

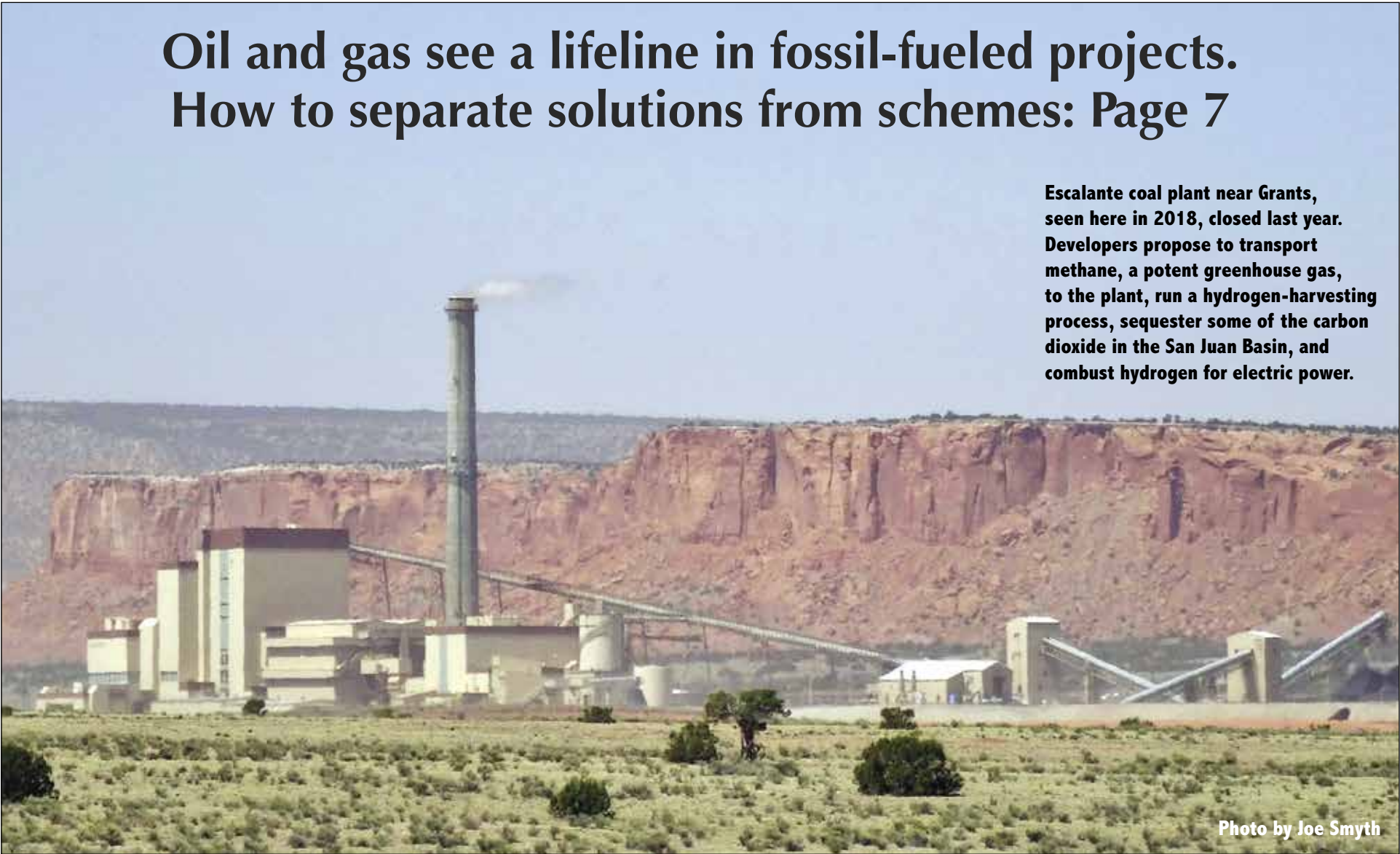


Rio Grande Sierran

Volume 59, Issue 4 News of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter: New Mexico & West Texas October / November / December 2021

Hydrogen: Hope or hype?

Oil and gas see a lifeline in fossil-fueled projects.
How to separate solutions from schemes: Page 7



Escalante coal plant near Grants, seen here in 2018, closed last year. Developers propose to transport methane, a potent greenhouse gas, to the plant, run a hydrogen-harvesting process, sequester some of the carbon dioxide in the San Juan Basin, and combust hydrogen for electric power.

Photo by Joe Smyth



Teresa Seamster

Protecting the Pecos: Residents speak out against mining proposal. **Page 5**



Roddy Hughes

Subsidies: Groups ask lawmakers to end taxpayer handouts to oil and gas. **Page 8**



Adobe

Climate Action: Feeling overwhelmed? Here's how you can help. **Page 6**

EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET



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Sierra Club
1807 Second St., Unit 45
Santa Fe, NM 87505

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Inside:

EPE to build gas unit but reduce pollution

Utility also agrees to four-year moratorium on fossil-fuel construction and lower its carbon and NOx pollution. **Page 3.**

Endorsements in local elections

Our picks for city councils, APS and soil and water districts. **Page 10**

PRC approves first utility EV-access plan

Transportation electrification will make driving an EV easier and cheaper, with public chargers and credits for home charging. **Page 9.**

More: **Executive Committee ballot:** Page 2. **Chair's column:** Page 4. **Zero Waste:** Page 4. **Oil, gas and methane:** Page 8. **Trapping:** Page 11. **Outings:** Pages 11 and 12.

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Cover banner photo of Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge by Mona Blaber

Vote for chapter, group executive committees

Three candidates are running for three open spots on the Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee. Only Sierra Club members may vote. Please mail this ballot with the member information intact on the label on the reverse side, or vote online. Online voting will be available in November; ballots will be emailed to members. To vote on paper, mail this completed ballot to: Sierra Club Election Committee, 1807 2nd St., #45, Santa Fe, NM, 87505. Ballots must be received by Dec. 15. Two-member households can each vote, using both boxes. Please also vote for candidates for the group executive committee where you live. **Note: El Paso Group ballots and candidate statements will be mailed separately, but El Paso members may vote for chapter executive committee using this ballot.**

Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee

There are three candidates running for three open positions.

☐ ☐ Mayane Barudin ☐ ☐ Karl Braithwaite ☐ ☐ Consuelo Walker

Pajarito Group Executive Committee (3 open seats)

☐ ☐ Jody Benson
☐ ☐ Iris Chung
☐ ☐

Northern NM Group Executive Committee (4 seats — vote for 4 only)

☐ ☐ John Buchser
☐ ☐ Richard “Mark” Glover
☐ ☐ Susan Martin
☐ ☐ Shannon Romeling

Central Group Executive Committee (5 open seats)

☐ ☐ David Bouquin
☐ ☐ Patrick Burton
☐ ☐ Diane Reese
☐ ☐ Ray Shortridge
☐ ☐ David Ther

Southern NM Group Executive Committee (4 open seats)

☐ ☐ Kurt Anderson
☐ ☐ Cheryll Blevins
☐ ☐ Dan Lorimier

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Residents force EPE concessions

By Antoinette Reyes
Southern NM organizer

This past year, the Sierra Club has worked in partnership with Earthworks, Environmental Integrity Project and the Chaparral Coalition for Community Health and the Environment to challenge El Paso Electric's proposed expansion of Newman Gas Plant.

In August, the community groups reached a settlement with EPE that, while allowing the new unit to be built, will substantially reduce air pollution in El Paso and southern New Mexico.

The agreement will also block construction of new fossil-fuel power plants for the

next four years.

"The legal deck was stacked against us, fighting a utility like El Paso Electric," said Dr. Jeanette Lara, a Chaparral resident.

"The health and climate concessions we forced from EPE were because we worked hard to organize our community. The struggle is not over until EPE replaces all its fossil fuels with the clean, renewable energy that we deserve and the world desperately needs."

Under the agreement, El Paso Electric:

- Is prohibited from ever constructing another fossil fuel unit at the Newman power plant site after Newman 6 is built;

- Is prohibited from constructing any new fossil fuel units, anywhere, for the next four years, with limited exceptions;

- Must begin the process of retiring two existing gas units, which lack basic emissions controls;

- Must reduce CO2 pollution from Newman 6 by 500,000 tons—the equivalent of taking 100,000 cars off the road.

- Must reduce ozone-forming NOx pollution from Newman 6 by 50 tons;

- Must dedicate funds to reducing ozone-forming volatile organic compounds across El Paso County, fully offsetting the emissions from Newman 6;

- Must create a fund to support the impacted communities and mitigate the local effects of pollution generated by Newman. For more information, see riograndesierraclub.org/epe-newman6-unit

Opposed by Texas, border nuke site still gets permit

By John Buchser, Nuclear Waste Issues Chair

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has approved the WCS/ISP high-level "temporary" storage for used fuel rods from commercial nuclear reactors. These fuel cores remain extremely radioactive for a million years.

This site is 5 miles from Eunice, NM, the largest nearby city. In Texas, the legislature quickly passed a bill banning this proposal, concurring with Gov. Greg Abbott's objections to this risky proposal. The oil and gas operations in the Permian Basin are at risk of permanent shutdown if a substantial accident occurs, and Gov. Abbott realizes this risk.

Out of concern for the safety of New Mexicans, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has taken a strong position in opposition to the WCS/ISP storage and the Holtec proposal for a site near Carlsbad, as has state Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard. State Sen. Jeff Steinborn has attempted for years to craft a bill to provide greater oversight of such sites. A stronger proposal is needed, and we appreciate the senator's work to fight these "temporary" storage sites.

Now that Texas is placing further roadblocks on the WCS/ISP proposal, our hopes are that the New Mexico Legislature will similarly put many barriers in place. Although federal law requires the creation of a permanent facility, there is not yet adequate technology nor political support for the work needed to permanently store this very radioactive waste. New Mexico faces the prospect of this waste being stranded here, with the casks

What's next?

New Mexico Sen. Jeff Steinborn is looking at ways to protect southeast New Mexico from the risks of Holtec's high-level radioactive waste, perhaps with legislation in the January 2022 session. Write to luis.guerrero@sierraclub.org to get on our listserv for legislative updates and actions.

and cladding holding the uranium fuel pellets degrading over time.

We have been fortunate this year to have Attorney General Hector Balderas join in with legal objections to Holtec's proposal. The Rio Grande Chapter also has legal challenges to both projects. Now is the time for New Mexico to place as many additional barriers in place as we can possibly think of. Why should the City of Eunice give some of their water to a facility that may ultimately force them from their homes?

In 2006, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission approved a license for a similar facility in Utah. The Skull Valley Goshute tribe (led by Margene Bullcreek and Sammy Blackbear), the State of Utah, and the Utah congressional delegation all fought this facility. It has not yet been built.

We hope Gov. Lujan Grisham will provide a strong budget to our Environment Department, Transportation Department, and other state agencies to fund the fight. The legislature needs to support the needed resources to fight these dangerous proposals and to enact a prohibition on such projects, as other states have done.



Photo courtesy Google Earth

Del Oro Dairy, seen from above on Google Earth, has been in negotiations with the New Mexico Citizens Dairy Coalition and Environment Department to properly clean up a pollution plume that is already under residential neighborhoods.

Dairy agrees to cleanup plan

By Dan Lorimier
Citizens Dairy Coalition

After two years of negotiations, Del Oro Dairy in Anthony, N.M., has agreed to several modifications to its original plan to capture polluted shallow groundwater from beneath its facility.

This revised plan is the culmination of efforts between the New Mexico Environment Department's Groundwater Quality Bureau, the New Mexico Citizens Dairy Coalition and Del Oro. It represents the hope that this plan spells the end for the shallow-water pollution plume that is already under residential neighborhoods and has been contributing to the larger pollution plume produced by the dozen or so dairies along Dairy Row on I-10 around Anthony.

The polluted water will be pumped into a storage tank from 10 wells that will pump continuously. That water will be used exclusively to wash down the floors of the milking parlor — not equipment.

It will then be captured in a

sump and pumped into an evaporative lagoon.

As part of the agreement between the parties, the dairy and the Environment Department will hold a virtual Town Hall in mid-December to explain the process and take questions from online participants. The town hall will be bilingual to encourage fuller participation.

Despite New Mexico's dairy industry being a strong economic generator, its Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) production and business model exacts a very high price from our land, air and, especially, water.

The New Mexico Citizens Dairy Coalition has served as the voice of the public regarding dairy issues since 2009, when it helped the Environment Department and the industry develop and implement the industry-specific New Mexico Dairy Rule. It has spoken for New Mexicans in numerous situations, like this one, since the adoption of the revised Dairy Rule in 2015.

Along with the Sierra Club

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Rio Grande Chapter, the Citizens Dairy Coalition combines the energy and resources of the Socially Responsible Agriculture Project, Food and Water Watch, Animal Protection New Mexico, Amigos Bravos, Del Valle Concerned Citizens, and Mesquite Community Action Committee.

Dan Lorimier is the former conservation organizer for the Rio Grande Chapter.

Ever searching for what we can do

What can I do to make fighting climate disruption the core of how I live?

- Read a book (one specifically);
- Talk to people in your community (the book gives pointers); and
- Get to know your county commissioners.

Katherine Hayhoe’s “Saving Us, A Climate Scientist’s Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World” is a path forward, a way to “bridge the gap” with climate deniers by finding what values and concerns we have in common, and applying them to the effects of climate change.

New Mexico’s constitution gives many powers to county commissioners, and the rural nature and relatively low population of our state enables us to at least meet our local commissioner. Much anticipated growth in our urban areas will occur outside city limits, and



Chair’s column
Susan Martin

how that growth looks depends on the wisdom and foresight of the commission.

In the last year, county commissions have used their power to select replacement members of the New Mexico House of Representatives when a vacancy occurred. I contacted my commissioner to express my preference for one of the candidates and appreciated the opportunity to discuss the selection with my commissioner, who I’d worked to elect.

Hayhoe is a Canadian climate

scientist working for the Nature Conservancy, and has been named a United Nations Champion of the Earth. She has an endowed chair in Public Policy and Law at Texas Tech and comes to the debate from a Christian perspective.

She recounts her guest talk to a West Texas Rotary Club, where she initially encountered many with crossed arms and suspicions. Hanging over the entrance was a Rotary banner of “The Four Way Test,” their guiding principles. To assess the value of the things we think, say, or do, they ask:

- Is it the TRUTH?
- Is it FAIR to all concerned?
- Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS? And
- Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

She described climate disruption through these questions, the lens

applied by her audience, noting that climate change affects farmers who’ve done little to cause it, decreasing their crop yields with stronger droughts and heat waves.

She noted that nearby Fort Hood was transitioning from fossil fuels and now draws 45% of its power from solar and wind saving millions to taxpayers. By the end of her talk, heads were nodding and faces were friendlier. She showed how climate change fit right into their value system.

St. Augustine said, “Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are.”

Please see Page 6 to learn more about how you can get involved in keeping climate at the core of our values.

Susan is the chair of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee.

Treasures from trash

By Carol Chamberland
Central NM Group

Recycling is strictly serious business, right? Workers at Albuquerque’s landfill laughed when I suggested they could host an artist in residence. But I wasn’t kidding.

Take San Francisco, for example. The Artist in Residence Program at Recology is a unique art and education scheme that provides Bay Area artists with access to discarded materials, a stipend, and a large studio space at the local Recycling and Transfer Station. Since its inception in 1990, over 145 professional artists and 40 student artists have completed residencies. The facility, located near Candlestick Park, is also home to a three-acre sculpture garden containing work by former artists-in-residence.

But San Francisco isn’t alone in this madness. New York City embeds artists in their Solid Waste Department. Portland’s Glean program taps into the creativity of artists to get people rethinking about their consumption habits. Monterey Bay’s Regional Waste Management and the local branch of the University of California paired up to create a residency plan. Kentucky’s Art of Goodwill provides artists access to their 66 stores where they can gather materials and create artworks. Seattle, Philadelphia, Chittenden, Vermont, Toronto, British Columbia and Rio de Janeiro all have artists working in the dumps.

This summer our Central Group’s Zero Waste team joined forces with the Art Show people to issue a challenge to NM artists. Show us your best recycled artworks!

The guidelines called for 2D or 3D original artworks created



Left: Pea Garr’s “Nest,” an ingenious solar-powered lamp constructed from items from thrift stores, garage sales and bicycle shops.

from at least 75% recycled materials. Judges Heather Kline, Peter Kelling, and Carol Chamberland scored the entries on their creative use of materials, artistic merit, and general compliance with the guidelines to select 35 artists for the show. Three grand-prize winners and three honorable mentions were chosen. First Place prize is \$200, Second Place is \$150, and Third Place is \$100. Three Honorable Mentions get \$50 each.

First Place goes to Xanthe Miller for Forest. Miller uses bottle caps, beer-can pull tabs, pill blisters and discarded toys to create her jewel-like collages. Second place is Pea Garr for Nest, an ingenious solar-powered lamp constructed from items gleaned at thrift stores, garage sales and bicycle shops. Third goes to Kaitlan Ducken for Blue Litter. These dramatic earrings are fashioned from bits of broken glass picked up



Left: First Place goes to Xanthe Miller for “Forest,” a collage made of bottle caps, beer-can tabs, pill blisters and discarded toys. Above: Kaitlan Ducken’s “Blue Litter,” earrings fashioned from broken glass picked up in the Pecos Wilderness or along the Rio Grande, won third prize.

while strolling in the Pecos Wilderness or along the Rio Grande. Cleaned and tumbled, the glass is combined with bits of brass.

Honorable Mentions go to: Petra Brown for her Rio Grande River Mats, made from red willow, plastic grocery bags, wool yarn and cotton warp; Endion Schichtel for Mother Earth Junk Jacket, wearable art created from gathered trash; and Bobb Neoboy Maestas for Come Out of the Darkness, a collage of wood and myriad recycled materials.

In addition to the six honorees, there are 29 more artists represented in our online exhibit. The show runs through Nov. 5. Go see for yourself what our creative New Mexicans are doing with trash. Get inspired!

Check out the show here!
riograndesierraclub.org/virtual-art-show-sept2021/

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Call for volunteers

Global Warming Express mentors: Train to become a GWE Mentor for kids 9-12. Climate science, leadership training, public speaking, letter-writing and the arts, in our new Outdoor Program! Train to mentor 9- to 12-year-olds once a week. To apply, email Genie Stevens at genie@theglobalwarmingexpress.org

Other roles: Whether you want to write letters to the editor, enter data, help us lobby at the Roundhouse or anything else, go to riograndesierraclub.org/volunteer to sign up!

Protecting sacred places & water of the Pecos

By Lela McFerrin,
Upper Pecos Watershed
Association, Ralph Vigil,
NM Acequia Commission,
Teresa Seamster, Northern
NM Group

For over 900 miles, the Pecos River stretches from its high-elevation headwaters in the Pecos Wilderness south through Tecolote, Santa Rosa, Roswell, Carlsbad and across the border to Pecos, Texas. The second-largest river in the state, it is the life-blood of eastern New Mexico towns, ranches, farms and natural landscapes.

The value of the Pecos River is immeasurable to New Mexico people, livestock and wildlife, and permitted use of the water for industrial development has been low ever since the Terrero Mine and Molino (mill) in upper Pecos Canyon was officially closed in 1950 and was designated as a “Superfund-level” site in 1995.

Over \$38 million and 20 years of reclamation later, the Pecos River is again threatened with a proposal to the Santa Fe National Forest by Australian mining company New World Resources LLC to start exploratory drilling on Jones Hill, 8 miles southwest of the closed Terrero mine, for base minerals (i.e., copper, gold, silver, lead and zinc).

Comexico project

New World Resources’ US subsidiary, Comexico, is applying for a permit to explore for the minerals on Jones Hill in the Pecos River watershed above the village of Pecos. Comexico proposes to use existing forest roads to access defined locations near the old Tererro Mine, the largest ore mine in the state, where enormous quantities of copper, lead, zinc, silver and gold were extracted from the 1920s to the 1950s. This new project will consist of 32 drilled boreholes on 1.65 acres with a 3-mile access road and easements totaling 7.6 acres of disturbance. If fully developed, the new mine and on-site milling operation would cover over 4,300 acres of critical watershed and impact 5 major tributaries of the Pecos River.

The estimated mineral resource to be mined is more than 5 million tons — more than twice the amount of mineral extraction from the original Tererro Mine.

Cultural Pueblo Sites

According to the Forest Service inventory of ancient cultural sites, monitoring for cultural impacts would be required by Comexico and any sites identified would be avoided through ongoing tribal consultation with area Pueblos. The Sangre de Cristo Mountains



Courtesy of Ralph Vigil and Teresa Seamster

Ralph Vigil is a Pecos River Valley farmer, president of Molino de la Isla Farmers Cooperative, chair of the NM Acequia Commission, and an essential leader in the Stop Terrero Mine coalition. Below: The unique quality of life in Pecos that has more value than any extractive industry.



are considered sacred to Pueblo and tribal nations including the Hopi, with thousands of years of ceremonial use and traditions of careful use of resources and preservation of plants and animals.

A cultural buffer area of 67 acres was surveyed in 2019 and at least 3 sites were evaluated as eligible for protection. Tesuque and Jemez Pueblos disagree with the assessment that these sites can be adequately protected and have asked for further consultation along with representatives of Santa Clara and the Hopi Nation.

Opposition to project

A legal team of water and mine experts is working on behalf of a large coalition of local, tribal and statewide organizations to prepare expert testimony to halt the Comexico application. The US Forest Service has been requested by U.S. Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján and State

Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard to conduct a rigorous Environmental Impact Study under the National Environmental Protection Act. Instead, the Forest Service decided to do an Environmental Assessment and will issue a decision letter in November.

The Northern Group sent comments to the Mining and Minerals Division on behalf of the Rio Grande Chapter that said, in part:

“We remain extremely concerned that a) Comexico has been unable to provide adequate financial estimates or assurance to cover predicted reclamation costs regarding damage to roads, erodible slopes, contaminated streams, and area dependent wildlife, b) Comexico plans to construct on-site pits to contain drilling waste instead of removal to a proper disposal site, and c) key mitigation and restoration practices and costs are left unspecified or to be answered

in the future.”

Lela McFerrin, Pecos resident and Vice President of the Upper Pecos Watershed Association:

“The legacy of the original Tererro Mine and Molino Mill has been devastating to the environment and wildlife of the Pecos Canyon. The remediation efforts continue to this day. Willow Creek (adjacent to the original mine site) was completely inundated, a mile of the Pecos was completely denuded of any life forms, acid runoff killed thousands of trout, and the old St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe reported exceptionally high rates of cancer patients from the Pecos area during the period of the mining operation. The potential of another mining operation on Jones Hill poses even greater threat due to the size of the operation and its location directly above the major drainages of Indian Creek, Sawyer Creek, Macho Creek and Dalton Creek.”

Ralph Vigil, Chairman of the New Mexico Acequia Commission and owner of Molino de la Isla Organics:

“As an 8th-generation resident and farmer of East Pecos, the Pecos River and the land it crosses have been a part of my everyday life for 43 years. It’s not just a river to me; it’s my home, my sanctuary, my family, and has sustained many different cultures for thou-

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sands of years. The health of our watershed is of the utmost importance to every community beneath it and crucial to the survival of the countless species of plants and wildlife it nourishes. We must protect these sacred and life-giving watersheds for generations to come and not leave our children to deal with the consequences of poor land-use decisions within watersheds today. Let us not forget the lessons of the past contamination of our waters as we move forward as a community of stewards of this precious land, and may we leave it in better shape than we found it.”

On Sept. 15, San Miguel County’s proposed mining ordinance was presented at a public meeting at Pecos High School, and some 20 residents and organizations spoke in strong support of the new ordinance and opposed any mining in Pecos Canyon.

For more information:
www.pecoswatershed.org.

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A real climate plan for N.M. to invest in

By Noah Long, NRDC
A coalition of climate and community groups has been working together to propose a broad plan for New Mexico to address climate change and provide market mechanisms to protect communities and drive economic innovation.

The package would also include appropriations to invest in grants to support energy-efficiency improvements for low- and moderate-income families; decarbonization credits for small business; and fleet electrification and other job-creating investments. We urge New Mexico legislators to make this package the cornerstone of climate and economic-transition legislation at January's session.

The Climate Security Act would create a Climate Leadership Council to recommend future action. The council would be co-chaired by the NMED and EMNRD secretaries, with members from stakeholder groups that include tribes, impacted communities, and industry.

The CSA would allow for vehicles, buildings and industry to replace fossil-fuel use with clean energy, and would bring essential utility services to households that today lack water, wastewater, broadband or electricity services.

The legislation paves the way to decarbonize New Mexico. It requires statewide greenhouse gases to be at net zero by 2050.

By 2030, upstream methane production would be required to be 60% lower than 2005 levels, and by 2035, electric utilities would have to reach net-zero CO2 emissions. Clean-energy standards for

electricity and transportation fuels are part of the bill and are to be consistent with decarbonizing our economy by 2050. The CSA sets ambitious, achievable requirements for emissions reductions in every sector.

For electricity, the act would accelerate the New Mexico's 100% clean-energy requirement to 2035 — 10 years faster than the current requirement. The act would also require the Environment Department to set and maintain advanced clean car and truck standards to ensure New Mexicans have the cleanest, most efficient vehicle options. In addition, the bill contains authorization for the a program the Governor has prioritized: cutting the emissions intensity of transportation fuels."

The Climate Security Act also establishes a credit system for clean transportation fuels. The clean-fuel standard would reduce greenhouse gases from transportation vehicles as part of a market-based system that benefits communities.

Finally, the CSA would ensure that no New Mexico communities are left behind as we transition to cleaner energy. Starting in 2023, utilities and co-ops would be required to report the number of disconnects that impact low-income customers and to develop plans to provide affordable and clean electricity to all low-income households by 2035. The legislation would create a fund for those in need, with small fees collected from utilities used to provide electricity and other essential services to hundreds of households each year — providing substantial benefits to those who need it most.



Photo by Frances Denny for The Luupe/theluupe.com

What can you do? Lots.

By Camilla Feibelman
Rio Grande Chapter director

I work from home a lot. I don't have to spend much of the day masked. I get a lot of social interaction, but mostly on Zoom.

When I go out to drop the kids off at school or shop for food I'm sometimes struck by the impact of the pandemic — at what it's like for every human on this globe to be aware of a problem and its solutions (whether they follow them is another story).

It makes me lament the climate crisis, which is upon us and affecting so many people today. People have lost their homes to storms, flood, fires. The stories of climate are on the one hand overwhelming and on the other hand easier to set aside than a problem that results in everyone in masks.

But climate is core to our survival, the quality of life of our kids in the future and now. It's core to protecting our air, water, wildlife, lands, food and so much more.

You know already that this isn't as simple as staying home, masking and getting vaccinated. But the Sierra Club has long prioritized climate action, and we can help you find ways to get and stay involved. Below is an overview of the key areas for action, and a timeline. Now is the time and we are the ones. Join ClimateCORPS:

Meetings: We'll meet at noon every other Thursday (on Zoom)

Sign up: Send an email titled: Join Climate Corps to sierraclubriogrande@gmail.com

Tell your story: Include a picture of you and your reason for action in your email. Maybe it's a place, maybe it's a person. Send a couple of sentences about your reason for action.

Add our ClimateCORPS action calendar to yours:

<https://bit.ly/2WRfGgB>
Go social: Post your picture and statement to social media and tag us:

Facebook: [facebook.com/NMSierraClub](https://www.facebook.com/NMSierraClub)
Twitter: @RioGrandeSierra
Instagram: [instagram/riograndesierraclub](https://www.instagram.com/riograndesierraclub)

Bring the kids!

Join our NMClimateParents listserv to find out how to get your kids and grandkids active on climate action. Email us to join: sierraclubriogrande@gmail.com.

Become a Global Warming Express mentor for kids ages 9 to 12. To apply, email Genie Stevens at genie@theglobalwarmingexpress.org.

A checklist for action on every front:

Advocate for a climate moonshot allowing agencies to act comprehensively on climate (see article at left) and pass climate legislation putting the governor's Climate Executive Order into law.

The Utility Affordability Act: Advocate for the Low-Income Utility Affordability Act that seeks to improve utility affordability, reduce energy burden, and increase utility access of low-income New Mexicans.

Drive economic, social and racial justice: Ensure transition funds and jobs for communities impacted by extractive industries and fossil-fuel workers in transition.

Support the Sustainable Economy Task Force that was passed into law last session.

Time to get over oil and gas Bring on the strongest state methane and ozone safeguards in the country and enforce them (see Page 6).

Bring on federal methane rules that protect us from States like Texas that don't regulate sufficiently.

Stop new oil and gas leasing on public lands

Ending oil and gas industry Subsidies at the DOI and in the tax structure.

Go electric, go renewable Ensure that utilities move away from coal and toward renewables and storage, not more natural gas.

Pass Clean Cars and Trucks rules at the state ensuring that electric vehicles make it to our dealerships and our driveways.

Ensure the state regularly updates its **energy-efficient building codes**.

Stop greenwashing "Blue" hydrogen, carbon capture, "certified green" gas are in many ways equivalent to the antiquated idea that we could have "clean coal." While some of these technologies may be needed and useful in niche areas, we've got to set climate- and community-protecting guardrails before accepting the hype (see article on Page 7).

Timeline for action

Speakers Climate Summit: Oct. 26: This is a chance to interface with New Mexico legislators and help drive climate legislation forward. In-person registration is filled but the event will be broadcast online. new-mexico-2021-climate-summit.eventbrite.com

COP26 Glasgow: Oct. 31 to Nov. 12

New Mexico Gov. Luján Grisham will attend the latest UN Climate Summit, the first since Biden took office. We'll want to call for the greatest local action to do our part for the global climate. www.sierraclub.org/sierra/upcoming-un-climate-talks-glasgow-are-make-or-break-moment

NM Legislative Session: Jan. 18 to Feb. 17, 2022

This 30-day budget session is a chance to push for greater climate action to put our greenhouse-reduction goals into law and get our environmental agencies fully funded.

Join the Sierra Club

You can join the Rio Grande Sierra Club (your membership is to both the national group and for the Rio Grande Chapter) for only \$15!

Go to riograndesierraclub.org/join to 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, Oakland, CA 94612

Scan the QR code at right on your cell phone to join the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter using our website:



Would you like to make a donation to support our work in New Mexico and El Paso? Go to riograndesierraclub.org. donate!

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

“Blue” hydrogen a climate threat

By **Mona Blaber**
Chapter communications director

On Oct. 5, a coalition of New Mexico community, environmental, and justice organizations warned state and federal lawmakers of the risks of diving head-first into fossil-fueled hydrogen projects. The groups’ letter provides guidance on the context and safeguards that must be enacted before hydrogen projects are considered in the San Juan Basin, and in New Mexico generally.

The oil and gas industry has lobbied for billions in taxpayer funds for hydrogen in the coming federal infrastructure bill, and states, including New Mexico, are scrambling to win those funds for “hydrogen hubs.” But hydrogen derived from fossil gas presents significant climate and health dangers, driving new methane, carbon dioxide and other emissions as well as a massive new market for fracked gas, just when scientists tell us it is most urgent to dramatically scale back our consumption of fossil fuels.

“Northwest New Mexico has an opportunity to transition to renewable energy, severing historic reliance on fossil fuels. That should be our priority. We have been here before. We have seen the fossil fuel industry attempt to repackage fossil fuels with concepts such as ‘clean coal’ and natural gas as a ‘bridge fuel’ over the past 15 years which has contributed to our climate crisis and continuing carbon and methane liabilities. This approach has cost taxpayers billions of dollars and worsened pollution and adverse public health impacts in Northwest New Mexico, as some foresee with fossil fuel hydrogen,” said **Mike Eisenfeld, San Juan Citizens Alliance** climate and energy program manager.

Hydrogen production is already responsible for 3-4% of the world’s greenhouse gas pollution, more than all of Germany’s emissions. Nearly all current hydrogen production involves an energy-intensive process fueled by methane and emitting carbon dioxide. The fossil-fuel industry is promoting carbon capture to reduce that considerable climate impact, labeling this “blue” hydrogen. Research has found that even with a slick marketing sheen, this process is worse for the climate than burning fossil fuels at a power plant. As critical as state and federal methane safeguards are, even New Mexico’s own estimate of the impact of its proposed methane rules was within the range researchers found “blue” hydrogen to be more harmful to the climate than gas at a power plant.

In addition, all hydrogen, even renewable-generated green hydrogen, produces health-damaging nitrogen oxide (NOx) when combusted, by some estimates six times more than burning methane. NOx pollution can cause serious health impacts including asthma and increased chance of respiratory infections. NOx is also a precursor to particulate matter and ozone, which are also harmful to the respiratory system. Hydrogen and carbon-dioxide transport both present major safety issues, as does storage of such massive amounts of CO2.

“The Navajo Nation has recognized that climate change is real. The Navajo Nation Council passed a Climate Change Adaptation Plan through legislation in 2019,” said **Jessica Keetso, Tó Nizhóni Ání** organizer. “However, because the Navajo Nation is at an economic disadvantage, especially since

Don’t believe the hydrogen hype

- Hydrogen production is already responsible for 3-4 percent of the world’s carbon emissions — as much as the UK and Indonesia combined.
- 99% of hydrogen today is generated from methane, which is the main component of natural gas and a greenhouse gas 80 times more powerful than CO2.
- Adding carbon capture to methane-fueled hydrogen production (“blue” hydrogen) reduces — but doesn’t eliminate — carbon emissions, and it adds storage and transportation issues that pose major health and safety risks to frontline communities.
- Hydrogen derived from water and powered by renewables (“green”) may be important for hard-to-decarbonize uses but not for electricity or replacing gas in homes and buildings, where it’s less efficient, more polluting and more dangerous.
- Billions of dollars in subsidies for “blue” (fossil-fueled) hydrogen creates a new market for a gas industry we should be transitioning away from.

Photo of gas flare by Roddy Hughes

Many of the proposals for New Mexico hydrogen projects use fracked gas and produce carbon dioxide and other pollution.

coal is going away from the region, the Nation could be persuaded to back gas hydrogen if fossil-fuel interests start making promises of phantom money to the right people. It is important for Navajo leadership to remember that this year alone, the Navajo Nation has suffered major losses due to extreme weather events ranging from loss of life in catastrophic flooding to water scarcity and water restrictions imposed on Diné people by tribal entities. It is even more important to recognize that the Navajo Nation still has 40% of its population living in housing without electricity or indoor plumbing. The Navajo people are still trying to figure out how we’ll get water for ourselves and our livestock today. The Navajo Nation is a testament to how the fossil-fuel industries have failed the economy, the environment and the people. If hydrogen further exacerbates the climate crisis, then Navajo has no business pursuing, investing in, or endorsing hydrogen.”

Prioritizing fossil-gas hydrogen could also divert and delay needed state investments in renewable energy infrastructure, limits on carbon emissions, methane reductions, a transition to 100% electric vehicles, and making New Mexico families’ homes more affordable, safe, and energy efficient. These investments — not taxpayer-subsidized handouts to the gas industry — are the pathways to a climate-resilient clean-energy economy that provides stability for workers and families.

“New Mexico should develop a comprehensive strategy to decarbonize the entire state economy, and fit hydrogen into the plan where it will do the most good,” said **Travis Madsen, Southwest Energy Efficiency Project** transportation program director. “Hydrogen will likely be an important tool to clean up parts of the economy that clean electricity and batteries can’t efficiently reach. But the plan should come first.”

“We simply cannot afford to create new sources of climate pollution. The more optimistic ‘blue hydrogen’ proposals aspire to only 90% carbon capture. When scaled up to the level of production that some are aiming for, that 10% creates significant climate damage. Renewable energy and storage can create

electricity more efficiently and affordably with zero carbon emissions,” said **Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman**.

In their letter, the organizations point to the dangers of prioritizing fossil gas hydrogen over critical climate solutions including efficiency, electrification, and renewables and storage development (see Page 6 to read about the Climate Security Act, a comprehensive climate-justice package).

“New Mexico must prioritize comprehensive, durable, and enforceable climate legislation to light the pathway to a thriving, resilient New Mexico that benefits all of New Mexico’s workers and families,” said **Erik Schlenker-Goodrich, Western Environmental Law Center** executive director. “We don’t need a distraction that involves risky bets of taxpayer resources that serves to further entrench the power of fossil fuel corporations.”

The letter also pointed out that fossil gas is a risky bet even in niche markets that may demand hydrogen because within a decade those markets will likely be supplied by hydrogen derived from water with renewable energy, rather than gas-fueled hydrogen.

Hydrogen harvested from water in a process powered by renewable energy — “green” hydrogen — has promise in hard-to-decarbonize applications like cement and steel production and long-haul freight. But electricity directly generated by renewable energy is always more efficient than hydrogen derived from a process powered by renewables and then combusted. New Mexico is a water-strapped state, and drought is driving irrigation limitations and wildfires. This drives the question of whether using our scarce water resources to manufacture hydrogen is the best choice.

“As an Indigenous organization working in the San Juan Basin, we ask New Mexico’s leaders from the Governor’s office, state Legislature and our federal delegation to exercise caution when pursuing hydrogen as a solution to the climate crisis. Using fossil gas hydrogen would also require sequestering carbon dioxide in communities that have multiple generations of compromised health problems. It is important that frontline and impacted communities

Read more: EarthJustice produced an excellent report on how to scrutinize hydrogen claims and deploy it as a meaningful climate solution: earthjustice.org/features/green-hydrogen-renewable-zero-emission

are centered in these policy decisions. Investments should not be made into a hydrogen economy when throughout the Navajo Nation region many people still do not have running water or electricity. There needs to be serious investments in the areas of education, housing, general infrastructure and broadband while ensuring that we are building a strong clean energy workforce. On behalf of our Earth Mother and future generations, we can not support a false solution,” said **Joseph Hernandez, NAVA Education Project Diné energy organizer**.

“Any consideration of making New Mexico a hub for hydrogen must center principles of equity and justice,” said **Dr. Virginia Necochea, New Mexico Environmental Law Center** executive director. “For too long, low-income communities of color have borne the brunt of extractive industry; it is critically important that any decisions about hydrogen development in our state must factor how such a proposal would impact historically overburdened communities. We have an obligation to address these concerns before moving forward.”

“New Mexico has started down the road of a just economic transition away from an extractive economy and toward one that is regenerative,” said **James Povijua, Center for Civic Policy** policy director. “Development of hydrogen projects must not divert resources away from reducing impacts of climate change on overburdened communities or detract from the important work of developing an economy that works for all New Mexicans and does not destroy our air, land, and water.”

“New Mexico already has a methane pollution problem that the state is working to get under control,” said **Gwen Lachelt, Western Leaders Network** executive director. “We need to be investing in and prioritizing clean energy and emissions reductions, before assessing whether hydrogen should be a part of the energy transition.”

“It’s textbook industry bait-and-switch. Oil and gas knows its industry is in decline on the global scale and is looking for any and all methods to market its products under the guise of the growing renewable energy economy,” said **Lucas Herndon, ProgressNow New Mexico** energy and policy director.

“Hydrogen development is wholly dependent on natural gas fracking-based development. Hydrogen development would only increase oil and natural gas fracking in Northwest New Mexico. Such development will poison land, air, water and destroy sacred places,” said **Mario Atencio, board member of Diné Citizens Against Ruining our Environment (C.A.R.E.)** “The poisonous and cancer-causing gas and oil fracking development is already impacting the health of Diné people and this ‘blue/green hydrogen’ malarkey only greenwashes the fact that the Diné homeland will continue to be an energy sacrifice zone.”

Public turns out for smog rules

By **Camilla Feibelman**
Chapter director

Eighty-five of you (parents, kids, faith leaders, Sierra Club members) spoke in favor of strong smog rules in front of the Environmental Improvement Board at the end of September.

Wait. What's smog, you ask? It's the brown stuff you breathe in big, polluted cities right? Well, turns out that even though Albuquerque and Las Cruces have car-driven smog problems, the counties with F grades from the American Lung Association on ozone are Lea, Eddy and San Juan. That's because ozone precursors leak out of oil and gas facilities alongside methane and then combine with other pollutants and sunlight to create smog, which drives respiratory disease.

The state's rules, when they come out in final form in a few months, can help improve health conditions for local residents and have the additional benefit of keeping methane out of the atmosphere — which has a big climate benefit.

The Environmental Improvement Board hearing lasted two weeks and involved testimony, witnesses, and cross-examining, all while climate and community groups made a case for the strongest safeguards possible. Our lawyers, witnesses and public commenters advocated for some areas of improvement to the draft rule.

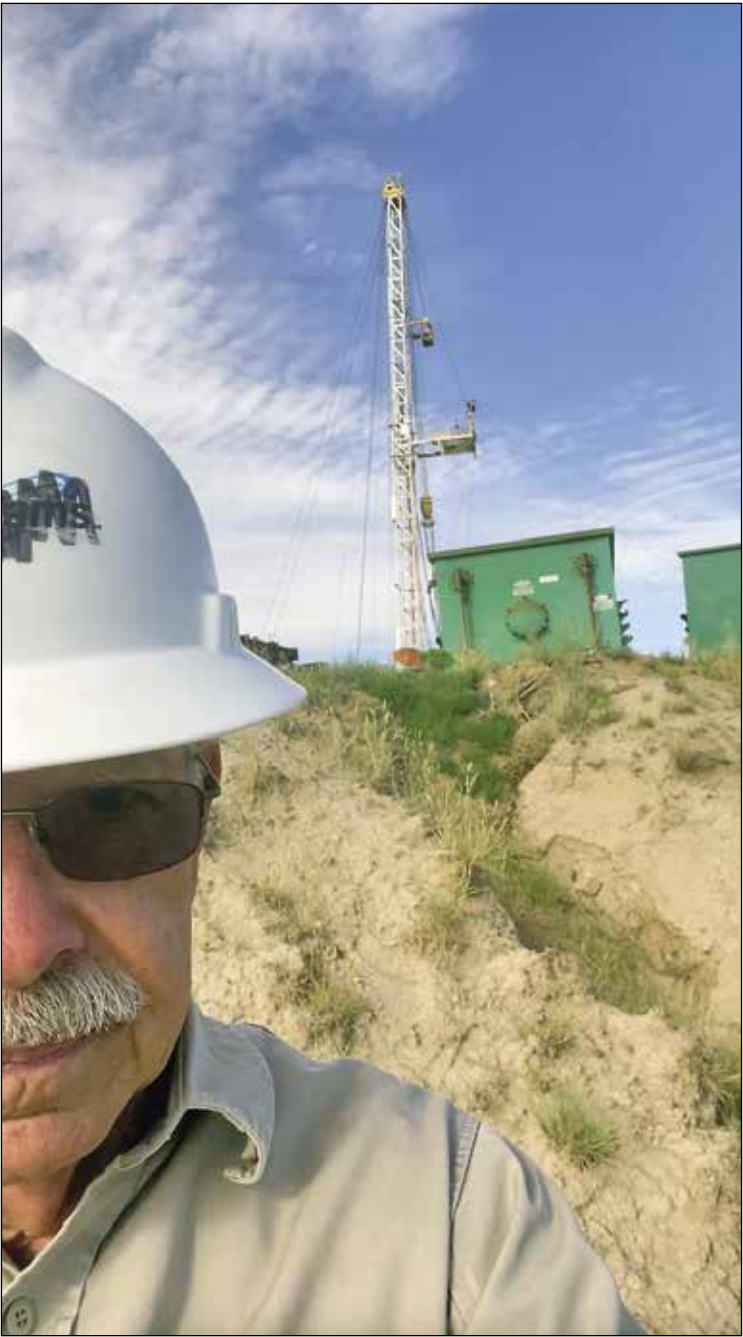
"As a practicing primary-care physician in New Mexico for the past 15 years, I have seen again and again the negative impact of poor air quality on the health of our

communities: children whose uncontrolled asthma forces them to miss school and spend their days in the hospital and elders whose worsening emphysema forces them to stay indoors and limits their ability to enjoy life," Dr. Jesse Barnes told the EIB. "The science clearly shows that certain oil and gas industry emissions are related to higher rates of respiratory and cardiac diseases. Unfortunately, there are parts of New Mexico where those industries are heavily concentrated and the air quality is unsurprisingly affected."

Our coalition attorneys requested that those living closest to development be protected by requiring more frequent inspections to find and fix leaks. We won support from the Environment Department and, interestingly, Occidental (an oil and gas company) for that proposal.

We also want stronger requirements for operators to capture gases during the completion of a well and for pneumatic controllers that are used in oil and gas production.

Strong protections at the state level can set a strong baseline for the federal EPA as it prepares to draft its own methane rules for wells on public and private lands. These rules are currently under interagency review. By setting the bar high locally, we help drive the demand for strong rules federally and ensure that states like Texas that aren't strongly regulating methane and ozone precursors locally aren't polluting communities in our state and exacerbating our global climate crisis. Keep your eye out for your opportunity to engage on these federal rules.



Pardon us while we vent:

Northwest New Mexico rancher Don Schreiber recently videoed toxic and dangerous gases like methane and volatile organic compounds being vented directly to the atmosphere over a period of four days by Hilcorp Energy during well completion operations near his ranch.

While Colorado clean-air rules prohibit this practice, existing New Mexico Oil Conservation Division rules do not prevent completion venting or flaring, nor do proposed Environment Department regulations currently being considered by Environmental Improvement Board. Now only decisive action by the EIB can stop these massive pollution events. Hilcorp is the No. 1 methane polluter in the United States.

Calling for an end to oil and gas subsidies

By **Miya King-Flaherty**
Our Wild New Mexico

Across the nation, the Sierra Club partnered with many organizations in mass-action efforts in August to call on members of Congress to include meaningful climate legislation in Biden's Build Back Better Act as talks continued on the infrastructure and budget reconciliation bills.

The Rio Grande Chapter partnered with Friends of the Earth and Food and Water Watch to call on Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján to pledge their support for removing federal fossil-fuel subsidies in the reconciliation bill.

The fossil-fuel industry receives roughly \$20 billion a year in federal subsidies for exploration and production, and the oil and gas industry receives the largest share of this amount through tax breaks, tax credits, and low-cost rates and fees to drill on public lands. Fossil-fuel development on public lands and waters alone accounts for 25% of all greenhouse-gas emissions, and according to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, we must drastically reduce those emissions within this decade to prevent climate catastrophe.

Representatives from Friends of the Earth and the Rio Grande Chapter and volunteers hand-delivered a letter signed by New Mexico residents, organizations, and local elected officials to Sen. Heinrich's office calling on the senator to support ending fossil-fuel subsidies and enacting much-needed oil and gas reforms, such as raising onshore royalty rates and increasing bonding rates.

We are glad to report that Sen. Heinrich issued a letter in late September stating he supports ending federal fossil-fuel subsidies and will continue efforts to invest in clean energy and fight the climate crisis, including his co-sponsorship of the Clean Energy for America Act, which ends direct tax credits for oil and gas and instead invests in clean-energy sources.

Continued subsidies for fossil fuels could lock New Mexico into an intractable boom-and-bust cycle and a legacy of sacrifice zones that falls hardest on low-income communities and communities of color. Ending subsidies is fiscally responsible, and Biden has called for eliminating them.

Sens. Heinrich and Luján have acknowledged that New Mexico must move away from relying on the oil and gas industry for state revenue, and we will continue to work with them to address the climate crisis.

1,000 commenters protest oil & gas leases

By **Miya King-Flaherty**
Our Wild New Mexico organizer

Another wave of new oil and gas leasing is coming to New Mexico after a Louisiana district court's ruling that forced the Biden administration to lift its temporary pause on new oil and gas leasing.

The administration is appealing this decision to the Fifth Circuit, but until then, it is complying with the judge's order. This is extremely disappointing news and a blow to President Biden's campaign pledge to ban all new oil and gas leasing on public lands. And more disheartening, it contradicts the executive order that declared tackling the climate crisis at home and abroad, a major priority.

In August, the Department of the Interior announced that the Bureau of Land Management will hold a new round of lease sales in February 2022. Despite hearing from millions of people and the world's leading scientists' calls to drasti-

cally ramp down fossil-fuel development to avoid more climate devastation, the agency has identified more than 740,000 acres across 10 states, including in New Mexico's Permian Basin, for more oil and gas leasing.

We are fundamentally at a crossroads to protect our global environment and avoid more catastrophic climate events. Opening hundreds of thousands of additional public lands for more oil and gas development only serves to continue a legacy of pollution and extraction zones at a time when addressing the impacts of climate change and investing in renewable energy should be a priority.

Meanwhile, the Department of the Interior has still not completed its review and interim report of the federal oil and gas leasing program, which we anticipated would be released early this summer. Despite the delay, the agency has admitted the need for fundamental reforms to the program to adequately account for environmental harms to lands, waters, and other resources, and

has acknowledged that the program should adequately consider climate impacts in leasing decisions.

The February 2022 lease sales stand to impact a range of environmental justice, public health, natural resource, and wildlife issues. Leasing more public lands in the Permian, and other states, will significantly increase greenhouse gas emissions. New Mexico is already home to a 2,500-square-mile methane cloud hovering over the state's San Juan Basin. And by now, we should recognize that methane is a powerful and dangerous greenhouse gas. One of the largest sources of methane is oil and gas rigs leaking, venting and flaring it.

The 30-day period for the public to voice their concerns on the proposed sale ended Oct. 1. We submitted nearly 1,000 public comments to the Bureau of Land Management and hand-delivered them alongside other groups at the state office in Santa Fe. There will be another public comment period to protest the sale, so stay tuned.



Photo by Jim O'Donnell

The Rio Fernando de Taos, among the high percentage of New Mexico surfacewater that went unprotected after Trump’s Dirty Water Rule went into effect. These waters will still be vulnerable to dumping until robust state and federal rules are passed.

NM water needs us

With Trump rule thrown out, better state, federal safeguards needed

**Rachel Conn, Amigos Bravos
Deputy Director**

Many uncertainties surrounding the definition of “Waters of the U.S.” have plagued the regulatory landscape since 2001 and ultimately resulted in the Trump-era Navigable Waters Protection Rule.

Also known as the “Dirty Water Rule,” the Trump administration’s rule has impacted New Mexico more than any other state in the nation. This is due to a combination of factors, including the high percentage of New Mexico’s waters that don’t flow year-round; the large portion of New Mexico’s waters that are found in closed basins such as the Mimbres, Tularosa, and Sacramento basins; and the fact that New Mexico is one of just three states that doesn’t have a state surfacewater-discharge program.

Due to federal interpretations of Supreme Court rulings, streams that don’t flow year-round and waters within closed

basins no longer fall under federal protections. Without a state program in place to fill in the gaps left by these shrinking federal protections, New Mexico’s waters have been vulnerable to unregulated dumping of pollution.

Several weeks ago, a federal judge threw out Trump’s Dirty Water Rule, ruling that it could cause serious environmental harm and was legally and scientifically flawed. This is great news for New Mexico’s waterways and will restore Clean Water Act protections for many, but not all, of New Mexico’s rivers, streams, and wetlands.

The Biden administration is now moving forward with drafting a new water-protection rule. Clean-water advocates in New Mexico are calling for the administration to adopt a robust and durable rule that is rooted in science. In order to protect New Mexico’s rivers, streams, and wetlands, a new rule must include ephemeral waters (waters that don’t flow year-round); respect traditional agriculture; recognize the connections

between groundwater and surface water; address tribal priorities; and be applicable for arid conditions.

We have now seen two decades of shifting and unpredictable federal clean-water protections, and New Mexico continues to suffer disproportionately, leaving at times over 90% of our waterways unprotected and vulnerable. Even with the new court ruling, New Mexico’s closed basins and many of our wetlands and playa lakes are still not federally protected, underlining the need for New Mexico to implement a state program to control the discharge of pollution into our surface waters. As a state, we should not be held at the whim of ever shifting federal priorities. We need to move quickly to implement and adequately fund a state surface-water discharge program to protect our water resources.

Please ask your state legislator to support a permitting program for surface water: state legislators: nmwaters.org/petition/

PRC approves first utility EV proposal

**By Cara Lynch
Coalition for Clean,
Affordable Energy**

On Sept. 22, New Mexico’s Public Regulation Commission approved Southwestern Public Service Company’s Transportation Electrification Plan — essentially a state-required plan for adding electric-vehicle infrastructure — with some important improvements your actions helped secure.

Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy and Sierra Club fought hard to make sure that the plan provides New Mexicans adequate rebates for installing home EV fast chargers and ease of payment at public charging stations.

Legislation passed in 2020 requires New Mexico’s three investor-owned utilities -- PNM, Southwestern Public Service and El Paso Electric — to submit these plans that will make driving an EV more affordable for all New Mexicans.

SPS (which provides service to southeast New Mexico) was the first to propose a plan. Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy intervened in the case and used experts from Southwest Energy Efficiency Project and Prosperity Works during hearings to propose improvements that the hearing examiner recommended the commission adopt.

One aspect that wasn’t present in the hearing examiner’s recommendation: A requirement that charging companies put traditional credit-card readers on public charging stations. Most charging companies want users to subscribe and pay for charges through their membership services, and after CCAE and Prosperity Works pointed out that

public chargers should be as easy to pay for as gas, the recommendation was to only require contactless readers on public charging stations. But many Sierra Club supporters offered remote comments to urge the commission to require swipe and chip readers, as most New Mexicans — especially low-income New Mexicans — don’t have contactless cards. After hearing your comments, Commissioner Cynthia Hall advocated for a change to the final order for traditional readers, and commissioners unanimously approved both the basic plan and the credit-card requirement.

CCAE advocated for increased rebates for home wiring for low-income and other customers to cover the costs of chargers and electrical panel upgrades. And we got an increase in the budget for outreach to low-income customers. Further, now customers can be assured that they will be charged a per-kilowatt rate, instead of an arbitrary amount set by site hosts. SPS customers should keep their eyes out for additional public chargers going up in their communities. This will increase accessibility to electricity as a transportation fuel.

Some highlights:

SPS customers can receive up to \$500 rebates for home rewiring upgrades and installing a fast charger.

Low-income customers may qualify for up to \$2,500 in rebates for home wiring upgrades and installation of a fast charger.

This program is a positive step to get more EVs on the road and reduce climate pollution.

State on Clean Cars rules: There’s always next year

By Mona Blaber

Chapter communications director

Thanks to everyone who commented to the Environmental Improvement Board to support climate advocates’ petition to begin a rulemaking that would make electric cars much more available in New Mexico.

The state Environment Department, which had committed to adopting the Clean Cars standards in 2020, opposed our petition, saying they were understaffed but would start a rulemaking in December. Supporters of Sierra Club and other groups submitted nearly 1,000

comments to the EIB, and several volunteers gave oral comments at the July 23 meeting where the board heard our petition. Unfortunately, the EIB rejected the petition.

However, the state did commit to start the rulemaking in December, with a May 2022 hearing. The petitioning groups, including Sierra Club and led by National Resources Defense Council and Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, have requested that the state and Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board keep their promise to start a rulemaking in December, as

well as:

- include Advanced Clean Truck and Heavy Duty Omnibus standards;
- notify the state and local board of the state’s intent to petition for an Advanced Clean Cars 2 (the higher standards that California is likely to adopt in 2022 and other states with advanced standards must match) as soon as it is available; and
- adopt early-action credits and limits to proportional credits in the petition that is filed in December. The credits would encourage automakers to comply with New Mexico’s standards sooner

than the federal requirement of two model years.

Providing early notice of a plan to adopt ambitious standards for 2026-2035 will encourage manufacturers to begin deploying and advertising cleaner vehicles, including more electric vehicles in New Mexico today, to prepare for meeting this more ambitious standard.

Your engagement has made clear to the state that the public wants the Environment Department to prioritize these standards. Let’s keep up the positive pressure for our climate and our pocketbooks.

Elections

Across the state, municipalities, school boards and soil and water districts will hold elections on Nov. 2. Below are the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter's endorsements in some of those elections.

Albuquerque mayor

Under the leadership of **Mayor Tim Keller**, Albuquerque is well on its way to becoming one of the top 10 U.S. cities powered by renewable energy. With the Solar Direct project scheduled to come online later this year, combined with 10.4 MW of onsite solar installed or planned for city buildings, Albuquerque is on track to reach 80% renewable use for city operations by 2022, and Keller has committed to 100% by 2030. Under Keller, Albuquerque is continuing its energy audits and facility upgrade work with a goal of reducing energy consumption by 65 percent. Keller has committed to electrifying the city's bus and vehicle fleet. For the private sector, Keller has updated the building codes to require construction to be more energy-efficient and partnered with nonprofits to provide free energy-efficiency audits and upgrades to income-qualified homeowners.



Albuquerque City Council

We can't say enough good things about **Tammy Fiebelkorn**, a longtime activist, leader, and ally to the Sierra Club on energy issues. Tammy is the New Mexico representative for Southwest Energy Efficiency Project and works with Prosperity Works on the Community Energy Efficiency Project, which provides efficiency upgrades to low-income homeowners in the International District with a focus on electrification.



Tammy has provided tireless leadership on energy efficiency at the state Legislature, especially for low-income New Mexicans. She was a driving force behind the Efficient Use of Energy Act. Tammy developed and was the lead lobbyist and expert witness for the Sustainable Building Tax Credit legislation, which provides incentives for electrification of new and existing buildings. She also led advocacy for the city to update its energy-efficient building code and is championing legislation to support energy-efficiency grants to make New Mexicans' homes safer and more affordable.

Tammy's enormous expertise on energy issues, dedication, heart and effectiveness make her the obvious choice in District 7.

Lan Sena was appointed by Mayor Keller to fill a vacant seat in District 1 and is now running for re-election. Lan is a community activist and true progressive. Lan views all issues through an equity lens and lives that fundamental value of the contemporary Sierra Club, that you can't save the planet without protecting its people, that these are one and the same issue.



Councilor Sena sponsored amendments to the Integrated Development Ordinance to promote the clustering of development to allow more green space and to prevent development near vulnerable open-space areas.



Cynthia Borrego is running for re-election in District 5 on the northwest side against former city councilor and mayoral candidate Dan Lewis. Councilor Borrego describes herself as a "big proponent of sustainability." She advocates for a more regional public transit system, and was a co-sponsor of the "Clean and Green Ordinance," which banned single use plastic bags for many retail uses.

Rob Grilley is running for the open seat in Albuquerque's far SE/NE Heights. With respect to the climate emergency, he states that the urgency of the situation cannot be overstated and that the time for token gestures has long passed. He emphasized the need for more green spaces that will improve the health and wellbeing of nearby residents.



Albuquerque School Board

Emma Jones, District 5
Josefina (Josie) Dominguez, District 6
Julie Brenning, District 7

Santa Fe Mayor

Mayor Alan Webber started the switch of the city's fleet to electric vehicles; pushed for conversion in 2021 and 2022 of 9,000 streetlights to energy-efficient, Dark Sky-compliant fixtures; got funding for powering with solar nine facilities to date and 17 additional ones in 2022; and backed a resolution calling for 40- and 80-year water planning to support the city's 100% water reuse pathway.



Santa Fe City Council

District 1: Councilor Signe Lindell supports programs to cut vehicle air and noise pollution; recognizes the need to use limited land and infrastructure resources wisely for infill projects; redevelopment of the Midtown campus as a place for Santa Feans to live, work and play; and to extend the ethic of water conservation to the commercial sector.



District 2: Councilor Carol Romero-Wirth championed converting the city's streetlights to energy efficient and Dark Sky-compliant fixtures; supports programs to cut vehicle air and noise pollution; sponsored legislation (now law) to dedicate revenue from sale of land toward the affordable housing trust fund; and sponsored a resolution calling for 40- and 80-year water plans.



District 3: Councilor Roman "Tiger" Abeyta supports programs to cut vehicle air and noise pollution; supports providing as part of the affordable housing trust fund rebates to allow families a way to afford more sustainable sources of energy; and seeks to pursue



aquifer storage and recovery.



District 4: School administrator **Amanda Chavez** aims to bring the knowledge, skills and passion she brings to public schools to the city council. She is a supporter of community solar, infill and a mix of land uses, as well as programs to cut vehicle air and noise pollution.

Las Cruces City Council



A 20-year faculty member at Doña Ana Community College, **Becky Corran** has influenced thousands of students with her focus on equity and climate change. As chair of the NMSU Faculty Senate, her leadership resulted in the development of NMSU's Land Acknowledgement Statement. Corran has a master's in public health, and her work has been primarily with historically marginalized groups.

Yvonne Flores has served on the City Council since 2017. She has been a consistent advocate for sustainable policies and priorities. She did much of the groundwork for passing the city's comprehensive plastic-bag ban. She is an attorney, educator and labor activist whom the League of Women Voters sent as an observer status delegate to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2017.



Becki Graham works at NMSU's Arrowhead Center, where she develops and implements sustainable economic development programs. She is an avid mountain biker who spends significant time on public lands, and she works to bring others (especially women and girls) into the world of exploring the natural landscapes surrounding Las Cruces.



Soil and Water boards

Steve Glass, Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District
Zoe Economou, Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District
Gill Sorg, Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District
Teresa Smith de Cherif, Valencia Soil and Water Conservation District

Las Cruces municipal endorsement listing authorized and paid for by the 2021 Las Cruces Sierra Club PAC, 505-232-3013.

Albuquerque municipal endorsement listing authorized and paid for by 2021 Albuquerque Sierra Club MFC. Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's campaign committee.

Santa Fe endorsement listing authorized and paid for by The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club Political Action Committee.

Soil and Water Conservation District endorsement listing authorized and paid for by The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club Political Action Committee.

Albuquerque Public School Board endorsement listing authorized and paid for by The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club Political Action Committee.

Cohesive management for Caja

By **Brittany Fallon, NMWild**
The Caja del Rio Plateau west and southwest of Santa Fe is one of the most ecologically rich and culturally significant landscapes in New Mexico.

Caja is part of the vital Western Wildway Priority Wildlife Corridor that runs along the Upper Rio Grande Watershed from Colorado through New Mexico. The plateau and canyons are vital habitat for a diverse range of plants and animals, and the area is recognized by the National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area.

The entire plateau and adjacent Santa Fe and Rio Grande river basins have been, and still are, used for spiritual practices, hunting and herb gathering since time immemorial by Cochiti, Santo Domingo, Tesuque, Pojoaque, Jemez, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, San Felipe, Sandia, Santa Ana and Ohkay Owingeh pueblos. Recreation enthusiasts of all stripes frequent the area.

We are working to secure durable administrative and legislative protections for this sensitive area. The Caja del Rio Plateau consists of both Santa Fe National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands, making effective management difficult.

To encourage our leaders in Congress to protect Caja del Rio in a way that makes cohesive management possible, please go to: <https://p2a.co/SLXGEil>

Pajarito Group

riograndesierraclub.org/pajarito

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Treasurer: Mark Jones, 505/662-9443

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Endangered Species/Wildlife: Cheryl Bell.
Global Warming: Charles Keller, alfonso@cybermesa.com, 505/662-7915
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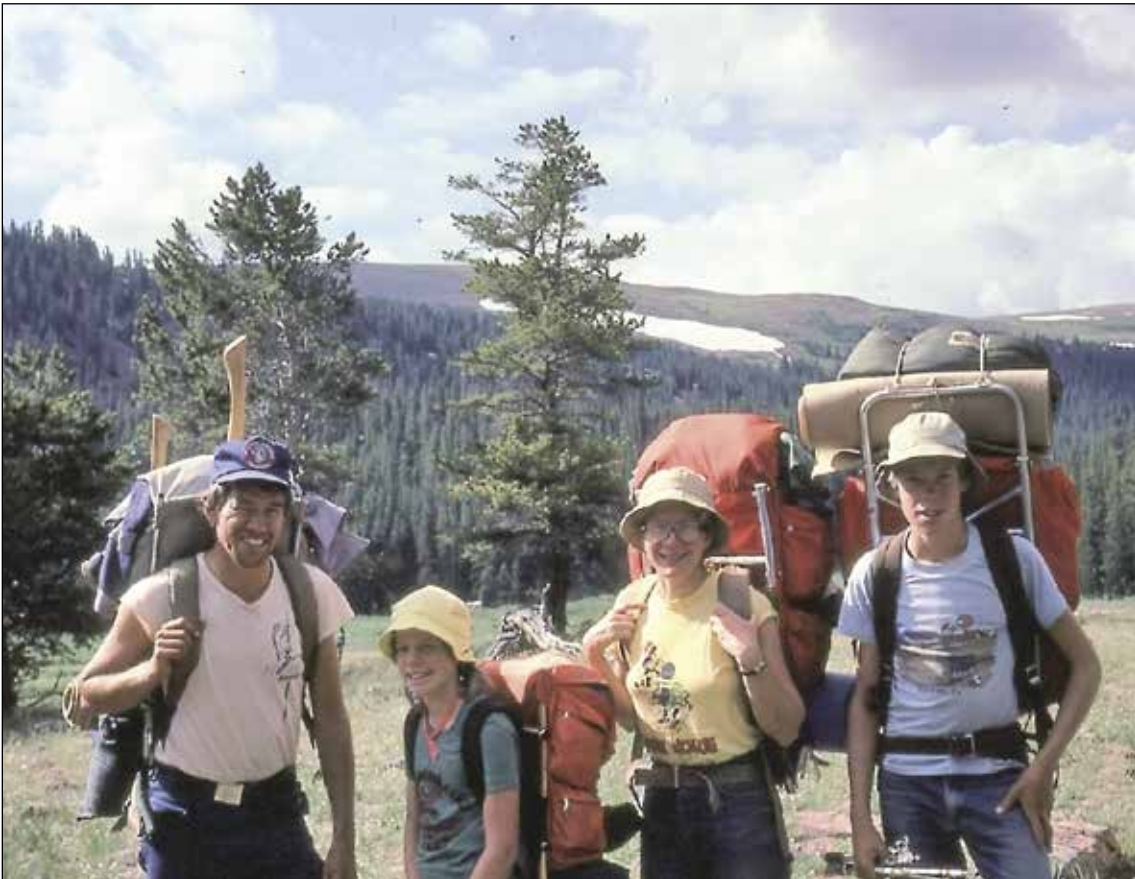


Photo courtesy Martia and Gordon Glass
Gordon and Martia Glass with their kids in 1983, headed out to clear trails in the Uinta Mountains.

Member focus: Gordon and Martia Glass

By Hart Pierce

Lifetime Sierra Club members and Farmington residents Martia and Gordon Glass have been intimately involved at all levels of Sierra Club activities throughout their lives together, along with their children and grandchildren. The Glass family has explored our vast wild places in the West and is committed to protecting the planet.

Gordon’s association with the Sierra Club began at age 2. His father, a Presbyterian minister, served as chaplain for the Protestant chapel in Yosemite National Park from 1945 to 1960. Gordon was reared in the shadow of Half Dome, Bridal Veil and Yosemite Falls. Throughout his youth, he and his father hiked and backpacked in the High Sierras. Through those adventures, the Sierra Club credo of exploring, enjoying and protecting the planet took hold and became part of his core. Gordon grew up with Sierra Club members like Ansel Adams, who for many years, while refining his photographic skills, was the caretaker of the Sierra Club’s LeConte Memorial Lodge, now the Yosemite Conservation Heritage Center. In recent years, pre-COVID, Gordon and Martia volunteered as docents at the Conservation Heritage Center, where they would share personal anecdotes highlighting their relationship to Yosemite. For instance, Gordon remembers his sister Gail and friend Ann Adams playing under the grand piano in the Adams apartment while Ansel, an accomplished concert pianist, and wife Virginia, an accomplished singer, would hold forth.

In 1965, after graduating from the University of Redlands, Gordon entered the Peace Corps and was assigned to teach in Malawi in Southeastern Africa. Martia, born in Houston, graduated from Austin College in Sherman, Texas, and entered the Peace Corps at the same time. She was assigned to teach in India. Upon returning, they met at the University of Pennsylvania while training to teach in inner-city Philadelphia schools. Gordon and Martia soon married and looked westward, securing teaching positions with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Aneth, Utah, on the Navajo Reservation, tucked between what is now the Bears Ears National Monument and the Canyons of the Ancients in Colorado. While in Aneth, the Glasses took young Navajo children

on many hikes along the San Juan River. In the mid-’70s, they moved to Albuquerque, where Martia entered UNM Medical School and Gordon earned his master’s in counseling from the UNM College of Education. He worked in the City Court Clinic while Martia finished medical school. They also started a family, and son Justin and daughter Alisia would join in their many outdoor adventures. After relocating to Farmington in 1980, the family hiked and backpacked in San Pedro Parks Wilderness, Bandelier National Monument and other wild places in the Santa Fe, Cibola and San Juan National Forests. Later the family volunteered for service projects in New Mexico’s Gila National Monument and the Valle Grande, now the Valles Caldera National Reserve. They spent summers clearing trails in Utah’s Uinta Mountains and installing erosion logs on Grand Canyon trails. The Glasses volunteered for a service project in Gran Paradiso National Park in the Alps of Northwestern Italy. As Gordon would later tell his grandchildren, “Our family likes to do hard things.” In Farmington, Gordon worked for the state of New Mexico and Farmington Municipal Schools as a family counselor. Martia was a Public Health Service commissioned officer and served as a physician with the Navajo Area Indian Health Service. In retirement, they continue to explore, camp, hike and volunteer with the Sierra Club, returning annually to Yosemite to visit and volunteer. Gordon and Martia are active in the Farmington Presbyterian Church, heading youth programs and fostering fellowship. Gordon was recently diagnosed with cancer and has had to curtail those outdoor activities that have been an integral part of their lives. But he continues to fight for the environment through service on the Farmington Public Utility Commission, where he is a forceful advocate for renewable energy, clean air and water, governmental ethics and transparency. Gordon, Martia and their family have done “the hard things.” For that, the lives they have led, the values they hold dear, for their service to their fellow man and the environment, we recognize their contributions and truly thank them. *Hart Pierce is a Rio Grande Sierra Club Outings Leader in the Four Corners, a fellow FPUC commissioner, and a friend.*

One more winter of trap vigilance

By Mary Katherine Ray
Chapter Wildlife chair

Trapping season will be upon us beginning November 1. While we still are celebrating that the New Mexico Legislature passed and the governor signed Roxy’s Law banning traps from public land, it won’t take effect until April 1, 2022.

The licensing year at New Mexico Game and Fish runs from April 1 to March 31. That is the timeframe in which all the rule booklets are printed and licenses issued. So there is one more winter in which it will still be legal to hide traps on National Forest, BLM and State Trust lands where the public may also be recreating.

This means one more winter where traps may be placed as close as 25 yards from official trails or roads without restriction, and even directly in the path of those that are “unofficial.” Hikers should carry a pair of cable cutters to free a dog caught in a wire snare — the device that killed Roxy by strangulation — and know how to open a steel-jawed leghold trap. **There are videos on www.trapfreenm.org with clear instructions.**

Every winter, we dread learning of dogs or wildlife caught in and injured by traps. You are legally allowed to rescue your dog but not wildlife. If you find a trap or trapped animal,



Bobcats are a frequent trap victim. Traps are allowed on New Mexico public lands until March.

you may contact New Mexico Game and Fish, especially if there are questions about legality. The Operation Game Thief number is 800-432-4263. A warden should get back to you. Also, please let TrapFreeNM.org know. Last winter, even before the passage of Roxy’s Law, trapping license sales, which number around 2,000 each year in New Mexico, were down by around 25%. Did the requirement that trappers spend a few hours completing a trapping education course dissuade license-buyers? Pelt prices also dropped, and that surely contributed. But trapping season will end on New Mexico public lands for the last time on March 15. Then we can truly celebrate!

Military Outdoors on duty

By Terry Owen

The Military Outdoors program has returned to duty after a COVID-induced leave of absence. Our objective is to provide active-duty, military retirees, reservists, their families and those that care for them opportunities to enjoy the land they fought for. It’s also to provide that sense of camaraderie that many who have served long for. The program is led by three military veterans who understand what service really means and continue to serve in this new capacity. I’d like to introduce them to you. Marine Corp veteran and Purple Heart recipient Hart Pierce returned from Vietnam and found that nature was exactly what he needed to heal his wounds. He now leads outings in the Four Corners. Most recently, those have included hiking and camping in the San Pedro Parks Wilderness and wildflower hikes near Durango, Colo. John Link is an Air Force veteran and physician who supported Operation Iraqi Freedom. He continues to serve veterans at Albuquerque

Veterans hospital. He was instrumental in establishing the Military Outdoors program and often co-leads hikes and snowshoe outings on outings on peaks above 12,000 feet. I’m Terry Owen, and I spent a 20-year career in the Navy as both enlisted and as an officer on submarines and submersibles. My time on and under the ocean helped me understand how endangered our oceans are and how vital they are to our survival. Now semi-retired, I lead hikes, snowshoe and cultural outings around the state and serve as program chair. We want to recruit you to join us on any Military Outdoors Program outing. You don’t have to be former military to join us, and there are outings that range from very easy to very challenging. We have a number of awe-inspiring outings coming up, including yoga hikes, mountain hikes, snowshoe outings and weekend backpacking trips. Each one is designed to be safe, fun and inspiring. Plus, virtually all of our outings are free. If you’d like to join us, see the outings listings on Page 12 and sign up!

Outings and hikes

By Terry Owen

Chapter Outings chair

Friday, Oct 15-Sunday, Oct 17: Chaco Canyon Camp, Hike and Bike. Join us to camp at Gallo Campground in Chaco Culture National Historical Park on Friday night. Come and enjoy the evening sky and meet new friends. Group will meet at 9 a.m. on Saturday at the Pueblo Alto trailhead and hike to Pueblo Alto and New Alto ruins. This four-mile hike will cover steep, rocky terrain at the start and then climb gradually over 500 feet to the Chacoan sites above. We will stop for many photo ops and to view the interesting geology, plant life and spectacular vistas above the canyon.

After we descend from our hike we will have lunch and the group will re-convene at the visitors' center, mount our own bikes and ride the 10 mile Canyon Loop Drive and visit the major ruins such as Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Kettle on the way. If participants choose not to join in the bike tour, they are on their own. For those who opt for the second day's outing, we will hike to Wijiji Ruins in the Chaco National Historical Park, a four mile round trip hike to a large, interesting ruin. This hike is rated as "Easy" as hikers trek over flat terrain with little elevation gain. This outing is appropriate for minors 16 or over accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. No dogs. Due to the rough road conditions entering the park, a vehicle with adequate clearance is highly recommended. Register by Oct. 10. A list of recommended gear and any added information will be sent to registrants on Oct. 11. Contact the outings leaders for further information.

Trip Leaders: Hart Pierce, shpierce@q.com, (505) 320-1055/Terry Owen, trowen@comcast.net, (505) 301-4349.

Level: Moderate

Location: Nageezi, NM

Sign up: riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

Friday, Oct. 15: Las Conchas Trail Hike along the Jemez River East Fork. Meet at 9 a.m. at Home Depot in Bernalillo, 7700 Highway 550 at the North West corner of the parking lot. Carpooling encouraged as there is limited parking at the trailhead on Highway 4. Recommended carpool driver donation is \$15. This five-hour long outing includes one hour of driving each way from departure point, along the lovely winding mountain Highway 4 with a photo stop at the Gilman tunnels and waterfall. Then we will lunch together after the hike at Los Ojos in Jemez Springs. This easy pine forest hike alongside the mountain stream is approximately 3 miles



Photo by Hart Pierce

Hikers on the last Chaco Canyon Camp, Hike and Bike, in 2019. Terry Owen and Hart Pierce lead another Chaco outing on Oct. 15.

round trip with 50 feet of elevation gain. You can find this hike listed as a Bonus Hike on Page 217 of the *60 Hikes Within 60 Miles* 3rd edition, by David Ryan and Steven Ausherman. Join us for a dose of nature and camaraderie. Bring your own water, and wear outer layers as temperatures can range from 45-80 degrees. This hike is appropriate for children over 12 accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. No dogs. Covid 19 precautions will be taken as appropriate. Register on the electronic form provided by Oct. 10.

Trip Leader: June Parsons, 832-723-4533, comicsilver@gmail.com

Level: Easy

Location: Jemez Mountains, North of Jemez Springs

Sign up: riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

Saturday, Oct. 16: Bosque Clean-up. Come join us at the Pueblo Montano Open Space and Trailhead to pickup trash and celebrate our amazing open spaces. Meet at 8:45 a.m. at the Pueblo Montano Open Space. We'll team up for about one and half hours to clean-up the surrounding area. Bring water, sunscreen, gloves, hat a snack, a trash bag or bucket, and wear closed-toed shoes. This is a great activity for families with children. Children 18 or under must be accompanied by a legal guardian. If you love the bosque and our open spaces I hope you'll join us!

Trip Leader: June Parsons, 832-723-4533, comicsilver@gmail.com

Level: Easy

Location: Albuquerque

Sign up: riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

Friday, Oct. 29: Las Conchas Trail Hike along the Jemez River East Fork. Meet at

Protocols for reopened hikes and events

The following COVID-19 protocols for Sierra Club Outings have been incorporated to help ensure the health and safety of our volunteers, participants and staff. These are subject to change based upon CDC and Sierra Club guidance. We thank you in advance for your patience and assistance.

To reduce contact, sign up for outings and complete the participant agreement at riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/

If you've signed up for an outing or event and begin to feel ill, please stay home and seek appropriate medical care.

There are potentially participants who are vaccinated and unvaccinated, and it's each participant's choice to attend or not attend the outing with this knowledge.

No vaccine or test results are required, and participants will not be required to disclose their vaccination or test status. Participants are welcome to wear masks if it makes them comfortable. Masks will be required if there's an indoor component to the outing, while they are indoors. Masks are also required at all times for ICO outings participants, and in some other cases where minor children are participating.

9 a.m. at Home Depot in Bernalillo, 7700 Highway 550 at the North West corner of the parking lot. Carpooling encouraged as there is limited parking at the trail head on Highway 4. Recommended carpool driver donation is \$15. This five-hour outing includes one hour of driving each way from departure point, along the lovely winding mountain Highway 4 with a photo stop at the Gilman tunnels and waterfall. Then we will lunch together after the hike at Los Ojos in Jemez Springs. This easy pine forest hike alongside the mountain stream is about 3 miles round trip with 50 feet of elevation gain. Join us for a dose of nature and camaraderie. Bring your own water, and wear outer layers as temperatures can range from 40-70 degrees. This hike is appropriate for children over 12 accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. No dogs. Covid 19 precautions will be taken as appropriate. Register at the link

below no later than Oct. 25.

Trip Leader: June Parsons, 832-723-4533, comicsilver@gmail.com.

Level: Easy

Location: Jemez Mountains, North of Jemez Springs

Sign up: riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

Saturday, Dec 18: Full Moon Snowshoe Hike on Sandia Crest.

Crisp night air and the reflection of the moon's rays onto glistening snow. Meet at 5 p.m. at the Sandia Crest parking lot. This three-hour outing is approximately 2.5 miles round trip with 150 feet of elevation gain. We'll depart from the Sandia crest parking lot and proceed along the crest trail with several stops to enjoy stunning views all the way to the continental divide. We'll cover tips for safely traversing on snowshoes and winter hiking. If there's insufficient snow, this will be a full moon hike. Sponsored by the Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome.

'Sierran' publication information

The *Rio Grande Sierran* is published four times a year, in January, April, July and October, by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club as a benefit for members in New Mexico and West Texas. The opinions expressed in signed articles in the *Sierran* are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club. Products and services advertised in the *Sierran* are not necessarily endorsed by 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*.

Participants must be in good physical condition and tolerate high elevation. Appropriate for children over 14 with parent or legal guardian. No dogs, please. Register no later than Dec. 12 at the link below. A recommended gear list and additional information will be provided to registrants on Dec. 13.

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

Level: Moderate

Location: East Mountains of Albuquerque

Sign up: riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

Saturday, Jan. 15: Intro to Snowshoeing on Sandia Crest.

If you can walk, you can snowshoe! Meet at 10 a.m. at Sandia Crest. This three-hour long outing is approximately 2.5 miles round trip with 150 feet of elevation gain. We'll depart from the Sandia Crest parking lot and proceed along the crest trail with several stops to enjoy stunning views all the way to the continental divide. We'll cover tips for safely traversing on snowshoes 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. Register by Jan. 10. A recommended gear list will be provided to registrants on Jan. 11.

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

Level: Moderate

Location: East Mountains of Albuquerque

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar