



Rio Grande Sierran

Volume 58, Issue 3 News of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter: New Mexico & West Texas July / August / September 2020

WHAT'S NEXT?

Demanding change on the streets and at the ballot box



2018 protest against the Wall. Photo by Molly Molloy



2014 rally for a wild Gila River. Photo by Camilla Feibelman



Brenda McKenna, Democratic primary winner in N.M. Senate District 9




Sierra Club member Yami Cruz at a June El Paso anti-racism demonstration. Photo by David Baake

Court hands Sierra Club a victory against border wall, but the destruction isn't stopping: **Page 9**

After years of relentless people-powered effort, the Gila River is safe from diversion: **Page 3**

As the nation reckons with systemic racism, New Mexicans made a powerful statement for transformation in the June elections: **2, 6, 7**

EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET

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Inside:

What it's like living in a nuclear sacrifice zone
Holtec wants to send all the nation's high-level nuclear waste to New Mexico. Rose Gardner isn't having it. **Page 5.**

Coal out, 100% renewable/storage in?
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Feds kill wolves while rewriting rule
As Fish and Wildlife begins to draft new rule, wolves struggle. **Page 9.**

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Facing white fragility, becoming anti-racist

Turns out white progressives are a big part of the problem. And if you are like me, you are sure that's true, but...it's not you. You are open-minded and are definitely part of the solution.

I find myself thinking, at the Sierra Club I've worked almost exclusively in justice-focused areas, for the Sierra Student Coalition, for the Environmental Justice program, for the Puerto Rico chapter, I've been through dismantling-racism training and the Sierra Club's staff training called Growing for Change, I live in a multiracial and bilingual household. How could I possibly be part of the problem? On the outside I am trying to do all the right things, but inside I'm feeling defensive. And it wasn't until I started reading "White Fragility" by Robin Diangelo that I was able to enter this next phase of my learning, learning I will need to do every day for the rest of my life.

This book has helped me take myself and my ego out of the picture. I learned that my personal story is not the issue.



Camilla Feibelman,
Sierra Club
Rio Grande
Chapter
director

Any experience that I've had with injustice or unfairness isn't supposed to show that I'm not part of the problem, it's to provide me with the empathy I need to better be present and active in defense of Black lives. Diangelo explains that white people, no matter how committed, progressive and present, are inevitably racist, not because we are bad people, but because we benefit from the advantages for white people in our society and because we so often don't make ourselves aware of the unearned privileges we receive and the daily indignities that people of color face. But she also explains that being ignorant of white privileges is a major part of the problem. Reverse racism cannot exist

because oppressed communities don't have the power to deprive the people in power of their rights.

The videos we've seen provide a horrific window into false accusations against black people and of deliberate murder and have brought longstanding truths home for many white people. Being at home, not rushing to school, work and the store, even with screaming children interrupting coherent thoughts, has demanded we listen and imagine life for people of color, black men and women, and indiginous people, when we've so long been asleep to the truth.

We've done some good work, but it's been slow, and it's not enough. So let's wake up from the haze and make a daily commitment to retraining our minds, our organization, our actions, our activities to route out the exhausting inequities for people of color. I heard a black activist compare the exhaustion of living with covid to being black in America. She said if you feel right now that everything is harder, that you feel

you are risking your life just by leaving the house, that you just want to feel normal, then you have a small window into the daily discrimination people of color face. I hear Maurice Mitchell, national director of the Working Families Party, when he says this is not the time to tiptoe and fear making mistakes; this is the time to follow black leadership, to step up while also stepping back. This is a time for reckoning.

We won't each contribute in the same way. Some will march (with masks and distance), some will stop to learn first, some will introduce moments of dismantling and reconstruction of an organization, and some will better teach their children. But if you are white and looking for a first step (even if you are still sure it's not you), please see the excellent list of resources on Page 8. Please also help us take action for ending the military surplus program for Albuquerque Police Department (see Page 7) and think about joining our solidarity policy committee by emailing riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org.

Rio Grande Green

By the Friend and Fund Development Committee

As we all are roiled from the past months of the Covid-19 virus and the tragedy of violence against our Black, Brown and Native American brothers and sisters, we are all struggling to come to grips with equity in our homes, work, towns, states and nation. This is very serious work. The Sierra Club and your Rio Grande Chapter are taking decisive steps and working hard to live our commitment to equity and environmental justice.

Your membership makes a bold statement about your beliefs and actions. Your donations fuel the work on the ground here in New Mexico and western Texas.

Thank you.

In your mailbox

You should receive a request for support from our Political Action Committee by mid-July. In these uncertain political, social and economic times, our work to elect individuals who share our beliefs and who will fight for equity, clean water, clear air, public lands and wildlife for all of us is more critical than it has ever been.

Our Rio Grande Chapter has celebrated big successes in the primaries, including an unprecedented number of women of color. Now the pressure is on to fill legislative seats with environmental champions. Thank you for giving as generously as you can to our chapter political action committee so we can support pro-environment, pro-justice candidates.

By the numbers

(End of second quarter 2020)
Membership: 9,459 members;



Dale Doremus is a former New Mexico Environment Department program manager who now chairs our Chapter Water Team.

131 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/join.

Donations: \$132,489 (a correction is reflected from previous report)

477 individuals and/or households from our membership have stepped above and beyond their membership to be donors! 89 give monthly. Just imagine what we could achieve together, if all members were donors, too!

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/donate and click "Regular Donation." Be sure to check the box for a monthly gift.

Volunteers: 536 hours

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 per hour. The hours donated this quarter were worth \$13,630.48.

If you'd like to get more involved, please give us a call at (505) 243-7767 or go to our website www.riograndesierraclub.org/volunteer-form to see all the ways in which you can help.

Volunteer Hero of the Quarter

Dale Doremus serves on the Chapter's Executive Committee and as our Water Chair. Dale has worked in water-resources programs in New Mexico for 30 years at the New Mexico Environment Department and Interstate Stream Commission.

She has overseen Superfund, groundwater-quality and remediation programs. Having this level of professional experience and expertise brings real weight to our conservation mission to protect and conserve communities, the environment and water resources. Thank you, Dale!

Daniel Tso wins national award

By Miya King-Flaherty

Daniel Tso, longtime activist and partner in the campaign to protect Greater Chaco, has won the Sierra Club's Distinguished Service Award, which honors persons in public service.

Daniel is a Navajo National Council delegate and chairs the council's Health, Education, and Human Services Committee. He is a staunch advocate for the protection of public health, indigenous cultural lifeways, and environmental justice for communities impacted by oil and gas development in northern New Mexico's Greater Chaco region. He represents 8 Navajo Chapters, several of which are in heavily oil and gas developed areas. He is the epitome of individual commitment to safeguarding communities through bringing greater awareness on the dangers of oil and gas drilling.

Daniel is a community leader, an elder, and activist who has been tireless in his work to highlight the myriad impacts that Navajo communities in the Greater Chaco region experience. He continues to lead the work of the Greater Chaco Coalition, of which the Rio Grande Chapter is a part, and has engaged in countless actions to break down the inequities and injustices perpetrated by oil and gas operators and the Bureau of Land Management.

For years, Daniel's



Daniel Tso

"Fracking Reality" tour of the region has increased the public's awareness of the environmental injustices that rural communities experience through the BLM oil and gas leasing program. His tours, presentations, testimonies and support letters have been instrumental in educating congressional representatives, legislators and state and federal agencies on the impacts that communities face every day, resulting in a series of advancements aimed at addressing oil and gas development in this culturally sensitive region.

Through Daniel's guidance and unwavering commitment to mitigating community impacts from development, the Rio Grande Chapter has been able to support projects like the community- and Indigenous-led Counselor Health Impact Assessment that documents community exposure to emissions. Daniel has also been instrumental in empowering community members and elders to speak out and voice their concerns about oil and gas impacts.

Huge victory for a wild Gila River

By Allyson Siwik
Gila Resources Information
Project

The campaign to protect the Gila River has proven the Ben Franklin adage from *Poor Richard's Almanac* that “energy and persistence conquer all things.” It’s taken more than a decade and lots of energy and persistence, but the Gila River diversion is finally defeated!

The Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) voted 7-2 last month to stop work on the Environmental Impact Statement for the Gila River diversion project, effectively ending the 15-year battle over the future of the Gila River.

Your steadfast support over the past several years made the difference in the campaign to end this ill-conceived project and protect the wild Gila for future generations.

Back in 2014, the Rio Grande Chapter joined with us to strongly oppose the “billion-dollar boondoggle” that would have put massive diversion and storage infrastructure in the Cliff-Gila Valley, severely impacting ecologically important riparian habitat and popular recreational areas, including an inventoried roadless area.

The Chapter added its name to the list of conservation groups across New Mexico and Arizona commenting on the diversion proposal during the environmental compliance scoping process in 2018 and just recently on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. More than 500 substantive comments had been catalogued and categorized before the draft Environmental Impact Statement process ended.

This campaign demonstrated that by joining together diverse voices representing conservation, sportsmen, businesses, communities, and elected officials throughout the state,



Photo courtesy Gila Resources Information Project

Community members have fought for years to stop the expensive, risky plan to divert the Gila River. In June, the Interstate Stream Commission finally put an end to the threat of diversion, freeing funding for community water projects.

we could build a unified and powerful force for protection of New Mexico’s last wild river.

In addition to the support of advocates, community leaders, and citizens, we also have had several amazing champions that deserve our thanks for defeating the Gila diversion project for good.

In her 2018 water plan, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham pledged to end work on the diversion and to direct the Interstate Stream Commission to work with local governments and stakeholders on implementing water projects to benefit all of southwest New Mexico. Lt. Gov. Howie Morales has been a strong leader since his time in the state Senate when he sponsored legislation to direct Arizona Water Settlements Act (AWSA)

funding to priority community water projects rather than the harmful and unaffordable Gila diversion. Sens. Martin Heinrich and Tom Udall have worked tirelessly for Gila River protection and fiscally responsible use of AWSA funds to meet southwest New Mexico’s water-supply needs.

Our state legislative champions in the Senate (Peter Wirth, Mimi Stewart, Joseph Cervantes, Jeff Steinborn, Bill Soules, Benny Shendo, Liz Stefanics, Sander Rue, Jerry Ortiz y Pino and Antoinette Sedillo Lopez) and the House (Rudy Martinez, Matthew McQueen, Nathan Small, Melanie Stansbury, Abbas Akhil, Angelica Rubio, Joanne J. Ferrary, Andrea Romero, Debbie Sariñana, Derrick Lente, Micaela Lara Cadena and

Georgene Louis) also deserve our thanks for carrying the torch each legislative session in support of spending Arizona Water Settlements Act funding on cost-effective, community water projects instead of an unaffordable and harmful diversion.

Now that the diversion is finally off the table, it’s time for the ISC in collaboration with local communities to take responsibility for efficient and effective use of the remaining AWSA funds to secure a resilient future water supply for everyone in southwest New Mexico.

The \$70 million in AWSA funding could be used on projects such as the following:

- 14,605 Deming residents could benefit from projects seeking funds for well upgrades (\$2.2M), effluent reuse (\$1.8M), and water system line replacement/repair (\$1M);

- 2,797 Lordsburg residents could benefit from projects to treat drinking water to remove fluoride (\$3.1M) and rehab/drill new wells (\$10.5M);

- 26,000 residents of Central Grant County could benefit from completion of the Grant County Regional Water Supply Project (\$15M);

- 20,000 residents of Silver City and area water associations serviced by Silver City’s water system could benefit from new wells; well, water line, and storage tank replacement/improvements; and effluent reuse improvements (\$17.9M).

Responsible for the diversion

planning for the past five years, the local New Mexico Central Arizona Project Entity has nothing to show for the \$16 million in AWSA funding it has spent and remains committed to its dream of diverting and storing 14,000 acre-feet per year of Gila water.

This group lacks full representation from local governments (Silver City, Bayard, Hurley, and Columbus are not members) and stakeholders in the region, as well as the technical expertise to make funding decisions on community water projects. The state of New Mexico should disband the NM CAP Entity and form a new, more representative organization with the appropriate expertise to decide how to spend the remaining AWSA money.

The AWSA planning process was the fourth attempt over the past 50 years to dam or divert the Gila. In order to prevent future diversion plans, we must work for passage of Wild and Scenic River designation to ensure that the Gila and San Francisco rivers are permanently protected for future generations.

We can all breathe a sigh of relief that our beloved Gila River and the riparian habitat and wildlife that it supports are out of imminent danger from this nonsensical project. It’s now up to us to make sure that the ISC follows through with a responsible process for spending AWSA funds on local water projects that will do the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

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Photo: Stephen Dorn

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Cover banner photo of Fajada Butte by Jim Klukkert

‘Rio Grande Sierran’ publication
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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*.

Join the Sierra Club
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 **riograndesierrclub.org/join** or send a \$15 check with your name, address **and the code 1700 in the memo line** to:
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Scan the QR code below on your cell phone to join the Rio Grande Chapter using our online form.



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100% clean closer to replacing coal

By Mona Blaber
Chapter communications
On June 25, PRC hearing examiners released their recommendations on how to replace the costly, polluting coal power from the retiring San Juan Generating Station. Their No. 1 recommendation? 100% renewable energy and battery storage.

The portfolio proposed by the Coalition for Clean and Affordable Energy (CCAIE) and highlighted by hearing examiners would replace coal with 100% renewable energy and battery storage in the same school district as the coal plant, plus large solar/battery projects in nearby McKinley County and Jicarilla Apache Nation in Rio Arriba County.

The hearing examiners said the 100% clean proposal is the best choice for compliance with the Energy Transition Act's prioritization of investment in the community impacted by San Juan's closure and reducing environmental impacts, as well as cost and reliability.

CCAIE's proposal creates more than 1,200 construction jobs in San Juan, McKinley and Rio Arriba counties.

However, as a backup option, the hearing examiners recommended a PNM proposal that includes 440 MW of gas and only 100 MW of solar. This option would provide fewer jobs and no investment in McKinley or Rio Arriba counties. The ETA would require that the gas units be retired by 2045 because of their climate impact, and PNM has pledged

Comparing replacement plans for San Juan coal	
Investment	
100% clean: \$447 million in same school district, \$700 million in McKinley and Rio Arriba counties	
Mostly gas: \$425-480 million in school district; \$0 in Rio Arriba and McKinley County.	
Tax revenue	
100% clean: \$52.3 million state and local	
Mostly gas: \$32 million state and local	
Jobs	
100% clean plan: 3,545 direct and indirect jobs	
PNM mostly gas: 1,883 direct and indirect jobs	
Cost	
Both plans would SAVE customers \$6-\$7 per month	

Photo: Navajo Tribal Utility Authority

to go carbon-free by 2040. It just doesn't make sense to build a power plant that will be shut down in 20 years.

ALL the recommended scenarios would SAVE the average PNM customer \$6-\$7 a month in comparison with continuing to run San Juan.

The 100% clean CCAIE option invests \$447 million in the Central Consolidated School District, where San Juan Generation Station is, restoring the property-tax base for the schools and the county.

The CCAIE proposal would also invest more than \$500 million and create 700 construction jobs in nearby McKinley and Rio Arriba counties with the Arroyo and Jicarilla solar/storage facilities. PNM's gas-heavy option invests nothing in Rio Arriba or McKinley.

A UNM economist's report finds that the 100%-clean proposal would create

3,545 direct and indirect jobs, about twice as many as the gas-heavy option.

A third option cited by hearing examiners, which includes renewables but also 200 MW of gas, puts only 200 MW and \$156 million of resources in the Central Consolidated School District. It does not comply with the ETA's location and lowest-impact requirements.

Highlights from the recommended decision:

Community health: In their recommendation, hearing examiners quoted community groups' expert Adella Begaye, Diné CARE board president and a former Indian Health Service official. Begaye testified that the burning of fossil fuels contributes to heart disease, cancer, stroke and chronic lower respiratory diseases, including asthma.

Begaye also said health disparities exist among the Native American popu-

lation in comparison to the U.S. general population, particularly with childhood asthma. She cited poverty, limited access to specialty care, environmental challenges, and high levels of indoor and outdoor air pollution exacerbating asthma rates. Begaye testified that 13% of American Indian/Alaskan Native children have asthma, compared with 8.6% in the U.S. general population.

Jobs: Hearing examiners quoted UNM economist Kelly O'Donnell, a witness for community groups including Diné CARE and San Juan Citizens Alliance. O'Donnell said coal-mine reclamation and plant decommissioning have the potential to improve environmental quality, increase property values, enhance business opportunities, and generate a substantial number of new, multi-year jobs.

O'Donnell said that instead of investing millions attempting to resuscitate the coal industry, northwest New Mexico should aggressively pursue an economic-development strategy that leverages local assets and prioritizes quality of life, with a focus on tourism and recreation, solar power generation/storage, and mine reclamation/plant decommissioning.

On Enchant's carbon-capture scheme: Hearing examiners recommended NOT delaying a replacement decision so Enchant, which wants to keep San Juan running as a high-risk carbon-capture coal plant, could make a proposal: "All witnesses testified that PNM needs flexible resources, not the base-load that (carbon-capture coal) would provide."

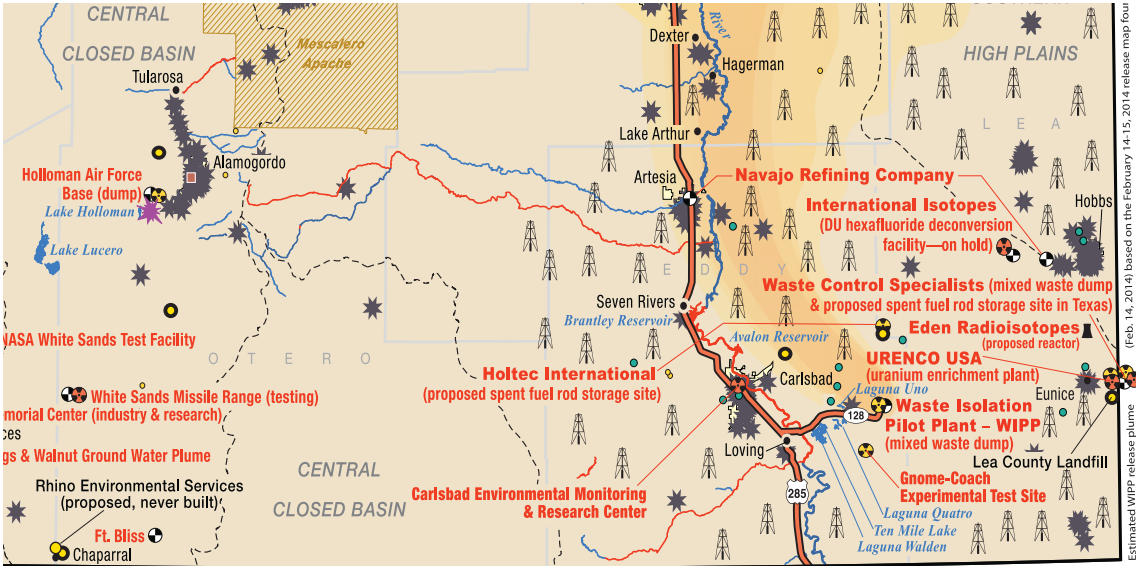
What it's like to live in an industry sacrifice zone

By Rose Gardner
Lea County resident
As I look to the east of town at night, it looks like a prison or an airport, something of importance.

Initially the lights were white, then some yellow ones were added years later, and now I can see red blinking lights, the signs of industrial activity where there used to be almost none. The area is about 5 miles from my house, but all activities in the area are of Urenco, the uranium-enrichment facility, Waste Control Specialists-ISP, the nuclear dump that is on the other side of the Texas state line from Urenco, and then there are the new windmills on the Texas side. Then there is the ever-present Lea County landfill for all of the Lea County communities and now a new Loves Truckstop.

Some people call it economic diversity for Lea County, N.M. I call it a paradox. I recall the days when I would see a calm and dry desert scene common in this area, with cows and the occasional coyote or rabbit. I remember when the basic jobs picture involved oil and gas extraction and all the necessary ancillary businesses required for that industry.

Now I find myself going



Deborah Reade



Rose Gardner lives in Lea County, in the lower-right corner of this New Mexico threat map created by Deborah Reade.

from one environmental fight to another. I tried fighting off Urenco, after it had been run off from Louisiana and Tennessee because they weren't wanted there. I tried fighting Waste Control Specialists when they wanted their low-level nuclear-waste license. I spoke against the changes that the Department of Energy wanted to make on waste volume and expansion at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (even as I recall the fire and waste explosion in 2014), about 37 miles from my house, and now I fight the proposed Holtec International project sited 35 miles from my home near WIPP.

Holtec seeks to bring 173,000

tons of high-level nuclear waste from around the country and even possibly from overseas. They talk of possible reprocessing of the waste in the future. I am also fighting the high-level nuclear waste license application by WCS-ISP, which wants to bring 40,000 tons of high-level commercial waste to a site just on the other side of the Texas border from us. Interestingly, both applications are being considered simultaneously.

The draft Environmental Impact Statement on both Holtec and WCS-ISP claim there will be small impacts to the area, to jobs, to people, yet no one really knows since this will be an experiment that hasn't been done anywhere on

anyone else. I feel especially indignant about these two projects because of their proximity to me and my family.

My community in Eunice is small, about 2,700 people, and yet we are disproportionately bearing the brunt of health impacts if these projects go forward. Are we considered expendable? Is the idea "Someone has to do this, so why not here"? Is it our patriotic duty to suffer the known and unknown illnesses that come with living near a high-risk nuclear dump or facility?

We live in the county with the highest cancer rate in New Mexico. We live with the risks associated with oil and gas emis-

sions, and many live with allergies and asthma, like my two grandchildren. How much more should we be required to take for the economy to be diversified enough to satisfy the money whoremongers? I do not consent to be a guinea pig for these companies, nor will I consent to be the national sacrifice area for high-level nuclear waste generated elsewhere and sent to poison me and my family.

The NRC is accepting comments on Holtec through Sept. 22 at Holtec-CISFEIS@nrc.gov and through Sept. 4 on ISP/WCS at WCS_CISF_EIS@nrc.gov. Learn more at riograndesierraclub.org/holtec/

Rose Gardner chairs weekly meetings of activists protecting their community from harmful pollution impacts.

Primary Election 2020



Sierra Club-endorsed winners in the June 2 primary: Marian Matthews; Neomi Martinez-Parra, Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero; Rep. Miguel Garcia; Rep. Debbie Armstrong; Roger Montoya; Linda Serrato; Sen. Mimi Stewart; Rep. Derrick Lente; Rep. Matthew McQueen; Katy Duhigg; Kristina Ortez; Siah Correa Hemphill; Sen. Pete Campos; Leo Jaramillo; Adriann Barboa; Brenda McKenna; Pam Cordova; Harry Browne; Hank Hughes; Carrie Hamblen; Katharine Clark; Aurora Chavez; Amanda Lopez Askin.

Big victories over Big Oil

By Richard Barish
Rio Grande Chapter
Political chair

The primary was a stunning and overwhelming victory for the environment, for justice, and for other progressive issues that we all care about, and a repudiation of conservative politics in the Democratic Party.

As you may know, the Sierra Club, along with allies OLÉ, Working Families Party, Progress Now New Mexico, No Corporate Democrats Coalition, Planned Parenthood and others, targeted five Democratic senators who for years have voted with Republicans to block progressive legislation, including environmental legislation.

Voters turned out in numbers not seen in years to reject the conservative Dems, who were backed by millions of dollars of oil and gas money. Chevron spent more than \$750,000 on a Texas-based PAC that backed the conservative incumbents, and a Republican-leaning PAC spent thousands on deceptive last-minute mailers and robocalls. Voters weren't fooled. Four of the five conservative senators were beaten by progressive challengers we supported.

Neomi Martinez-Parra defeated powerful Senate Finance Committee Chair John Arthur Smith; Carrie Hamblen beat Senate President Pro Tem Mary Kay Papen; Pam Cordova crushed Senate Corporations Committee

Contribute to local political wins

When you receive a letter in mid-July from our Political Action Committee, please consider giving. Your dollars will support local and state candidates who will bring equity and bring pro-environment legislation to reverse the dangerous actions at the federal level and bring out more pro-environment voters. You can also donate at riograndesierraclub.org/donate and choose PAC donation.



Teresa Leger Fernandez

Chair Clemente Sanchez; and Siah Correa Hemphill embarrassed freshman Sen. Gabriel Ramos. Noreen Kelly, a Navajo elder who lost in the fifth race, stepped up and ran a strong race, but was hampered by the inability to campaign on tribal lands where face-to-face campaigning is the norm and by an obscene monetary disadvantage. In addition, the pandemic's grip on the Navajo Nation made it much more difficult for many to vote.

I can't emphasize enough how huge these results are. Between COVID and racism laid bare, this is without doubt a difficult time. But if you haven't allowed yourself at least an occasional smile, you really should. Voters demanded candidates who will strive for justice, community and a safe climate for future generations.

Women of color led the day. Indications are that it will now be a whole new ballgame for legislation such as permanent funding of early childhood programs and so much more that focuses on New Mexico families.

Overall, 18 of the 21 legislative candidates we endorsed in contested primaries won (list below). Brenda McKenna won a difficult three-person race in Albuquerque's north valley and Corrales. Rep. Matthew McQueen beat back a challenge from a scion of the King family, and Mimi Stewart, Patricia Roybal Caballero and other environmental stalwarts who were challenged also all easily survived.

And of course, Teresa Leger Fernandez easily outdistanced her six rivals in the race to succeed Ben Ray Luján in the 3rd Congressional District in Northern New Mexico.

Leger Fernandez's victory means that New Mexico could become the first state to boast a Congressional delegation of all women of color.

Finally, six of nine candidates we endorsed in county primary races won, including Adriann Barboa for Bernalillo County Commission and Katharine Clark, who was elected as

Santa Fe County Clerk (effectively; she has no opponent in November).

Many of you called or otherwise volunteered for many of the races. Thank you! Working together is how we achieve great things.

New Mexicans can relish this moment, even as we confront the many other challenges we face. Victories like these are why we spend our valuable time volunteering.

House races:

District 13: Rep. Patricia Roybal-Caballero **won**
District 14: Rep. Miguel Garcia **won**
District 17: Rep. Debbie Armstrong **won**
District 27: Rep. Marian Matthews **won**
District 40: Roger Montoya **won**
District 42: Kristina Ortez **won**
District 45: Linda Serrato **won**
District 50: Rep. Matthew McQueen **won**
District 65: Rep. Derrick Lente **won**
House District 70: Anita Gonzales **lost**

Senate races:

Senate District 4: Noreen Kelly **lost**
District 5: Leo Jaramillo **won**
District 8: Pete Campos **won**
District 9: Brenda McKenna **won**
District 10: Katy Duhigg **won**
District 17: Mimi Stewart **won**
Senate District 20: Rebecca

Stair lost

District 28: Siah Correa Hemphill **won**
District 30: Pam Cordova **won**
District 35: Neomi Martinez-Parra **won**
District 38: Carrie Hamblen **won**

County races:

Bernalillo County Commission: Adriann Barboa **won**
Bernalillo County Commission: Frank Baca: **lost**
Doña Ana County Clerk: Amanda López Askin: **won**
Grant County Commission: Harry Browne: **won**
Sandoval County Clerk: Bob Perls **lost**
Santa Fe County Commission: Hank Hughes **won**
Santa Fe County Clerk: Katharine Clark **won**
Santa Fe County Treasurer Lucinda Marker **lost**
Valencia County Clerk – Aurora Chavez **won**

Our slate of endorsed candidates will expand for the general election to include many who were unopposed in the primary but have challenges in the general election.

Democratic voters have made clear who we want to lead us as we confront our greatest challenges.

These primary results bring fundamental change for this state, and they are a crucial step in achieving justice and fundamental change.

Justice and equity

My rise to action for Black Lives Matters

By Sharon J. King
Rio Grande Chapter activist

Someone asked my personal meaning of BLM (Black Lives Matters) and why I felt the need to engage in this movement. Thoughtfully, I did some soul-searching because I needed to profoundly and truthfully reflect on how this currently resonates with me not only in my mind, but also in my soul.

This movement troubles me deeply because my roots stem from the deep south of Memphis. The deep south was the reason for my immediate departure as soon as I graduated college. Though raised in black segregated neighborhoods I found this normal for the most part, yet even in my early youth I felt a deep penetrating discourse that something was not right racially.

I was one of the fortunate African Americans to go to



Photo courtesy Miya King-Flaherty

Sharon J. King, right, and her daughter Miya, who is the Rio Grande Chapter Our Wild New Mexico organizer.

college, mainly because of my smarts and ability to accomplish whatever I invested my time and energy into. My schooling fell short of my white colleagues in my college

courses, and I found I had to work harder, but I caught up. At the same time, I was also inspired by Angela Davis at this unchartered time in my life. Gradually I began to let

my defenses down and mingled with several white students. I found that we had a few things in common. As we began to do things socially around the city, I discovered that many white establishments fought to keep us out and apart.

Needless to say, this did not sit well with me, and after graduation I was off to California where I found the freedom that I would not be denied. I no longer worried as much about racism, it was a place where I could be myself and raise my children freely and educate them for many years in diverse private schools.

Long story short, I sheltered us from racism as much as possible, and it had become a non-issue at least in my mind for a very long period in our lives. While we went on to live our lives through the years — here we are facing RACISM in America that never left. We,

on the other hand, left it or became somewhat oblivious to it because it was fantastically easier. For many years there had been a deliberate disconnect for my daughters and myself on this subject. This saddens me deeply because as an older woman I am now learning about the degree of relentless inequalities, injustices, and killings of my black brothers and sisters.

The pandemic has shed so much light on America for many, and it illuminates how there is no liberty and justice for all, as the Constitution states. I am purposely here now to fight for what is right because black lives matter as well as all lives.

One of my daughters, Miya King-Flaherty, is an organizer with the Rio Grande Chapter. I am a volunteer, and together we are working to bridge those connections between racial and social justice and protecting our environment.

N.M. special legislative session

Defeated senators take last swipe at voter rights

By Alissa Barnes and
Lucas Herndon

Progress Now New Mexico

Well, we made it through another special session of the New Mexico Legislature, and a few weeks later we continue to reflect on the wins, the losses, and the absolute ridiculousness of some of the debates.

While some important legislation was passed and a compromise budget was agreed to, there was a lot left to be desired. But we get it — the state Senate specifically couldn't do EVERYTHING on the table; they had to save three and a half hours to pat each other on the back.

The primary election laid bare inadequacies in our voting system and disenfranchisement exacerbated by the pandemic, especially for tribes and pueblos in one of the biggest virus hotspots in the state.

SB4 is an election-reform bill meant to address some of those inadequacies. It was written with input from the Secretary of State and county clerks from around the state. One of the major points of the bill was to allow county clerks to opt in to mailing ballots to all registered voters without requiring the additional step of the application process, which confused and bogged down the system in the June primaries.

But that major voter-access provision was stripped out in committee by Republicans and two outgoing Democrats before being heard on the Senate floor.

The N.M. Senate for years has been controlled by corporate-backed Democrats who have aligned with Republicans to hold key Senate leadership positions — from Pro

Tem Mary Kay Papen's longstanding ability to dictate what bills go to what committees to John Arthur Smith's control over anything related to budget issues as chairman of the Finance Committee. SB4 should have gone to Senate Judiciary, but under the urging of Papen and other outgoing Democrats who voted with Republicans, that was changed to the Senate Rules Committee.

Two of the seven Democrats on Rules are lame-duck senators who lost their bids for re-election in the June primary: Papen and Clemente Sanchez. They voted with Republicans once again to strip out the measure that would have allowed absentee ballots to be mailed directly to voters. Thanks senators — your parting gift was to continue to make it more difficult for New Mexicans to engage in our democracy.

The elections bill, which fortunately did eventually pass, did keep some crucial voter-access and equity provisions (see box), including increased Tribal and Pueblo authority over voting centers.

In other news, we were not surprised by House and Senate Republicans' complete lack of connection to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) communities when commenting on SB8 (body cameras for police), SB7 (state responsibility in dismantling institutional racism), and HB5 (creation of a civil-rights commission to review qualified immunity).

Luckily, despite Republican attempts to amend and table the bills, all three did pass. While none of them alone are the solution for BIPOC communities, they are small positive steps, and we are grateful for the legislators who supported them.

Changes to voting law

- Tribes and pueblos will be able to keep early-voting sites open even if they have COVID-related lockdowns. This was prohibited by previous law.
- Smart trackers so voters can track their ballots;
- limited emergency powers for the secretary of state, and
- increased time for applications and ballots to be sent.

Cuts to environment

In advance of the special session the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter joined 19 partner groups in writing an open letter to the N.M. Legislature urging a limit to cuts to the agencies that keep our communities' air and water clean.

The final budget included a 4% cut from the General Fund for all agencies, including the Environment and Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources departments. The Environment Department was cut an additional \$400,000 for new staff for the Water Protection Program.

There were also cuts to one-time funding for special projects for both departments, including \$1.6 million from the Environment Department for long-needed IT infrastructure to allow more transparency in the permitting process. The Energy Department lost \$500,000 for promotion of investments in clean-energy production and \$500,000 for the Natural Resources Trustee fund.

More measures in the legislation-transferred funds from Environment Department programs to the General Fund. These reductions will mostly impact community water/wastewater projects. They include a \$2 million Corrective Action Fund cut (cleanup for underground storage tanks); and \$2.5 million from drinking water state revolving loan fund.

— Dale Doremus

Anti-racism resources

As one of the largest climate and environmental-justice organizations, the Sierra Club recognizes the need to dismantle systemic racism in the United States and within our own organization. We can never forget that the roots of the climate crisis lie in racism, land theft and colonialism.

As Hop Hopkins says in his excellent article in this month's *Sierra* magazine (www.sierraclub.org/sierra/racism-killing-planet), "we will never survive the climate crisis without ending white supremacy."

Below are some resources, many geared toward environmentalists:

■ The Sierra Club Outdoor Activities team compiled this document with reading, and other resources for doing the work on ourselves and making the outdoors more equitable and safe for all: <https://bit.ly/outdoor-racism-resources>

■ New Mexico black-owned food businesses: ediblenm.com/black-owned-businesses-new-mexico/.

■ Make a donation to local organizations supporting justice and equity:

Welstand Foundation, which works for health equity and underserved youth: charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/welstand-foundation

Black Lives Matter Albuquerque: venmo.com/BLMDONATIONSABQ

■ Organizations to donate to, reading and ideas for action/education: <https://bit.ly/3fjabey>

For more, see riograndesierraclub.org.

Albuquerque police demilitarization:

The City of Albuquerque Public Health and Safety Committee is holding a public meeting at 12 p.m. Thursday, July 16, to hear a resolution that would end the Albuquerque Police Department's participation in the military surplus program. This is a first step but is not the only change we need to reform our police department. If you would like to make a comment, you must sign up by 10 am on July 16. You can access the sign-up sheet at: www.cabq.gov/july-16-2020.

Crashing industry hobbles NM

By Denise Fort and
Kyle Tisdell

New Mexicans are getting whiplash watching the ups and downs of the oil industry. Obviously, the industry plays an important role contributing to our state's budget, but it has also tied our state to a cycle of boom and bust while causing untold harms to people and the environment. The oil industry is in trouble, and the economic future of our state and the livability of our planet depend on our ability to manage that decline.

The industry is volatile, tied to international markets and economics that are entirely out of New Mexico's hands. For example, the recent oil price collapse was the result of power plays from Russia and Saudi Arabia, with the pandemic exerting downward pressure on all energy consumption. The result in New Mexico was a state budget that suddenly plummeted from lost oil production.

We can no longer afford for oil and gas to dictate the terms of its operations, or allow our fears over lost revenues to prevent accountability and give the industry a pass to pollute. Precisely because the market for oil is international, any breaks we give industry will only exacerbate the harms to our state without making the slightest difference in how many new wells are drilled.

New Mexico has put itself into a box with its heavy reliance on oil and gas revenues — now approximately one-third of the state's budget, a percentage that increased significantly after tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations were passed in 2003 and 2013. To be clear, the state's economy is far broader than oil and gas, but we have failed to build a tax structure that is fair and resilient. In order to diversify our economy and build a just and equitable New Mexico we must hold Big Oil accountable. Revenues from oil and gas should be invested and used for limited projects rather than being put in the general fund.

The current volatility has also accelerated the environ-



Photo courtesy Nathalie Eddy/Earthworks

New Mexico has put itself into a box with its heavy reliance on oil and gas revenues, now about one-third of the state's budget, a proportion that increased significantly after tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations were passed in 2003 and 2013.

mental risks to our state. The oil and gas industry does not pay for new wells out of its pockets, but instead does so by borrowing huge sums of money. In the next few years alone, almost \$200 billion of this debt will come due — just as the price of oil has collapsed.

At the same time, the oil and gas industry has not been saving for its retirement. Every new well that is drilled adds to a legacy of industrial pollution. In New Mexico alone, there exist almost 100,000 historic oil and gas wells, representing billions if not tens of billions in clean-up costs. As markets go bust and industry bankruptcies rise, those costs will get transferred to the state and its taxpayers ... unless we hold industry accountable.

What do we need from state and federal officials?

The state must push forward with methane regulation. The damage that methane emissions do to our future cannot be tolerated—both because it is 87 times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas pollutant, but also because of associated air pollutants and their impacts on our health. Thanks to the governor for standing firm. We expect to see draft rules for the public to comment on later this year. This is especially

important since the EPA is on the brink of the final gutting of federal rules.

We must create a mandatory schedule for the plugging and abandonment of wells that are no longer producing — creating jobs and cleaning up a legacy of pollution on our landscapes — and tie any future permit approvals to a company's compliance with this schedule and its environmental compliance.

We must also update bonding requirements, including full-cost bonding for all new permits and when permits are transferred from one company to another, as well as imposing liability on all owners to create accountability throughout the chain of well ownership. This will ensure a funding mechanism to clean up industry's mess in the event of bankruptcies or companies simply walking away.

At the federal level, we need the government to execute a 180 degree turn on oil and gas. In the short term, the prospect of abandoned oil wells has led to a helpful proposal from House Democrats to provide jobs for unemployed workers plugging wells and restoring lands. Another bill would raise federal bonding requirements.

We also need an immediate end to oil and gas leasing on public lands and a managed

decline of production. Such bold action is needed to stay within warming thresholds and avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis. New Mexico will need to broaden our economy and our tax base as this transition occurs.

The federal government must step forward with regulation and just transition funding, recognizing that some states are far too beholden to the industry to effectively regulate. A protective uniform base of federal regulation can allow some states to be more protective, while ensuring that national interests in climate change and federal lands are protected.

The time will come when the world has transitioned to renewable energy and New Mexicans will once again look out on quiet desert landscapes. We need to act now to ensure that these lands don't look like something out of Mad Max.

Kyle is an attorney with the Western Environmental Law Center.

Denise has been a Club member since 1975 and is Professor Emerita of Law at UNM, where she taught environmental law.

Comment deadline on Chaco plan extended

By Miya King-Flaherty
Our Wild New Mexico
Organizer

As the public health crisis continues, disrupting lives and impacting the most vulnerable in our communities, the Department of Interior forges ahead with the planning process for its Resource Management Plan amendment for the Greater Chaco region.

The draft, released in February, allows for up to 3,000 new fracking wells, with more than 40,000 existing oil and gas wells in the region.

As federal and state health guidelines were announced in March in response to COVID-19, New Mexico's entire congressional delegation, Tribal leaders, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Dept., and multiple groups called on Interior Secretary Bernhardt to extend the May 28 comment deadline to allow for the public and state and tribal governments to meaningfully engage. Members of the Navajo Nation and the Pueblos are among the hardest hit by the pandemic, and state and tribal governments are focused on addressing the mounting public health crisis.

Instead of heeding pleas to extend the comment period, 15 days before the deadline the BLM and BIA held four virtual meetings. Virtual meetings do not constitute meaningful tribal consultation, and the Navajo Nation and Pueblos disproportionately lack adequate access to broadband Internet.

The virtual meetings were fraught with problems. There was little representation from tribal governments and impacted community members, some commenters were cut off because of connectivity issues, others had problems logging into the Zoom meetings, and the majority of commenters condemned the online meetings.

The inadequacy of virtual meetings also underscores the history of the federal government failing to meaningfully consult with tribes and demonstrates how marginalized communities and people of color are often systematically disenfranchised from decision-making processes that impact them.

After widespread criticism and outrage over the process by thousands of members of the public, Interior Secretary Bernhardt extended the draft plan comment period to Sept. 25. Although this is welcome news, it took far too long.

Thank you to those who commented, and please stay tuned. We'll continue working with our partners to call for a plan that protects public health, air and water quality and cultural resources and addresses the environmental injustice issues that impact Greater Chaco communities.

region. Stay tuned for forthcoming calls to action. We'll need your

Contribute to Navajo COVID mutual-aid fund

The Navajo Nation continues to be one of the hardest-hit regions in New Mexico from COVID-19.

The New Mexico-based Torreon Community Alliance requests your support to help Far Eastern Navajo chapters respond to the pandemic.

Because of distance from sophisticated medical facilities, governmental centers

and food markets, the Far Eastern Navajo communities are susceptible to significant impacts.

The funds purchase critical sanitation and food supplies for the most needy communities. This project is meant to supplement and support the local Navajo Governmental Chapters response and mitigation of the COVID-

19 pandemic. www.gofundme.com/f/far-east-navajo-covid19-relief.

You can also donate to Indigenous Environmental Network's **Emergency Mutual Aid** fund by texting IENCOVID to 44-321.

Or donate to Dig Deep to provide running water to Navajo families at navajowaterproject.org.

Court rules border wall illegal

**By Antoinette Reyes
Southern NM organizer**

On June 26, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that President Trump’s attempt to circumvent Congress and transfer of \$2.5 billion in military pay and pension funds for border wall construction is unlawful.

The court also forcefully rejected the administration’s argument that

no one can go to court to block the president’s blatant abuse of power.

The court affirmed the district court’s order blocking the illegal construction. The ruling came in a lawsuit, Sierra Club v. Trump, filed by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of the Sierra Club and Southern Border Communities Coalition.

While this victory is HUGE, unfortunately, there will not be

immediate relief for communities and land impacted by new walls.

Last year, the Supreme Court stayed the injunction we won at the District Court level. This means that the imposition of new walls, blockage of waterways and wildlife movements, and destruction of sacred Indigenous sites will continue until the Supreme Court lifts the stay.

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Jim Schulz/Chicago Zoological Society

The wild population of Mexican wolves needs genetic diversity. This spring, a record 20 wolf pups were cross-fostered from captive to wild dens.

Wolf news, good and bad

**By Mary Katherine Ray
Chapter Wildlife chair**

Mexican wolves, the most imperiled canine species in the world, have made progress in the last three months but have also suffered setbacks.

In May, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that a record 20 pups were cross-fostered from captive wolves into wild dens. FWS has been using this practice to insert profoundly needed genes from the captive population into the wild. Cross-fostering requires that pups from captivity be within days of the same age as pups in the wild, which means that wolf managers have to move quickly. The genetic bottleneck of the wild population is one of the largest looming threats to wolf recovery.

Sadly, for the first time, one of the exchanges went horribly wrong. Two wild pups were removed and transferred to a captive den to make room for the captive pups in the wild den. The captive wolf parents killed the wild-born pups along with their own remaining two pups. The cause for this unprecedented response is unknown and unexplained.

An unacceptably high number of wolves have been intentionally killed by the Fish and Wildlife Service itself at the bidding of livestock interests. Since January, five Mexican wolves have been shot by the agency charged with their protection. The wolves were killed for preying on livestock. But their stories are complex and involve pack disruptions from unexplained losses as well as injuries from traps, both those set by the agency and by private trappers. The latest wolf to be intentionally killed was a 3-legged trap amputee who turned to livestock as the easiest prey.

In addition, the agency placed eight wolves into captivity in April and May also because of conflict with livestock.

This has been allowed under the flawed 2015 management rule. U.S. Fish and Wildlife is under court order to rewrite this rule because of its glaring inadequacies. In good news, the agency received over 40,000 comments about what should be included in the rewrite to fix the problems.

Declaring the wild population to be “Essential” under the Endangered Species Act rather than “Non-essential,” as they are now, would make it harder for the government to kill or remove wolves. The Fish and Wildlife Service must produce the new management rule by May 2021 and with it, wolves will get a sorely needed reprieve.

Wildlife Services contracts

Most people are shocked to learn that counties using public money contract with the euphemistically named federal agency Wildlife Services to kill wildlife at the behest of private interests. After two years of pressure, the Grant County Commission voted that its annual contract with Wildlife Services shall require the agency to use non-lethal conflict resolution measures before resorting to killing.

We thank our partners at WildEarth Guardians and activists in Grant County, especially Glenn Griffin (who knows what suffering in a trap is like after having two dogs go through the experience) for his dedication to this outcome.

A similar contract has expired in Doña Ana county. By the time you read this, it may have voted on the contract and any changes for the coming year.

This year, County commissioners can

SunZia line drops plan for Escondida crossing

By Mary Katherine Ray

In a surprise move in May, the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project announced that it is abandoning its proposed electrical transmission line on the White Sands Missile Range and the Rio Grande crossing at Escondida just north of Socorro and Bosque del Apache that had drawn deep concerns about the harm the overhead lines posed to migratory birds, especially Sandhill cranes, raptors and other waterfowl.

Previously, SunZia proposed to bury the lines across the missile range.

Conservationists note the lines could now be buried under the Rio Grande to prevent bird collisions and electrocutions. SunZia hasn’t released the new plan but said it will cross the river farther north. Regardless, crossing the river above ground is a threat to birds, as the river is a major migratory route throughout its length in south-central New Mexico. Since the land in question belongs to the BLM, a new process for permission will begin, likely this summer.

Call for nominations to executive committees

Think you’d be a good candidate to serve on the Rio Grande Chapter executive committee, or one of our group executive committees?

The chapter includes five groups: Pajarito (Los Alamos and surrounding),

Northern New Mexico, Central New Mexico, Southern New Mexico and El Paso. Group positions run for two years and chapter seats for three. Please contact Ken Hughes at b1family@icloud.com with nominations.

BEST WILDFLOWER HIKES NEW MEXICO
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BY CHRISTINA SELBY

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Navajo Nation schools might get monitors

Teresa Seamster
Northern NM Group
Conservation chair

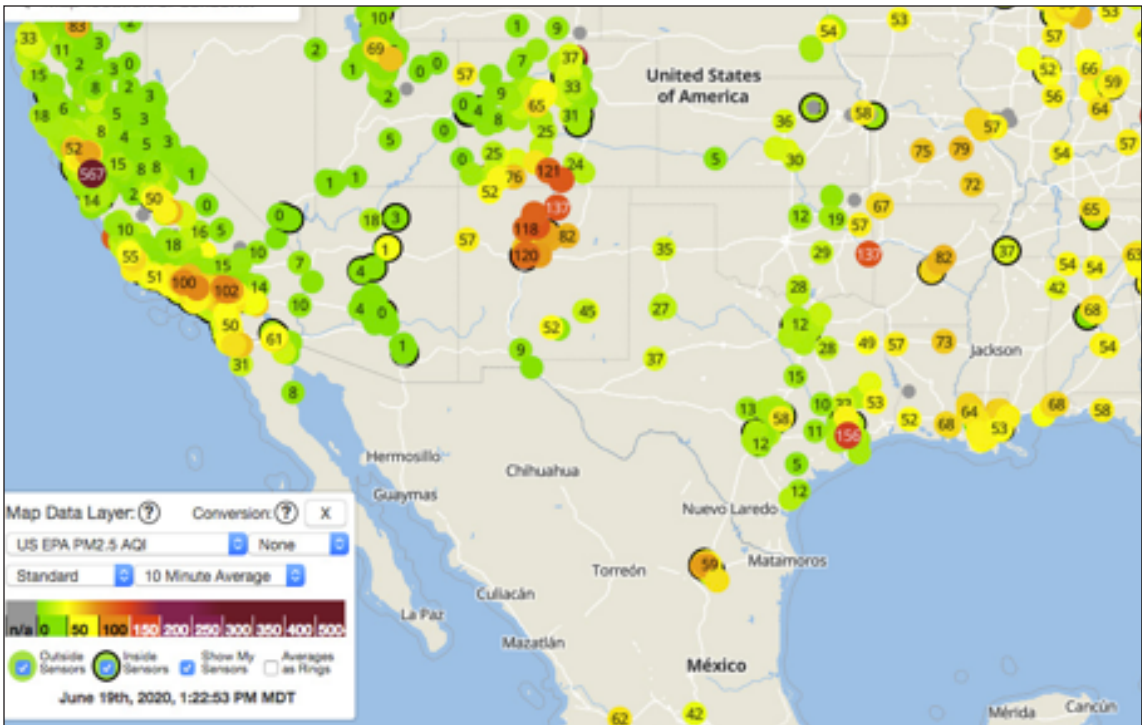
It started as a small group call to get an air monitor set up in the Chaco Tri-Chapter area by Tribal Air Monitoring Service to continue the monitoring started by the Counselor Health Committee.

Brandon Velivis, Ojo Encino Economic Development consultant, contacted a few colleagues to see where the monitoring project might go.

Out of that one phone call, a few health advocates, Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency, and members of Northern Arizona University’s Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals, with decades of expertise in monitoring air quality and community outreach, are considering funding to install air monitors in possibly all 150 Navajo Nation schools.

On the call, participants gave introductions about the local air-monitoring work of the Counselor Health Committee, the newly developed wildfire air-quality reporting network under the Navajo Nation EPA, and the work of Northern Arizona University environmental professionals and interns interested in the air quality at Navajo schools and potential health impacts on children.

When asked what the ideal air-monitoring network on the Nation would be, Institute



A look at air quality from the Purple Air website on June 19 shows several elevated readings from Albuquerque to southern Colorado — a result of two wildfires in south-central Arizona and their resulting smoke plumes blowing across north-central New Mexico.

for Tribal Environmental Professionals Project Director Mansel Nelson replied: “In Alaska, we had monitors set up across the state. I think it would be a dream come true to have one in all 150 schools on Navajo Nation.”

Diné CARE NM Energy Organizer Wendy Atcity said: “With air monitors at schools for students to collect data, this would be real STEM — not learning from a book.”

The push for greater access to local air-pollution data has grown rapidly in the last 10 years with convenient and inexpensive technology avail-

able to measure microscopic particulate matter (PM2.5) that comes from combusted hydrocarbons such as fires and oil-well and vehicle emissions. Purple Air offers monitors in the \$170-\$300 range that provide continuous indoor and outdoor PM2.5 levels that can be downloaded from phones, laptops or computers. The Purple Air global map gives real-time readings from thousands of locations around the nation and world.

The focus on measuring PM 2.5 pollution has sharpened with the publication of numerous health studies and findings that even moderate (under 100 mg/m3) continuous exposure

to PM 2.5 leads to serious lung impairment, induced asthma and other debilitating respiratory conditions.

In a UC Berkeley Energy Institute blog by Meredith Fowlie, “My New Pollution Monitor: Gimmick or Game Changer,” the conclusion is: more is better.

“If these little sensors are going to be transformative, they’ll need to be more widely deployed. And the data need to be actionable so that people can understand where the most dangerous pollution problems manifest and how we might address them.”

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After the telephone conversation in early July, we are hoping for a “game-changer.”

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Military Outings: Terry Owen

UNM Sierra Student Coalition: Keely Scheffler

Zero waste during a pandemic

By Carol Chamberland
Central NM Zero Waste Chair

It seems like I’m writing from a different planet today. The pandemic is wreaking havoc and cratering our economy. Millions of Americans are unemployed, hundreds of thousands are dead. Police murders of Black men have unleashed national protests unlike any since the Vietnam war.

People are hunkering down at home, heeding the call to stop the spread of the virus. Meetings and outings are cancelled through the summer. Precious little hugging is going on.

All of this is having an effect on our efforts to refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle. A proliferation of latex gloves and plastic masks are making their way into our waters. Due to the “temporary” relaxation of restrictions on single-use plastic, such bags and takeout food containers are cropping up in huge numbers. Online orders are way up, resulting in more non-recyclable plastic packaging. Low oil prices make it cheaper to manufacture new plastic than to use recycled.

I don’t mean to be depressing. People are still working toward a Zero Waste environment. There is some hope that corporations will embrace a circular economy as we begin to open up again.

There is renewed appreciation for the great outdoors. And there are still things you can do to help. Here’s one I’ve adopted since our reusable bags have become unwelcome in grocery stores. Sure, you can bring them in and bag everything yourself. But I’ve found it easier to have them put your purchases back into the cart, wheel the cart to your car, and pack it there, using your trusty reusable bags.

Many of us who received a stimulus check were fortunate enough not to need it. I surveyed friends to see what they did with the extra funds. They kept the money in New Mexico by supporting overworked food banks, charities, tribal groups, medical organizations and local businesses.

National protests have raged across the country, and monuments are toppling. Here in Albuquerque we said farewell to Juan de Oñate amid cheers, boos and some violence. Other New Mexico monuments to the Civil War and Spanish colonization are being subjected to new scrutiny. Amid this belated reckoning, isn’t it time to rename Coronado Historic Site in honor of the people who were actually there? Kuaua Pueblo Historic Site has a nice ring to it.

Only YOU can prevent waste!

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:

Idling your engine contributes to air pollution. If you are able-bodied, ditch the drive-through lane. Park your car and walk inside.

Carry a spork so you can refuse plastic utensils when dining out.

Switch to loose-leaf tea. Tea bags contain plastic and don’t decompose.

Use wood chips instead of kitty litter.

Reduce:

Take the Plastic Pledge. Save all your plastics (recyclable and not) for a week to see how much trash you really generate. Prepare to be shocked.

Buy refillable laundry soap and shampoos. Don’t buy a new plastic jug each time.

Use bar soap and shampoo instead of bottles.

Reuse:

Buy used instead of new, if possible. Thrift stores are good sources of reusable goods.

Save plastic bags from tortillas, bread, etc. for reuse around the home.

Use the library instead of buying new books.

Recycle:

Recycle smarter. See our handy cheat sheet at riograndesierraclub.org for tips on how to do it right.

No community-lab pit collaboration

By Jody Benson
Pajarito Group

The world has seen how inept, unprepared, disinterested, unfocused, and unscientific the US Administration and much of Congress has been in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. This failure to protect the public makes me concerned for the government choices when it comes to nuclear weapons.

And yet, even with the pandemic and its subsequent economic/educational/cultural meltdown, even as Earth’s climate is changing at a rate that has exceeded most scientific forecasts (Siberia measured 100 F on June 20; the humans cut or burn 200,00 acres of Amazon forest per day; drought and floods world-wide severely impact agriculture, adding to the increase in climate refugees despite the pandemic), even as the world grapples with centuries of injustice — even as all these demands press the life out of us, the federal government is transitioning toward producing 30, then 80, nuclear-weapons triggers (pits) per year by 2030.

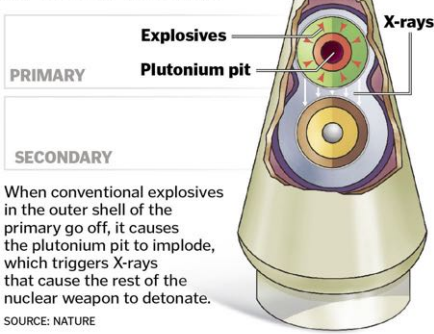
Much of the effort will be at Los Alamos National Laboratory on the skirt of the Jemez Mountains that have been in serious drought for almost 20 years, and with only one way in and one way out in case of a “radiological incident.”

The effort is to be shared between Savannah River National Lab and Los Alamos National Lab. Although this is a huge shift in the LANL mission, there’s been little public collaboration on issues that will significantly affect both Los Alamos and Northern New Mexico. After multiple requests, the Lab finally wrote a letter thanking the Pajarito Group for our interest and telling us to comment on the Site-wide Environmental Impact Statement.

Here’s the background: Our federal government is committed to nuclear weapons’ viability, as well as to creating new weapons such as the nuclear-armed, submarine-launched cruise

Plutonium pits: Nuclear weapon triggers

A modern thermonuclear weapon consists of “primary” and “secondary” components.



missile (W76-2), the W93 submarine-launched nuclear warhead (to replace the Trident), and the 87-1, a redesign of a 40-year-old thermonuclear weapon made for ground-based missiles. These are our current federal priorities. Except for voting for a change in the Senate and the Executive, we can’t do much about the federal nuclear “security” mission.

However, because LANL expects Los Alamos and Northern New Mexico to support and fund all the extraneous needs required by the huge increase in both staffing and infrastructure, we can work locally.

Here’s the Pajarito Group’s strategy: (Except for commenting on the Supplemental EIS: web link below) focus on local governments. Let our cities and counties know they must monitor and restrict LANL’s demands on our communities. Local governments’ job is to protect both human communities and the natural environment. LANL must alleviate issues before the project proceeds. We locals must communicate our demands in order to ensure that negative impacts are either stopped or mitigated.

The most urgent issues regarding the impacted communities of Los Alamos and Northern New Mexico include: transportation, quality of life, protecting the natural environment, affordable housing, and limiting climate change.

These issues must be fully addressed with public input prior to the pit-facility infrastructure moving forward.

Of these, let’s focus on the “lowest-hanging fruit:” initiating and sustaining a smart transportation plan.

Smart transportation plan:

Although the supplemental EIS states LANL will need about 400 new hires for the pit factory, LANL management predicts it will hire 1,000 to 1,500 new workers per year for the next five years. To meet these needs, the Los Alamos County Council created an inventory of all the vacant land, both public and private, within the county. These include school property as well as TAs 70/71 adjacent to Pajarito Acres.

LANL also proposes to house many of these new workers off The Hill (primarily in Rio Rancho, where homes are affordable), LANL proposes to maintain the existing paradigm of individuals driving cars. For this the lab is urging the state to build a shortcut from I-25 across the Caja del Rio Western Wildway Priority Wildlife Corridor, bridging the Rio north of Frijoles Canyon to connect to State Road 4. The state and other agencies — not LANL — would fund this project.

A most efficient transportation model, however, is for a LANL-sponsored, free system such as a bus fleet similar to what the Nevada Test Site provided from Las Vegas. Not only would the fleet significantly reduce the state and nation’s responsibility for continued repairs and upgrades, but eliminate the need for a short cut requiring bridging the Rio Grande.

Contact Sens. Martin Heinrich, Tom Udall, and your representative, and tell them you want a Manhattan Project for Climate Change at LANL rather than new nuclear weapons triggers.

Heinrich: contactsenators.com/new-mexico/martin-heinrich

Tom Udall: tomudall.senate.gov/contact

Xochitl Torres Small: torressmall.house.gov/contact/emailme

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Questions to address

Virtual SC and Root Beer: Silvery minnows

By Diane Reese

Central New Mexico Group chair

Sierra Club & Root Beer goes virtual!
6:30-8 p.m. Friday, July 31

The Rio Grande Silvery Minnow is a beautiful little guy who was once abundant in the Rio Grande. Dial in to hear Thomas Archdeacon of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service speak about how the decrease in the Rio Grande silvery-minnow populations is directly correlated with man-made modifications and alterations over the past century. The Egg Salvage Pilot Project rears minnows to adult size and then transplants them back into their native range or holds them for captive propagation.

Dial-in information to be sent out shortly — please email reesedianem@gmail.com to RSVP. “See” you soon!

NM adopting energy-saving building codes

By Ken Hughes

Chapter Executive Committee

One of Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham’s top energy priorities, along with passage and implementation of the Energy Transition Act, is adoption of new energy-efficiency requirements for buildings.

New Mexico is still using the energy codes last updated in 2009, twice passing up opportunities during the Martinez administration to bring our energy-efficiency requirements up to date. Now the state is considering adopting the new code.

All but the most intrepid Sierra Club hikers spend 90 percent of their time indoors. Getting homes, offices and stores built right can massively reduce climate pollution. Energy efficiency is the cheapest and often the most effective way to cut utility bills as well as greenhouse gases.

New buildings built under the

proposed 2018 energy code will be 20 percent more energy efficient than under the existing code.

Like that old commercial put it, you can pay now or really pay later. Of course there are upfront costs to the builder in conducting a blower-door test on air movement and a duct-blast test to check for duct leaks, among other items. And while the builder will pass on these costs to the homebuyer, reduced utility bills mean extra costs of \$1,470 will save residents \$324 per year, a return on investment of 4.5 years. Any homeowner and most business owners will gladly take that kind of return.

That does not include many other benefits of a more resilient housing stock and a more livable planet with fewer health-care costs associated with poorly built homes.

The new efficiency requirements are likely to face heavy opposition from some builders and developers, and the state may make amendments to

weaken some of the criteria.

Please comment at the July 29 public hearing in support of adopting the latest code revision with no amendments. Or submit a written comment with the subject line “Proposed 2020-5-14 2018 Residential and Commercial International Energy Conservation Code Adoption” by July 28 to the State Construction Industries Division, mary.james2@state.nm.us.

Check your email in mid-July for an action alert with more details and help with your comment or go to riograndesierraclub.org/building-codes.

New Mexico cities and counties can adopt their own building codes, as long as they are stricter than the state’s codes. The city of Albuquerque is also considering adoption of the latest code. Contact riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org to learn how you can take action to boost energy efficiency.

Outdoors, safely — for all

By Terry Owen

Chapter Outings chair

Hi, Sierra Club supporters!

As coronavirus cases surge across the nation, Sierra Club has extended the moratorium on outings and events through Aug. 31, with an eye toward your safety and welfare.

As the nation grapples with dismantling systems of oppression and racism, the Rio Grande Chapter continues its focus on making the outdoors and our outings safe, inclusive and welcoming for everyone. When it's safe, please join us, and if you're wondering what you can do to make outdoor spaces more equitable, please see some of the outdoors-focused anti-racism resources on Page 7.

Following are outings that are scheduled for after the current moratorium expires Aug. 31, but may not occur depending on state health and Sierra Club guidelines. COVID-19 CDC, state and Sierra Club guidelines will be observed for all hikes when they resume.

Here are the upcoming outings.

Saturday, Sept. 12: West Old Town-Wells Park Bike Loop. Meet at Java Joe's, 906 Park Ave SW at 8:30 a.m. This easy, mostly flat surface bike loop is 6.8 miles of streets & bike trails. Lots of sunshine, so wear sunscreen and bring water to stay hydrated. Helmet required. This ride is appropriate for youth 12 and up, accompanied by parent or legal guardian. Consider this phase two of the riding training in and around Albuquerque.

Heavy Rain cancels. RSVP to trip leader by Thursday, Sept 10. COVID-19 CDC and state guidelines will be observed.

Leader: CarrieAnn Drinville 505-369-9450 (text is best) drinville@hotmail.com

Level: Easy/Moderate

Location: Municipal Albuquerque

Sign up at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/

Saturday, Sept 12: Purgatory Flats autumn aspen hike. This hike begins across US 550 from Purgatory Ski Area 25 miles north of Durango, Colo. It is a 4-mile out and back hike through a large aspen forest. We will quickly enter the Weminuche Wilderness and enter a grassy, Purgatory Flats, 1 mile below US 550. We will continue 2 miles to Cascade Creek where we will take a snack break and enjoy the cool alpine air and foliage that should be turning to autumn colors. This outing is appropriate for children 16 and over if accompanied by an adult or legal guardian. RSVP by Sept. 9.

Trip Leader: Hart Pierce, 505-320-1055, shpierce@q.com



Level: Moderate
Location: Southwest Colorado

Sign up at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/

Saturday, Sept. 19: Mountain hiking and blissful yoga. Contact leader for location. If you'd like to explore the wonders of nature, hiking and outdoor yoga in the company of nice people, this is the hike! We'll embark on an easy 2.5-mile hike that incorporates a one-hour outdoor yoga and mindfulness break midway. Includes 200 feet of elevation gain and amazing views of the mountains. Sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome. Limited to 15 participants, and children over the age of 12 are welcome when accompanied by parent or legal guardian. To preserve the solitude of the occasion only certified service dogs meeting ADA guidelines will be permitted. Contact leader no later than Sept 15th to RSVP and obtain location. COVID-19 CDC and state guidelines will be observed.

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

Level: Easy

Location: East Mountains of Albuquerque

Sign up at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/

Saturday, Sept 19: Vista Magnifica-River View Heights bike loop. Meet at Java Joe's, 906 Park Ave SW at 8:30 a.m. This moderate, mostly flat surface street bike loop is 8.2 miles of streets and bike trails.

Included is the steep Gabaldon bridge across the Rio Grande. The total elevation gain is 177 feet. This means that somewhere we'll be riding downhill! This ride is appropriate for youth 12 and up accompanied by parent or legal guardian. Plenty of sunshine so wear sunscreen and bring water to stay hydrated. Helmets are required. Consider this phase three of the riding training in and around Albuquerque. RSVP Sept 17. COVID-19 CDC and state guidelines will be observed.

Trip Leader: CarrieAnn Drinville 505-369-9450 (text is best) drinville@hotmail.com

Level: Easy/Moderate

Location: Municipal Albuquerque

Sign up at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/

Saturday, Sept 19: Mesa Verde Prater Ridge Hike: Mesa Verde National Park has several beautiful hikes but the Prater Ridge Trail affords hikers unobstructed vistas of points in all Four Corners states from as far to the west as Bears Ears, north to the Mt. Wilson massif in Colorado and the Abajos and La Sals in Utah; east to the La Platas; and south to Angel Peak, Huerfano Peak, Shiprock; and the Lukachukai and Carizzo Mountains in Arizona. This hike is a 7.5-mile loop with an elevation gain of 1,000 feet in about 4 hours. Meet at Morefield Campground, which is 4 miles from the Mesa Verde National Park main entrance. There is a park fee of \$20 per vehicle. All park passes are accepted. Camping is available at Morefield Campground. A

Top photo by Ken Hughes.
Photo at right by Richard Barish

Above: We can't hold organized outings, but we can still enjoy our outdoor spaces, like the Santa Fe River and its new ponds.

Left: A Plumbeous Vireo nest along the Cienega Trail in the Sandia Mountains in early June.

15-mile bike tour of Chapin Mesa is tentatively scheduled the following day for those interested. RSVP by Sept. 23. COVID-19 CDC and state guidelines will be observed.

Leader: Hart Pierce, 505-320-1055, shpierce@q.com

Level: Moderate

Location: Southwest Colorado

Sign up at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/

Saturday, Sept 26: A summer outing into the Bosque. Meet us at the sculpture garden parking lot just off the Montano Bridge at 8:30 a.m. for an approximately two-hour easy walk into our beautiful Bosque. The walk is leisurely, the paths are wide and level so we can take time to enjoy the Bosque. Part of the path will take us to the Rio Grande as well as past the Oxbow. Enjoy the beauty with us! Dress comfortably, bring water and snacks. Register by Sept 24.

Level: Easy

Leaders: Margaret DeLong, mardel18@aol.com, Julie Hudson, jth@cybermesa.com

Location: Albuquerque

Sign up at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/

Saturday, Sept 26: Adopt-a-Trail Event. Here's your chance to make a difference and design your own adventure. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the trailhead of your choice to hike and pick-up trash. There will be Outings Leaders at some trails across the state to accompany you, or recruit your own squad, or you can go solo and enjoy your favorite trail while enhancing the beauty

of the Land of Enchantment. Hike for a mile or 10 miles, it's totally up to you. Sign-up using the link provided and indicate which trail you'll beautify. You'll be notified if others sign-up for the same trail. Children under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Recommend bringing water, snacks, gloves, plastic or recycling bags, yard tongs, and sunscreen. RSVP no later than Sept. 24. COVID-19 CDC and state guidelines will be observed.

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

Level: Easy

Sign up at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/

Saturday, Sept 26: North Channel Trail-Nob Hill Bike loop. Meet at Java Joe's, 906 Park Ave SW at 9:30 a.m. This moderate surface street and bike-trail loop of 11.8 miles will include uphill in the Martineztown area to downhill in the University Heights area. Total elevation gain is 384 feet. Helmets required. This ride is appropriate for youth 12 and up accompanied by parent or legal guardian. Plenty of sunshine so wear sunscreen, bring water to stay hydrated and cash for a stop at Nitro Fog Creamery for ice cream.

Final phase of the riding training in and around ABQ.

RSVP to trip leader by Thursday, Sept 24. COVID-19 CDC and state guidelines will be observed.

Leader: CarrieAnn Drinville 505-369-9450 (text is best) drinville@hotmail.com

Level: Moderate

Location: Municipal Albuquerque

Sign up at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/

Sierra Club is discussing what precautions should be taken once outings reopen. Some of the guidelines that the Club is considering are listed below. If you have suggestions please email me at teowen@comcast.net.

- Limiting number of participants (predicated on absence of any local jurisdiction that limits group size)

- Requiring masks

- Keeping outings local

- Keeping outings simple (short hikes as opposed to rafting or backpacking trips)

- RSVPing via Campfire/calendar events vs. handling paper and pens

- Adherence to CDC and local protocols/directives (social distancing, etc.)

After precautions are issued, we'll notify participants in advance so you can properly prepare.