EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET

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**Photo by Mark Clune**

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**Photo by David McGahey**

**Photo by Jeremy Parsell**

**Photo by David McGahey**

**Rio Grande Sierran**

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ON MARCH 21, President Joe Biden announced the designation of Castner Range near El Paso, Texas, along with Nevada’s Avi Kwa Ame, 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 habitation 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 thousands of acres of the range, advised El Paso’s Regional Economic Development Corporation to develop it, 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 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 Ame, 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.

“Events.” You may do a hike and the La Cueva hike led by Garrett Leitmann, 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!

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

La Cueva hike led by Garrett Leitmann, 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!

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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.

Sierra Club.

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NM deserves longer sessions, paid legislature

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 met 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 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 issuing any permits for the storage site proposed for southeast New Mexico by Holtec International.

Sponsored by state Sen. Jeff Steinborn and Reps. Matthew McQueen, Debbie Saritana and Patricia Roybal Caballero, SB53 also strengthens the Radiactive 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 proposed site. The area includes recreational, tourist and agricultural businesses as well as extensive oil and gas facilities, as well as 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 the state, and publicly accepted.

State Sen. Roybal Caballero, SB53 also requires state permits and file legal 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, companies and the environmental community must wait two years before another opportunity to protect our air, water, land, communities and health.

Our legislators are without a check for their work, and in most cases, they have no staff to perform constituent services. Rep. Joy Garrison recently told constituents who 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 constituent concerns and increases reliance on paid lobbyists for information and research on bills before them. SB53 would change the length of legislative sessions.

Some of these legislators are women elected to the Legislature and a referral to the voters.

There is some good news in that the 2023 legislature provided funding to allow resource professionals and legislators to provide 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

Statements on SB53 passage

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

Patricia Cardona, co-founder, Lea County resident:

"We protected our state from another opportunity to protect our state from another nuclear gateway to the US. We say 'no' to radioactive waste that continues our water. We say 'no' to all communities susceptible to this toxic-dump disaster. Protection for our Sacred Homelands to be preserved and protected by legislators from all walks of life, profession, industry and everyone else should be doing is working to find the right consent-based path to geologic disposal of high-level waste."

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 disposal of high-level waste. The dilemma of an unpaid, unstaffed legislature can be addressed with state constitutional amendments, which require a vote of the Legislature and a referral to the voters."

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 unsalted legislature in the United States.

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

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 challenges.

These 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, companies and the environmental community must wait two years before another opportunity to protect our air, water, land, communities and health.

Our legislators are without a check for their work, and in most cases, they have no staff to perform constituent services. Rep. Joy Garrison recently told constituents who 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 constituent concerns and increases reliance on paid lobbyists for information and research on bills before them. SB53 would change the length of legislative sessions.

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There is some good news in that the 2023 legislature provided funding to allow resource professionals and legislators to provide 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.

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 Stewardship 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 protected 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 and future 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 people, 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 Buchner, Rio Grande Chapter Nuclear Waste Chair:

"The broad, sustained support of New Mexico advocates is working to find the right consent-based path to geologic disposal of high-level waste."

Camilla Felbainman, Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter director:

"Communities that opted to host nuclear power plants got a paycheck for their work, and Holtec would allow them to express non-vote 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 dumping ground."

Discussion in the House and Senate on the last day of session was filled with passionate speeches. It was the first step in a process to establish an inter-state permitting process to shift much of the cost onto the state, and publicly accepted.

The broad, sustained support of New Mexico advocates is working to find the right consent-based path to geologic disposal of high-level waste. The process is slow and federal legislation needs to follow its own law and identify a permanent storage facility before making us the country’s dumping ground. It is both scientifically defensible and publicly accepted.
2023 NEW MEXICO LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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 SB55 (Steinhein, McQueen, Saritana, Royal Caballero), which will prevent state agencies from terminating 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 non-stop. See Page 4 for more about SB53.

Climate tax credits: HB547, the final tax package for the year, 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 lease electric vehicles and home chargers, which could allow buyers to use them to lower the price at point of sale. This amounts to tens of millions of dollars in tax credits that our state will invest in climate solutions. We'll keep you posted on how they take advantage of these credits.

SB9, Legacy Permanent Fund (Wirth; Neville): Another awesome 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 wildfires and drought and invests in outdoor recreation.

HB4, the Voting Rights Act (Lujan, Duhigg, 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 court 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, Luna): 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 EFA 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.

SB365: Geothermal Center and Fund (Ortiz y Pino, Ferrary, Lujan, Saritana, Royal 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, Saritana).

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.

HB148, Game Commission Appointment process, broadening and diversifying commission membership. As of press time, this bill awaits the governor's signature.

SB72, Create Wildlife Corridors, authorizing for the creation of a Corridors plan.

SB182, the Recycling and Waste Coordinator at Environment Department. This had not yet been signed by the governor as of press time.

Thank you to 35 North for their donation of hot cocoa and whipped cream for Climate Justice Day! You made our event warmer and adults happier! Please support 35 North at 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 this year.

Bad stuff that failed:

HB12 would have appropriated $50 million for public-private partnerships for vague "advanced energy technology," which could have been a blank check to hydrogen projects and dangerous underground 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-change mitigating hydrogen projects and prolonged the use of oil, gas and coal by funding the state's effort to gain priority 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 priority. The bill did not advance, so 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 had 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 struggle for 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.

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.

Photo by David McGayley

Rio Grande Sierran 5

APRIL | MAY | JUNE 2023
2023 NEW MEXICO LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Gratitude, Connection, Protection

A time for GWE to pause, reflect and move forward

BY GENIE STEVENS
Rio Grande Chapter
Global Warming Express

Seven 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, who had already worn the first GWE shirt seen at the Roundhouse. She had just turned 9. Her 1-minute speech created a stir. No kid 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 Expressors have been speaking, testifying, performing dances, songs, play 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, community events, art events, science events, fairs, letters written, city and country meetings, bills being passed (plastic bag ban in Santa Fe, 10-cent fees on paper bags in Santa Fe, plastic bag in Albuquerque), bills being revoked, solar installations being built, recycling being implemented, gardens being born, school parking lots filling 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./G.W.E.’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 this global 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, some kids marched and chanted to the sound of African drums, and six girls, including GWE veteran Sierra Woolsey, who identifies as deaf/blind, gave speeches. Despite the odds and the obstacles, the Global Warming Expressors’ 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.

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 through many bills related to water policy did 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 Sen. 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.

SB37, Water Security Planning Act: Sen. Peter Wirth (D) and Rep. Herrera) creates a framework for the Interstate Stream Commission to establish rules and guidelines that will inform 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 take years to complete, so it’s imperative that money be available for a greater length of time for this tool to be more effective.

SB6, New Mexico 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 $30 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.

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 opportunities.

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 Ray Greenwell at matrng@hofstra.edu.

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

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.

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.
Wildlife

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 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 for four of the commission seats to ensure a diversity of perspectives. One 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 authority of the department to include all native species, even insects, and raised the fees for hunting and fishing licenses. HB185 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.

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 breeding 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 HFCGs released in the process is negligible.

In early 2021, we told you that Sierra Club Central Group was working on an 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 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.

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.

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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 Pandorda’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 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 Cerrro 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 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.
Ramping up efforts to stop mine

BY TERESA SEAMSTER
Rio Grande Chapter
Mining Committee

I

n the aftermath of the devastating Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon fire last year, the multyear 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 4,500 acres of high-mountain terrain adjacent to the proposed Thompson Peak Wilderness and bordering the Pecos Wilderness.

With federal action 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 communities, 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 Pecos Watershed and future mining claims. Creating 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 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 Tererro Mine website: stopterromine.org.

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 clear that unless we drastically reduce 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 inconsistent 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.

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Rio Grande Sierran
I
n 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 supply for 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 presumably 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 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.

Activists fight WIPP mission expansion

BY TERESE 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

BY MONA BLABER

Chapter communications director

I
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Learn to backpack on two wheels

**BY SANDRA CORSO**

Did you ever think that you could enjoy backpacking while riding on two wheels? This style of camping is a great way to bring 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. One of the main benefits of bike touring, which generally refers to touring on a bike in the front country and carrying bike panniers, is a new and trendy term that refers to touring off-road, such as 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 organizing tips.

Finding the right bike and gear to travel on quiet backcountry roads is easier than you think. A simple bike with a flat bar 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 drypack for items you need to easily access such as rain gear, snacks and a first-aid kit. Be sure to have enough water-bottle cages attached to your bike frame to carry plenty of water when riding in New Mexico. Typically, you need to be able to ride your route carefully and make sure you have it uploaded to GPS device or phone, or that you have a map, compass and good navigational skills.

Just like a bikepacking trip, bikepacking requires careful planning. You will need to sign up and prepare for the amount of nutrition needed on the trip, water availability, weather outlook, number of miles and elevation gained travel 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, to be better you plan, the more fun you’ll have.

**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 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.

Weekend course: People get hurt, sick, or lose. The temperature drops, the wind picks up, and it starts to rain. What will you do to know what to do? If you’ve 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 of the weekend 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, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and Sunday, September 17, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Payment instructions will be sent in late July requesting a $65 deposit to hold your seat. The first 24 people who have signed up. Applicants will be taken in the order that they register and make the deposit. Maximum size is limited to 24.

Leader: Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@comast.net.
Location: Tijeras, NM
Sign up by: 9/3/22.

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Are you prepared for a wilderness emergency? (continued from page 12)

In this third outing to explore birds along the Farmington side of the Animas River in Farmington.

SATURDAY, JUNE 24

**ABQ-Santa Fe Rail & Bike Tour.**

See the “City Different” in a different way by exploring the River Trail on a bike! We will ride the Bicicruiser 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. Trail in Santa Fe suitable for beginner cyclists; priority riding experience recommended for Albuquerque riders.

Meet at Montgomery Park at 7:30 a.m. or Los Ranchos Rail Runner station at 8 a.m., or at the Santa Fe Rail and Sandia Cutoff Depot Rail Runner station at 9 a.m. for children under 16 accompanied by parent or legal guardian. E-bikes are welcome. No dogs. Registration deadline June 16.

Leader: Patrick Burton, 505-530-1534, patrickburton9@icloud.com.
Level: Moderate
Location: Albuquerque and Santa Fe
Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/

FRIDAY, JUNE 23

**Michael A. Emery Trail Hike for People That Don’t Hike.**

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.

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**APRIL | MAY | JUNE 2023**

OUTDOORS

**Bikepacking 101:** Bikepacking is gaining greater popularity around the United States and the world, with festivals and meetups for like-minded adventurers where they share ideas, best practices, new technology and organizing tips.

Are you prepared for a wilderness emergency? (continued from page 12)
BACKPACKING AT SAN GREGORIO RESERVOIR IN THE SAN PEDRO PARKS WILDERNESS WITH THE MILITARY OUTDOORS PROGRAM—Intro to Backpacking.

SUNDAY, APRIL 16

TUNNEL SPRINGS LOOP HIKE.

9:30 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. As 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 snacking break. If you have an older ankle, there is an old wall we can stop on.

Level: Easy-Moderate

Leaders: Holly Thomas, 510-301-2814
tewan@comcast.net

SATURDAY, APRIL 1

ZERO WASTE TOUR OF BARCO RACERYCING CENTER (formerly Friedman’s). 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 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. Yes, helmets, eye protection and ear plugs will be provided. Must be able to climb over an obstacle. If you’re over 18 and not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, you must bring along a brief snack at the falls parking area. This outing is not an outing for beginners. The early afternoon time is perfect for hillside birding from any distance. Please plan to commit to the outing before registering.

Level: Easy

Leaders: Jessica O’Callahan 505-337-3572, jessicaeoc@gmail.com and Terry Owen, 505-301-4349
tewan@comcast.net

SATURDAY, APRIL 2

THE TUNNEL SPRINGS LOOP HIKE.

9:30 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. As 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 snacking break. If you have an older ankle, there is an old wall we can stop on. We will stop in a group campsite with a tent, food and gear. This is a great activity for families with children 12 and under must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Leaders: Jessica O’Callahan 505-337-3572, jessicaeoc@gmail.com and Terry Owen, 505-301-4349
tewan@comcast.net

TUESDAY, MAY 2

LIGHTWEIGHT BACKPACKING AND HydraPak Seminar.

8 a.m. Tuesday, May 2, to evening

May 7’s advanced skills traveling in the backcountry lightweight-style, this trip is right for you. Please meet at Winser Trailhead and travel to Puerto Angel on the 3rd night. This is the last night we will do an Alpine-style ascent to Santa Fe Baldy. Please arrive at trailhead the day of our backpacking and park our packs. Please sign up only if you feel comfortable and fit to carry a 70- to 80-pound pack or under. Please bring your 4 miles with elevation gain, summit the top and backpack back to the trailhead earlier. This is not an outing for beginners. The route includes starting with an easy hike up Pajarito Mountain for 3,500 feet of elevation gain. On this outing we will cover map and route reading, navigation, gear selection, Leave No Trace principles, self-care, campsite selection, and a few basic backpacking skills. Leader will email a gear list ahead of time. Participants must be prepared for varying weather conditions and

Continued on page 11

April-May June Outings

Sign up: 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 mile out-and-back hike with about 400 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 birding, notice any wildlife being bisoned, take some deep breaths, and enjoy the beauty of the Orang Mountains and Fillmore Canyon. It is unlikely there will be any water in the falls at this time of year, but the cool canyon wall will provide a lovely point to rest, snack and contemplate. The trail has a few steep stretches with larger rocks but is otherwise well maintained. Bring along a brief snack at the falls parking area. No dogs. Reservations required. Please join us at the Trailhead, also at the Cabezon Wilderness Study Area. We will go over map and trailheads. Please bring your own water. There is free parking at the Trailhead. This outing is not an outing for beginners. The route includes starting with an easy hike up Pajarito Mountain for 3,500 feet of elevation gain. On this outing we will cover map and route reading, navigation, gear selection, Leave No Trace principles, self-care, campsite selection, and a few basic backpacking skills. Leader will email a gear list ahead of time. Participants must be prepared for varying weather conditions and