



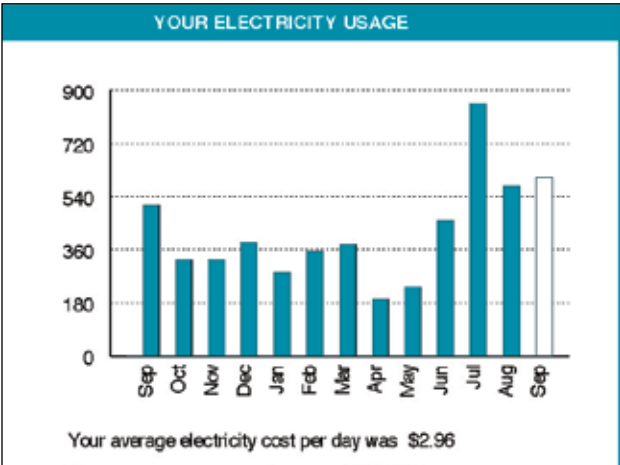
GOING GREEN

NM Clean Cars and Trucks standards promise major health, climate, economic benefits. **Page 3.**



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Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham drove an electric vehicle to the July 3 event announcing proposed Clean Cars and Trucks standards in New Mexico.



ETA rate credits coming: Check your PNM bill for a monthly credit averaging \$9 reflecting coal-to-clean transition. **Page 5.**



Public domain

Cougars, bears at risk again: New Mexico Game and Fish proposing unjustified bear and cougar kill quotas. **Page 7.**



Photo courtesy San Juan Citizens Alliance

Court ruling a win for enviros, PRC: PNM plan would likely have kept Four Corners coal plant open years longer than scheduled. **Page 4.**

EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET



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Vote for chapter, group leadership

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

Note: El Paso Group ballots and candidate statements will be mailed separately, but El Paso members may vote for chapter executive committee using this ballot.

Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee

There are three candidates running for three open positions.

☐ ☐ Jody Benson

☐ ☐ Anita Gonzales

☐ ☐ Susan Martin

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

☐ ☐ John Buchser
☐ ☐ Susan Martin
☐ ☐ Shannon Romeling
☐ ☐

Central Group Executive
Committee (5 open seats)

☐ ☐ Patrick Burton
☐ ☐ Michelle James
☐ ☐ Diane Reese
☐ ☐ Ray Shortridge
☐ ☐ David Ther

Southern NM Group
Executive Committee

(4 open seats)

☐ ☐ Kurt Anderson
☐ ☐ Cheryl Blevins
☐ ☐ Dan Lorimier
☐ ☐

NM considers adopting Clean Cars & Trucks

BY MONA BLABER

Chapter communications director

In July, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham proposed updated Advanced Clean Cars and Clean Trucks standards that can save lives and money — and you can help ensure a state board finalizes them in November and makes a major dent in New Mexico’s climate pollution.

If adopted by the state Environmental Improvement Board in November, Clean Cars and Trucks will require auto and truck manufacturers to deliver an increasing number of zero-emission electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid vehicles for sale. Clean Cars requires 82% of new cars sold in New Mexico by 2032 to be zero-emissions vehicles or plug-in hybrids. Clean Trucks would require that an increasing percentage of medium- and heavy-duty trucks be electric.

Both would go into effect starting with the 2027 model year if adopted before 2024.

These standards would reduce climate pollution by hundreds of millions of metric tons by 2050, about the same amount as the total pollution New Mexico produces in a year, making these among the most effective climate policies New Mexico could adopt.

Clean Cars II

These are the updated version of the standards New Mexico adopted in 2022, which won’t go into effect unless updated to the most recent version.

A July New Mexico-specific study commissioned by Sierra Club, Western Resource Advocates and NRDC found that Advanced Clean Cars alone would provide New Mexico up to \$44 billion in economic benefits. That includes health and climate improvements, savings to drivers, and utility savings — with full adoption to 100% EVs by 2035. The benefits include:

Avoiding 85 to 93 premature deaths a year and up to 52,482 health incidents from breathing polluted air;

Reducing up to 116 million metric tons of greenhouse-gas emissions, 38,000 metric tons of nitrogen oxide, and 3,300 metric tons of particulate matter;

Creating nearly 1,000 additional



Photo Courtesy 350 New Mexico, 350nm.org

Volunteers at a 350 New Mexico EV showcase in September. New Mexico has the chance to adopt life-saving and money-saving Clean Cars and Trucks standards in November.

jobs, many in well-paying positions in electrical-component manufacturing and construction;

Saving individual EV owners between \$14,000 and \$16,800 during the life of their vehicle and delivering more than \$30 billion in total savings for drivers through 2050.

Reducing electricity bills.

Clean Trucks

A 2023 study found that New Mexico can generate \$3.3 billion in health, air and economic benefits and prevent more than 28,000 respiratory illnesses by 2050 by transitioning to zero-emission electric trucks.

Reducing vehicle pollution from trucks will particularly benefit the communities closest to transportation routes, which tend to be disproportionately low-income, Black, Brown and Indigenous.

A recent Environmental Defense Fund analysis found that by 2027, the purchase price alone will make many electric medium- and heavy-duty vehicles (including transit and school

buses, shuttles, delivery vehicles and refuse haulers) less expensive than their fossil-fuel counterparts.

Federal \$7,500 tax credits are available for new EVs and \$4,000 credits for used cars. In 2024, these will be transferable to dealers so they can be taken off your purchase price.

New Mexico utilities have begun rebate programs that provide up to \$2,500 for ratepayers to upgrade their electrical, install chargers and purchase EVs.

Plug-in hybrids, which are included in these standards, use battery charge for the first 30 to 50 miles and then switch to gas. Most drivers rarely have to buy gas, because their daily driving doesn’t exceed 30 miles.

Because EVs remain parked most of the time, EV load is highly flexible and has proven to reduce electricity rates in other states.

Electric vehicles are expected to reach upfront cost parity by the year this rule is implemented. EVs benefit customers who finance on Day 1 in

most cases. Low-income customers spend a larger portion of their income on fuel, so Clean Cars and Trucks will have disproportionate benefit for low-income customers.

Many New Mexicans have had trouble finding EVs, and these standards would help make many more available in New Mexico. See below for ways you can support them.

Take action

Ensure New Mexico’s Environmental Improvement Board adopts these standards by speaking at the board’s November hearing or sending a written comment at addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/clean-cars-nm (or scan the QR code below). The Environment Department is holding meetings to inform the public; the final meeting is Oct. 16 in Albuquerque. Contact riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org for more info or to learn how you can help!



Stronger EPA oil & gas safeguards would save lives in NM

BY DAVID BAAKE
AND JACK MCDONALD

Southern New Mexico Group

Air pollution from oil and gas production in the United States caused 7,500 excess deaths in 2016, according to an Environmental Research Health study published this year.

About 100 of those premature deaths were in New Mexico — the result of heart attacks, strokes, respiratory infections, and other health problems caused by emissions from the oil and gas industry. Other impacts of this pollution included asthma attacks, new cases of childhood asthma, hospitalizations, and missed work and school days.

In fact, the true impact of oil and gas pollution may be even greater than the study reflects. The study used emissions data from 2016 to model health impacts. But fossil-fuel extraction in the Permian Basin more than doubled between 2016 and 2022, and ozone-precursor pollutants,

which lead to smog, increased alongside production. Venting and flaring of gas in the Permian increased by a factor of four from the beginning of 2017 to the beginning of 2019. These wasteful activities — along with other oilfield equipment and processes — contribute to excessive levels of ozone and fine particulate matter in our towns and our homes.

That, in turn, causes New Mexicans to suffer a host of pulmonary and cardiovascular problems.

While New Mexico regulators have taken important steps to reduce pollution, including banning routine flaring of methane gas and requiring operators to conduct routine surveys to fix leaking equipment, these state-level regulations are not federally enforceable. That means non-compliance with state regulations is extremely common. And, unfortunately, pollution does not respect state lines; New Mexicans breathe in pollution from oil and gas facilities in the Texas Permian.

It is difficult to fathom the amount of pollution that these Texas facilities emit; according to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the Texas Permian region produces more ozone-forming volatile organic compounds than Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston combined.

Fortunately, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has authority under the Clean Air Act to address the deadly impacts of oil and gas pollution. The EPA could finalize strong standards for the industry under Section 111 of the Clean Air Act later this year.

Action at the regional level is necessary as well. The ozone monitors in Carlsbad, NM., have reported violations of the federal ozone or “smog” limit every year since 2018. Because the region is violating the smog standard, EPA must redesignate the Permian Basin region as “nonattainment.” This would tighten emission limits on polluting facilities and make it easier to enforce pollution regulations. Many other oil- and

gas-producing regions — including the entire state of Pennsylvania and the Denver-Julesburg Basin — are already subject to these common-sense regulations, which have improved air quality without threatening economic growth.

Moving forward with Permian-specific regulation is likely to ignite a political fight. Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas has vowed to fight any such effort. To overcome this opposition, New Mexico needs its leaders—including Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and the state congressional delegation — to voice their support for reducing Permian emissions. Lives — hundreds of them — are at stake if current levels of pollution are not brought under control. Our nation has repeatedly found ways to improve the quality of the environment without sacrificing economic growth. Surely it can do so again when it comes to eliminating oil and gas pollution.

Talking about it — and getting results

“Example, whether good or bad, has a powerful influence.” — George Washington

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

In “Saving Us: A Climate Scientist’s Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World,” Katharine Hayhoe states, “[A]fter thousands of conversations, I’m convinced that the single most important thing that anyone — not just me, but literally anyone — can do to bring people together is, ironically, the very thing we fear most. Talk about it.

Communicating and educating about issues to members, supporters, decision-makers and the public is central to the Rio Grande Chapter’s impact. In September, that impact was recognized with National Sierra Club awards.

Terry Owen, our chapter outings



SUSAN MARTIN
Rio Grande Chapter chair

co-chair, was honored with the Sierra Club’s “Outings for Action” award. Terry leads by sharing what loves. He not only introduces people to the outdoors, he empowers them with the skills they need for confidence and competency in the wilderness. He calmly invites you into his space, which extends out from the Albuquerque sidewalks and paved bike paths up into los picos altos de los Sangres, Jemez, Sandia, and Organs, all the way into the Four Corners, across the border into Colorado and Utah. Terry also started our Military Outdoors program. He and all the outings leaders he trains remind us to back into the nature that compelled us to become Sierrans in the first place.

National Sierra Club also recognized the excellence of our Rio Grande Sierran, its many contributors, and especially Mona Blaber, our communications director and editor who tracks issues that should be highlighted, magically assembles submissions, hunts down great photos, resolves editorial conflicts and extends our reach beyond our members. Mona is the one who (as a contributor and editor to the *Sierran* says) “herds the cats” to get this excellent resource published and distributed to coffee shops, libraries, doctors’ offices, colleges, and congregations throughout New Mexico and El Paso. You are, right now, reading an award-winning publication that informs us and gives us the tools and the courage to take action. Through the education, information, and actions offered here, we are talking about our issues to build the power of community.

Gov. Bill Richardson, 1947-2023

In September, we received the sad news that former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson had passed away.

We are breathing healthier air and drinking cleaner water thanks to Gov. Richardson. Under his leadership, New Mexico passed its first Renewable Portfolio Standard law, our first carbon and Clean Car safeguards (some of which were later revoked) and historic groundwater protections. Richardson also co-founded the Western Climate Initiative. Many of our chapter leaders noted his love of animals and his protective actions for our waters — he started New Mexico’s River Stewards program and was critical to defending the Gila River from diversion threats.

Our year-end *Sierran* will feature a deeper look at some of Gov. Richardson’s many environmental accomplishments from a few of his many friends and colleagues. We send our deepest condolences to his family and friends.

Court rejects PNM appeal on coal transfer

BY MONA BLABER

Chapter communications director

A New Mexico Supreme Court decision has — for the moment — stopped a plan that could have kept coal-fired Four Corners Power Plant polluting far beyond its potential 2031 closure date.

The court on July 6 rejected PNM’s appeal of a Public Regulation Commission decision to deny PNM’s proposal to transfer its 13% stake in Four Corners. Sierra Club attorney Jason Marks and a PRC staff attorney argued the PRC case at the Supreme Court.

PNM in 2021 proposed to become coal-free by transferring its share of Four Corners (and PNM’s vote on the future of the plant) to the owner of the coal mine that supplies the plant. That company, NTEC, had expressed its intention to keep the plant running as long as possible as the sole customer for its coal mine.

The commission in 2021 denied PNM’s proposal, in part because the utility had not suitably identified replacement power and because of financial questions about PNM’s 2016 ownership renewal and the transfer itself.

The commission had also ruled that in PNM’s next rate case, it would review the prudence of PNM’s expenses at Four Corners. PNM asked the Supreme Court to limit whether and how the commission can review PNM’s Four Corners expenses. The Supreme Court rejected that request.

The court’s ruling paves the way for the commission, in PNM’s pending rate case, to consider that evidence. (see sidebar)

“Our communities have sacrificed much with the Four



Photo by Buddy Mays

PNM had proposed to pay \$75 million to offload its 13% stake in Four Corners coal plant to the owner of the feeder mine. The PRC rejected PNM’s plan, and the Supreme Court in July affirmed that decision.

Corners Power Plant open for over half a century,” said Wendy Atcitty, Indigenous Energy Program manager for Naeva. “Our elders and children are the most sensitive to health and environmental impacts that emissions spew into the atmosphere. The extreme heat from global warming is hurting our elders. The polluted air from burning coal drives asthma rates in our kids. NTEC wanted to run this toxic pollution from Four Corners with coal from their mine. That idea stops now as the decision will ensure the protection from NTEC’s conflict of interest to our tribal communities.”

“The Court’s decision is a victory for PNM’s customers. PNM had tried to prohibit the commission from reviewing the hundreds of millions of dollars in customer money that PNM has poured into the expensive and polluting Four Corners power plant,” said Matt Gerhart, Sierra Club Environmental Law Program Senior Attorney. “The commission can now undertake that review, and will hopefully hold PNM accountable for its wasteful spending at Four Corners.”

Coal issues in PNM rate case

In PNM’s pending rate case, Sierra Club has continued its long-standing efforts to hold PNM accountable for its bad decision to continue to own the expensive and polluting Four Corners coal plant.

In its current rate case, PNM is asking the Public Regulation Commission to recover nearly \$300 million in Four Corners costs through rates and earn a full profit on those costs. These costs are due to PNM’s decision to continue to own Four Corners after 2016 — despite the fact that El Paso Electric and some other utilities exited Four Corners in 2016.

Sierra Club submitted testimony from Dr. Jeremy Fisher, who showed that

PNM’s decision to continue to own a share of the Four Corners power plant after 2016 was unreasonable and imprudent.

Dr. Fisher recommends that the commission reduce PNM’s earnings because of PNM’s imprudent decision to continue its stake in Four Corners after 2016 rather than exiting and investing in cheaper and cleaner resources.

The Sierra Club’s priority is to get the Four Corners plant retired as soon as possible and end its deadly carbon and health pollution. That effort includes preventing ownership by an entity that wants to keep the plan running as long as possible (see accompanying article).

“The decision to reject PNM’s transfer of shares to NTEC is a huge win for Tribal sovereignty not only for the Navajo Nation but throughout Indian Country. The time has come to prioritize Tribally

owned and operated clean energy projects— meaning from the top-down. This also means prioritizing community input and engagement. New Mexico is bravely stepping forward and committing to the

clean energy transition, and now Tribes can lead this effort and stop investing in fossil-fuel economies,” said Catherine Zingg (Ho-Chunk Nation), Director of Indigenous Partnerships at Vote Solar.

“Today’s decision protects New Mexico ratepayers and Navajo people by not allowing a company it cannot regulate to take over a facility at the end of its life and facing extensive decommissioning and cleanup costs. NTEC’s transactions have never served the Navajo Nation’s best interest and don’t require Navajo Nation approval,” said Robyn Jackson, Diné C.A.R.E. executive director. “This decision prevents PNM from passing off its responsibilities to see this coal plant all the way through decommissioning and cleanup so that we aren’t living with its pollution for decades to come.”

“PNM’s documents showed that the utility knew that the right way to exit its interest in the uneconomical and polluting Four Corners plant would be to see the plant fully or partly retired, but under pressure from Avangrid to ink a deal, PNM engineered a transaction that did the opposite, making it much harder to retire the plant,” said Jason Marks, a former PRC commissioner who argued the case for Sierra Club at the Supreme Court and the commission.

PNM may be planning to freshen up its plan and bring it back to the PRC. It is critical that the utilities that own Four Corners (the majority owner is Arizona Public Service) retire it as soon as possible, and that the company that admits its interest is to keep the plant running for decades not wind up controlling PNM’s part of the plant.



PNM customers to see \$115M in ETA rate credits

BY MONA BLABER
Chapter communications director

If you’re a PNM ratepayer, look for a credit averaging \$9.28 on your next electricity bill.

On Sept. 21, the Public Regulation Commission approved a settlement between PNM and multiple environmental and consumer groups to deliver \$115 million back to PNM customers.

These credits represent expected savings from Energy Transition Act bonds. The bonds were meant to refinance PNM’s previous investments in the plant that had not yet been paid off when the plant shut down.

The Public Regulation Commission approved PNM’s abandonment and power-replacement plans in 2020 with the understanding that PNM would issue ETA bonds when the coal-fired San Juan Generating Station closed in September 2022. PNM, however, later revealed it would delay the bond issue until its next rate case. This meant PNM would continue to collect operations, maintenance and debt costs, plus a 9%-plus rate of return, from customers for several years after the plant closed.

After the PRC last year ordered PNM to honor the intent of the ETA and issue rate credits in the absence of Energy Transition bonds, PNM appealed to the state Supreme Court.

Intervenors, including Attorney General Raul Torrez, Western Resource Advocates, Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy (which includes the Sierra Club Rio Grande

Solar jobs in Four Corners

Aerotek and SOLVenergy advertised the following listings for job-seekers in the Four Corners region:

General Laborer: \$19/hour
Equipment Operator: \$21/hour
Experienced Electrical: \$28/hour
Journeyman Licensed Electrician: \$38/hour

Assist in the construction of a utility-scale solar site in Kirtland, NM. Must have previous experience working outdoors in extreme heat and be mechanically inclined.

To apply, contact:
Hann-Ah Hong 623-259-2816
hhong@aerotek.com
Tracy Chamberlin 505-342-5031
tchamberlin@aerotek.com
Valerie Favela 702-699-8407
vbay@aerotek.com

Chapter) and New Energy Economy, negotiated the new settlement with PNM to obtain a monthly rate credit averaging \$9.28, titled “San Juan ETA Settlement Credit.”

The settlement also includes a cap on the interest rate customers will pay once the bonds are issued.

The ETA has led to 100% renewable and battery replacement for the San Juan’s coal-generated electricity, all located in the impacted community. PNM did pre-fund the \$40 million in worker payments and community investments that were also to be funded by ETA bonds. (See article at right).

Customers have seen some savings already because of reduced fuel charges from exiting coal. But ratepayers should now receive the full benefits due them.

“All of the arguments against paying what was due to customers in the PNM settlement disregarded the urgency of nearly half of its ratepayers who struggle every day to meet their basic needs,” said Ona Porter of Prosperity Works. “It is absurd that we had to spend so much time in litigation, and that customers had to wait for a bill credit that was rightfully theirs over a year ago.”

“This summer has been full of extreme heat and drought, showing just how much we need policies like the Energy Transition Act. The closure of the San Juan Generating station has allowed for a better quality of life for our communities. Additionally, now PNM customers will benefit from the credit on their bills as a result of the move towards renewable energy,” said Ahtza Chavez, Naeva executive director.

“PNM tried to withhold Energy Transition Act savings after the San Juan plant closure, but now we’ll each see our fair credit on our bills,” said Camilla Feibelman, Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter director. “The PRC twice directed PNM to credit customers for the ETA bonds the company delayed, but instead, they kept collecting a profit. This settlement allows customers to see the true savings of moving away from coal and toward renewable energy.”

Four years in, ETA benefits are visible

BY CAMILLA FEIBELMAN
Rio Grande Chapter director

Benefits of the Energy Transition Act, championed in 2019 by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, legislative leadership and an array of community and environmental groups, are becoming more tangible in New Mexico and West Texas.

New Mexico utilities and co-ops are adding renewable energy and battery storage to meet the requirements of the legislation. On Oct. 5, San Juan Solar will break ground in the shadow of the now-closed San Juan Generating Station coal power plant. It is just one of the projects that will amount to 100% solar and storage replacement for the polluting electricity the plant once produced.

New Mexico’s Public Regulation Commission approved credits to PNM customers of \$9.28 per month on average for a full year to reflect the savings that come with the closure of the costly, polluting coal plant and lower interest rates enabled by the ETA.

Other savings from the plant closure were used by PNM to pay plant and mine workers for severance and retraining. Another \$20 million in ETA funds is being disbursed by the state Indian Affairs, Workforce Solutions and Economic Development departments.

The Indian Affairs Department announced in July that its \$1.8 million will support the Shiprock Traditional Farmers Coop, Native Renewables, Diné Introspective, Northern New Mexico Indigenous Farmers and the Dine Centered Research and Evaluation Project, all community-led projects.

The Workforce Solutions Department provided direct assistance to displaced workers. According to Secretary Sarita Nair, the agency has delivered 445 checks for \$20,000 to displaced workers, with another 62 applicants still working on San Juan shutdown and reclamation. The agency reports that 43% are Native American, 50% are union members and 31% are retired. And 94% of recipients still live in San Juan County.

The Economic Development Department has not yet issued its grants, which under the ETA cannot fund fossil-fuel projects. We hope to learn more about the agency’s plans at the Energy Transition Act Community Advisory Committee meeting on Oct. 12.

Another central piece of the ETA is the establishment of registered apprenticeships on construction of all new energy projects serving New Mexico customers. We need the PRC (and Workforce Solutions) to ensure that developers comply.

The PRC cited the ETA in rejecting El Paso Electric’s proposal to charge customers to build a new gas facility, as well as in the decision to require 100% solar and storage to replace San Juan coal. PNM also cited ETA requirements in proposing solar and storage to replace expiring Palo Verde nuclear leases.

Continued monitoring and advocacy will be required to make sure the ETA’s intent — to transition from deadly coal, lower costs and provide a safety net for local communities after plant closures — is carried out properly. But the 2019 law has already required utilities to build renewable energy instead of gas, to invest millions in community and worker transition, and to protect customers.

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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*.

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You can join the Sierra Club (your membership is to both the national group and the Rio Grande Chapter) for only \$15! Go to riograndesierraclub.org/join or send a \$15 check with your name, address and the code 1700 in the memo line to:

Sierra Club, Attn: Member Services, 2101 Webster St., #1300, Oakland, CA 94612.

Scan the QR code at right on your cell phone to join the Rio Grande Chapter using our online form.



Trap deaths down after Roxy’s Law

BY MARY KATHERINE RAY
AND TERESA SEAMSTER
Rio Grande Chapter Wildlife
Team

The kill reports from trappers for last winter are in. This was the first trapping season in which traps could not legally be set on New Mexico public lands, and the numbers suggest that Roxy’s Law not only prevented hikers and their dogs from being harmed, but also saved bobcats, foxes, and other wildlife from being killed and exploited for their fur.

Compared to the previous winter, after Roxy’s law had passed but was not yet in effect, the number of foxes killed was down by 56%, the number of bobcats killed was down by 31%, and the number of beavers killed was down by 47%. Overall, killings of animals exploited for their fur were down by 40%, which just about equals the proportion of public land to private land in New Mexico. Not only that, but compared to the 14 incidents involving hikers and their dogs in the year Roxy was killed by a trap, we only learned of one dog being trapped, illegally now, in the Santa Fe National Forest while out recreating with his people last winter.

The downward trend began even before Roxy’s Law was passed because pelt prices have been falling as fashion houses and designers have stopped using real fur. Consumers’ values are changing as people don’t want to be associated with cruelty in their choice of apparel. Trapping is all about money. It has nothing to do with wildlife “management” or anything beneficial to the biome. Lower prices mean that more trappers will weigh the cost of trapping compared to the potential profit and decide to stay home.

Nevertheless, trappers have decided to take the state of New Mexico to court over



Bobcat photo by T. Seamster; gray fox (bottom) and coyote (top) by Mary Katherine Ray

Bobcats, gray foxes and coyotes are the three most trapped species in New Mexico. Trapping deaths have dropped significantly since Roxy’s Law went into effect.

Roxy’s Law. Their complaint centers on the provision that allows registered members of a tribe or pueblo to trap on public land for religious or ceremonial purposes, not for commerce. The lawsuit claims this violates the trappers’ equal-protection rights to pursue their brutal hobby. We are confident the court will see through this desperate attempt to undermine the will of the people of New Mexico and that Roxy’s Law will sustain this legal challenge and remain in effect.

As the numbers show, however, animals that “bear fur” are still being trapped on private land, and they can also be shot on public lands. There are no bag limits for any of these animals, and the seasons are long; November to the middle of March and for some

Take action

Please join us in asking the Game Commission to keep the current four-year furbearer rule-review cycle. Don’t deny these important animals vital regular public input and reconsideration. It isn’t enough to let the agency director unilaterally decide if any changes are needed or to let these animals languish in a regulatory dead zone. Email your comments to DGF-Furbearer-Rules@state.nm.us.

even longer. New Mexico Game and Fish is disconcertingly now proposing to make these policies permanent, meaning they will no longer be reviewed regularly every four years.

This proposal discounts the importance of these mammals and their contribution to the wildlife safety net. In case of severe weather events, wildfire, flooding, drought or epidemic zoonotic disease, these non-herd mammals are the indispensable wildlife that can

bring restoration, ecosystem services and re-population of species to damaged and destroyed habitats.

These small mammals are so significant and far more valuable than their fur because:

- Smaller mammals have advantages over large-bodied ones: they need less food and less space and can adapt to the available food supply.
- They have a significant positive impact on vegetation, water, and soils by preying

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on insects and rodents, maintaining a healthy balance with small but significant herbivores.

- Beavers, otters, and muskrats are essential architects of healthy riparian areas and waterways, so crucial to so many other species from birds to pollinators.
- They in turn are important prey for larger carnivores.
- They breed faster and produce more offspring than larger animals.
- In a “man-made or disrupted” environment, they stand a far better chance of surviving while providing indispensable roles in ecosystem function and health. However, they can easily become over-trapped or shot for their fur unless regular four-year reviews are maintained to monitor their numbers.

Also, while the chances of encountering a trap on public land have gone down, some trappers may still choose to trap illegally. If you find a trap, please leave it in place and report the incident to TrapFree New Mexico at trapfreenm.org/report-trap-incident/. We will help contact law enforcement so that law-breakers can be prosecuted.

New Mexicans march in NYC, at home

BY MIYA KING-FLAHERTY
Our Wild New Mexico
organizer

In September, I joined more than 75,000 people across all ages, faiths and backgrounds in downtown Manhattan to demand President Biden declare a climate emergency, stop approving new fossil-fuel projects and phase out oil and gas drilling on public lands.

The march took place ahead of the U.N. General Assembly session in New York and coincided with other climate actions around the globe, including a huge climate strike and march organized by YUCCA, the No False Solutions Coalition, and UNM



Photo by Miya King-Flaherty

Thousands packed the streets around the world for climate marches, including a large New Mexico delegation in New York, above.

LEAF here in New Mexico. In New York, Indigenous leaders and prominent environmental activists led

the march, closely followed by a delegation of more than 40 New Mexicans representing frontline communities,

advocates and organizers.

The New Mexico delegation called for an end to energy sacrifice zones and for bolder climate action.

Around the world, people showed up to demand more action on climate change, voicing their concerns with their signs, chants, and banners.

The march in New Mexico challenged technologies being discussed that week at the Advanced Energy Conference, calling out polluting industries and their greenwashing proposals that ultimately perpetuate fossil fuels and make the climate crisis worse. Our chapter and partners brought those

concerns inside the meeting, asking challenging questions about nuclear waste, fossil-fuel hydrogen, and claims by Conoco-Phillips that they’re committed to climate solutions even as they expand oil and gas operations in the Permian Basin.

New Mexico is the No. 2 oil-producing state and No. 7 gas producer in the nation, so we have an outsized impact on the climate crisis. With so much at stake, our work takes on even more urgency.

Take action

Go to sc.org/stopfossil to ask President Biden to stop allowing our public lands to be leased for oil and gas drilling.



Photo by Mary Katherine Ray

New Mexico’s Game Commission is proposing cougar kill quotas based on a 2010 study that has repeatedly been found to have overestimated cougar populations.

Science is missing from the bear and cougar proposals

BY MARY KATHERINE RAY
Chapter Wildlife chair

After listening to the representative for New Mexico Game and Fish and testimony at Game Commission meetings and reading public comments received by the agency, one thing is clear: Everyone wants the hunting quotas of bears and cougars to be based on science. But what is also clear is that not everyone knows what constitutes actual science. Some believe that if New Mexico Game and Fish claims a thing to be valid, then it must be valid. This is not science. This is placing a faith or belief in the agency’s claims without scrutinizing its methods or results. Science requires evidence that can be examined by everyone. It requires that calculations and results be transparently obtained. Let’s examine the science behind the cougar kill quotas, for instance. This is the number of cougars that Game and Fish says can be killed in each “cougar management” zone without harming the cougar population in that zone. In 2010, the agency changed the way it estimated cougar populations based on non-published and non-peer-reviewed methodology that found that cougar densities and thus the cougar population in New Mexico was much higher than previously supposed. Since the kill quotas are based on a percentage of the population, those quotas also went up. In 2017, the agency used a different methodology to estimate the population in

cougar-management zone F. This resulted in a published, peer-reviewed paper — in other words, valid science. This research found that the 2010 estimate of the cougar population in Zone F was too high by 69%. Instead of an intended 25% harvest rate, the quotas had actually been allowing an 82% harvest rate — a severe overkill. In 2019, New Mexico Game and Fish implemented an emergency reduction of the cougar kill quota in that zone. Then the agency reapplied the new methodology to Zone F and expanded the study area to include Zone B. Not only were the previous results for Zone F verified, but the population of Zone B was found to have been overestimated by 73%. And the kill quotas were actually allowing hunting of over three times the number of cougars that would be sustainable. The agency’s response was to combine zones F and B into one zone (the current Zone B) and reduce the kill quotas to match the new population estimate in that zone. In 2021, the new, peer-reviewed methodology was applied to cougar Zone Q. Not surprisingly, once again, the cougar population was found to be much lower than estimated using the 2010 model, and thus the kill quotas were again found to be too high. This is why in the new cougar rule being proposed this year, the kill quota for Zone Q is being reduced by 50%. Thus, three studies in three separate cougar-management zones that all used the same

peer-reviewed scientific methods to produce accurate and precise results, all of which were conducted within the last six years, have overwhelmingly demonstrated that the population estimates from 2010 are severely inaccurate, grossly unreliable, and have consistently overestimated local cougar population sizes and the quotas based on these population sizes have been far too high. Yet the agency continues to rely on that unvalidated 2010 methodology that was never externally or independently peer-reviewed to derive cougar population sizes and prescribe hunting limits for the 16 other cougar-management zones. To say that the cougar hunting allowed in these 16 zones is based on valid science, or is conservation-minded, is patently false. To estimate the population of black bears, New Mexico Game and Fish has begun to use the acceptable methodology of collecting bear hair samples as bears pass through baited stations rimmed with barbed wire set up at intervals in the study area. However, while the methodology is sound, its application may not be. The agency won’t reveal how the density determinations have been used to produce a population estimate. What is the size of the area? Instead, we are told that bear-management Zone 10, which encompasses the greater Gila bioregion, despite the drought and destructive fires of recent years, can support the killing of 35% more bears. The agency is also proposing to allow the killing of 6% more bears in Zone 1 in Northern NM.

In neither instance can the public see the scientific details or justifications for these proposals. We are to take them on faith. This is not science. The hallmarks of science demand that the way population estimates are derived and kill quotas set be transparent. There should be a management plan with clearly stated measurable objectives. It should all be open to external review especially by experts. In the case of the bear kill quotas and most of the cougar kill quotas, these hallmarks are missing. Except for three cougar-hunting zones, everyone who says they support the use of science when it comes to setting bear and cougar kill quotas in New Mexico by definition cannot support what NM Game and Fish is proposing to allow for the next four years.

Take action
The final decision won’t be made until the Oct. 27 Game Commission meeting. To participate via Zoom, go to www.wildlife.state.nm.us/commission/webcast/ for instructions a few days beforehand. You may also still submit written comments about the hunting proposals until Oct. 27 at DGF-BearCougar-Rules@state.nm.us or bit.ly/NMbear — or point your phone at the QR code below for the link.



Pueblo lands proposed for protection

BY KIM POPE
Sierra Club Conservation field organizer

President Joe Biden in SePresident Joe Biden in September announced a process to protect the Buffalo Tract and Crest of Montezuma, near Placitas, NM, from oil and gas leasing and mining for 50 years. The process will include public meetings and opportunities for public comment on the proposed withdrawal. Sierra Club and other conservation advocates are urging the administration to make this temporary protection, called an “administrative mineral withdrawal,” a priority. Once in place, it will protect this area while we push for permanent protections through federal legislation championed by Sen. Martin Heinrich. The proposed withdrawal includes 4,200 acres. The Crest of Montezuma and the Buffalo Tract have been used by communities along the Rio Grande Valley for centuries. The area is the ancestral lands of the Pueblo of Santa Ana and the Pueblo of San Felipe and includes sites protected under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Buffalo Tract and the Crest of Montezuma contain important ecosystems and areas that are relied upon as wildlife corridors. They provide a source of clean water to nearby communities. The area also offers close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities and is popular for hiking, camping, sightseeing and hunting. Residents have worked for years to protect the Buffalo Tract and the Crest of Montezuma from the threat of mineral development that would negatively impact public health, quality of life, and water supplies. The community’s ultimate goal is to achieve permanent protections through federal legislation. The proposal to administratively withdraw the Buffalo Tract and Crest of Montezuma will provide strong interim safeguards as we work toward permanent protection. The Biden administration deserves credit for listening to the community and initiating a process to protect these sites. Now it’s up to us. **Take action**
The BLM will host a public meeting from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Nov. 14 at the Placitas Library, 453 NM-165, and is taking public comment through Dec. 19. Go to riograndesierraclub.org/buffalo-tract to learn more and submit a comment.

How we monitor soil, water, air

BY TERESA SEAMSTER
New Mexico Water Sentinels

We often write about healthy soil, clean water and unpolluted air, but until we sample it and analyze its components with lab testing and recorded site conditions, we don't accurately know what we are describing.

Currently, we have some new and ongoing monitoring efforts being conducted in northern New Mexico.

This coming 2024 season, volunteers will be measuring soil moisture and nutrients in the Santa Fe National Forest, while others are testing river water and tributaries for contaminants in the Pecos River. Also, advanced air-quality monitoring equipment has been installed in Counselor to record the emissions affecting the health of Navajo chapter residents near the Chaco oil fields.

Soil health

Soil and vegetation health and moisture levels are critical indices in agriculture, forestry and firefighting to monitor especially in times of drought, intense heat, high wind and fire danger. A new team under the direction of Lisa Markovchick, PhD (Northern Arizona University) has developed a sampling plot map and protocol for volunteers to start collecting soil and vegetation samples from the Santa Fe National Forest and process them in the Evans Science Lab at St. John's College. (Contact etc. seamster@gmail.com for more information)



John Lopez, Trout Unlimited, sampling water at Dalton Campground.

Water quality

A combined group of volunteers from the Sierra Club New Mexico Water Sentinels, Amigos Bravos, Trout Unlimited and NM Wild has been collecting water samples and recording conditions on the Pecos River since July.

Water collected from four sites is being tested at the New Mexico Department of Health Scientific Laboratory Division for gross Alpha (measures overall radioactivity in drinking water), total metals (including manganese and iron) and nutrients (often in runoff from fertilized agricultural fields adjacent to the river). Additional samples are collected to measure e Coli, and streamside conditions are recorded to assess sediment, dissolved oxygen, electrical conductivity, water temperature and pH.

Results from this summer's sampling in July, August and September are showing good water quality throughout the



Photos by Teresa Seamster and John Lopez

Teresa Seamster, Water Sentinels checking dissolved oxygen level.

upper Pecos River from Tererro down to the town of Pecos with: a) water temperatures falling within the cool 6.6-18.3 degrees Celsius range, b) dissolved oxygen levels from 7 to 9 ppm, well above 5 ppm DO needed for healthy fish and other aquatic life, and c) low-risk eColi levels well below 10MPN/100ml at all four sites.

Air quality

Air monitoring at the Chapter level around Chaco has evolved from an initial

network of 16 donated Speck air monitors in 2018, for a one-month data collection period, to a continuous air monitor nationally networked with PurpleAir installed at Ojo Encino Chapter House in 2021.

This summer, a highly sophisticated AQ Sync air monitor paired with a weather station that records simultaneous conditions of wind speed, direction, precipitation, temperature, PM 2.5, NOx and O3 was

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installed at the Counselor Chapter House. This powerful monitoring system designed by 2BTechnologies is part of a \$3 million air-quality-monitoring project funded by National Institutes of Health Small Business Innovative Research program to address pollution hotspots affecting public health in urban and rural communities.

Northern Group supports AES project

BY JOHN BUCHSER AND
CHRIS CALVERT

Northern New Mexico Group

Rancho Viejo has proposed an 800-acre facility on private land bordered by Eldorado and Rancho San Marcos for 96 megawatts of solar panels and 48 megawatts of battery storage. Rancho Viejo has partnered with AES Corp. to pursue permitting from Santa Fe County.

This development is 1.5 miles from any homes but is close to existing PNM high-voltage power lines, minimizing transmission losses. Hopefully PNM won't drag their feet on the needed interconnection. Solar collectors on this scale are a good option for Santa Fe, where the wind is not as persistent as on the eastern plains of New Mexico.

Santa Fe County, which has limited staff with the

appropriate expertise to evaluate a large solar/storage project, has hired Terracon Consultants of Albuquerque to provide input to the county Planning Commission.

The grasslands and piñon-juniper forest at this elevation are frequently very dry. The county needs to be assured that it has the capacity and resources to quickly control escaped fires. AES should have appropriate on-site control chemicals for use by county firefighters. No on-site water is planned, so the county must assess a worst-case need for water to prevent fire spread outside the facility.

The Sierra Club Northern New Mexico Group supports this proposal's inclusion of storage, as we need nighttime renewable energy in addition to daytime solar. Should it be approved, it will join even larger solar projects proposed for sites in Bernalillo County

and San Juan County. Together, they point to a future where renewable energy can be counted on for a majority of our electricity needs.

The Sierra Club Northern New Mexico Group supports the AES solar/storage project, but we are aware of some residents' concerns about the potential for fire from the batteries. However, solar facilities generally have robust fire protections, as shown by three other Northern New Mexico facilities.

The first is a facility in Hyde Memorial State Park installed by Positive Energy Solar. This facility consists of a 200-panel, 80-kilowatt PV system with 22 lithium-ion batteries for storage. Positive Energy Solar is confident that with its multiple built-in safeguards, the building that houses the batteries can contain any fire that might occur within the building, as well as protect the

batteries from any external fire, especially given the onsite building setbacks. This is important because this facility is in a heavily wooded area. Granted, this project is considerably smaller than the proposed AES project, but this technology is scalable. In addition, given its size, AES would probably choose a slightly different technology that would incorporate even more safeguards and redundancies.

The other two are solar/storage facilities in the Kit Carson Electric Coop system. One in Taos entails 12.5 megawatts of lithium-ion battery storage that has been in operation for a year. The other in Angel Fire entails 3.5 MW of lithium-ion battery storage and it has been in operation for 3 - 4 months. No fires have occurred at either facility. The safety features are robust. Three independent entities monitor

these batteries 24/7.

The storage facilities have sophisticated control systems with automatic features that could shut down the battery(ies) under set parameters, with manual overrides as well.

The batteries are compartmentalized in steel containers (think shipping containers) to isolate and contain any fire that might start. These containers also have generous setbacks from vegetation and property boundaries.

Kit Carson has coordinated with and conducted training with all fire departments in these areas.

Kit Carson has 15 more MW of battery storage on the drawing board for three other sites as well, a good indication of its confidence in the safety of these facilities.

2023 RIO GRANDE CHAPTER ENDORSEMENTS

Santa Fe elections



City Council District 1 Alma Castro

Castro’s lifelong embrace of the environment and her pledge to electrify city equipment, increase transit frequency, offer rebates for energy- and water-efficient appliances to income-constrained Santa Feans, and support gas-free new construction, won our support.



Council District 2 Michael Garcia

Councilor Garcia chairs the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Group, which has produced a pathbreaking strategic plan that can lead toward a city much safer and enjoyable to walk and bike. The Rio Grande Chapter is proud to endorse him for another term.



Council District 3 Pilar Faulker

Pilar Faulkner is a small-business owner who was born and raised in Northern New Mexico. She pledges to protect open spaces, conserve natural resources, and protect Santa Fe’s night skies by limiting light pollution.



Council District 4 Jamie Cassutt

Councilor Cassutt chairs the Metropolitan Planning Organization, where she has consistently advocated for funding projects that provide more trails and sidewalks as well as connections among them. She has been a strong advocate for equitable climate solutions.



Ballot measure: Yes

The Rio Grande Chapter supports the Santa Fe affordable housing initiative, which would provide a dedicated funding source for the City’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund by imposing a 3% tax on the portion of the sale price of Santa Fe homes that exceeds \$1 million.

Albuquerque

Public School Board

District 1: Janelle Astorga

Astorga is a young organizer who has worked on education issues from a community perspective since she was in high school, including opposing the privatization of education. She is now co-director the Learning Alliance of NM and development director at SWOP.

District 2: Ronalda Tome-Warito

Tome-Warito is a Native woman who for 25 years has advocated for Native students with disabilities. She will bring a knowledgeable voice on special education and the needs of Native students to the board.

District 4: Heather Benavidez

Benavidez is CEO of The Arc of New Mexico, which advocates for New Mexicans living with disabilities. She emphasizes the accurate teaching of science so that students will be prepared to address climate change and have a place where they will be able to thrive and raise their families.

City Council District 2



Joaquin Baca

Baca is running for the open seat currently held by Ike Benton, who is retiring. Baca is a hydrologist whose career has focused on both protection of water resources and riparian restoration, policy-wise as well as on the ground. Joaquin is also a current member of the MRGCD board and has held an array of public and nonprofit board positions with conservation of natural resources as the common theme.

City Council District 4



Abby Foster

We’re lucky to have Abby Foster. Foster has made it her mission to unseat a bad incumbent in City Council District 4. Foster states that “it is difficult to overstate the urgency with which humanity needs to act to mitigate climate change” and that “we need to work on electrifying everything,” exactly the kind of commitment to addressing climate that we need on Council!

City Council District 6



Nichole Rogers

A native New Mexican raising her kids in South Los Altos, Rogers is a New Mexico First board member and has worked in the City’s Office of Equity & Inclusion, experiences that led to her emphasis on collaboration between community and government. Rogers sees the need for concrete climate solutions, like providing ways for more and safer cycling, better public transport and helping with conversion to electrification.

Las Cruces



Mayor: Kasandra Gandara

Gandara says Las Cruces needs to aggressively address climate change, and the two-term councilor walks the walk. She supported the city’s climate action plan, which has allowed it receive 25% of its electricity from solar, and a plastic-bag ban, electric buses, and the City’s PowerUp Expo to educate citizens about electrification.



City Council District 1 Cassie McClure

McClure is a city Parks and Recreation Advisory Board member. She is a cyclist who enjoys seeing the agricultural side of Las Cruces through its ditchbanks and trails. She supports moving away from fossil fuels as fast as possible.



City Council District 2 Tessa Abeyta

Incumbent Abeyta’s career has been dedicated to advocacy for children, public health and the environment. She was Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce director and an advocate for the formation of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.



City Council District 4 Johana Bencomo

Incumbent Johana Bencomo is a New Mexico Environmental Law Center board member and has been executive director for NM CAFÉ. She is proud of her votes to end use of plastic bags in Las Cruces and to create the crisis intervention team.

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Listings of endorsements and ballot measure for the Santa Fe City Council, the Albuquerque Public School Board, and the Las Cruces School Board authorized and paid for by The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club Political Action Committee.

Las Cruces School Board

District 1: Patrick Nolan

Nolan has been involved with the Green Chamber since he joined as executive director of the Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. He also served as union representative for American Federation of Teachers NM.

District 4: Teresa Tenorio

An incumbent, Tenorio is proud of her votes to approve an equity and excellence policy and a gender-inclusive schools policy, as well as policy in response to the Martinez-Yazzie decision in support of at-risk students.

District 5: Edward Frank

Frank, an incumbent, supports diversity, equity and inclusion in our schools and beyond. He believes that outcomes improve when students feel respect for their cultures in the curriculum.

NM to update energy-saving building codes

BY TAMMY FIEBELKORN

Southwest Energy Efficiency Project

The energy that buildings use, and often waste, makes up a big percentage of New Mexico’s climate pollution. Energy conservation codes minimize the energy waste in buildings by ensuring that new structures are built to require the least amount of energy possible while maintaining safety and comfort.

As part of Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham’s Climate Executive Order in 2019, the state committed to regularly update these codes.

In 2020 the state updated the 2009 codes to 2018, and now, as New Mexico is updating to the 2021 version, 2024 code templates are coming out.

It’s great news that we’re moving towards the 2021 update this year, but the climate and our energy savings would benefit from legislation to keep up with codes that come out every three years and bring us the best building science and technology to minimize energy use.

The proposal going before the Construction Industries Commission for approval in November includes the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code that updates the energy efficiency of buildings, along with an amendment to require all new buildings be EV-ready, making it easier for homeowners, residents of multifamily units and users of commercial parking lots to charge their electric vehicles. Conservation codes help reduce emissions from buildings, help make them more comfortable and save money on electricity, but to ensure their adoption, we need your help.

Take action

Please make a difference by joining public hearings on Nov. 15 and 16 to speak up for healthy buildings. Email camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org for more details on how to participate.

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Volunteer coordinators: Open

Wildlife: Open

Military Outings: Terry Owen



Photo by Laurie Zunner

Owner Carolyn Richter in her People & Planet Refill in Albuquerque.

E-bikes great way to get around

BY DIANE REESE

Rio Grande Chapter vice chair

I got an e-bike for my birthday! This had been on my wish list for a long time — something to use not just for exercise but also as an alternative to my car. I particularly wanted it for camping trips — something I could carry on the RV and use to get to trailheads or around the state parks that I love so much. After test riding a number of options, I chose the Velotric Go: 500 watts, 55 miles on a charge, 65 pounds and fun to ride! I can pedal all I want but get that zippy boost on the hills — it is terrific!

Sustainable transportation modes are low- to zero-emissions, energy-efficient, affordable, accessible and healthy ways to get around. E-biking is a great example. E-biking has many benefits in addition to sustainability — using one can improve your fitness because while pedaling is assisted, the bike still provides excellent physical exercise by increasing the rate at which your body burns calories. When I exercise outside, I find my stress level goes down, and I feel happier and sleep better, too. E-bikes are environmentally friendly — as an alternative commuting

E-bike Fair

What: E-bike Fair
When: Saturday, Oct. 28, 10 am to 12 pm
Where: Snow Park Community Center, Albuquerque
Who: Central New Mexico Sierra Club and you!
Learn more about e-bikes and check out different styles. Everyone who gets to the fair by sustainable transport instead of a personal vehicle will receive a gift. Contact DianeAbqNM@gmail.com for more info.

option, ebikes are better for us all as they don’t consume fossil fuels or pollute the air. And with minimal maintenance and fuel cost (you do need to charge the battery), an ebike is a very cost-effective mode of transport. And did I mention that they are fun?

Let’s talk about the broader topic of sustainable transportation — something that should be available to everyone. Access to sustainable transportation is still a struggle — both nationwide as well as here in the Southwest.

We are proud of our Albuquerque City leaders for enacting zero-fare buses and will continue to advocate for making this program permanent. Consider the nationwide Week Without Driving Challenge, sponsored by America Walks. This campaign is an attempt to raise awareness of how car-dependent most of our transportation is, and how it impacts the roughly 25% of Americans who don’t drive. Check it out at americawalks.org.

The Central Group would like you to explore e-biking with us. We are holding our Second E-bike Fair on Saturday, Oct. 28, from 10 a.m. to noon at Snow Park Community Center, 9501 Indian School Rd NE, Albuquerque.

Everyone who gets to the fair by sustainable transport instead of a personal vehicle will receive a gift!

E-bikes come in many styles — cruiser, commuter, mountain and road bikes. We will have experienced riders and experts to answer your questions and lead you to your best option. Our partners in promoting sustainable forms of transportation will have information on trails, efforts to make our streets safer for bikers, raffles and even free demo rides on e-bikes!

Central New Mexico Group monthly get-togethers

BY SUSAN GORMAN & TERRY OWEN

Calling all Sierra Club Central New Mexico Group members and friends to join us for our resumed October, November and December membership meetings.

October will be the Central Group’s first in-person general membership meeting in over two and a half years, and we’re excited to get back together

with you. The meeting will be held at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, 431 Richmond Place NE, Albuquerque, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 6.

Joining us will be Cliff Giles of Friends of the Sandia Mountains and Ranger Crystal Powell from the US Forest Service Sandia Ranger District. They’ll be sharing views about the health of our Sandias, new ways to enjoy them, volunteer opportunities,

and Sandia fun!

Also, circle Nov. 3 (one year post-Inflation Reduction Act) and Dec. 1 (Member and Volunteer Appreciation Potluck Party) on your calendar as we continue our monthly meetings that will include speakers discussing topics that we all care about.

Free, light refreshments including beer and wine will be served. Contact sbginabq@aol.com for more info.

Becoming a more sustainable adventurer

BY TERRY OWEN
Outings co-chair

When you're planning your next adventure, do you sometimes forget to consider your impact on the planet? Or perhaps, it's a consideration, but it's not front of mind?

Being a sustainable adventurer allows you to have a smaller footprint, save money and feel good about living your ethics. This may seem daunting at first, but to take some of the stress out of this idea, know that you won't do it perfectly — no one can — but we can't let perfectionism get in the way of progress.

Now that we have that out of the way, let's talk about how you can easily reduce, reuse and recycle to become a more sustainable adventurer.

The main inputs into any adventure are transportation, food and lodging, and gear and equipment. Of the greenhouse-gas emissions related to tourism, transportation accounts for 49% per Sustainable Travel International. It's often one of our biggest expenditures when we're embarking on that epic trip to the mountains, a national park or a body of water. But there are a few things we can do to reduce our impact. The obvious ones are to carpool with others, drive an efficient vehicle, and look for areas closer to home for our adventures.

Transportation

We're lucky, because no matter where we are in New Mexico, there are myriad possibilities within 100 miles of home where we can see new sights and have new experiences. For those far-flung adventures, try to combine several trips into one. Instead of making three separate trips to see the Grand Canyon, go mountain-biking in Sedona, and backpack a section of the Continental Divide Trail, make it one phenomenal trip. Also, consider taking your e-bike or mountain bike, then set up a basecamp in one area, campsite or lodge and ride your bike to see the city sights or trails. Seeing a new place from your bike saddle rather than your vehicle makes it more personal and intimate while saving energy.

Food and lodging

Food and lodging account for more than 16% of the carbon emissions related to travel. This is among the easiest categories to reduce our impact. It's as easy as eating lower on the food chain. Throw veggie burgers on the grill rather than beef, salmon or chicken. The carbon footprint, water and energy consumption and environmental damage that

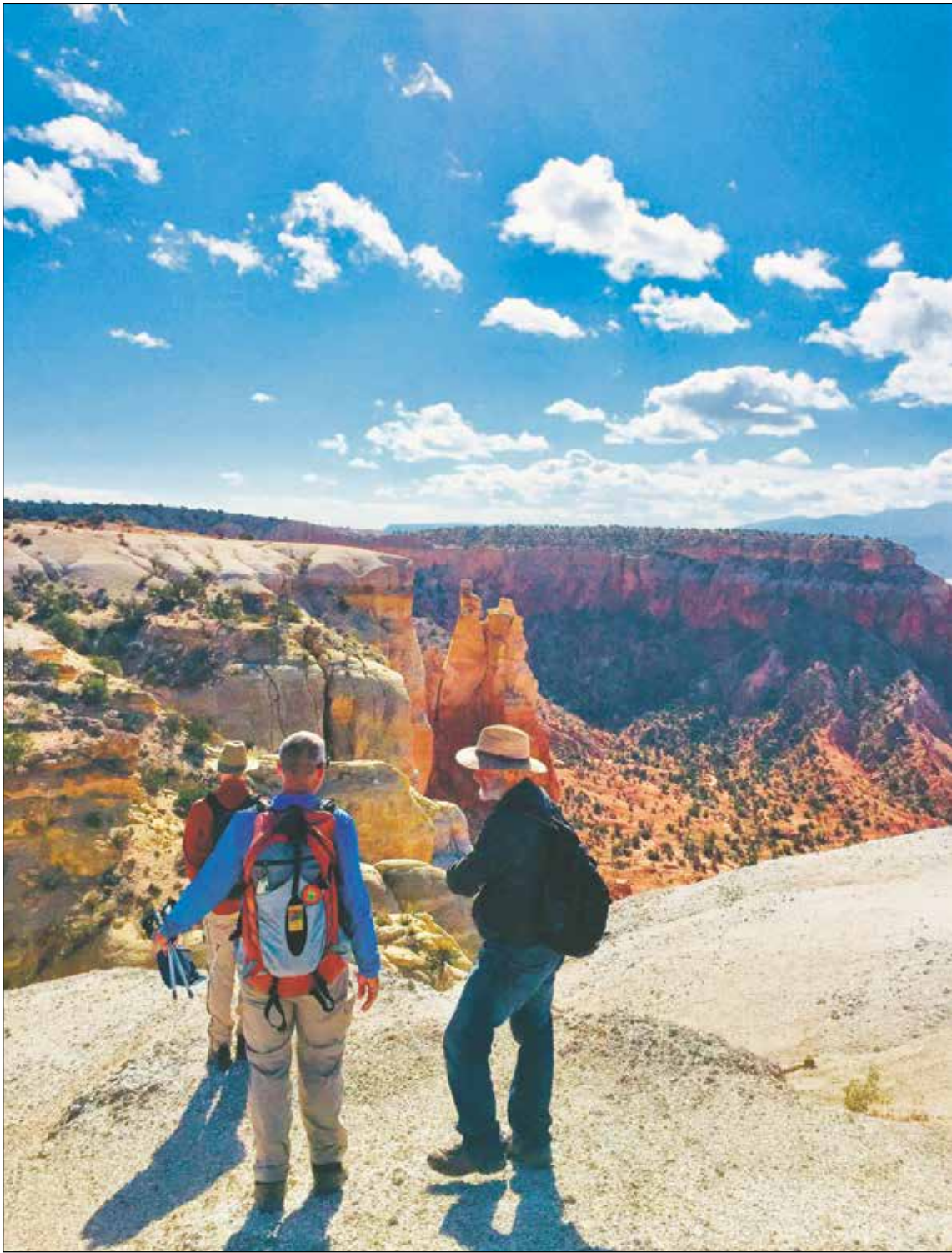
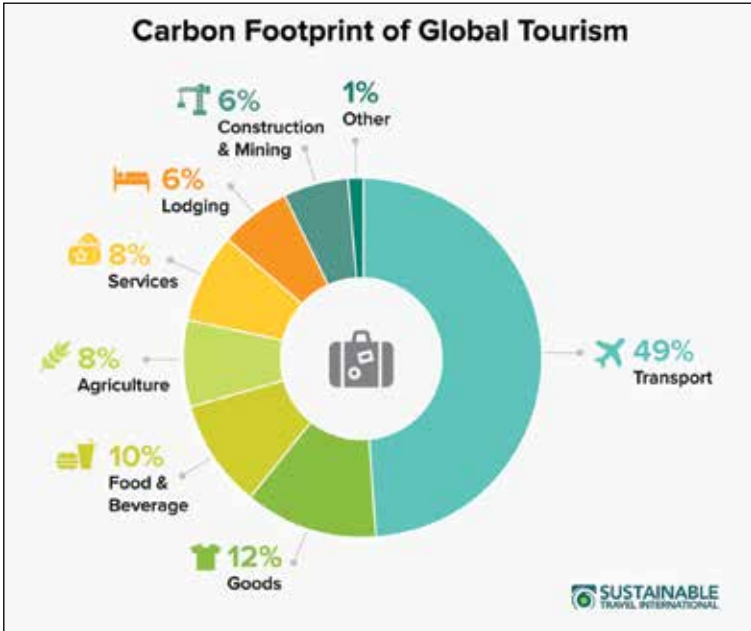


Photo of Kitchen Mesa hike by Ann Maes

Sierra Club's motto is "Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet." We do our best to protect while we explore.

raising and harvesting meat produces is well documented, and the meatless alternatives are getting better all the time. Instead of going to that fast-food joint, go to the local grocery store and pick up fresh ingredients and locally sourced items that are healthier for you and for the planet. If you do want to dine out, choose a local small-business eatery that sources their ingredients closer to home.

For lodging, look for facilities that have been certified green by a third party such as Trip Advisor's Green Leaders, Audubon Society's Green Seal or Google's Green Certified. Those facilities must comply with high standards to obtain and maintain their certifications. Tent camping is my favorite way to reduce my carbon footprint and save money. There are many commercial campgrounds all over the U.S., as well as a slew of non-commercial and free camping areas to choose from. HipCamp and Harvest Hosts offer great camping solutions on out-of-the-way property owned by private landowners. Freecampsites.net and the Campendium app can help you find free dispersed



camping all over the U.S. I make a game out of my trips to see how little I can spend on a per-day basis on food and lodging. That also results in fewer carbon emissions. It's fun and economical.

Gear and equipment

Gear and equipment can account for upwards of 12% of tourism-related carbon emissions. High-quality gear can last years, even with a lot of abuse. It's also an opportunity to not only reduce the amount you purchase, but increase the amount that you reuse

and recycle. If you do buy new gear, look for companies that make a solid commitment to the environment and have a great warranty. Look for companies like Patagonia and Cotopaxi that make recycling an integral part of their product lifecycle. There are certain items I will only buy new, such as rock-climbing gear, diving equipment and any other item upon which my life will depend. Otherwise, I look for used gear or consider borrowing it from a friend, neighbor or

Interested in being an outings leader?

BY TERRY OWEN
Outings co-chair

Interested in becoming a certified Sierra Club outings leader and leading local outings? The first step in that journey is to complete Outings Leader Training.

Join Chapter Outings Co-Chair Terry Owen on Saturday, Oct. 21, for this eight-hour course that will provide you with the foundational information you need to lead safe, fun and inspiring outings such as hikes, bike rides, snowshoe or ski outings, and ambles. You don't have to be a super-outdoorsperson or an expert in ecology, either. Also, if you're a currently certified outings leader and have not yet received the new curriculum or it's been approximately four years since you last attended this course, you should also consider joining us.

This course will be conducted virtually, and all persons who register will be required to download the instruction packet, which includes the training materials, handouts and reference materials along with a Zoom link, about one week before the course start date. Note that this particular training will provide some additional focus on risk management in the desert and Mountain West, including high-altitude outings. Register by Oct. 17 at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/.

fellow Club member. For used gear, consider the Rerouted, GearTrade, Out & Back or eBay websites, and locally there's ReGear and the REI Garage Sale. Another option is to search on the Facebook Free Stuff and Buy Nothing forums. As with any other transaction you make on the internet, look carefully at photos and related information for any gear that you're considering purchasing, and buyer beware.

Lastly, no matter where you go or what you do, don't forget to Leave No Trace. Every little thing that you do to reduce your impact contributes to the larger aim of protecting the planet. It's all part of becoming a more sustainable adventurer.

October · November · December outings

BY TERRY OWEN
& DEBBIE BRYANT

SATURDAY, OCT. 7

Cerros de Amado Ramble.

The landscapes will be pleasing in this geologically interesting area. With no forest cover, the rock strata and their contortions are laid bare. We walk up and down through millions of years. This hike is 6 miles with an elevation gain of 800 feet. Kids ages 14 and up allowed with parent or legal guardian. No dogs. Register by Oct. 4.

Leader: Jim Nelson, (575) 517-7001
jcnelson@gilanet.com

Level: Moderate

Location: East of Socorro, NM

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/

FRIDAY, OCT. 13

Bosque Walk at Durand Open Space.

Welcome to the beautiful South Valley! Durand Open Space provides excellent access to forest paths and river views. We'll do a 2-mile loop and take a break at the covered picnic area. Meet at the Durand parking lot by 9:55 a.m. No dogs please. 10 a.m. to noon.

Trip leader: Diane Reese

505-507-6416

DianeAbqNM@gmail.com

Level: Easy – no elevation gain; mix of shaded-unshaded, flat trail, root trip hazards

Location: Durand Open Space, 4750 Isleta Blvd SW, Albuquerque.

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, OCT. 14

More Fall Birds Along Animas River in Farmington.

Three miles round trip. 8 to about 11 a.m. This and the Sept. 16 trip aim to discover which of the 31 migrant species, who headed north last spring, will follow the same route, heading south in the fall. We'll also look for the 24 residents discovered last spring, hopefully finding a few more. Eighteen years old and up only. No dogs please. Use sunscreen, bring binoculars, water, snacks, and dress for the weather. Limit 12 people. Register by Oct. 11.

Trip leader: Mike Foster

303-594-1431

mike4ffoster@gmail.com

Level: Easy

Location: Farmington

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, OCT. 14

Angel Peak Eclipse Peek-a-Boo.

The annular solar eclipse at 9 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 14, should be a spectacular event. The path of the eclipse will pass directly over the Four Corners and Angel Peak Scenic Area 15 miles south of Bloomfield, NM. The eclipse will last for about three hours. Angel Peak and Kutz Canyon are in a remote area of beautiful, stark badlands unrivaled anywhere in the West. The Rio Grande Chapter will host an outing limited to 20 registrants, all of whom must be 18 or older. The fact that this outing will be in various stages of darkness, and the fact that rattlesnakes and other critters may still be out in mid-October presents too much of a risk for pets and kids. The campground and picnic areas there have been built and are maintained by the Bureau of Land Management. Angel Peak Campground has nine sites suitable for tenting and small-mid sized RVs. No water or hook-ups are available. The campground is 6 miles off US



Photo courtesy Diane Reese

Above: Led by outings co-chairs Debbie Bryant and Terry Owen, Backpacking 101 graduates celebrate their successful ascent to Wheeler Peak — the highest point in New Mexico.

550 on County Road 7175. The road was well-maintained on our scouting visit and may be traveled by any vehicle with medium or high clearance. The leader intends to camp Friday night but cannot relay a specific location because camping is first come-first served. It is difficult to estimate whether the campground will be at capacity. If you plan to camp, arriving a day or two early is advised. Dark Sky areas in the path of the eclipse will be very crowded. Mesa Verde facilities and motels in Mancos and Cortez are booked. Chaco Canyon will be overrun with campers and spectators, so plan ahead. Lodging and dining are available in Bloomfield and Farmington. As the event nears, this description will be updated and edited to reflect any new information. This is not a physically demanding outing. There is no planned hike. We will gather at a site to share the spectacle, hot beverages and snacks, and enjoy the morning. Contact the leader with questions. **Trip Leader:** Hart Pierce 505-320-1055, shpierce@q.com **Level:** Easy **Location:** Four Corners area **Sign up:** riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SUNDAY, OCT. 22

Hike Palomas Peak Via Faulty Trail.

This trail is about 7.5 miles long with 1,860-foot elevation gain and is rated by All Trails as moderate to strenuous. We will meet at the Sandia Man Cave parking area. If it is full, there is additional parking about 1 mile past it at a picnic area. We should be done in five hours if everyone who signs up has a 1.5-mph pace going uphill. This is a remote trail with some great views. We will stop for water breaks and a snack break along the way. If interested, afterwards we can arrange to stop at the Placitas Cafe for lunch.

Trip Leader: Debbie Bryant
bryade@gmail.com

Level: Moderate-Strenuous



Photo by Debbie Bryant

Participants enjoyed a Yoga in the Mountains outing in September.

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

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 8

Zero Waste Tour of the Rio Grande Compost facility.

10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on the West Mesa. Come and see the process up close on how biosludge from the ABCWUA is mixed with green waste, stable bedding and wood chips to make nutrient-rich compost. Tour starts indoors with a brief orientation then moves outdoors and to an open warehouse, so dress accordingly. Must wear long pants and closed-toed shoes. Limited to 10 people, first come first served. Participants must be able to stand during the entire tour. Register by Nov 6. Meet at the facility parking lot, 7400 Jim McDowell Road NW.

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

Level: Easy

Location: Albuquerque's West Mesa

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, NOV. 18

Beat the Black Friday Rush Bike Ride to Nob Hill.

Meet at Winrock Mall parking lot at 9:45 a.m. This eight-mile course includes 225 feet of elevation gain and 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, but money for purchases at restaurants and shops is recommended. Maximum 10 participants. No dogs are allowed. Deadline for registering is Nov. 11.

Trip Leader: Patrick Burton
505-550-5534

patrickburton9@icloud.com

Level: Easy-Moderate

Location: Albuquerque Winrock to Nob Hill

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, DEC. 2

Introduction to Backpacking.

New Mexico has hundreds of miles of trails waiting for you. Whether you just want to get away for a weekend of solitude with your family or solo through-hike from Mexico to Canada, adventure is right in our backyard. Perhaps you're merely curious and not quite sure how to begin backpacking or whether it's for you? This clinic is designed for those who've never shouldered a backpack as well as those who just want to learn more about how to safely hike in the backcountry. During this six-hour course we'll take you from the basics to the essential things you need to know for an extended through-hike. We'll use both classroom and

hands-on learning. Class runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a one-hour break for lunch. Appropriate for children 14 and up with parent or legal guardian. Class limited to 16 attendees. We'll cover the following topics: Planning and preparing for a trip, Risk management and safety, Proper pack fit and pack loading, Essential, optional and non-essential gear, Care and uses of gear, Self-care, Leave-no-trace ethics.

Trip leader: Terry Owen
teowen@comcast.net

Level: Easy

Location: East Mountain Library

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 21

Night Stargazing Bike Ride

7-9 p.m. It may not seem so at first, but the middle of winter is actually a good time for a nighttime bike ride. It's quiet with minimal traffic and clear skies overhead. Join us for a ride from Montgomery Park to Canteen Brewery. Five miles round trip with less than 500 feet of elevation gain. Road-capable bike with front and rear lights, helmet, and reflective clothing required. Participants must be 21 or over. No dogs are allowed. Deadline for registering: Feb. 12. Limit five participants.

Trip Leader: Patrick Burton
505-550-5534

patrickburton9@icloud.com

Level: Moderate

Location: Albuquerque

Sign up: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar