localizada en un barrio de bajos recursos económicos.

Dos paseos especiales: Los participantes estuvieron encantados, aunque era un lluvioso día, del Salinas Pueblo Mission



Photo by Cecilia Chávez Beltrán

Participants at a Rio Grande Nature Center excursion this summer. Our Spanish-language outings program conducted 25 outings this year.

sol al Acoma Pueblo Sky City. Educativas y activas, en estas excursiones hemos aprendido un poco de la historia según los españoles conquistadores y los Nativos Americanos, queriendo de alguna manera balancear nuestro poco conocimiento sobre la tierra que pisamos.

Varias excursiones locales a las Montañas Sandía, áreas del Monumento Nacional de Petroglifos, y los volcanes.

En total hemos tenido 176 participantes yendo desde los 3 a los 71 años de edad. Hemos contado con el apoyo de guías expertas voluntarias bilingües y/o conocedores de aves e historia de Nuevo Mexico.

Continuamos entonces, queriendo inspirar a la comunidad a sentirse seguros disfrutando nuestros espacios al aire libre. Aunque no tienen mucho tiempo libre para estar en la naturaleza, el comentario que siempre recibo al llegar al estacionamiento luego de nuestras aventuras es el deseo de seguir explorando la naturaleza en grupo, en convivio. Se agradece infinitamente el tener Excursiones como instrumento de integración. Los paisajes en Nuevo Mexico son hermosos y eso es celebrado en todas nuestras Excursiones.

Excursiones report

language program promoting the enjoyment of nature within the Spanish-speaking community.

Excursiones are diverse, not only in relation to countries of origin, but also in the levels of physical exertion and in our participants' hiking experience. Without a doubt, rather than numbers or statistics, it is more meaningful to report about the reactions and commentaries we hear during our time together: a remembrance of a place from their childhood/youth in far away lands, the joy of having been able to go beyond what they thought they were capable of, sharing their pleasure of exploring in a group.

Our 25 Excursiones in 2019 included:

Several walks in the bosque with groups working in adult education, leadership development, transforming lives of survivors of domestic violence, and survivors of sexual violence. These outings were specifically requested by various organizations.

An entertaining and educational day at the Rio Grande Nature Center with children from a childcare center, coordinated with our volunteer bilingual outings leader Paulina Díaz.

A relaxing stroll by the river with mothers from an

neighborhood.

Two all-day special outings: Despite a rainy day, everybody had a great time visiting Salinas Pueblo Mission National Monument.

Months later, on a gloriously sunny day, we visited Acoma Pueblo/Sky City. Both Excursiones were active and educational, where we learned a bit more history according to the Spanish colonizers and the Native American people somehow wanting to balance the little knowledge we have about the land we stand on today.

Several trips to the Sandia Mountains, the Petroglyph National Monument, and the volcanoes.

We have enjoyed the company of 176 participants ranging from 3 to 71 years old. We have had the support and expertise of bilingual volunteer guides and/or knowledgeable birders and historians.

So we keep going, wanting to inspire the Spanish-speaking community to feel secure enough to independently enjoy nearby open spaces. The feedback I receive is that they are universally thankful for the experience of enjoying nature in the company of others. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to have Excursiones as an instrument of integration. New Mexico's landscape is gorgeous, and that is cele-

Celebrating our progress together

By Diane Reese

A large group of volunteers and supporters gathered on December 8 at The Three

Sisters Kitchen to celebrate a strong year of environmental action. Joining in the fun were



350 New Mexico and

Mom's Clean Air Force — a few of our special partners. Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman thanked volunteers and staff and highlighted a few successes, such as the Energy Transition Act. "None of this could have been accomplished without you!"

Special recognition was given to outgoing Central Group Chair Fred Houdek and new chapter Friends and

Central New Mexico Contacts

Chair: Fred Houdek, fihoudek@ gmail.com, 630.809.4234 Vice Chair: Ray Shortridge, rshortridge@gmail.com Treasurer: David Ther, grelbik@ gmail.com Secretary: Heather Kline, heatherjkline78@gmail.com, 505.577.2798 Outings: Terry Owen, teowen@ comcast.net, 505-301-4349 Carol Chamberland, pictografix@comcast.net Mark Rudd, mark@markrudd. com Peter Kelling, cloudsandwater@ juno.com **Other Responsibilities** Political/Bosque: Richard

Barish, richardbarish@gmail.com Art showings: Peter Kelling Volunteer coordinators: Keely Scheffler, kscheffler99@unm. edu, Patty Duncan, pgnm@ comcast.com, Wildlife: Leslie Chavez, chavezles99@gmail.com Military Outings: Terry Owen

National Monument. Meses más tarde, un glorioso día de

Established in July 2017, Excursiones is our Spanishelementary school located in an economically challenged

UNM Sierra Student Coalition: Keely Scheffler

Global Warming Express: From Congress to the Legislature



GWE student activists asked Bernalillo County commissioners to declare a climate emergency.

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By Genie Stevens Global Warming Express The Global Warming Express has been busier and bigger than ever this fall. By January we will have added new programs in Belen, Taos and Santa Fe and will have recruited five more mentors, in addition to our fall programs.

We will have programs in Los Alamos, Taos, Dixon, Santa Fe, Albuquerque and Belen, while working on a new program in Española. This fall, the GWE came to the attention of Greta Thunberg and national and international audiences when U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Luján gave the GWE a shout-out during the congressional meeting with Greta and youth climate activists. Rep. Luján asked Greta a question posed by GWE founder Marina Weber: "How can we get more youth in America engaged in climate activism?" Greta wisely answered: "Educate them," which is exactly what we are in the Rio Grande Sierra Club region doing.

On Dec. 9, Mentor Beverly Williams and a group of her Global Warming Expressers from Mountain Mahogany School traveled to Santa Fe Prep's Climate Symposium to lead a workshop on speaking about climate change in public as impactfully as kids do! We look forward to offering similar workshops at other venues. Let us know if you have venues for such events.

GWEers are now heading in various directions, to plant trees and to observe beavers in the Bosque. Look for our 260-plus GWEers at the Roundhouse at Environment Day on January 28!

Hikes and Outings

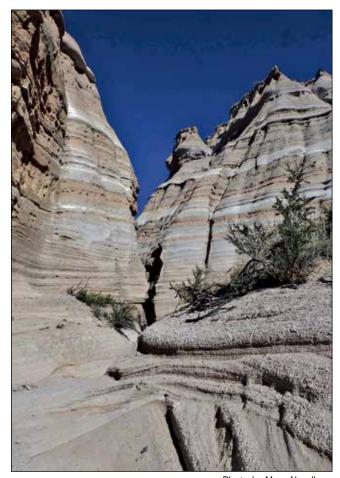


Photo by Mary Needham Hikers scrambled through the Kasha Katuwe Tent Rocks and Slot Canyon in late October.

Always a good time to get outside

By Terry Owen, Outings chair

J acques Cousteau famously said, "We only protect the things that we love," and the Rio Grande chapter provides an abundance of opportunities for our members and non-members alike to fall in love with New Mexico's wild lands. From snowshoeing and nordic skiing in the central and northern mountains to hiking all across the state, there are lots of options from very easy to very challenging activities.

What's more, there is the Excursions a la Naturaleza de Nuevo Mexico program which offers outings in Spanish, and the Military Outdoors program which encourages military veterans, active duty and reservist to get outside. With all of these options, there's virtually no reason for not joining us on an outing!

Thanks to the chapter's volunteer outings leaders, 2019 was a great year. With more than 70 outings and over 400 participants, they offered a variety of events and outings that were safe, fun and inspiring. Some of the highlights included a hike near Las Cruces to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks Monument, a camp, hike and bike outing at Chaco Canyon; and wilderness first aid training specifically geared for Sierra Club members. All of these activities were at no cost or very low cost to participants.

We began the year with 14 outings leaders across the chapter and added two more to our ranks. Congratulations are in order to June Parson in the Central Group and Hart Pierce in the Northern Group for completing the certification requirements and leading outings in their respective regions. Unfortunately we had to bid farewell to longtime Chapter Outings chair and one of our most active outings leaders, Odile De La Beaujardiere, as she relocated to Colorado.

We invite you to join us in 2020 for more outdoor adventures.

If you're short on outdoor gear or have too much outdoor gear, we have a Gear Swap tentatively scheduled for mid-April, a service project planned at Chaco Canyon for late April, and Wilderness First Aid training scheduled for September. We'll also be recognizing the 50th anniversary of Earth Day with some special activities. That's in addition to the scores of outings we have planned.

If you or someone you know would like to become a certified outings leader, we'd enjoy having you join our ranks. Outings Leader Training (OLT-101) is scheduled for March 7 in Albuquerque. You can register by March 4 at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar. For more info, contact Rio Grande Chapter Outings Chairman Terry Owen,

Outings, continued from Page 16

4.25 miles round trip and 1,000 vertical feet of climbing. Reliable headlamp and very warm clothing required, and participants may need snowshoes and micro-spikes, depending on conditions. Sponsored by Military Outdoors Program; everyone welcome. Appropriate for children over 16 with parent or legal guardian. No dogs, please. Contact leader by Feb. 5 to RSVP, obtain gear list and other details.

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

Level: Moderate-Strenuous Location: East of

Albuquerque

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

Saturday, Feb 15: Haviland Lake-Chris Park Snowshoe

Trek. Sponsored by Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter Military Outdoors Program. Meet at 10 a.m. Haviland Lake Road parking area 20 miles north of Durango, Colo. This threehour and 3-mile trek will start at 8,700 feet elevation and descend about 700 feet to Chris Park picnic area and return. Trail is marked and includes some off-trail travel. Participants must be able to walk one mile uphill in 25 minutes or less. Must bring own equipment. Children 14 and over permitted with adult or legal guardian. Dogs allowed. Equipment list distributed upon registration. Local carpool and caravan rendezvous at Step Back Inn, 123 Aztec Blvd, Aztec, NM. 8:30 a.m. RSVP by Feb. 12. Leader: Hart Pierce, 505-320-1055, shpierce@q.com Level: Moderate Location: Haviland Lake, Chris Park Trail, CO.

Become a Sierra Club outings leader

Want to lead hikes for the Rio Grande Sierra Club? We want you!

As a Sierra Club Outings leader, you will join others in exploring our wild lands and share your love for nature. You could be hiking, backpacking, kayaking, bicycling or doing service work--its up to you, because you ultimately design and lead your very own trips.

The requirements to become a certified outings leader are:

-Be at least 18 years of age

-Complete Outings Leader Training -Complete first-aid and CPR training

-Complete at least one provisional hike in the company of a certified leader

Outings leaders training will be offered

you are already an outings leader and it's been four years since you last attended, this an opportunity to meet the refresher training requirement. This will provide current and prospective outing leaders with the tools they need to lead a safe, inspiring and fun outing.

from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. March 7 at our

Albuquerque office, 2215 Lead Ave. SE. If

Attendees will receive a resource packet that includes the handbook and update, a Trailhead Talk laminated card, an Emergency Response laminated card and a Leave No Trace laminated card.

Please contact Terry Owen, teowen@ comcast.net (505) 301-4349 with questions.

To register, go to www.riograndesierraclub.

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

March

Sunday, March 1: Sandia Crest Triangle Snowshoe hike.

Meet at 9 a.m. at Hobby Lobby on Juan Tabo to carpool, or at Sandia Crest at 9:45 a.m. We'll depart from Sandia Crest parking lot, proceed to the upper tram station, go down La Luz trail to the "Y" and return on the south leg of La Luz trail to the Sandia Crest parking lot. Route is about 4.25 miles round trip and 750 vertical feet. Participants may require snowshoes and micro-spikes depending upon conditions. Sponsored by the Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome. Appropriate for children over 16 with parent or legal guardian. No dogs, please. Contact leader by Feb. 27 to RSVP, obtain recommended gear list and additional info. Leader: Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@ comcast.net Level: Moderate-strenuous Location: East of Albuquerque Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

Saturday, March 7: A spring outing into the Bosque on the west side of the Rio Grande

Meet us at the sculpture garden parking lot just off the Montano Bridge at 9 a.m. for a one- to two-hour easy walk into our beautiful Bosque. The walk is leisurely and the paths — NM Computer Recyclers 10-11 a.m., 5445 Edith Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, on the southwest corner with Montaño

— Albuquerque Computer & Electronics Recycling Company 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m., 3726 Hawkins St. NE, Albuquerque Limit: 6 people Bravo and Second Street SW, go south on Second Street 1.5 miles to the little street on the right, Valley High SW. Turn right and go to the end of the street, at the irrigation ditch. For information, call, text, or write the trip leader.

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

Level: Easy

Location: Albuquerque, South Valley

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

Saturday, March 28: Sand Canyon Trail-Trail of the Ancients National Monument

hike. Sponsored by Rio Grande Chapter Military Outdoors Program. Open to all! Trailhead location is 15 miles west of Cortez, Colo., on McElmo Creek Road (CR G). Trailhead elevation 5,400 feet. This 5-mile, 3-hour hike will travel over rocky, sandy trail through piñon-juniper ecosystem with an elevation gain of 400 feet. Trail passes several ancestral Puebloan ruins, many of which are accessible. Spectacular geology and landscape. Detailed trail map at grandcanyontrust.org/hikes/ sandcanyontrail. Local carpool and caravan rendezvous at Step Back Inn, 123 West Aztec Blvd., Aztec, NM, at 8 a.m. or meet at 10 a.m. at the trailhead. Participants must be able to walk 1 mile in 25 minutes or less. Children 14 and over allowed; must be accompanied by parent or legal guardian. Dogs allowed but must be leashed. RSVP by March 25. Equipment list available upon registration. Leader: Hart Pierce 505-320-1055 shpierce@q.com Level: Moderate

are wide and level so we can take time to enjoy the Bosque coming out of dormancy and into spring. Part of the path will take us to the Rio Grande as well as past the Oxbow. Dress comfortably, bring water, snacks you may need.

Level: Easy

Leaders: Margaret DeLong; mardel18@aol.com; Julie Hudson jth@cybermesa.com Location: Albuquerque Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

Wednesday, March 11: Zero Waste E-cycling Tour. Come find out what more you can e-cycle than just computers. We will tour two E-cycling businesses: Contact trip leader to RSVP or to carpool.

Leader: Laurie Zunner, 505-440-5337, lmzunne@ gmail.com.

Level: Easy

Location: Albuquerque Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

Saturday, March 28: Easy Bosque Hike: Meet at 9 a.m. for a roughly 1.5-mile walk to visit a successful Army Corps of Engineers Bosque restoration site. This area was restored from 2010 to 2012 with thriving new cottonwoods, willows and a variety of lower shrubs. Meet at intersection of Valley High SW and the irrigation ditch. From Rio

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On a Dec. 15 Kitchen Mesa hike, participants overcame muddy sections to enjoy fantastic views. Check our Meetup groups or the listings below for more hikes like this.

January-February-March hikes

January

Thursday, Jan 9: Zero Waste Tour to Friedman Recycling Center. 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Contact trip leader to RSVP or if you want to carpool by Jan. 8. Vests, helmets, eye protection and ear plugs will be provided. Dress warm, part of the tour will be outdoors.

Trip leader: Laurie Zunner, 505-440-5337, lmzunne@gmail.com

Level: Easy

Location: Meet at Education Bldg. 5049 Edith Blvd. NE, Albuquerque Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.

org/calendar Saturday, Jan 18: Volcanoes on

the West Side Hike (Excursiones a la Naturaleza): 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Easy hike with beautiful views of the valley, city and Sandia Mountains. About 3.2 miles round trip. The Pueblo people believe the volcanoes and the petroglyphs pecked into the volcanic boulders provide a direct spiritual connection to both their ancestors and to the spirit world, the place where time began. To carpool, please be at Lowes Home Improvement, 2001 12th St. NW, Albuquerque. Meet at the southeast side of the parking lot, at 9:45 a.m. Please

feet. Children 14 and over allowed and must be accompanied by parent or legal guardian. Participants must be able to walk one mile uphill in 25 minutes or less. No dogs. Bring your own equipment. Rentals may be obtained at San Juan College Outdoor Rental Center or several locations in Durango. Consult snowshoe sizing-weight charts at rei. com or backcoutry.com. Trip leader can also advise on proper equipment. Equipment list available upon registration. If snow conditions are insufficient venues may change or outings may become hikes. Outings leader will contact confirmed participants in the event of outings changes.

Participants must RSVP by Jan. 15. Outings Leader: Hart Pierce,

505-320-1055, shpierce@q.com Level: Moderate

Location: Chicken Creek Nordic, Mancos, CO

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub. org/calendar

Friday, Jan 24: Michael M. Emery Trail and Trail 305 Loop Hike (Excursiones a la Naturaleza). 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Elevation gain 334 feet, 3-mile loop. Meet at 99999 High Desert St. NE, 87111. To get there.



Photo by Mary Needham A hiker climbs through the slot during an October outing to Kasha Katuwe Tent Rocks and Slot Canyon.

and winter hiking. Sponsored by the Military Outdoors Program, and everyone is welcome. Appropriate for children over 14 with parent or legal guardian. No dogs, please. Contact leader by Jan. 22 to RSVP, obtain recommended gear list and other details.

All about Sierra Club outings

Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter outings are free and open to the public. The level of difficulty is listed in hike descriptions.

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.

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

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

no dogs

Leader: Cecilia, 505-243-7756, cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org Level: Easy/Moderate Location: West of Albuquerque Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub. org/calendar

Saturday, Jan 18: Beat the Snow Shoe Trek: Sponsored by the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, Northern Group, Military Outdoors Program. If you can walk, you can snowshoe! 10 a.m. at Chicken Creek Nordic Parking Lot, Trailhead, Mancos Colorado. Rendezvous at Step Back Inn parking lot at 123 Aztec Blvd., Aztec, NM, at 8 a.m. to carpool or caravan. Round trip to Chicken Creek Nordic is 150 miles. Trek will cover approximately 3 miles in about 3 hours, depending on route taken. Trek will start at 8,000 feet with approximate elevation gain of 400

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proceed up Academy Road NE, cross Tramway Boulevard, continue east until it turns into High Desert. Dogs on leash are welcome.

Leader: Cecilia, 505-243-7756, cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org Level: Easy

Location: Sandia Foothills

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub. org/calendar

Saturday, Jan 25: Intro to Snowshoeing on Sandia Crest. If you

can walk, you can snowshoe! Meet at 9 a.m. at Hobby Lobby on Juan Tabo to carpool or at Sandia Crest at 9:45 a.m. This three-hour outing is about 2.5 miles round trip with 150 feet of elevation gain. We'll proceed along the crest trail with stops to enjoy stunning views all the way to the continental divide. We'll cover tips for safely traversing on snowshoes Leader: Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@comcast.net

Level: Easy

Location: East of Albuquerque Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub. org/calendar

February

Sunday, Feb 2: Rinconada Canyon

Trail, Petroglyph National Monument (Excursiones a la Naturaleza). 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Elevation gain 114 feet. 2.2 mile-loop. Come for a walk and let's find them petroglyphs! Sandy paths. There is no shade, so bring your sun hat. Please no dogs. To carpool, please meet at the southeast side of the Lowes parking lot, 2001 12th St. NW, Albuquerque at

9:45 a.m.

Trip leader: Cecilia, 505-243-7756, cecilia.chavez.beltran@sierraclub.org Level: Easy Location: Off Unser Boulevard, Albuquerque Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub. org/calendar

Saturday, Feb. 8: Full Moon Night

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January/February/March 2020