



Volume 61, Issue 2

News of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter: New Mexico & West Texas

April / May / June 2023

Rio Grande Sierran

PROTECTED

Years of local advocacy win National Monument designation for Castner Range. Page 3.



Photo by Mark Clune



Photo by David McGahey

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Photo by Jeromy Parsell

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Photo by David McGahey

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EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET



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Inside:

Air board blocks asphalt plant

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Front-page banner photo: Mark Clune

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‘Sierran’ publication information

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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*.

Castner Range a National Monument

BY MONA BLABER

Rio Grande Chapter
communications director

ON MARCH 21, President Joe Biden announced the designation of Castner Range near El Paso, Texas, along with Nevada’s Avi Kwa Áme, as the nation’s newest national monuments. Castner Range, in Fort Bliss in the Chihuahuan Desert, will encompass about 7,000 acres that contain prehistoric habitations and agriculture dating back more than 10,000 years and rare and endangered wildlife. In the past, Castner Range served as a training and testing site for the U.S. Army during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. The Rio Grande Chapter’s El Paso Group has worked for years within local coalitions to protect the range and its historic beauty.

“It has been a long, long battle for National Monument designation, almost 30 years,” said El Paso Group Chair Laurence Gibson. “Early on, we fought and lost over and over. The Texas Department of Transportation got a chunk of this unique landscape. The US Border Patrol got a piece of it. Then, when El Paso’s Regional Economic Development Corporation targeted it for development, we fought and won.” The development forces were hindered by unexploded ordnance that littered the thousands of acres of the range, making it too dangerous for immediate development. Castner Range is the ancestral homeland of the Comanche and Apache people, and its cultural ecology is considered sacred to several



Photo by Mark Clune

President Biden designated El Paso’s Castner Range a National Monument on March 21.

Indigenous communities. Many community members, working through organizations like the Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition, gradually raised awareness of Castner as a potential partner of Franklin Mountains State Park, the largest urban wilderness park in the nation, Gibson said. “If there is any one person who deserves credit for this victory, it must be our late member, Judith (Judy) Ackerman,” who led coalition efforts to protect Castner for years, he said. Biden also designated Avi Kwa Ame National Monument

in Nevada. The Fort Mojave tribe has long crusaded for protection of Avi Kwa Áme, which they consider sacred. “When we conserve our country’s natural gifts, we’re not just protecting the livelihoods of people who depend on them ... we’re protecting the heart and the soul of our national pride,” Biden said. “We’re protecting pieces of history.” Together the designations provide permanent protection for roughly 514,000 acres of unique Southwestern landscapes. U.S. Rep. Veronica Escobar brought Secretary of Interior

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Deb Haaland to El Paso for an on-site visit last year and had

advocated for the designation to President Biden. “I’m absolutely thrilled about the designation,” Escobar said in a statement. “This historic announcement has been decades in the making. Generations of activists have dedicated countless hours and resources toward achieving this once seemingly impossible goal. It brings me such joy to know that El Pasoans will soon be able to enjoy the beauty of this majestic, expansive landmark for years to come.” “So Hallelujah, and kudos to all who worked for this achievement,” Gibson said.

EIB allows polluting Alto plant to move forward

BY ALTO COALITION
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
PRESERVATION

The Alto Coalition for Environmental Preservation vehemently disagrees with the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board’s March 24 decision to overturn the Environment Department’s permit denial and allow Roper Construction to build its concrete batch plant near homes and protected spaces in Alto. The Alto coalition’s rigorous analysis and conclusion (unchallenged by the New Mexico Environment Department or Roper) that air-quality standards would not be met if Environmental Protection Agency standards are used was dismissed by the board, under the pretense that the Environment Department was not

required to use the EPA standards. The Environmental Improvement Board ignored Roper’s lack of data and detail describing how it would suppress emissions to meet air-quality standards, using a yet-to-be-specified dust-suppression system. The unprecedented volume of public objection, including hundreds of written and spoken comments, against the plant, and the adverse impacts to the public, were only briefly acknowledged by two EIB members. We are also dismayed by the level of unpreparedness and misunderstanding displayed by EIB members and their legal counsel during the March 24 public meeting. The Alto coalition will continue to pursue legal options to prevent the construction and operation of the proposed concrete batch plant.

Southern New Mexico Group Earth Day hikes and picnic

Join the Sierra Club Southern New Mexico Group for an Earth Day event on Saturday, April 22. Mother Earth Needs a Hug! **Where:** Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument **What:** Choice of two morning hikes and a picnic. At noon, we’ll enjoy a picnic lunch provided by the Southern New Mexico Group at the La Cueva Picnic Pavilion. We’ll get a legislative summary from our chapter lobbyist, Luis Guerrero, with special appearances from elected officials. Bring your own beverage. Parking fee paid by Sierra Club. **1:30:** Farewell Sign up at organmountainsdesertpeaks.org under “Events.” You may do a hike and the picnic or just one or the other. La Cueva hike led by Garrett

Leitermann, BLM archeologist. Longer hike led by a Friends of Organ Mountains docent. For more info, contact Gayle Eads at Gayle.s.eads@gmail.com. See you there! **Southern New Mexico Group contacts** **Chair and Outings:** Howie Dash howiedash@aol.com 575-652-7550 **Treasurer:** Cheryl Blevins spotblev@earthlink.net 575-524-4861 **Secretary and Wildlife:** Mary Katherine Ray mkrscrim@gmail.com, 575-772-5655 **Political:** Gayle Eads gayle.s.eads@gmail.com **Chapter rep:** Kurt Anderson kurt@nmsu.edu, 575-646-1032 Dan Lorimier, dlorimier1948@gmail.com

2023 NEW MEXICO LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NM deserves longer sessions, paid legislature

Zero, Zip, Nada. That is what the men and women elected to represent us receive for their service in the New Mexico Legislature.

Some of these legislators are single parents, juggling their attendance at interim committee hearings around this large state with their childcare obligations and employment demands. New Mexico is the only unsalaried legislature in the United States.

These elected state senators and representatives also have zero, zip, nada flexibility to change the length of legislative sessions.

Why? Because the New Mexico constitution provides

for session length and does not allow salaries for legislators, except for \$192 mileage and per diem reimbursement.

Today's legislature faces demands not contemplated in 1912, when our constitution was created. Most legislators were farmers who were able to travel to Santa Fe for a winter session. They would go to the capitol in their horse and buggy, review some bill proposals, pass a budget, and go home for the rest of the winter. Legislators' workload has increased with the complexity of the economy and social issues, and sessions are too short to permit thoughtful study and debate on long-term economic and environmental



SUSAN MARTIN
Rio Grande Chapter chair

challenges. Short sessions also enable delaying tactics by fossil-fuel and utility lobbyists to run out the clock on bills that would regulate their industries to minimize pollution. In such cases, interested legislators and the environmental community must wait two years before another opportunity to protect to protect our air, water, land, communities and health.

Our legislators are without a paycheck for their work, and in most cases, they have no staff to perform constituent services. Rep. Joy Garratt noted that her constituents vocally complained to her, saying, "Your staff doesn't call me back."

She and most of her colleagues recognize that the lack of staff limits their ability to respond to constituents and increases reliance on paid lobbyists for information and research on bills before them.

State Sen. Katy Duhigg stated, "Now only the rich or the retired can serve."

We are blessed with committed and truly bright legislators, but they deserve

support and the resources to do the best job possible.

The dilemma of an unpaid, understaffed legislature can be addressed with state constitutional amendments, which require a vote of the Legislature and a referral to the voters.

There is some good news in that the 2023 legislature provided funding to allow resources for professionalizing legislative staff and providing additional year-round employees, but there's more to do to ensure longer, more meaningful sessions supported by legislators from all walks and stages of life.

NM says 'no' to high-level nuclear waste



Photo courtesy Jeff Steinborn

From left, Brendan Shaughnessy, Susan Schuurman, Eileen O'Shaughnessy, Sen. Jeff Steinborn, Patricia Cardona and Leona Morgan celebrate the passage of SB53 at the Roundhouse on March 17.

BY PATRICIA CARDONA
Rio Grande Chapter Nuclear-Waste Team

On the last full day of the 2023 legislative session, New Mexico said "no" to being the nation's nuclear dump.

The Legislature took a firm step toward developing a fairer solution for storing 30 million high-level "spent fuel" rods from commercial nuclear power plants by passing SB53, which would prevent the state from issuing permits for the storage site proposed for southeast New Mexico by Holtec International.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed the legislation within hours of it passing the House.

SB53 requires: no permits or licenses be issued for the building of an "interim" storage site for spent fuel rods until there is a permanent repository in operation as required by federal law; consent from the state before creating a high-level waste disposal site; no political subdivision may approve or certify a permit, contract, lease or license necessary for construction or operation of a high-level waste disposal or storage site without New Mexico's consent.

Sponsored by state Sen. Jeff Steinborn and Reps. Matthew McQueen, Debbie

Sariñana and Patricia Roybal Caballero, SB53 also strengthens the Radioactive Waste Consultation Task Force, adding members to investigate and study the impacts of nuclear waste storage facilities on New Mexico.

Sierra Club policy calls for high-level waste to be stored in the closest, safest location to its source of production. Federal law requires the operation of a permanent storage site before a government interim site is established. No permanent site has been identified yet, which suggests that the Holtec site is intended to become a permanent storage site for the nation's spent fuel rods.

SB53 helps to prevent displacement of New Mexico's existing economy adjacent to Holtec's proposal site. The area includes recreational, tourist and agricultural businesses as well as extensive oil and gas facilities and other industrial activities, including nuclear facilities WIPP and Urenco on the New Mexico side.

Along the Texas/New Mexico border, the ISP/WCS site in Texas stores low-level waste from decommissioning sites. ISP/WCS has been issued a license by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for storage of high-level waste. The Texas legislature has already passed a law similar to SB53

preventing the storage of high-level waste in Texas.

The Holtec proposal does not provide payment of losses to the state due to emergency service required for operation of the proposed storage site nor to private citizens due to personal injury or property damage, loss of jobs or businesses due to the operation of the proposed storage site. Insurance companies do not pay for property damage or injuries caused by radioactive matter. The Holtec proposal appears to shift much of the cost onto New Mexico taxpayers.

New Mexico has the right to define its economic future, and most importantly not harm what makes our Land of Enchantment so special. We want to protect our state's recreational tourist and cultural economy.

After Gov. Lujan Grisham signed SB53 into law on March 17, she issued a letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, calling on them to pause the permitting process. The commission soon after announced a delay in the expected issue of the license, from March to May.

If the federal permit is issued, Holtec might then apply for required state permits and file legal challenges when the state denies the permits.

Statements on SB53 passage

Statements from anti-nuclear advocates in response to New Mexico passing SB53 into law:

NM Sen. Jeff Steinborn, sponsor:
"Today was a great win for New Mexico and the country. We protected our state from this short-sighted and long-term dangerous plan and in doing so, pushed the federal government toward what needs to be the real solution, which is a permanent repository."

Rose Gardner, Alliance for Environmental Strategies co-founder, Lea County resident:
"A decisive vote on SB53 proves that New Mexico knows that Holtec's vision of a massive nuclear-waste dump storing the nation's high-level waste here is not welcome."

Leona Morgan, Diné anti-nuclear activist and community organizer:
"This is a momentous step forward to show the world that we can protect ourselves from never-ending radioactive waste. Our communities will no longer allow our Sacred Homelands to be sacrificed and contaminated by nuclear colonialism!"

Wendy Atcitty, NAEVA:
"It's time for New Mexico to say 'no' to a nuclear gateway to let toxic waste travel through tribal lands. We say 'no' to the past uranium mines that scar our landscape and contaminate our water. We say 'no' to all nuclear waste that continues the trauma in health for our people. We say 'no' to Holtec's high-level nuclear waste that would've made more communities susceptible to this toxic-dump disaster. Protection is now, not when a spill, leak, derailment, or people are sick for many generations."

Patricia Cardona, policy analyst for Southwest Alliance For A Safe Future (SAFE):
"We congratulate the New Mexico Legislature for passing SB53. A broad coalition of

groups, including SAFE, evaluated the Holtec project as net loss of land and water for New Mexico, which could be better used for diversifying New Mexico's economy."

John Buchser, Rio Grande Chapter Nuclear Waste Chair:
"The broad, sustained support of New Mexicans made this important step possible. The much-needed next step is to have our Congress allow the process of studying specific long-term disposal sites across the country. Nuclear power is not a safe solution to slowing climate change unless we have a safe place to store the waste for a million years. Humans have a 10,000-year history of applying technology. It will clearly be a technological challenge to safely store radioactive waste for 1,000,000 years."

Camilla Feibelman, Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter director:
"Communities that opted to host nuclear power plants got the energy, jobs and property taxes, but Holtec would allow them to export the costs to the communities along the rail lines and to New Mexico. This legislation said 'no.' The federal government needs to follow its own law and identify a permanent storage facility before making us the country's de facto nuclear-waste dump."

Douglas Meiklejohn, advocate for water quality:
"Conservation Voters New Mexico is grateful to the Legislature for taking this step to protect our beautiful state."

Noah Long, NRDC, Western director of the Climate and Clean Energy Program:
"What the federal government, industry and everyone else should be doing is working to find the right consent-based path to geologic repositories in a manner that is both scientifically defensible and publicly accepted."

Struggles and some big victories

BY RIO GRANDE CHAPTER LOBBYING TEAM

We have once again emerged from New Mexico’s annual production of “Everything Everywhere All at Once.”

The 2023 New Mexico legislative session may not have delivered on all our hopes, given a \$3.6 billion surplus and a prime opportunity to pass economy-wide climate standards and transition funding for fossil-fuel workers, but it did leave us with a thrilling finale.

A big win: On the last evening of the session, the House passed SB53 (Steinborn, McQueen, Sariñana, Roybal Caballero), which will prevent state agencies from permitting Holtec’s “temporary” storage site for all the nation’s high-level nuclear waste. Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed it into law within hours.

Many organizations contributed with action alerts, especially in the crucial final days, when your calls, emails and texts had legislators’ phones buzzing nonstop. See Page 4 for more about SB53.

Climate tax credits: **HB547**, the final tax package sent to the governor, includes a suite of climate-protecting tax credits: a geothermal energy tax credit, a heat-pump tax credit, an energy-storage credit, changes allowing energy storage systems to be eligible for industrial revenue bonds, and credits for purchasing or leasing electric vehicles and home chargers, which are transferable so that buyers can use them to lower the price at point of sale. This amounts to tens of millions of dollars annually that our state will invest in climate solutions. We’ll keep you posted on how you can take advantage of these credits.

SB9, Legacy Permanent Fund (Wirth, Neville): Another powerful bill that made it across the finish line creates a permanent fund, the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund, for conservation projects. The Legacy Fund will be initially funded from this year’s General Fund and eventually from interest generated by the permanent fund. The fund could help protect the state from wildfire and drought and invests in outdoor recreation.

HB4, the Voting Rights Act (Martinez, Duhigg, Chasey, Johnson, Lara), will: Allow the option to vote by mail in every election so you don’t have to reapply each time; automatically restore voting rights for those who have completed their prison terms; automatically register people to vote when they confirm their citizenship



Photo by David McGahey

Sen. Liz Stefanics led Global Warming Express and New Mexico International School students in a mock committee hearing during Climate Justice Day at the Roundhouse in February.

and residency at the MVD; increase collaboration between tribal leaders and election clerks, standardize early voting on tribal lands, and guarantee resources for polling places and secure ballot drop boxes on tribal lands.

HB2 (General Appropriations): Each year we track the budget process, advocating for environmental agency investments. We pushed for greater appropriations for the Environment Department, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, State Engineer and Game and Fish Department. We pushed for greater specificity in a \$50 million appropriation for “advanced energy” that will now be divided among agencies for oversight and enforcement, economic transition for oil and gas workers, geothermal development and to ensure proper San Juan plant and mine remediation. We’ll need to advocate for the remainder of this \$50 million to ensure it goes to real climate solutions. We also helped advocate for \$7.5 million for the Strategic Water Reserve, which leases water to keep our rivers flowing (see Page 6). Your efforts helped restore \$2 million for species of greatest conservation need. And finally we worked to assure the proper appropriation of Energy Transition Act funds to the granting agencies.

HB142 San Juan Cleanup (Allison, Szczepanski, Matthews): This requires the Environment Department to hire third-party overseers to ensure the remediation and demolition of San Juan coal plant and mine are done properly and won’t harm nearby families and air, soil and water. (PNM also must fulfill its 10-year-old consent decree with Sierra Club, which requires the company to prevent coal ash from flowing to the San Juan

River, before owners complete plant demolition). At press time, this bill is awaiting the governor’s signature.

HB449 Displaced Worker Eligibility (Allison, Duncan, Montoya, Lane): This expands the benefits of the Energy Transition Act funding to San Juan plant and mine workers who were laid off a year or more before the coal plant closed for good in September 2022. Funds were also added to the ETA Workforce Development Fund beyond what PNM deposited at the plant’s closing. We’ll work this year to make sure those funds get swiftly and equitably distributed to community projects and workers.

HB365: Geothermal Center and Fund (Ortiz y Pino, Ferrary, Lujan, Sariñana, Roybal Caballero): Geothermal is a renewable, 24/7 energy resource, and New Mexico is sixth in the nation in geothermal potential. This funds a geothermal resource center at NM Tech and offers funding to further develop geothermal resources in the state.

HB95 makes the Renewable Energy Office in the State Land Office permanent (Lujan, Sariñana).

SB337 Water Security Planning (Stefanics, Herrera) authorizes the Interstate Stream Commission to make loans and grants to facilitate regional water planning.

Other good bills that passed

SB1, Regional Water System Resiliency, allowing regional water authorities.

HB184, Game Commission Appointment process, broadening and diversifying commission membership. As of press time, this bill awaits the governor’s signature.

SB72, Create Wildlife Corridors, allowing for the creation of a Corridors plan

SB182, restoring the Recycling and Waste Coordinator at Environment Department. This had not yet

been signed by the governor as of press time.

SB206 and **HB195**, Improving agency response to forest fires and restoration.

HB228, which allows businesses to add energy-efficiency investments to their tax assessments.

Important legislation that didn’t pass

HB218, (Ortez, Rubio, Stewart, Lente, Borrego) which would have enabled lower utility rates for low-income New Mexicans, once again failed to advance to the governor’s desk, mostly because of opposition by electric cooperatives.

HB188 (Rubio, Ortez, Allison, Serrato, Johnson), which would have created an Economic Transition Division at the Environment Department, passed its first committee but was never heard in House Appropriations and Finance, though some funds may be directed toward related uses from the \$50 million appropriation for advanced energy technology and energy transition in HB2.

SB418 (Jaramillo) would have updated the 1935 Oil and Gas Act to promote safer bonding levels so taxpayers aren’t left with cleanup bills; allowed setbacks from homes, schools, etc.; created an environmental-justice advisory council; and lifted the cap on civil penalties for violations. This will be back next year.

SB164, Future Oil and Gas Lease Royalty Rates

HB432, Plastic-Waste Reduction Act

HB426, Clean Fuels Standards


SB77, New Home-Build Renewable Requirements

SB432 Low-Income Solar Act

SB520, Clean Future Act. We’ve worked with many organizations and legislators for several years for comprehensive climate legislation, but it again did not make it this session,

Thank you to 35 North for their donation of hot cocoa and whipped cream for Climate Justice Day! You made many kids and adults warmer and happier!

Please support 35 North Coffee and Pastelaria, 60 E. San Francisco St., Santa Fe.



including this stripped-down version.

SB56, Distributed Generation Facility Supply Cap, which would have removed limits on how much rooftop solar you can generate at your home or business.

Legislative reforms like professional salaries for legislators and longer sessions, which would help ensure there is time to pass critical legislation, did not make it through both chambers.

Bad stuff that failed:

HB12 would have appropriated \$50 million for public-private partnerships for vaguely worded “advanced energy technology,” which could have been a blank check to hydrogen projects and dangerous and unproven carbon sequestration. The \$50 million remained in the appropriations bill, but much of it is now earmarked for positive uses such as economic transition for frontline workers, geothermal development funding, oversight of San Juan plant and mine cleanup, and energy transition.

HB174 would have enabled climate-damaging hydrogen projects and prolonged the use of oil, gas and coal by funding the state’s effort to gain primacy over Class VI wells, used to sequester carbon underground. Currently, the EPA regulates these wells and takes much longer to permit them than the two states that have primacy. The bill did not advance, but the state will still pursue primacy.

A host of bills that would have prohibited electrification in building codes or given tax breaks to the oil and gas industry also failed.

Thank you and what’s next

Thanks to the organizations that led on so many of these bills and the legislators who championed policies that help New Mexicans. Most importantly, thank YOU. Your participation in hearings and contact with legislators really made a difference.

The sum of what we achieved is strong but doesn’t match the urgency of the climate crisis. We will strive, with your support, to advance legislation to once again put our state in the lead of protecting our children and grandchildren from the worst consequences of the climate crisis.

Gratitude, Connection, Protection

A time for GWE to pause, reflect and move forward

BY GENIE STEVENS

Rio Grande Chapter
Global Warming Express

Eleven years ago, Marina Weber-Stevens gave her first speech at the press conference of what was then Renewable Energy Day at the New Mexico Roundhouse.

Marina's teddy bear wore the first GWE shirt seen at the Roundhouse. She had just turned 9. Her 1-minute speech created quite a stir. No kids had ever spoken at the Roundhouse about global warming and species destruction before.

One year later, the Global Warming Express nonprofit (theglobalwarmingexpress.org/) and its after-school programming started. Seven years later, the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club adopted the program. Global Warming Expressers have been speaking, testifying, performing dances, songs, plays and puppet shows at the Legislature for all these years, even during the pandemic.

Ten years of kids raising their voices to capture the attention of the grownups in charge. Ten years of rallies, marches, book publications, committee hearings attended, art events, science events, fairs, letters written, city and county meetings, bills being

passed (plastic bag ban in Santa Fe, 10-cent fees on paper bags in Albuquerque), bills being revoked, solar installations being built, recycling being implemented, gardens being born, school parking lot idling ending, tree plantings and more tree plantings, EPA hearings and many awards.

If the kids' voices had won the day, our programs would no longer need to exist. If our kids' voices had helped to strike the chord that caused the Big Change, we would not be reading the latest warnings from the United Nations and World Health Organization.

But that's not been the case.

So, this year, on the Global W.E./GWE's 11th year, the kids did what they always do. They made exquisite artwork, wrote and practiced speeches and headed to the Roundhouse on Climate Justice Day, wearing their now-recognized blue t-shirts. Due to the Covid outbreak in the building, some kids stayed outdoors and some kids masked up and went indoors to attend a mock committee hearing coached by Camilla Feibelman and run by Paul Biderman and Sen. Liz Stefanics. Outside, all kids marched and chanted to the sound of African drums, and six girls, including GWE



Photo by David McGahey

Global Warming Express participants marched and spoke at a Climate Justice Day rally at the Roundhouse in February to urge New Mexico leaders to act urgently to address the climate crisis.

veteran Sierra Woosley, who identifies as deaf/blind, gave speeches. Despite the odds and the obstacles, the Global Warming Expressers' chant was three words:

Gratitude, Connection,

Protection. The mandalas they drew showed who and what they are grateful for, who and what they feel connected to and who and what they feel protected by and want to protect.

Take a moment. What is your mental list of those categories?

In the 10 years to come, the kids' voices will continue to ring out for accountability and change. Yet, in these next 10 years, there is much more for the Global W.E./GWE to teach them, in addition to their S.T.E.A.M.-based program.

What does a world so damaged, yet so beautifully connected to us all need? What do we need? Gratitude, connection and protection is a good start. Slowing down, breathing, listening, being silent, learning from the wild things, learning how to live with the wild things, learning from elders, coming to know traditions, learning old ways and creating new rituals, taking responsibility, trusting, experiencing awe, which leads to lifetime wonder and embodying a new, internal confidence that none of us grownups had to learn in our day — how to move through the fear and into possibility. To always feel the possibility.

Whatever the next 10 years brings, the Global W.E./GWE kids will be taking the lead in learning to be present in it and to whatever the following 10 years will require.

Learn. Dream. Do. Inspire. Kids change the world.

How did water bills do in 2023?

BY DALE DOREMUS
AND TRICIA SNYDER

Chapter Water Team

New Mexico made progress on protecting and conserving our waterways during the 2023 legislative session, though many bills related to water policy did not pass. We highlight below a few important policy and funding appropriations that were successful.

SB1, Regional Water System Resiliency Act: This new law, sponsored by Sens. Peter Wirth and Liz Stefanics with Rep. Susan Herrera, allows small water and wastewater systems to voluntarily combine into regional water authorities. By providing a legal framework for these entities to collaborate, small domestic water and wastewater associations can improve their ability to ensure communities across New Mexico have access to clean, safe, and reliable water.

SB337, Water Security Planning (Sen. Stefanics, Rep. Herrera) creates a framework for the Interstate Stream Commission to establish rules and guidelines to transform the state's regional water planning process with a focus on resilience and sustainability. The rulemaking and guideline process will determine many of the details as to how these

regional water plans will be developed. At a minimum, regions will identify priority projects and policies to increase water security. In addition, it authorizes the Interstate Stream Commission to make loans and grants to facilitate regional water planning.

The bill was developed in collaboration with members of Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's 2022 Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force. Because so many of the details are left up to the rulemaking and guideline process, we will need to heavily engage to ensure that this effort is set up in a way that promotes equal decision-making powers to advocate for different water uses and recognizes the importance of species and habitat protection and the value and quality of life that waterways bring to all who live and recreate in New Mexico.

Budget: In the state's final budget, the Strategic Water Reserve received its largest appropriation since it was enacted in 2005. This important tool provides a mechanism for the state to purchase or lease water rights to be released into New Mexico's waterways for two purposes: for the benefit of endangered or threatened species and to meet our downstream obligations through

interstate compacts. Your efforts helped secure \$7.5 million to lease water rights from the Jicarilla Apache Nation, through a finalized 10-year lease, and purchase or lease statewide as other opportunities for voluntary acquisitions from other water-rights owners arise. However, because this funding has a time limit of one year to be expended, this advocacy will have to continue. Water-rights transactions are complicated and can often take years to complete, so it is imperative that money be available for a greater length of time for this tool to be most effective.

SB9: New Mexico now has dedicated, permanent conservation funding through the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund. This historic investment provides funding for six state agencies to protect New Mexico's communities against wildfire, flood, and drought.

This multiyear effort involved a diverse coalition working collaboratively to establish a permanent fund that creates a \$50 million fund to be expended annually on programs like the River Stewardship Program and Outdoor Equity Program.

See Page 5 for more about the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund.



Photo courtesy Raymond Greenwell

Inspiring Connections Outdoors is a program that makes the outdoors more accessible to all youth. If you're interested in volunteering, contact Ray Greenwell at matrng@hofstra.edu.

Sierra Club Inspiring Connections outdoors

BY RAYMOND GREENWELL

If you'd like to get outdoors more and help urban youth share in your experiences, please consider the following volunteer opportunity.

Sierra Club Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) is a community outreach program that provides opportunities for urban youth (and also adults) to explore, enjoy and protect the natural world. ICO is dedicated to providing outdoor opportunities to people who would not otherwise have them, including low-income youth of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. ICO is made up

entirely of volunteer leaders who work to provide young people with outdoor recreational opportunities, leadership training, positive group experiences, and environmental education, while sharing a love of nature and the outdoors.

ICO in Northern New Mexico works with Santa Fe Youth Shelters and Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Santa Fe. Our outings are usually fairly easy hikes. If you think you might be interested in helping, contact Raymond N. Greenwell at matrng@hofstra.edu.

For more information, visit riograndesierraclub.org/ico/.

Legislative wins and losses for wildlife

BY MARY KATHERINE RAY
Rio Grande Chapter
Wildlife chair

New Mexico has passed significant protections for wildlife in the past four years, including bans on public-lands trapping and coyote-killing contests. But many species are still in peril. Below is a progress report from the 2023 session:

Passed: Hundreds of wild animals are killed every year in vehicle crashes on highways in New Mexico, but now a bill, SB72, to fund highway wildlife crossings has become law. This follows a recently passed law to study and identify collision hotspots where crossings would be most effective. Once these crossings are in place, as projects in other states have shown, wild animals remarkably understand how to use them. Many lives of deer, elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, black bears, and cougars will be saved. Other animals and even human lives will potentially be saved too. Thank you to Sen. Mimi Stewart for her sponsorship and Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham for her signature to make safe wildlife passages a reality!

On the governor’s desk: The state Game Commission, a seven-member board appointed by the governor, has been in disarray for years. HB184, reform the commission, passed both chambers with surprising and significant bipartisan support. A number of groups with very diverse wildlife views emerged to support the bill in committee hearings, reflecting the dire need for reform.

HB184 defines the qualifications of four of the commission seats to ensure a diversity of perspectives. One



Photo by Mary Katherine Ray

Wild animals like these pronghorn will soon have safe crossings over busy highways after the passage of SB72.

seat would go to an owner of a ranch or farm, one to a hunter or angler, one to a representative of a conservation organization concerned primarily with non-game wildlife conservation, and one to a scientist with at least a master’s degree in a wildlife-related field of study. These positions would be appointed by the Legislature. The Governor would retain appointment power over three seats based on state geography. The bill also requires that commissioners could only be removed for a stated cause, bringing stability and independence to the board. In

our age of climate chaos and mass extinction, we cannot afford to take wild nature for granted. Wild animals are too important to the functioning of their biotic communities, to the state’s economy, and to the people of New Mexico, both present and future, to leave to political forces. HB184 is awaiting the Governor’s signature at the time of this writing. She has until April 7 to sign.

Did not pass: HB486 would have renamed the Department of Game and Fish to the Department of Wildlife, broadened the mission and



Photo by Mary Katherine Ray

Prairie Dogs, though a crucial keystone species, remain unprotected after HB 486 did not advance.

authority of the department to include all native species, even insects, and raised the fees for hunting and fishing licenses. HB183 would have transferred the Department of Game and Fish, which is now a standalone agency, to the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department as a division, similar to the way state parks are managed now. Both bills each had only one committee hearing.

Hearty thank-yous to Rep. Matthew McQueen, who sponsored these visionary wildlife governance bills.



Photo by Robin Silver

This is one of the Seco Creek wolves whose death is now under investigation. Wolves did well last year, but more needs to be done to stop illegal killing.

A banner year for lobos

BY MARY KATHERINE RAY
Chapter Wildlife chair

At the end of each year, the US Fish and Wildlife Service embarks on a process to locate and count each Mexican wolf in the wild. The results are in. In 2022, the wild wolf population grew from 196 to 241, a 23 percent increase. There are more lobos in the wild than any time since reintroduction began 25 years ago.

Nevertheless, advocates must continue to pressure the US Fish and Wildlife Service to address the decline in wolf genetic diversity. Today, all Mexican wolves in the wild are as closely related as siblings. The agency has been attempting to insert more

diverse genes into the wild population by cross-fostering pups with important DNA from captive litters into wild dens since 2016. But of the 83 cross-fostered pups since then, only 14 are alive today. The pace is too slow and more needs to be done. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services could and should release entire families of genetically valuable, well bonded parents and their pups into the wild at once.

Also, given that Colorado will soon be restoring Northern gray wolves in that state, allowing the subspecies to meet, mate, and exchange DNA would provide a welcome influx of new genes for the Mexican wolf population. Historically, this is what the wolf population

of North America looked like. There were gradations of subspecies from Mexico to Canada, though most are now extinct. In order for this to take place, Mexican wolves should be allowed to roam to suitable habitats north of the arbitrary boundaries set on paper to satisfy political rules and not ecological ones.

So much has been done to restore wild wolves, which were so callously extirpated. Celebrations are in order for how well wolves are doing. But the population remains fragile and more work is needed to ensure their robust future as keystone members of wild nature and to continue to educate the public about the key role that apex species play in the health of our ecosystems.

Zero Waste team visits Styrofoam recycler

BY LAURIE ZUNNER
Zero Waste chair

That's right! Styrofoam, the trademark name for expanded polystyrene, scourge of environmentalists on par with single-use plastics, is now being recycled in Albuquerque.

An inconspicuous storage unit on Second Street NW is marked with a small, green sign: The Foam Recycler. Central Group's Zero Waste Team and a group of curious folks recently visited the spunky startup. Business owner Tom Spadafora told us, "I just didn't want all of this going to the landfill." After a year of retirement from Operations Management, he wanted to do something constructive.

During six months of research, he learned that recycled, condensed polystyrene is useful for making rigid foam insulation, crown molding, picture frames and other durable products. He bought a used densifier which grinds and compresses the foam, squeezing out the air and producing a thick sausage-like rope of hardened polystyrene. The amount of HCFCs released in the process is negligible,



Photo by Laurie Zunner
The Central New Mexico Zero Waste team took a field trip to Albuquerque's The Foam Recycler in March.

Tom says, and the densifier meets all EPA standards. When further compressed into 50- to 60-pound bricks, the reconfigured Styrofoam is ready for sale. Buyers need to obtain a minimum of 15,000 pounds or a truckload of 150 blocks to use as raw material for their manufacturing processes.

Spadafora is actively seeking suppliers of expanded polystyrene to create enough blocks for his first shipment. He has approached neighborhood associations and small businesses, but individuals can also participate. The public is invited to drop off clean Styrofoam in collection bins at The Foam Recycler, 6204 2nd St. NW, Unit D, Albuquerque. Donations must be free of stickers, labels and dirt. Since foam peanuts can be either polystyrene or cornstarch based, they are not accepted along with food-stained takeout containers.

The Foam Recycler works to reduce the amount of polystyrene dumped in the Cerro Colorado landfill, which, if comparable to other landfills in the nation, can be as much as 30% by volume.

The public is invited to drop off clean Styrofoam in collection bins at The Foam Recycler, 6204 2nd St. NW, Unit D, Albuquerque. Donations must be free of stickers, labels and dirt.

Polystyrene poses many environmental and health issues, from the creation of hazardous waste in its manufacturing to leaching carcinogens and neurotoxins into hot food and drink from takeout containers. Still, recycling Styrofoam is a good interim step until it can be replaced with eco-friendly alternatives. Tom Spadafora can be contacted at info@thefoamrecycler.com.

Air board blocks Mountain View asphalt plant

BY DIANE REESE
Central New Mexico Group chair

In early 2021, we told you about plans to build another hot-mix asphalt plant in Mountain View, a South Valley neighborhood of primarily low-income people of color where there are already two asphalt plants operating.

The community has a long history of farming. However, zoning actions in the 1970s led to a concentration of toxic industry replacing the

farmland. In 2020, the City of Albuquerque's Environmental Health Department granted a permit for the plant. It would have been built at the south end of the Mountain View neighborhood, just across the tracks from homes and farms and directly across I-25 from Isleta Pueblo on one side and the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge on the other. It would further pollute the air for Mountain View, the Refuge, and the Pueblo.

Supported by the New Mexico Environmental

Law Center, a community coalition composed of the Mountain View Neighborhood Association, Mountain View Community Action, and Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge appealed the issuance of the air permit. On Feb. 8, the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board voted unanimously to deny further actions on the permit, in short, ending this years-long effort to pollute this community further.

The community remains

vigilant. At the December 2022 hearing, the coalition requested that the Air Quality Control Board adopt comprehensive rulemaking that ensures polluters are fully held to account for all aspects of air pollution for any proposed projects, as well as keeping community health the priority and considering cumulative impacts. Known as the Health, Environment and Equity Impact Regulation, it will require review and consideration of health, environment, and equity

impacts in air-quality permitting decisions. Nine health indicators must be screened and community input must be considered in any decision. A date for a hearing on this proposed rule has not yet been scheduled, but we can still take action while waiting!

Please let the Air Quality Control Board members know you appreciate their decision to deny the asphalt plants and ask that they support the proposed regulation at airboard@cabq.gov.

Sierra Club Member Appreciation Picnic

Calling all Sierra Club members! With summer approaching, let's head to the mountains!

Join the members and friends of the Rio Grande Chapter Central New Mexico Group who have survived a global pandemic, come through legislative sessions, knocked on doors to get out the vote, canvassed, led outings, and faced a Pandora's box of other challenges. We want to show our appreciation with a picnic!

When: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, July 2

Where: Doc Long Picnic Site in the Cibola National Forest

Bring a potluck offering to share.

If your last name starts with A-G, bring appetizers and salads; if your last name starts with F-R, entrée; S-Z names bring dessert. Drinks, chips, plates, utensils and napkins will be provided by the Central Group and there will be a few other surprises during the day. Carpooling will be available. So that we have an attendee estimate, please RSVP at <https://www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/> no later than June 26.

If you'd like to volunteer to help us organize this event, contact Terry Owen, teowen@comcast.net.

Central New Mexico Group contacts



Courtesy Terry Owen

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Ramping up efforts to stop mine

BY TERESA SEAMSTER

Rio Grande Chapter
Mining Committee

In the aftermath of the devastating Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon fire last year, the multiyear pause on the Environmental Assessment of a mining application in Tererro may be ending.

For several years, Comexico LLC has filed incomplete replies to some of the requests from Santa Fe National Forest and responsible agencies for information on how the company will mitigate environmental impacts from their proposed exploratory drilling in the upper Pecos Watershed. To date, the required EA has not been completed and no permits have been issued.

Since the first 20 mining claims were filed by Comexico LLC in 2019, their plans have expanded to 236 claims covering some 4,300 acres of high-mountain terrain adjacent to the proposed Thompson Peak Wilderness and bordering the Pecos Wilderness.

With federal attention no longer consumed by pandemic closures and the catastrophic fires in the Santa Fe National Forest, the mining application is due to be reviewed later this year.

In preparation, the Stop Tererro Mine coalition of local community, governmental, tribal, agricultural, business and conservation partners is working on multiple fronts to protect the Pecos River, its watershed and the Santa Fe Watershed, including:

1. Advocating for a 20-year moratorium on extraction (officially called a mineral withdrawal) to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed from future mining claims. Creating



Photo courtesy Teresa Seamster

The trail to Tererro as it was pre-Covid and before any access by Comexico up to the Jones Hill exploratory site.

an administrative and/or legislative mineral withdrawal would be critical to protecting cultural and natural resources, especially water in the Pecos Watershed (see the proposed Pecos Watershed Protection Act). Additionally, the coalition requested that the Interior Department enact an immediate 20-year withdrawal of the Pecos headwaters from mineral extraction.

2. Working with the NM congressional delegation on a proposal to designate wilderness and/or special management areas in the vicinity of the proposed mining operations to protect watersheds and wilderness-quality lands in the

Santa Fe National Forest such as Thompson Peak.

3. Preparing comments to respond to the upcoming Environmental Assessment on Comexico LLC's proposal to conduct exploratory drilling in the Upper Pecos Watershed.

4. Enforce New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission's Outstanding National Resources Waters designation of 180 miles of stream and 43 acres of wetlands in the Pecos watershed. This designation prohibits any degradation of water quality from any source.

For more information visit the Stop Terrero Mine website: stoptererromine.org/.

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More land, waters opened to oil & gas drilling

BY MIYA KING-FLAHERTY

Our Wild New Mexico organizer

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report makes it clear that unless we drastically reduce greenhouse-gas emissions to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the consequences will be dire for humanity and wildlife.

A chief culprit driving these emissions is oil and gas development. Fossil-fuel production on public lands accounts for a quarter of U.S. greenhouse-gas emissions. Ending new oil and gas leasing can reduce climate pollution and help us avoid catastrophic impacts.

Unfortunately, the Biden administration is heading in the wrong direction. This year, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is planning to lease over half a million acres of public lands throughout the U.S. for new oil and gas development. The Permian Basin, which covers southeastern New Mexico and West Texas, continues to be a national sacrifice zone and is experiencing an oil boom that comes at great cost to nearby communities and

residents. The BLM is already in the process of auctioning off over 3,000 acres of public lands in New Mexico this summer, and in the fall, the agency plans to lease an additional 700 acres in Lea, Eddy and Roosevelt counties.

We continue to engage by submitting technical comments outlining why leasing is incongruent with addressing climate change and protecting public health and the environment. More than 2,000 Sierra Club supporters have taken action and voiced their opposition to these latest rounds of lease sales.

Public and ancestral tribal lands are not the only resources being offered for oil and gas leasing and drilling. Roughly 73 million acres of public waters are up for lease in the Gulf of Mexico by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. And recently, the administration approved ConocoPhillips' Willow project, which would allow drilling in Alaska's North Slope. This would be one of the largest oil and gas drilling projects on public lands and is estimated to release 287 million tons of carbon pollution.

Ending new oil and gas leasing and infrastructure development is a must

if we are to tackle the climate crisis and protect the health and safety of our communities.

On a more positive note, the Department of the Interior announced plans for the BLM to change how it manages public lands to address the climate and environmental health crisis. The proposed Public Lands Rule would advance the BLM's mission to manage lands for a variety of uses, including conservation, ecosystem resilience, restoration, fostering healthy wildlife habitat, and more, rather than just prioritizing oil and gas development. Once the rule is published in the federal register, it will kick off a 75-day comment period. We'll keep you posted on ways that you can engage.

With your participation, we continue to generate thousands of public comments opposing lease sales, and many auctions have been reduced after public opposition. We are in a climate emergency, and our leaders must invest now in a just transition to clean, renewable energy and prioritize environmental justice.

Solarize Santa Fe

Signup deadline April 17!

Solarize Santa Fe is a program designed to help City of Santa Fe residents, with a focus on helping low-and-moderate income households save money on their energy bills by increasing access to rooftop solar and energy efficiency.

Last year, 39 rooftop solar systems were installed through Solarize Santa Fe.

Our program offers
■ lower prices
■ consumer protections on solar installations;

■ high-quality, pre-vetted installers to make going solar easy.

Register by April 17 by using your phone camera to scan the QR code below or going to www.SolarizeSantaFe.com



Court hears PNM coal appeal

BY MONA BLABER
Chapter communications director

In March, the Sierra Club argued at the New Mexico Supreme Court to prevent a deal that would keep Four Corners coal-fired power plant from polluting for years longer than necessary. In a 2021 decision supported by Sierra Club and other environmental and consumer groups, the Public Regulation Commission rejected PNM’s deal to transfer its 13% stake in the Four Corners coal plant to NTEC, which owns the coal mine supplying the plant. In internal emails obtained by Sierra Club during the PRC case, PNM and NTEC (which is owned but not run by the Navajo Nation) discussed that NTEC’s purpose in acquiring the ownership stake would be to keep the plant open as long as possible. Other documents showed that PNM had been pursuing more environmentally sound ways to make an early exit from Four Corners prior to merger talks between PNM and Avangrid coming to a head in 2020.

Avangrid, which presents itself as an environmentally aligned company, demanded PNM finalize a plan to exit Four Corners before it would sign the merger agreement. The NTEC deal was the only alternative PNM could nail down under the pressure of the merger deadlines. The pressure of the merger was so great that PNM not only knowingly joined in NTEC’s strategic plan to keep Four Corners burning coal as long as possible, it agreed that PNM shareholders would pay NTEC \$75 million to accept the transfer.

PNM appealed to the state Supreme Court to overturn the PRC’s rejection of its plan, and the court heard oral arguments on March 28.

The main technical reason the PRC rejected PNM’s plan was that PNM had not met its burden to identify adequate replacement resources for Four Corners. Sierra Club attorney Jason Marks told the court that in order to satisfy deadlines in the Avangrid merger contract, PNM rushed in with a half-baked application for approval of the “sale” and abandonment which relied on hypothetical, not actual, replacement resources. By the time the PRC ruled on the Four Corners case, Marks said, it was already apparent that



Photo by Joseph Hernandez
Mary and Calvin Badoni were among Navajo elders who gathered in December 2021 to testify remotely, asking the Public Regulation Commission to reject a PNM proposal that was likely to keep Four Corners coal-fired power plant polluting indefinitely.

supply-chain delays were stalling some of the replacement resources for San Juan Generating Station, so ensuring replacement resources would be available was especially important from the perspective of the PRC commissioners. The Four Corners Power Plant is the last coal-generation asset in PNM’s portfolio, but Arizona Public Service is the majority owner, so PNM’s exit wouldn’t result in a plant shutdown right away. The internal documents indicate that Tucson Electric and Salt River Project, the other two utility owners in Four Corners, shared PNM’s assessment that the plant was a money-loser and should be retired early. Thus, the plant is more likely to see early retirement if PNM keeps its stake, and much less likely if the agreements with NTEC are upheld, given NTEC’s interest in keeping the plant open as a customer for its coal.

Marks told the court that as a

policy matter, the intent of the Energy Transition Act was to transition New Mexico utilities away from using coal-fired power plants. PNM’s proposal to transfer its stake in the plant to an entity that seeks to burn coal at Four Corners indefinitely is contrary to the spirit and intent of the ETA. Marks told the court that the ETA expressly prohibits “greenwashing” transactions that move coal emissions off the books of PRC-regulated utilities (like PNM) to unregulated entities (like NTEC), and that even if the specifics of the deal did not technically violate that portion of the ETA, the PRC Commissioners were right to be concerned that the Four Corners plan was contrary to our state’s environmental policies. The Supreme Court did not give a timeline for a ruling. Sierra Club has also intervened in PNM’s rate case that is before the commission now.



San Juan Citizens Alliance, sanjuancitizens.org
PNM owns 13% of Four Corners coal-fired power plant, above. The utility wanted to pay NTEC \$75 million to take its stake in a transaction the Public Regulation Commission rejected.

Activists fight WIPP mission expansion

BY TERESA SEAMSTER
Plutonium is among the most hazardous elements on the planet. This element is radioactive, man-made, toxic, carcinogenic, and highly reactive in nature. Pu-239 is used to make the “pit” or “trigger” in nuclear weapons. When nuclear weapons are manufactured, a significant amount of plutonium waste is generated that requires safe disposal in a permanent storage location. The only facility in the country is southern New Mexico’s Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

Broken Promises
WIPP opened in 1999, when New Mexico agreed to host a federal

radioactive waste pilot project outside Carlsbad, subject to various limitations. WIPP can legally accept only materials such as containers, equipment, solids, fluids, and apparel contaminated by “transuranic” radioactive elements – mostly plutonium. This material is different from the high-level nuclear waste from nuclear reactors proposed to be stored at a Holtec facility. WIPP is scheduled to shut down in 2024. Now, the Department of Energy is pushing to keep WIPP open for decades, double the storage capacity and begin transporting new waste. That waste would include large amounts of highly toxic plutonium waste “downblended” into a powdered form, which can be inhaled in case of an accidental release.

What We Can Do
The NM Environment Department is currently considering WIPP’s 10-year Hazardous Waste Facility Operating Permit renewal and DOE’s plan to:
— double capacity
— change the type of waste from transuranic to include pure plutonium
— eliminate the end date of 2024 with no scheduled closure
Alarmed residents and elected officials are making their voices heard as the promises made by DOE when WIPP was built are being broken. The state is responsible for permitting WIPP’s operation and closure. The Stop Forever WIPP coalition includes communities on the

WIPP transportation route as well as Southwest Research and Information Center, Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety, Citizens for Alternatives to Radioactive Dumping, Nuclear Watch, Veterans for Peace and Conservation Voters New Mexico. These groups have been instrumental in informing the New Mexico Environment Department, the National Nuclear Safety Administration, the governor, Legislature and local officials of resident concerns. The Environment Department is accepting comments on WIPP’s permit renewal until April 19. For more information: www.StopForeverWIPP.org

Learn to backpack on two wheels

BY SANDRA CORSO

Did you ever think that you could enjoy backcountry traveling on two wheels? This style of exploring remote and beautiful landscapes on a bike is called bikepacking: A true minimalist camping experience with all your gear packed strategically on a bike. It gives you the ability to travel greater distances while allowing you to stay in touch with nature and the environment.

Contrasted with cycle-touring, which generally refers to traveling on a bike in the front country and carrying bike panniers, bikepacking is a newer and trendier term that refers to touring off-road, such as on gravel forest roads, rail trails and single- and double-track trails.

Bikepacking is gaining greater popularity across the United States and the world, with festivals and meetups for like-minded adventurers where they share ideas, best practices, new technology and organized outings.

Looking for a way to get started?

Check out the resources below and sign up for a Sierra Club Intro to Bikepacking outing. The next one is April 26-27, and you can sign up at riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/.

Educational Resources

- Bikepacking 101:** bikepacking.com/bikepacking-101/
- 8 Tips for Your First Bikepacking Overnighter:** www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBBC7k898KI
- Pack list:** sarahjswallow.com/stories/2020/11/27/sarah-swallows-bikepacking-pack-list
- Beginning guide:** ilovebicycling.com
- Bikepacking Trip Planner Workbook.** \$10 at exploringwild.com/bikepacking-trip-planner/. A highly interactive workbook that takes you through the entire planning process.
- Route Planning:** Ride with GPS and Gaia GPS apps
- Paper and Digital maps:** Adventure Cycling Association

Finding the right bike and gear to travel on quiet backcountry roads is easier than you think. A simple bike with a flat handlebar with either a suspension or a rigid fork, a good number of gears

(typically 9 to 12 speeds) is adequate and a minimum of 2.0-inch-wide tires loaded with sealant is sufficient to get you started. Pack all your gear, such as your food, tent, sleeping bag and sleeping pad

in a couple of dry bags which should be attached to the handlebar and rear rack. Use a medium-size daypack for items you need to easily access such as rain gear, snacks and overflow items. Be sure to have enough water-bottle cages attached to your bike frame to carry plenty of water when riding in New Mexico or the Southwest. Research your route carefully and make sure you have it uploaded to a GPS device or phone, or that you have a map, compass and good navigation skills.

Just like a backpacking trip, bikepacking requires careful planning. You will need to plan ahead and prepare for the amount of nutrition needed on the trip, water availability, weather outlook, number of miles and elevation gain traveled per day, desired routes, campsite locations and if necessary any required permits. You can find online tools to take some of the guesswork out of this process. The better you plan, the more fun you’ll have.

Are you prepared for a wilderness emergency?

BY TERRY OWEN

Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter is sponsoring a Wilderness First Aid course especially geared toward our members. This course is in high demand and typically fills up months in advance. The SOLO Wilderness First Aid Course is a two-day first-aid course that provides training for anyone that spends time hiking, skiing, engaged in other outdoor pursuits, or just wants to know what to

do when things go south. The course is a blend of lectures, demonstrations, and scenarios. Why attend? People get hurt, sick, or lost. The temperature drops, the wind picks up, and it starts to rain. Would you know what to do? If you’re ever more than an hour away from a hospital or one mile from any road you need to know what to do. Many backcountry emergencies are preventable, and even when bad things happen, sometimes the

wrong care can make things worse. By learning a few basic skills, you can make the difference between a good outcome and a bad one — and maybe even save a life. For more information on SOLO’s curriculum, visit www.soloschools.com. Attendees must participate in all portions and hours of the course to obtain certification. The price for the course is \$200 per person. Participants must commit to attend both days. Class times: Saturday, September 16,

8 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday, September 17, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Payment instructions will be sent in late July requesting a \$65 deposit to hold your seat to the first 24 who have signed-up. Applicants will be taken in the order that they register and make payment by the deadline. Maximum class size is 24. Leader: Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@comcast.net. Location: Tijeras, NM Sign up: bit.ly/3G22WqL

April-May-June Outings continued from page 12

feel comfortable sleeping under the stars or in a tent. Meet at 10 a.m. at Winsor Trailhead, adjacent to the public bathrooms and picnic table at the Santa Fe Ski Basin. No dogs please. Children 14 and over with parent or legal guardian are welcome. Outing size is limited to six, so register by April 18. Leader: Sandra Corso, 505-699-9321 sandracorso@yahoo.com Level: Moderate-Strenuous Location: Santa Fe, NM Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

FRIDAY, MAY 12
Relaxed Bosque Walk at Durand Open Space. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Welcome to the beautiful South Valley! Durand Open Space provides excellent access to forest paths and river views. We’ll do a two-mile loop and then take a break at the covered picnic area. Let’s meet at the Durand parking lot by 9:55 a.m. No dogs please. Leader: Diane Reese, 505-507-6416 DianeAbqNM@gmail.com Level: Easy, Location: Albuquerque Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

FRIDAY, MAY 26
Las Conchas Trail Hike along the Jemez River East Fork. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Join us for a dose of nature and camaraderie. 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. Lunch together 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. Meet at Home Depot in Bernalillo. Carpooling encouraged as there is

limited parking at the trailhead. Recommended carpool driver donation is \$15. Bring your own water and wear outer layers. Appropriate for children over 12 with a parent or legal guardian. No dogs. Register by May 20. Leader: June Parsons, 832-723-4533 comicsilver@gmail.com Level: Easy Location: Jemez Mountains, North of Jemez Springs Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

FRIDAY, MAY 26
Bike Ride from Valle de Oro NWR to Bike in Coffee. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Valle de Oro is one of the few Urban Wildlife Refuges — and it is right in our back yard! We will meet at 7851 2nd St. NW at 10 a.m. and bike a short distance to the visitors’ center to hear about the refuge. Then we hit the Paseo del Bosque Trail for a 10.5-mile ride to Bike-In Coffee at Old Town Farm. You can purchase food and drinks and we’ll spend some exploring the farm. Leader: Diane Reese, 505-507-6416 DianeAbqNM@gmail.com Level: Moderate Locations: Albuquerque Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, MAY 27
More Migrating Birds Along Animas River in Farmington. 9 to 11 a.m.
Three miles round trip. Let’s follow up April’s birding trip to identify new arrivals and departures. Some birds will have moved further north; others will have established a territory for nesting here. No dogs please. Limit 10 people over 18. RSVP by May 20. Trip leaders: Mike Foster, 303-594-1431, mike4ffoster@gmail.com Level: Easy, Location: Farmington, NM

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

WEDNESDAY, MAY 31
Valles Caldera Spring Fling. 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Rio Grande Chapter Military Outdoors Program is hosting a spring hike in the spectacular Valles Caldera National Preserve. We’ll hike the Coyote Call and Rabbit Ridge Trails along the southeastern rim of the preserve. This 5.3-mile hike will contour up the side of Rabbit Mountain with an elevation gain of 1,701 feet over trails that are grassy, gravelly and rocky. Enjoy magnificent views of the Valle Grande, wildlife sightings and the beauty of the aspen/conifer forest. 4-5 hours depending on pace. This will not be a “forced march,” rather an opportunity to see the landscape come alive with spring grandeur. The trailhead is at 8,714 feet and we will reach an elevation of 9,610 feet. Accordingly, folks need to be accustomed to hiking at altitude and be able to ascend sections of the trail that steeper as we progress. Level: Easy-Moderate Leader: Hart Pierce 505-320-1055, shpierce@q.com Location: Valles Caldera, NM Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, JUNE 3
Intro to Land Navigation Course. 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
This course will teach use of a map and compass and other skills to help you find your way in the wild. Includes both classroom and field instruction. Bring a suitable navigation compass and topographic map of the Sandia mountains. Additional information, gear list and meeting location for the classroom portion will be provided about one

week in advance. Children over 12 with parent or legal guardian may attend. No dogs. Class size limited to 10. Meet at Rio Grande Chapter Office, 2215 Lead Ave SE, Albuquerque, by 7:45 a.m. Leader: Terry Owen 505-301-4349, teowen@comcast.net Level: Easy, Location: Albuquerque Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, JUNE 17
ABQ-Santa Fe Rail & Bike Tour. 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
See the “City Different” in a different way by exploring the River Trail on a bike! We will ride the Railrunner from Albuquerque or meet at the station in Santa Fe for a long day excursion. 8 to 18 miles depending on starting point, maximum 500-foot elevation gain. Trails in Santa Fe suitable for beginner cyclists; prior city riding experience recommended for Albuquerque route. Meet at Montgomery Park at 7:30 a.m. or Los Ranchos RailRunner station at 8 a.m, or at the Santa Fe Railyard-Santa Fe Depot RailRunner station at 9:40 a.m. Appropriate for children over 16 accompanied by parent or legal guardian. E-bikes are welcome. No dogs. Registration deadline June 10. Leader: Patrick Burton, 505-550-5534 patrickburton9@icloud.com Level: Moderate Location: Albuquerque and Santa Fe Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

FRIDAY, JUNE 23
Michael M. Emery Trail Hike for People That Don’t Hike. 8 to 10 a.m.
This is an easy hike with an elevation gain of 334 feet over a 2.5-mile loop. Meet at 9999 High Desert Street NE, 87111. Suitable for children over

12. Well-behaved dogs on leash are welcome. Signup no later than June 20. Leader: Terry Owen 505-301-4349, teowen@comcast.net Level: Easy, Location: Sandia Foothills Albuquerque, NM Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, JUNE 24
Birds of High Summer Along Animas River in Farmington. 9 to 11 a.m.
Three-mile round trip along the river. On this third outing to explore birds along a major riparian habitat, we will discover breeding residents of the area and compare their abundance to the migrants viewed over the past two months. No dogs please. Limit 10 people over 18. Leader: Mike Foster, 303-594-1431 mike4ffoster@gmail.com Level: Easy, Location: Farmington, NM Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, JUNE 24
Leave No Trace Course. 8 to 10:30 a.m.
Maybe you’ve heard of Leave No Trace principles but have never had the opportunity to learn how to incorporate them into your outdoor adventures. Here’s your chance to learn from a certified Leave No Trace instructor. Meet at Elena Gallegos Double Shelter on the northeast side of the park loop. We’ll cover the principles and then take a short hike to discuss how to easily incorporate them into your outdoor activities. Suitable for children 12 and up. No dogs please. Sign-up no later than June 22. Leader: Michaelle Huntley michaelledsutton@gmail.com Level: Easy, Location: Albuquerque Foothills Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

April-May-June Outings

**BY TERRY OWEN
AND DEBBIE BRYANT**

SATURDAY, APRIL 1
April hike with Santa Fe Youth Shelters. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
The New Mexico Inspiring Connections to Outdoors program will be hiking Santa Fe Youth Shelters at Cerrillos Hill State Park. We're meeting at 8:45 and leaving at 9 a.m., and we should be back no later than 3 p.m. Those interested should contact Raymond N. Greenwell at matrng@hofstra.edu. There are simple volunteer forms to complete.
Leader: Raymond Greenwell
516-312-5751
raymond.n.greenwell@hofstra.edu
Level: Easy
Location: Cerrillos Hills State Park
Sign up: raymond.n.greenwell@hofstra.edu

SATURDAY, APRIL 1
No-Fooling Bike Commuting. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Meet at Winrock parking lot at 9:45 a.m. This eight-mile course over 224 feet elevation will pass by city parks and destinations between Uptown and Nob Hill. Previous experience riding in mixed traffic is recommended. This ride is appropriate for children over 16 when accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. A road-suitable bike and helmet are required. Tire sealant and bike lock are strongly recommended. No direct cost, money for purchases at restaurants and shops is recommended. Maximum 10 participants. No dogs are allowed. Deadline for registering is March 29.
Leader: Patrick Burton, 505-550-5534
patrickburton9@icloud.com
Level: Moderate, **Location:** Albuquerque Uptown-Midtown
Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, APRIL 8
Earth Month Open-Space Cleanup — Indian School. 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Registrations will be taken at the link provided at the bottom only. Come join us to pick up trash and celebrate our amazing open spaces. We will team up for three to four hours to clean up the surrounding area. Come for all of it or part of it. Bring water, sunscreen, gloves, hat, a snack and a trash bag or bucket and wear closed-toed shoes. This is a great activity for families with children. Children under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. If you love our open spaces, join us!
Leaders: Jessica O'Callahan 505-710-3675, jessicaeoc@gmail.com and Terry Owen, 505-301-4349
teowen@comcast.net
Level: Easy, **Location:** Albuquerque
Sign up: bit.ly/3G6sTWA

THURSDAY, APRIL 13
Zero Waste Tour of BARCO Recycling Center (formerly Friedman's). 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Come see how all of our blue-bin recycling is sorted. Find out how much is actually recycled and get answers to other recycling questions. Vests, helmets, eye protection and ear plugs will be provided. Must be able to climb stairs and not be bothered by a very noisy environment. Masks are optional. Register early as space is limited to 10 adults. Deadline to register is April 10. If you need to cancel after registering, please contact trip leader ASAP to allow anyone on the waiting list to register.
Leader: Laurie Zunner 505-440-5337, lmzunner@gmail.com
Level: Easy, **Location:** Albuquerque
Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, APRIL 15
Earth Month Open-Space Cleanup — Menaul Picnic Area. 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Registrations will be taken at the link provided in this listing only. We'll team up for three to four hours to clean up the area. Come for all of it or part of it. Bring water, sunscreen, gloves, hat, a snack and a trash bag or bucket, and wear closed-toed shoes. This is a great activity for families with children. Children 18 or under must



Photo by Terry Owen

Backpacking at San Gregorio Reservoir in the San Pedro Parks Wilderness with the Military Outdoors Program-Intro to Backpacking.

be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.
Leaders: Jessica O'Callahan 505-710-3675, jessicaeoc@gmail.com
Terry Owen, 505-301-4349
teowen@comcast.net
Level: Easy, **Location:** Albuquerque
Sign up: bit.ly/3lYQgtY

SUNDAY, APRIL 16
Tunnel Springs Loop Hike. 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
The Tunnel Springs Loop is on the Placitas side of the Sandias. There are beautiful views on this trail of the Sandias, the volcanoes and other surrounding mountains. The surface of the trail seems to stay decent most of the year. The trail up goes by an abandoned mine. This is a 4.5-mile loop trail with 1,165 feet of elevation gain. This will take about three and a half hours (allowing time for stops and snacks). All Trails considers this a moderately challenging route. Microspikes and poles should be brought in case of need. We will stop several times on the way up as it is steep. On the way down, we are planning to stop twice as it's pretty gentle. There will be a snack-lunch break at the top where there is an old wall to sit on.
Leader: Debbie Bryant 832-692-1881, bryade@gmail.com
Level: Moderate
Location: Placitas, NM
Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SUNDAY, APRIL 16
Migrating Birds Along Animas River in Farmington. 9 to 11 a.m.
3-plus miles round trip. Expect to see ducks, geese, herons, woodpeckers, probably raptors and hummingbirds, friendly chickadees, noisy corvids, and colorful warblers, as well as some of the usual suspects. Always a surprising bird. Along these riparian, urban habitats we'll also visit the Model Xeriscape Garden and the All-Veterans Memorial Plaza. Eighteen years old and up only. No dogs please. RSVP to Mike by April 9.
Leaders: Mike Foster, 303-594-1431
mike4ffoster@gmail.com
co-leader: Hart Pierce 505-320-1055, shpierce@q.com
Level: Easy, **Location:** Riverside Nature Center, Farmington, NM
Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

TUESDAY, APRIL 18
Sand Canyon-Trail of the Ancients Hike 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Sponsored by the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter Military Outdoors Program, open to all! Sand Canyon trailhead is 15 miles west of Cortez, Colo., on McElmo Creek Road. This loop hike will be over sections of the Sand Canyon and Rock Creek trails with connectors. Trailhead elevation is 5,400 feet. This 3- to 4-hour, 5-mile hike will travel over a rocky, sandy,

sometimes packed, sometimes slick rock trail through pinyon-juniper ecosystem with an elevation gain of 400 feet. Trail passes several ancestral Puebloan ruins, many of which are accessible and interactive. Sand Canyon is surrounded by red rock and Navajo sandstone mesas and plateaus with diverse geological features. McElmo Creek Road winds through picturesque McElmo Canyon dotted with vineyards and farms. Participants should be able to walk a mile in 25 minutes or less. Trail is shared with mountain bikers. Apparel and gear recommendations will be provided one week in advance.
Leader: Hart Pierce 505-320-1055, shpierce@q.com
Location: Cortez, CO
Level: Easy-Moderate
Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

FRIDAY, APRIL 21-SUNDAY, APRIL 23
Earth Day Service Trip to Secluded New Mexico State Park.
Celebrate Earth Day by giving back. City of Rocks State Park is a city of ancient volcanic rocks that needs a gentle facelift, and we need your help. We will stay in a group campsite with big skies, beautiful sunsets, and share evening campfires and conversations. On Friday and Saturday, we will perform light trail maintenance and have time for an eight-mile trail bike ride or hike on Sunday to enjoy our handiwork! Weather should be warm during the day with cool spring nights. Check in on Friday after 2 p.m. Check-out on Sunday no later than 2 p.m. A recommended gear and tool list will be provided a week in advance. Children 14 and over with parent or legal guardian are welcome. Deadline for registering is April 14.
Leaders: Rose Rowan, 505-449-8244
rose.rowan7@gmail.com and Terry Owen, 505-301-4349
teowen@comcast.net
Trip Level: Easy-moderate.
Location: City of Rocks State Park, Faywood, NM
Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, APRIL 22
Earth Month Open Space Cleanup-Piedra Lisa Open Space. 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Join us to pick up trash and celebrate our amazing open spaces. We will team up for three to four hours to clean-up the surrounding area. Come for all of it or part of it. Bring water, sunscreen, gloves, hat, a snack and 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 parent or legal guardian. If you love our open spaces, please join us!
Leaders: Jessica O'Callahan 505-710-3675, jessicaeoc@gmail.com and Terry Owen, 505-301-4349

teowen@comcast.net
Level: Easy, **Location:** Albuquerque
Sign up: bit.ly/3nAhwPX

SATURDAY, APRIL 22
Earth Day Valley of Dreams Moon Walk. 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Join the Rio Grande Chapter Military Outdoors Program. as we celebrate Earth Day by hiking The Valley of Dreams in the Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness between Chaco Canyon and the Bisti-De-na-zin Wilderness. This is an other-worldly landscape of hoodoos, water-carved clay hills and other unique geological formations, fossils, petrified logs and magnificent vistas stretching from Mount Taylor in the south to Colorado's La Plata Mountains in the north, and from the Chuska Mountains in the west to the Jemez Mountains in the east. The Valley of Dreams trailhead is very difficult to find and the location is remote, so it is strongly suggested that those folks from outside San Juan County arrange to stay in the Tri-Cities-Durango area the night prior to the outing. The early rendezvous time allows for 1.5 hours trip time to the venue and will be impossible to meet for those coming from any distance. Please commit to the outing before registering.
Leader: Hart Pierce 505-320-1055, shpierce@q.com
Level: Easy
Location: Four Corners Region
Signup: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/

SUNDAY, APRIL 23
Mindful Birding Walk to Fillmore Falls, Dripping Springs Natural Area. 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.
This is an easy 2.1-mile out-and-back hike with about 450 feet of elevation gain. The leader will share some of the health benefits of mindful time in nature and encourage a lot of listening with a quiet attitude. Pace will be about two miles per hour, with frequent pauses to listen for birdsong, notice any wildlife (bring binoculars), take some deep breaths, and enjoy the beauty of the Organ Mountains and Fillmore Canyon. It is unlikely there will be any water in the falls at this time of year, but the cool canyon walls still provide a lovely point to rest, snack and contemplate. The trail has a few stretches with larger rocks but is otherwise well maintained. Bring along a brief snack at the falls (if you like). No dogs. Restrooms near trailhead or at visitor center. We will meet at the Trailhead at the La Cueva turnout, Las Cruces. Pay for your parking ahead or get a pass from the Visitor Center if you need one before our meeting time. \$5 per vehicle or National Park Pass required.
Leaders: Holly Thomas, 510-301-2814
htbern1@sbcglobal.net; Howard Dash 575-652-7550, howiedash@aol.com
Level: Easy, **Location:** Las Cruces, NM

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26-27
Intro to Bikepacking 2-day event.
This is a lightweight bikepacking outing. If you feel comfortable riding a bike on dirt roads and wish to learn how to travel in the backcountry on two wheels lightweight-style, this trip is right for you. Participants will meet at the Cabezon Wilderness Study Area sign, travel around the mountain and spend the night at the highest point on the route. The next day we are going to enjoy the sunrise and discuss bikepacking basics and future adventures. We plan to leave camp around mid-morning and return to where we parked our vehicles. Please sign up for this outing only if you feel comfortable and fit to pedal a MTB bike loaded with overnight gear for more than 13 miles with elevation gain comfortably. This is not an outing for beginner cyclists. The route is 22 miles roundtrip with 1,334 feet of elevation gain. Access route here: ridewithgps.com/trips/64036557. We will go over map and route navigation, gear selection, Leave No Trace principles, self-care, backcountry bike riding, outdoor cooking and a few basic bikepacking skills. Leader will email a gear list. Be prepared for varying weather conditions and feel comfortable sleeping under the stars or in a tent. No dogs please. Children 14 and over with parent or legal guardian are welcome. Outing size is limited to six. Register by April 12.
Leader: Sandra Corso, 505-699-9321
sandracorso@yahoo.com
Level: Moderate
Location: San Ysidro, NM
Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, APRIL 29
Earth Month Open Space Cleanup-Embudito-Bear Canyon Trailhead. 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Join us to pick up trash and celebrate our amazing open spaces. We will team up for three to four hours to clean up the surrounding area. Come for all of it or part of it. 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 parent or legal guardian. If you love our open spaces, join us!
Leaders: Jessica O'Callahan 505-710-3675, jessicaeoc@gmail.com and Terry Owen, 505-301-4349
teowen@comcast.net
Level: Easy, **Location:** Embudito Trailhead, Trailhead Rd NE, Albuquerque, NM
Sign up: bit.ly/3KntpS4

TUESDAY, MAY 2 TO WEDNESDAY, MAY 3
Lightweight Backpacking and Santa Fe Baldy summit. 8 a.m. Tuesday, May 2, to evening May 3.
If you've mastered basic skills traveling in the backcountry lightweight-style, this trip is right for you. Participants will meet at Winsor Trailhead and travel to Puerto Nambé area, where we will spend the night. The next day we will do an Alpine-style ascent to Santa Fe Baldy so we can see the sunrise from the summit. We plan to return to the trailhead soon after we refuel and pack our packs. Please sign up only if you feel comfortable and fit to carry a backpack for more than 4 miles with elevation gain, summit the mountain and backpack back to the trailhead comfortably. This is not an outing for beginners. The route is 13.5 miles roundtrip with 3,500 feet of elevation gain. On this outing we will go over map and compass navigation, gear selection, Leave No Trace principles, self-care, off-trail hiking, outdoor cooking and a few basic mountaineering skills. Leader will email a gear list ahead of time. Participants must be prepared for varying weather conditions and

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