



Leading the charge

New Mexico passes momentous Clean Cars and Trucks standards: **Page 6**



New Mexicans celebrate Clean Cars passage with their EVs.

Photo by David McGahey

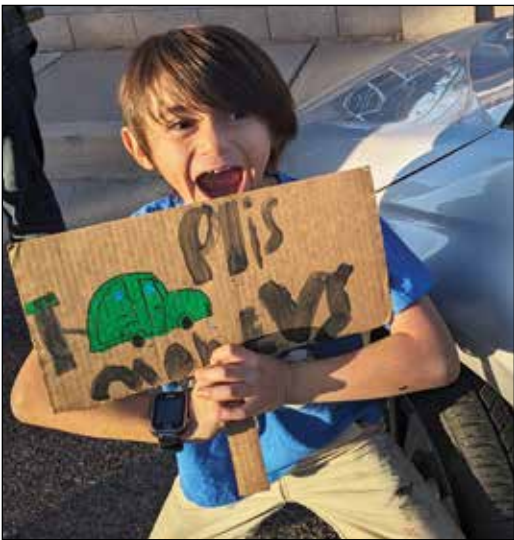


Photo by Xavier Obando



Photo courtesy Athena Christodoulou



Photo by Anne-Marie Kalus

Despite evidence-based objections, Game Commission passes ill-informed hunting rules: **Page 9**



Check out hikes and outings from easy to hard, all free and open to the public: **Page 12**



Asha after capture in early 2023

Follow the travels of Asha the Mexican gray wolf and other 2023 victories and challenges in the Year in Review: **Page 7**

EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET

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

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Inside:

PRC advised to disallow some coal expenses

Hearing examiners recommend a slight rate cut for PNM customers because of renewables and disallowed Four Corners costs. **Page 5.**

Air Quality firings don't stop rulemaking

Albuquerque City Council tries to squelch clean-air regulation by firing regulators, but air-quality board persists. **Page 8.**

Chapter goes 19-for-23 in elections

Most of our endorsed local candidates win in November. **Page 11.**

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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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EPA finalizes oil and gas methane standards

BY ANTOINETTE REYES

Chapter Permian and Southern NM Organizer

After 10 years of work by environmental and frontline communities in New Mexico and around the country, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham joined EPA Administrator Michael Regan at the UN Climate Summit to announce EPA safeguards to slash methane and other harmful pollution from the oil and gas industry, a major win for climate and public health.

Thousands of New Mexicans have spoken out in favor of strong methane and ozone rules in the Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations. Additionally, Gov. Lujan Grisham’s administration

has passed nation-leading methane and ozone safeguards that have provided a strong model for the EPA rules. And importantly for families in New Mexico’s Permian Basin, federal protections will apply to extraction in Texas, where methane emissions are nearly unregulated.

Each year, oil and gas operations in New Mexico release enough methane into the atmosphere to heat every home in the state. The nation’s largest methane emitter, Hilcorp, has 60% of its facilities in New Mexico. Hilcorp is the largest operator in the San Juan Basin.

The final EPA standards will strengthen leak detection and repair requirements for all wells, regardless of size or operation status; require installation of non-polluting pneumatic

equipment; impose a phased-in prohibition on routine flaring of gas at new wells; and initiate a community monitoring program to target particularly large emission events also known as super-emitters.

Reducing methane pollution from the oil and gas industry is the fastest, most cost-effective way to slow the rate of climate change and avoid the further escalation of unpredictable, severe, and catastrophic weather events like the wildfires and subsequent floods that ravaged the northern part of the state and the heat dome we experienced this summer.

Additionally, oil and gas methane is emitted alongside other health-damaging pollutants, such as smog- and soot-forming volatile organic

compounds and carcinogenic toxins like benzene and formaldehyde. These operations are in communities already dealing with disproportionate public health and socioeconomic burdens.

Studies show that oil and gas production is responsible for billions of dollars in health damages annually, including early deaths, asthma, increased rates of cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancer, and other adverse health impacts among those living closest to development.

Reducing emissions is good for the air we breathe and the climate, and it will create hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs. According to a BlueGreen Alliance study, the leak detection and repair provisions alone will create 136,000 permanent jobs nationwide.



Garcia Richard renews Chaco protection

BY MIYA KING-FLAHERTY

Our Wild New Mexico Organizer

On Dec. 15, New Mexico Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard renewed her 2019 Executive Order extending a moratorium on new oil and gas leasing covering 72,776 acres of state trust lands in the Greater Chaco area through December 21, 2043.

“Commissioner Garcia Richard’s commitment is one step on the path to ending the sacrifice of Indigenous lands and lives to toxic, destructive fossil fuels in Greater Chaco and beyond,” the Greater Chaco Coalition said in a statement.

As one of her first acts in office, in 2019 Commissioner Garcia Richard initiated a dialogue with Native American nations, tribes, pueblos of New Mexico, and other stakeholders to explore alternative land uses aligning with landscape protection. Since then, no new state trust lands in the Greater Chaco region have been leased.

This Executive Order aligns with a June 2023 Department of the Interior approval for a 20-year mineral withdrawal within 10 miles of Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Despite a lapse in engagement, we hope DOI’s Honoring Chaco Initiative can be a landmark moment to address the legacy of broken promises in the Greater Chaco Landscape.

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NM Gas proposes LNG plant near monument

BY ANNI HANNA

If you have hiked Petroglyph National Monument North, you know its rugged beauty and cultural significance. New Mexico Gas Company is proposing a \$180 million facility for storing and regasifying liquefied natural gas (LNG) on 25 acres close to these petroglyphs, and just two miles from Vantana Ranch and Double Eagle Airport.

The facility poses health and safety risks to surrounding communities and could raise the prices of gas by \$3 a month for the next 30 years for ALL gas customers.

LNG is created through an energy-intensive process to cool methane gas to -260° F, changing it from gas to a liquid that is 1/600th its original volume. The proposed facility would store about 12 million gallons of liquid natural gas and regasify 200,000 gallons per day to be distributed back into existing pipelines.

At a recent Public Regulation Commission forum, New Mexicans testified for over three hours, with about 80% of speakers raising concerns about the LNG facility, such as the potential to spark wildfires, risks to first responders, recent explosions at LNG plants in Texas, stranded assets of fossil-fuel infrastructure, and economic hardships already faced by New Mexico Gas customers:

“As a homeowner, I strongly object to LNG in my backyard or being in

anyone’s backyard. This is not an energy source we need to be pursuing. We need to be investing in solar and solar energy storage,” said Madigan Ray, a Rio Rancho resident.

“Why would you site a 12-million-gallon, 10-story LNG facility right next to a large metropolitan area? ... There have been no independent environmental impact studies... What’s going to be the impact on property values?” said Russ Poggensee, Santa Fe Village Neighborhood Association president in Rio Rancho.

State Sen. Harold Pope, along with 13 New Mexico representatives, also wrote a letter to the PRC outlining their concerns:

“The primary physical danger at an LNG plant is a leak forming a low-lying vapor cloud of methane gas that drifts until it hits an ignition source — even simple static electricity — igniting an inferno that cannot be extinguished with water. Depending on wind speed and topography, these vapor clouds can drift for miles. First responders require specialized training and equipment to respond to these leaks, and the risk of an explosive wildfire spreading in the arid Rio Grande Valley threatens the health and safety of our largest population center,” Sen. Pope’s letter to PRC said.

In February 2021, a severe storm strained the gas supply in Texas, causing technical issues at gas plants, excess

demand and unprecedented price spikes as gas-plant owners capitalized on the supply shortage. New Mexico Gas contracts with Keystone storage facility in Texas, and when the company was warned of potential shortages, it incurred over \$107 million in fuel costs procuring alternate supplies on the volatile gas markets. The PRC ordered New Mexico Gas to evaluate potential measures to prevent future extraordinary price spikes. Hence, the company’s proposal for this LNG plant in Rio Rancho.

However, since 2021, improvements have been made at the Keystone facility to prevent reliability issues. The proposed LNG facility would offer just half the gas supply available through the Keystone contract. Solely relying on the proposed facility could put New Mexicans at greater risk of price volatility in the event of another major storm. The true rationale for the \$180 million plant is likely the guaranteed return on equity that New Mexico Gas can charge ratepayers for its capital investments.

Residents are rightly concerned about their health and safety. Now is the time to find alternatives, not invest \$180 million in more fossil-fuel methane infrastructure.

The LNG proposal comes before the Public Regulation Commission on Jan. 8.

Submit your concerns by emailing: public.comment@prc.nm.gov.

Relationships made it a successful year

As the holidays approach, I'm thinking about my relationships. With my kids and how we celebrate the season. With my husband and how we tend our home. With my parents and what their legacy to their grandchildren will be. With my neighbors and how we build our neighborhood and our community. With my colleagues and how we navigate this moment of the ever increasing urgent need for change. And with you and how we here at the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter can help you feel the power of the change you are helping to achieve.

For my kids, this season, we're teaching them to celebrate together and to speak up and out. My little boy decided he wanted to testify at the

Clean Cars and Trucks hearings. I was amazed at how much he already knew. "I want more EVs so we don't have to burn gas because I'm worried about global warming." With my husband, who is the sustainability director at his architectural firm, I'm learning the power of warmth ... through insulation. Together we are discovering through RewiringAmerica.org that we can insulate our home and significantly reduce our energy demand. And by transitioning our appliances, with the



CAMILLA FEIBELMAN
Chapter Director

help of rebates and tax credits, we can get off the natural gas that is doing our planet so much harm, not to mention our indoor air quality. My neighbors remind me of the power of community. By sharing, as the self-appointed block captain, election information and home efficiency benefits, I'm multiplying the power of the knowledge that I have with the people I know. If you are reading this, you are also an ambassador of information to your friends, neighbors and families and can share information on how they can make their homes more comfortable, affordable and durable. To my colleagues at the Sierra Club and partners, you are tireless. Mona Blaber, our long-serving and deeply loved communications director, is taking a new

role with the national Sierra Club's digital organizing team. We are so sorry to see her go, but take joy in her opportunity for growth and the fact that she'll be assigned to work with New Mexico. This will be her last edition of the *Sierran*, which she's so ably made into a professional publication. Thank you, Mona. To my parents and all our Sierra Club members, I thank you for all you do. Joining, giving, volunteering, calling, writing, advocating. Your kids, grandkids, friends, families and neighbors owe you thanks, and I do too. Thank you for choosing us as your ebike for change. Thanks to all of you for joining together in striving always for healthy families, thriving communities and a living planet.



Left, Students watch a video about the GWE. Right, Learning how to view the solar eclipse. Below, The Blanket Experiment — always a favorite — how it feels to be the Earth heating up!

The Global Warming Express

BY GENIE STEVENS

School year 2023 saw the start of seven Global Warming Express programs, both in-school and after school, mentored by trained GWE volunteers and by teachers in the New Mexico school systems.

Global Warming Expressers this year are spread across the New Mexico map from Raton to White Rock to Santa Fe to Las Vegas to San Antonito to Albuquerque.

The students range in age from 7 to 12 and are a diverse, passionate, curious group of 70-plus kids completing the reading, studying, research and exploration portion of their program.

Next up for the new year is learning public speaking, letter writing and civic engagement, while setting their group's Big Goals and Small Goals for the rest of the school year.

You will see them in action at the Roundhouse on Feb. 9, Environment Day, for their 11th year! GWE kids from



all over the state will come together to attend the Senate or House sessions, have a mock Senate committee meeting in a real committee room with state Sen. Liz Stefanics and, of course, headline the noon press conference with their speeches and performances.

As usual, our GWE program includes both outdoor and indoor activities. Their GWE sessions this semester have included science, climate science, resilient solutions, arts, advocacy and action — all taught in a context of mindfulness as individuals in the world.

We are looking for motivated volunteers for our informational tabling and fundraising teams! The Rio Grande Chapter hosts tables at events to share information about ongoing campaigns and to ask for people to sign action items. It's fun. It's social. And, mostly, it's outside! If you have weekends and sometimes evenings free, we can train you how to be a tabling activist and provide supplies and swag. Looking for a leadership role? We really need a tabling leader to run the tabling program. Have an idea where Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter should/could table? Let us know!

If you like talking to people, running events, or have experience in development and advancement, our chapter could use your help! Our fundraising includes relaxed programming like talking to people interested in the same issues we worry about, and more intense programming like planning and running events. Our actions for conservation of air and water for our communities rely on robust and positive relationships with donors and foundations. This is engaging and important work, and no matter what your skills, we'd be glad to have your help.

We are also looking for graphic designers to help with maps, social-media graphics and the *Sierran*.

Contact us at 505-243-7767 or sierraclubriogrande@gmail.com if you are interested.

Two-Mile Pond, complement to a living river

Presentation by Neil Williams
Travel Bug, 839 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe
4:30-6:15 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 6

One of the earliest reservoirs used by Santa Fe was discovered residing on a fault, and as a result it was drained several decades ago, and the dam was mostly removed. What remains now is a roughly 1-acre pond. It has a 1.4-mile loop trail running around it.

During David Coss's time as Santa Fe mayor (2006-2014), the City Council passed a Living River Ordinance, which allocated water to run through town in the Santa Fe River. Unfortunately, there was no clear protection of the pond, which until recently supported beavers, ducks and the many plants and critters that need a healthy riparian area to exist.

Neil Williams will present options for maintaining this ecosystem for the enjoyment of residents, visitors, and the critters that depend on riparian habitat. Neil is a professional engineer who has received numerous contracts from the city along the Santa Fe River. He is intimately familiar with the history of the river and the pond.

RVSP at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/.

Members elect group, chapter leaders

The Rio Grande Chapter, like all the Sierra Club's 63 chapters around the nation, is run by elected volunteer leaders of our executive committees, "excoms."

The chapter has a 13-member excom. After the Pajarito group joined the surrounding Northern Group this year, the chapter has four regional groups: Northern New Mexico, Central New Mexico, Southern New Mexico

and the El Paso Group, which includes El Paso, Hudspeth and Culberson counties in Texas.

Chapter excom members serve three-year terms; group terms are two years. Members serve staggered terms. Chapter and group members vote each fall to elect or re-elect excom members. The following excom members were elected and begin their terms in January: Chapter: Jody Benson, Anita

Gonzales, Susan Martin.

Northern New Mexico Group: John Buchser, Susan Martin, Shannon Romeling.

Central New Mexico Group: Patrick Burton, Diane Reese, Ray Shortridge, David Ther.

Southern New Mexico Group: Kurt Anderson, Cheryl Blevins, Dan Lorimier.

Congratulations to all!

ETA credits lighten PNM bills for 2024

BY MONA BLABER
Chapter Communications
Director

If you’re a PNM customer, check the line item on your bill titled “San Juan ETA Settlement Credit” for a credit of around \$9.

The credits come as compensation for PNM’s delay in issuing Energy Transition bonds to refinance debt customers had been paying for San Juan Generating Station. Instead of issuing the low-interest bonds when the coal plant closed, PNM continued to collect its 10% rate of return on the debt from customers, who missed out on the lower interest rate. The Public Regulation Commission in 2022 ordered PNM to credit customers to reflect the savings the bonds would have brought, but PNM appealed and won a stay at the state Supreme Court.

In September, PNM settled with many environment and consumer groups (including our Coalition for Clean, Affordable Energy) to deliver about \$115 million back to customers, resulting in bill credits of \$9.28 for the average household. Those credits are appearing now!

The ETA bonds, enabled by the 2019 Energy Transition Act, were also to fund about \$40 million in worker severance and community investment funding. PNM distributed \$20 million to plant workers and to Westmoreland for mine workers’ severance, though the mining company and the associated labor union are in a dispute at the Labor Relations Board, so those workers have not yet received their funds.

The utility also sent \$20 million to the state agencies in charge of disbursing it to community projects and other types of worker support. The Workforce Solutions Department has



By Mike Eisenfeld/San Juan Citizens Alliance

The San Juan Solar and storage facility, above, is now under construction. Solar panels are the dark areas, and energy storage is to the left. The retired San Juan coal stacks and Shiprock can be seen in the background. San Juan Solar is employing hundreds of workers and is predicted to replace the property-tax base of San Juan Generating Station.

now distributed most of its \$13 million in direct checks of \$20,000 each to plant and mine workers.

A committee of Four Corners-area industry, tribal, and government representatives, called the ETA Committee, was tasked with recommending projects to be funded by the Economic Development Department and Indian Affairs Department ETA money.

Jason Sandel, chair of the ETA Committee, is operator of Aztec Well Co. and a booster of hydrogen and liquified natural gas as ways to prop up the gas industry. After almost a year of silence since the November 2022 meeting (the first since 2020), Sandel called a committee meeting in October, with no public notice but a proposed resolution with recommended projects already written.

Unfortunately, at that hastily called meeting, the ETA Committee voted 5-2 to accept Sandel’s recommendation that the Economic Development

YOUR CURRENT ELECTRICITY CHARGES							
Meter Read	Meter Read Date	Days Billed	Meter 0871939		Meter Constant	Total kWh	Rate
Actual	11/16/2023	29	Present	Previous	X 1.000	= 230.000	1A
			Block 1			230.000 kWh@ \$ 0.0779432	\$17.93
Electricity You Used							
Fuel Cost Adjustment:							
Non-Renewable: 76.3% of kWh						175.490 kWh@ \$ 0.0502457	\$8.82
Renewable: 23.7% of kWh						54.510 kWh@ \$ 0.0000000	\$0.00
Renewable Energy Rider						230.000 kWh@ \$ 0.0056760	\$1.31
Transportation Electrification R53						230.000 kWh@ \$ 0.0001237	\$0.03
Customer Charge							\$7.11
Cost-Effective Energy Saving Prog.			3.409%				\$1.20
San Juan ETA Settlement Credit							-\$8.64
City/County Franchise Fee			3.000%				\$0.83
Gross Receipts Tax							
State			4.8750%				\$1.39
County			1.1875%				\$0.34
City			1.5625%				\$0.45
Current Electricity Charges							\$30.77

Department fund four high-budget, low-employment projects that potentially violate the spirit and letter of the ETA. Two of the projects, Big Navajo and Libertad, had proposed manufacturing methane-derived hydrogen, but after learning that the ETA prevents funding for projects related to fossil fuels, both companies claimed they would instead produce electrolytic “green” hydrogen, with no specifics on how. Big Navajo is based in Utah, and Libertad in Santa Fe. A third project

is Kinetic Power, a pumped hydro project rumored to be intended for hydrogen-manufacturing facilities. The fourth recommendation was SonoAsh, a Canadian company with little to no track record, proposing reclamation for coal ash. Claims of job creation fall flat. SonoAsh says it will create six permanent jobs. Big Navajo predicts only 10-20 permanent jobs. Libertad, 40. Kinetic, 50. And these jobs would only come after years of funding searches, permitting and

construction if the projects come to fruition at all. There has been confusion over whether agencies must issue formal requests for proposals before awarding funds. The Indian Affairs Department initially announced funding awards to Shiprock Traditional Farmers Cooperative, Native Renewables, Diné Introspective, Northern New Mexico Indigenous Farmers and Diné Centered Research and Evaluation — but temporarily rescinded the awards after learning the agency and applicants may have to go through this additional step. There’s still time for the Economic Development Department to invest its \$6 million on smart community-driven projects like Native Renewables’ plan to install solar for off-grid Navajo families or the indigenous regenerative farming cooperatives — the types of projects the Energy Transition Act was meant to support.

PRC guidance: PNM made bad bet on coal

BY MONA BLABER
Chapter Communications
Director

On Dec. 8, New Mexico Public Regulation Commission hearing examiners recommended that the commission adopt a roughly 3% rate cut for PNM customers, thanks to Energy Transition Act savings, the move to renewable energy, and a disallowance for PNM’s “imprudent” decision to extend its ownership stake in coal-fired Four Corners Power Plant beyond 2016.

The hearing examiners recommended a roughly \$84 million disallowance from what PNM is allowed

to charge customers for its previous investments in the Four Corners plant. PNM had proposed what would amount to about a 0.9 percent rate increase overall, but with that disallowance and others, the hearing examiners’ recommendation would lead to a small rate reduction for PNM customers. PNM had asked the commission to approve rates that include more than \$200 million in costs associated with operating Four Corners after 2016. PNM incurred those costs when it decided to renew its stake in the coal-fired power plant after 2016, when the prior coal-supply agreement expired.

Sierra Club’s attorneys and expert witness Dr. Jeremy Fisher demonstrated that ratepayers are entitled to significant disallowance for PNM’s bad decision-making with the coal plant, providing financial calculations and analyses that PNM was unable to effectively refute. This issue was first litigated in PNM’s 2016 rate case. Back then, the hearing examiners also found the expenditures to be imprudent, but the commission ultimately deferred a decision on prudence until the next rate case and approved a settlement that allowed PNM to recover a reduced amount for Four Corners in rates.

The current case regarding more than \$200 million in Four Corners costs comes after PNM’s 2021 proposal to transfer its 13% stake in the plant to NTEC, the owner of the mine that feeds the plant. The commission rejected that transfer, and Sierra Club and commission attorneys successfully defended that decision at the Supreme Court this year. 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 NTEC, which wants to keep the plan running as long as possible

PNM had also proposed to depreciate its gas plants more quickly, which would smooth the way to retiring the polluting facilities faster, but some parties objected, saying that would raise rates (though the increase would be tiny). Hearing examiners recommended rejecting the faster depreciation, but Western Resource Advocates has filed exceptions to that finding, arguing that speedier depreciation would ease the path for PNM to go carbon-free by 2040. The commission will make the final decision on Four Corners prudence and other rate issues within the next few months.

New Mexico adopts Clean Cars

BY MONA BLABER
Chapter Communications
Director

In November, after four days of hearings and dozens of hours of testimony and public comments, New Mexico took a major step for climate protection by adopting Clean Cars II, Clean Trucks and Heavy-Duty Omnibus standards.

“Clean Cars and Trucks Standards will literally save lives in New Mexico,” said Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman.

Sierra Club was part of a coalition that joined the state in supporting the standards at the rulemaking hearing before the state Environmental Improvement Board and Albuquerque-Bernalillo Air Quality Control Board.

“We heard from experts who pointed out that EV owners save at least \$14,000 over the life of the car. We heard from commenter after commenter who told the boards about buying affordable EVs like used or new Chevy Bolts and Nissan Leafs and plugging their cars into wall outlets overnight to charge,” Feibelman said. “Most had to go out of state to buy their cars. These standards will allow everyone to find the clean cars they want in New Mexico and support local businesses.”

New Mexico was the 10th state to adopt the updated Clean Cars standards, but Delaware and New Jersey have since joined us to make it 12.

An analysis this summer found that by 2050, the standards will have prevented about as much climate pollution as New Mexico emits in an entire year, and will prevent 136 premature deaths and more than 76,000 health incidents like asthma attacks

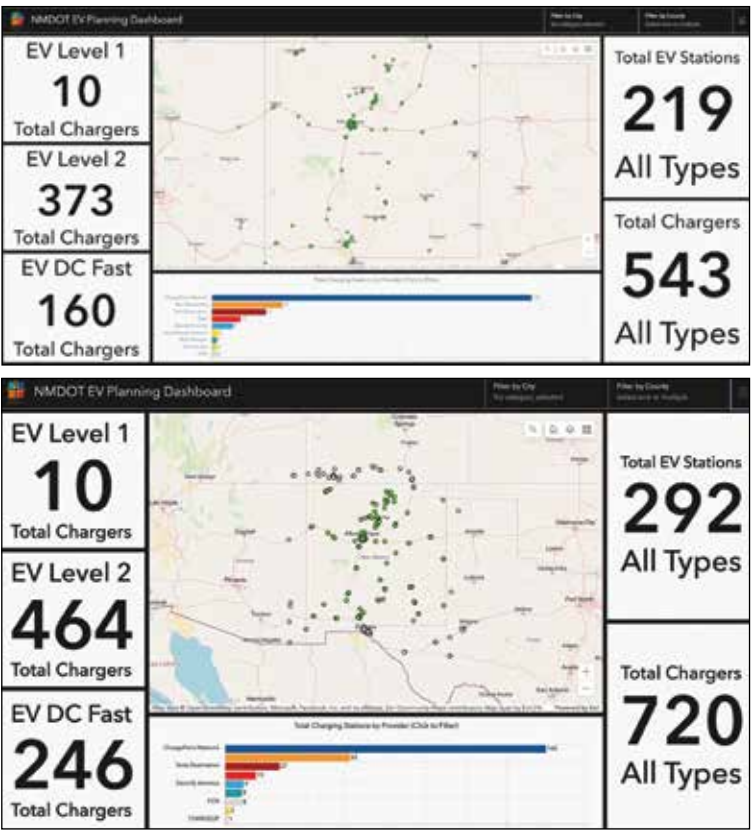


Photo by Xavier Obando, Graphics Dept of Transportation

Top: Albuquerque residents celebrate climate progress and healthier air thanks to passage of Clean Cars and Trucks standards.

Above: The number of public charging ports installed in New Mexico went from 543 on Sept. 30 to 720 on Dec. 21, less than two months later.

and heart attacks.

“The boards said ‘yes’ to one of the most effective climate policies New Mexico could adopt,” Feibelman said.

Advanced Clean Cars II

regulates companies that manufacture cars and light-duty trucks. Starting in model year 2027, automakers must ensure that 43 percent of the new vehicles they send to New

Mexico are zero-emission (electric or plug-in hybrid). Automakers have flexibility to comply by earning “early action” credits with sales before model year 2027, or by purchasing credits from manufacturers that exceed their target. The standard ends in model year 2032, when 82 percent of new cars delivered to New Mexico must be zero-emissions.

Advanced Clean Trucks establishes similar targets for heavy-duty commercial vehicles — everything from delivery vans to tractor-trailers to dump trucks. The percentage requirements vary by vehicle class, starting at 15-20 percent in model year 2027 and increasing to between 40 and 75 percent in model year 2035. The Low NOx, or Heavy Duty Omnibus, is a separate program that establishes stronger emission standards for new gas and diesel commercial trucks.

A Big Oil-backed campaign spent thousands on mailers, social media and ads to drive negative comments, but of 100 public comments at the hearings, 80 were in favor of Clean Cars and Trucks. More than 1,000 of you submitted written or in-person comments in

support. Commenters shared stories of saving thousands of dollars owning EVs, and several people described using the 3-cent/KwH whole-home overnight rate New Mexico utilities offer to EV drivers. We highlighted utility rebates of up to \$2,500 to buy and install home chargers and up to \$25,000 for chargers in multi-unit housing in lower-income neighborhoods.

Check out our fact sheet at www.riograndesierraclub.org/advanced-clean-cars or the FAQ below for more info on how you can buy an affordable electric vehicle and start saving right away.

We’ll also work to ensure that New Mexico accelerates its recent impressive progress at installing fast charging stations in locations like Socorro, Española, El Rito and Elephant Butte, going from 546 public charging ports to 720 in just the last two months.

Sales are increasing. New Mexico passed its previous record for EV sales in October. Colorado EV sales hit 17 percent of the market last quarter; 25% of new sales in California are EVs.

According to Bloomberg, “global sales of new internal combustion engines peaked in 2017, and net growth for car sales is now driven entirely by EVs ...[Globally,] the EV tipping point was passed in 2021. If the trends hold true, the rest of this decade will be remembered for doing for electric cars what the 1980s did for the microwave oven.”

Gov. Lujan Grisham has promised to propose significant state tax credits for EV purchases in the legislative session. Please help us advocate for those! Contact camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org to learn more or join our activist listserv.

Frequently asked questions and EV consumer guide

Will I be able to keep my gas car?

Of course. Clean Cars standards require manufacturers to provide New Mexico dealers with increasing percentages of EVs, giving buyers more choice. Many drivers have had a hard time finding new EVs in New Mexico and had to buy out of state.

You can keep your gas car as long as you like, and buy a new one if you want, even when these standards reach their peak in 2032, but you probably won’t want to.

Another great option that qualifies as a “Clean Car” is the plug-in hybrid, which goes 30 to 50 miles on battery before switching to gas. Most people drive less than 30 miles daily, so plug-in hybrid drivers rarely have to buy gas.

Are EVs affordable?

EVs are rapidly approaching the price of comparable gas cars, and with federal and potential state and utility rebates and credits, they can cost a lot less. Most importantly, they are much cheaper to operate and can save drivers thousands of dollars a year on gas and reduced maintenance.

What are the federal tax credits?

The Inflation Reduction Act includes

\$7,500 credits for new SUVs, vans and cars, and \$4,000 for used cars. Check irs.gov for qualification information.

What cars qualify?

Check fuelconomy.gov/feg/tax2023.shtml or Kelly Blue Book for the latest list of qualifying models. The list changes as automakers add manufacturing facilities in the U.S. to qualify.

Do I have to owe taxes to use the federal tax credit?

Nope! Starting Jan. 1, the tax credit is transferable to dealers, so you can transfer your credit to the dealer at point of purchase and take it off the price of the car.

What other purchase credits are there?

Gov. Lujan Grisham has promised to introduce state credits for EV purchases, and PNM is also proposing up to \$4,000 purchase credits, depending on your income. If approved, those could add up to \$15,000 off the price of your EV when federal credits are included.

Is there enough charging infrastructure?

The state’s public charging infrastructure is rapidly improving (see

graphics).

New Mexico was the first state to submit a plan to use \$38 million in national funding to install charging stations statewide. The required first phase is ensuring charging stations every 50 miles along interstate highways. The second phase focuses on tribal and rural roads.

A 2019 New Mexico law requires utilities to create plans to incentivize charging infrastructure in homes and multi-unit housing as well as in public. About 80% of charging happens at home. You can charge with a regular outlet, but to upgrade your charger, incentives are available.

How much is a home fast charger?

Around \$350 to \$500, though a Level 2 charger may require an electrical upgrade — rebates are available for both the charger and the upgrade.

What credits are available for chargers and installation?

A 30% federal tax credit offers up to \$1,000 for charger and installation costs. And for those in the three major utilities’ service areas:

PNM customers:

- Up to \$2,500, depending on income,

for purchase and installation of high-speed chargers.

- \$5,000 per Level 2 port for multi-unit housing in low- and moderate-income communities;
- Up to \$50,000 for commercial and public chargers;
- Overnight discount rates.

These rebates may cover the entire cost of your charger and installation. PNM’s proposed 2024 plan includes a rebate of up to \$4,000 for EV purchase.

Website: ev.pnm.com.

El Paso Electric customers:

- \$500 rebate for chargers;
- Discount overnight rates.

www.epelectric.com/ev

Southwestern Public Service customers:

- Up to \$500 for home rewiring
- Up to \$2,500 for rewiring and chargers for low-income customers.
- Overnight discount rates.

You probably have lots more questions about charging, range, prices and cars. We have plenty of information, resources and links at riograndesierraclub.org/advanced-clean-cars.

Year in Review

JANUARY

■ A female Mexican wolf named Asha roams almost to the Colorado border before being taken back into captivity. The US Fish and Wildlife Service hoped she could be paired with a mate to have pups that could be released to the wild.

■ Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter’s Pajarito Group, including Los Alamos and Jemez Springs, rejoins the Northern New Mexico Group, which surrounds it. “We’re still working together. Only the name has changed,” says Pajarito Chair Jody Benson.

FEBRUARY

■ The Fish and Wildlife Services’ annual count shows that the wild population of Mexican gray wolves in the American Southwest increased from 196 to 241 in 2022, with 136 wolves in New Mexico and 105 in Arizona.

■ After residents of Mountain View, a South Valley Albuquerque neighborhood of primarily low-income people of color, band together with help from New Mexico Environmental Law Center to stop a hot-mix asphalt plant from being built in their neighborhood, the Albuquerque-Bernalillo Air Quality Control Board votes unanimously to deny further action on the plant’s permit.

MARCH

■ The Legislature handily passes a bill to reform the state Game Commission that would have, if signed, set better qualifications for who could serve and split appointments to the seven-member board between the governor and legislature. Unfortunately, it is not signed by the governor.

■ President Biden announces the designation of 7,000 acres in Castner Range near El Paso, along with Nevada’s Avi Kwa Áme, as the nation’s newest national monuments. The Rio Grande Chapter’s El Paso Group worked for years with a local coalition to protect the range and its historic beauty and rare and endangered wildlife.

■ The Environmental Improvement Board votes to overturn the Environment Department’s denial of Roper Construction’s permit to build a concrete batch plant near homes and protected spaces in Alto, NM. Alto residents vow to pursue legal means to prevent the plant from being built.

■ Sierra Club attorney Jason Marks argues at the New Mexico Supreme Court to prevent a PNM deal that would risk prolonging the life of the aging and polluting Four Corners coal-fired power plant. Sierra Club was helping defend the PRC decision to reject PNM’s attempt to pay \$75 million to offload its stake in the plant to NTEC, the owner of the coal mine, which had expressed its intent to keep the plant open as long as possible.

■ On the last full day of the 2023 New Mexico legislative session, the state says “no” to being the nation’s nuclear dump. Gov. Michelle Lujan



Photo by Susan Pierce

Hart Pierce led a group of enthusiastic participants to Angel Peak to view the October eclipse with coffee, food and camaraderie.

Grisham almost immediately signed SB53, which prevents the state from issuing permits for Holtec’s proposed “interim” storage site for all the nation’s high-level nuclear waste. “This is a momentous step forward to show the world that we can protect ourselves from never-ending radioactive waste,” says Diné anti-nuclear activist Leona Morgan.

■ Legislators include the largest appropriation for the Strategic Water Reserve since 2005, allowing the state to purchase or lease water rights from other owners as opportunities arise.

■ Other legislative victories included appropriation of the ETA funds to be distributed to workers and the Four Corners community after the September 2022 closing of San Juan Generating Station; passage of tax credits for electric-vehicle purchases, home energy storage, geothermal and heat pumps; passage of the Voting Rights Act that expands voting access for Pueblos and tribes as well as citizens who have served prison terms; and a permanent fund for conservation projects. But ...

APRIL

■ Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham issues line-item veto of most of the legislative tax package, including climate tax credits for EVs, geothermal, home energy storage and heat pumps, as well as a geothermal center and fund. The Sierra Club and partners call on the governor to regain the state’s climate leadership by passing Clean Cars and Trucks standards and supporting comprehensive and equitable climate-justice policies.

■ Outings leader Rose Rowan leads 12 chapter members on a service trip at City of Rocks State Park, completing trail maintenance on over 2 miles of mountain trail.

■ Bureau of Land Management proposes its “Public Lands Rule” allowing the agency to manage lands for health and resiliency by placing conservation on the same level as other uses, like resource extraction and grazing, that have historically been prioritized by the agency.

■ American Lung Association State of the Air Report gives Eddy, Lea and San Juan

Counties, the state’s biggest oil and gas producers, F grades for oil and gas smog pollution.

MAY

■ El Paso’s “Climate Charter,” supported by a broad coalition of community climate-justice activists, is defeated after oil and gas interests spend more than a million dollars on deceptive mailers and ads opposing it.

■ NRC issues a license to Holtec for an “interim” nuclear storage facility despite state opposition. Sierra Club and partners return to court.

JUNE

■ Mexican wolf Asha gets along with, but refuses, all potential suitors as mates in captivity, so she is released back into the wild alone in the Apache National Forest of southeast Arizona.

■ Interior Secretary Deb Haaland issues a final decision to ban new oil and gas development on unleased federal lands within a 10-mile radius of Chaco Culture National Historical Park for 20 years. The ban does not include existing leases or private, tribal, allotted or state lands.

■ Dozens of organizations, including Sierra Club, write to the Department of Energy and Treasury Department outlining strict requirements that should be imposed in order for developers to qualify for lucrative new hydrogen-production tax credits. The groups warn that, without robust guardrails, billions of dollars could be spent incentivizing increased climate pollution.

■ News emerges that the USDA plans to spray an insecticide that is also a potent neurotoxin over 39 square miles in the Rio Chama watershed on June 26 to kill native grasshoppers that are competing with cows for grass.

JULY

■ The BLM, which controls much of the 25,000 acres of Rio Chama land to be sprayed, halts the USDA’s plan to release the toxic insecticide. The decision follows a powerful community mobilization when wildlife and air-quality proponents learned of the planned spraying just weeks before it was to happen. Sen. Martin Heinrich and Land

Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard supported hundreds of activists’ requests to the BLM to block the spraying.

■ Diné water-protection organization Tó Nizhóni Áni announces that 35 Navajo chapters have passed resolutions opposing hydrogen produced from fossil-fuel sources.

■ Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announces a proposal to adopt Clean Cars and Clean Trucks standards to require increasing percentages of new vehicles sold in New Mexico be zero-emission electric cars or trucks.

■ New Mexico Supreme Court unanimously upholds the Public Regulation Commission’s 2021 denial of PNM’s transfer of its ownership share in Four Corners Power Plant to Navajo Transitional Energy Company.

AUGUST

■ Kill reports from trappers for the previous winter, the first in which traps could not legally be set on New Mexico public lands thanks to the passage of Roxy’s Law, show that fox kills went down by 56% and bobcat kills were down by 31%.

■ The Bureau of Land Management proposes its oil and gas rule, with long-overdue provisions to update the agency’s leasing program, including raising royalty rates, lease rates, minimum bids and bonding requirements.

SEPTEMBER

■ Environmental organizations and the New Mexico attorney general announce a settlement with PNM requiring the utility to issue an ETA customer credit averaging \$9.28 per month after PNM delayed issuing Energy Transition Act bonds that would have reduced bills thanks to the closing of San Juan Generating Station. See Page 5 for more.

OCTOBER

■ The Department of Energy releases its selection of regional “hydrogen hubs” to receive \$7 billion in federal funding. New Mexico’s hub is not selected. New federal tax credits and other state funds could potentially direct billions of public dollars toward fossil-fuel hydrogen, which presents climate, pollution and safety risks. We will continue to

oppose public funding for harmful hydrogen development in 2024 and beyond.

■ New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announces the creation of the Climate Investment Center, or “Green Bank,” to help low-income families and rural businesses finance money-saving climate solutions like solar panels and heat pumps.

■ Sierra Club and Beer Central New Mexico Group meetings are revived! After two and a half years, meetings were held in October, November and December.

■ San Juan Solar breaks ground on a 200-megawatt solar facility in the shadow of the closed San Juan Generating Station, hiring hundreds of construction workers.

NOVEMBER

■ After wandering back into New Mexico from Arizona and spending several months roaming slowly northward, Mexican wolf Asha crosses I-40 again and reaches the Jemez Mountains.

■ In a major step for climate and health in New Mexico, the state Environmental Improvement Board and Albuquerque-Bernalillo Air Quality Control Board vote to adopt Clean Cars and Clean Trucks standards. See Page 7.

■ Eighteen of 23 endorsed candidates and ballot measures win in the November local elections, including important wins for equity. One Albuquerque race goes to a runoff. See page 11 for details.

■ Northern New Mexico Group members join the Caja del Rio Coalition for trash pickup on the Caja Mesa near the shooting area, filling two huge county trailer-dumpsters with close to 10,000 pounds of junk.

■ The Environmental Protection Agency finalizes its oil and gas methane-reduction rule. Thousands of New Mexicans submitted comments supporting strong safeguards. See Page 5.

DECEMBER

■ Nichole Rogers wins her Albuquerque City Council runoff, becoming the 19th of 23 candidates endorsed by the Rio Grande Chapter who won their elections in 2023.

■ The tracking collar of Mexican wolf Asha shows her staying around the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Scientists have already determined that this is suitable habitat for Lobos. But on Dec. 11, Asha is taken back into captivity, where wildlife officials say they will try again to breed her in hopes that next summer she can be released back to the wild in the official wolf recovery area, perhaps with pups.

■ Resisting pressure from the fossil-fuel industry, the U.S. Treasury Department releases draft guidance on qualification for 45V hydrogen-production tax credits. The guidance includes many of the strict requirements that Sierra Club and other climate advocates had requested.

Air Board persists despite Council drama

BY DIANE REESE
Central Group Chair

On Dec 11, the Joint ABQ-Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board concluded a weeklong public hearing on clean-air safeguards called the Health, Environment and Equity Impacts regulation. The safeguards represent decades of work to improve conditions for residents most impacted by toxic emissions from polluting industries in low-income communities of color. Caring experts and community members from the Mountain View Coalition, New Mexico Environmental Law Center, Los Jardines Institute, the Pueblo of Isleta and the Friends of the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge petitioned for adoption of this air-quality standard and have shown strength and persistence making sure the proscribed

legal process continues. However, in October, Albuquerque City Councilor Dan Lewis led an attempt to block this legal rulemaking. He introduced two bills, one to replace the current city-appointed members of the Air Quality Board and one to effectively suspend their ability to act until February, in a blatant, last-ditch attempt to undermine the community-driven clean-air regulation. The council passed both of Councilor Lewis’s bills with full support of the Republicans on Council and Democrat Louie Sanchez. Councilor Pat Davis voted in favor of the resolution to effectively suspend action until February, but opposed replacing the board members. However, Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller vetoed both controversial bills in November. Then, in a profoundly disappointing move, Councilor Klarissa Peña, who had originally opposed the bill to

replace the City Board members, switched her vote to become the deciding sixth vote necessary to override the mayor’s veto of that bill. Councilor Peña also voted to override the veto of the resolution to effectively suspend Board action until February, along with Councilor Davis. Bernalillo County commissioners reminded the City Council that this is a joint board. Members represent both city residents and residents in the unincorporated county. But the council ignored the county commission’s request to put off their efforts to undermine the board. The air board persisted and provided space for technical experts and more than 100 members of the public to testify. Monied industry voices, such as the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce and the University of New Mexico, testified against the safeguards — stating increased regulations

would be unfriendly to business, in some cases totally misrepresenting the rulemaking process and what the rule would have ultimately done. But others testified that “clean air must be put ahead of profits!” The Rio Grande Chapter has supported the community air protections from the start. Standing with the coalition, providing action opportunities for our members, speaking at and recruiting supporters to speak at the hearing or to write to the Air Board, we have represented our members’ voices in this struggle for environmental justice. The hearing ended with a lack of clarity. The exact rule passed by the air board was not made public, and the legal ramifications of the City Council’s override of the mayor’s veto are yet to be determined. However, we did witness the professionalism and dedication of the

appointed Board members. We thank the Board for their service and their perseverance under unprecedented attacks. The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter will continue to follow the process and support clean-air safeguards and please stay engaged! “What happened last week was incredibly important. For the first time, we saw a regulatory body seriously consider the needs of those most impacted by their decisions,” said Maslyn Locke, New Mexico Environmental Law Center senior staff attorney, after the board vote. “While we don’t yet know in detail the end result, what we do know is that the Air Quality Board understands that there are certain areas in Bernalillo County and Albuquerque that bear a disproportionate impact of air pollution and that the existing regulatory scheme does not meaningfully protect public health.”

Albuquerque companies reduce by reusing

BY DEBBIE BRYANT
Outings Co-Chair

Recently I visited two Albuquerque manufacturing firms: Submaterial, which makes efforts to reuse or recycle their waste byproducts from their interior architectural products, and Soilutions, which takes organic materials that might otherwise end up in a landfill producing methane and turns them into prime topsoil. Founded in 2006 in Seattle, Submaterial relocated to Albuquerque in 2012 and now employs 32 people. They manufacture architectural acoustical panels using natural and sustainable materials such as wool felt, cork, and wood. Submaterial uses byproducts from their industrial projects in the residential market. A lot of their cork and felt byproducts go to local schools, artists, makers, and become dog toys for Animal Humane’s Doggie Dash and Dawdle event. Biodegradable leftover waste goes to Soilutions, another local firm that produces mulch, compost and topsoil. Submaterial Marketing Director Brigid Harmon says they submitted the specification for their glue to Soilutions to ensure there wouldn’t be an impact on the quality of Soilutions’ compost. Visiting Soilutions meant driving through the south side of Albuquerque, surrounded by industry. At their office, I was struck by how much of an oasis they are. You can smell the warm dirt and hear the Sandhill cranes at the Rio Grande. I met with co-owner Dawn Dewey and Wendy Blair of Soils and Marketing. Both are passionate about



Left: Submaterial’s Brigid Harmon with scrap material destined for Soilutions. Right: Compost made by Soilutions.

what they do, which is lovely and often missing from the working world. Wendy is a Master Gardener and Dawn grew up in the business. Soilutions is New Mexico’s largest private compost and soil company and was started by the Brooks family 28 years ago. In 2021, Justin and Dawn Dewey bought Soilutions and are very enthusiastic about the future. The business is also a “carbon sequesterer” and is helping to reduce our carbon load. Soilutions diverts tons of organic waste from landfills each year, and their intake fees are lower than the dump’s. Their green waste suppliers include businesses (such as Bueno Foods green chile peels), Little Green Bucket, which does home and business compost pickup, grocers, restaurants, hotels, and even Sandia Labs. They

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use these materials to produce mulch and compost using carefully controlled processes and temperatures. Various piles of in-progress materials have to be turned, mixed and temperature-controlled over about a year. The soils are tested to ensure their quality is high. The richly colored soils they produce smell as if you are

going on a hike through the woods. End-use customers include landscapers, contractors, gardeners, and farmers throughout the state. Soilutions products are carried by other local companies, such as Osuna Nursery, Rehm Nursery, and Los Poblanos Lavender Farm uses their compost.

Sierra Club and Beers

BY DIANE REESE
Central New Mexico Chair

Ready to get back together? Up for a little social time and educational talks? The Central New Mexico Group is right there with you! In September, we returned to in-person “Sierra Club and Beers” meetings and have been so pleased with the response. We’re going bimonthly in 2024, so block your calendar now for first Fridays starting in February. Feb. 2’s theme will be outdoor safety with world traveler and outdoorsman extraordinaire, Rob Suminsby, just back from skiing in Antarctica (no, really — you have got to see the pics of that!) The meeting starts at 7 p.m. and ends at about 8:30 p.m. RSVP at riograndesierraclub.org/calendar **Location:** St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, 431 Richmond Place NE, Albuquerque.

E-Bike Fair a success The Sierra Club Central New Mexico Group and Free-to-Roam eBiking, CABQ (Sustainability, Municipal Development, and Transit), Look For Me, Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, BikeABQ, and Bike Thru Burque hosted the second E-bike Fair on Oct. 28 in Snow Park. Public input was taken on the Bikeway and Trail Facilities plan (www.abqbikeplan.com). The fair also offered e-bike test rides from Free-To-Roam e-bikes to fit different riders and uses. No matter which bike participants chose to ride, they all had the same gleeful expression! Central Group volunteers collected signatures in support of the Clean Cars and Trucks, discussed volunteer opportunities and offered reusable bags, T-shirts, hiking books and copies of the latest Sierran. We also raffled sets of bike lights for safe riding at night. If you missed it, we hope to see you next year!

10 Sierrans,
6 reaches and
18 sweeps

BY JERRY KURTYKA
El Paso Group

Ten Sierrans, three from our Rio Grande chapter, gathered from near and far at the Valles Caldera in the first week of October to assist Park Service biologists with a fish census project.

Permission for our visit was touch-and-go until the last minute, as the Preserve would have been forced to close had Congress not passed a continuance on the federal budget. Fortunately, it worked out and we all met on Oct. 1, just north of Jemez Springs.

A fish census begins with closing a 100-meter stretch of stream (called a “reach”) with nets at either end, then doing upstream sweeps with a shocking wand, and then netting the temporarily stunned fish for weighing, measuring, logging and release. Three sweeps of the reach are made to catch as many fish as possible.

At one reach, we shocked and netted about 100 fish. Many were brown and rainbow trout, considered to be an invasive species to the native Rio Grande cutthroat. Other native species include Gila and Apache trout (not common), chubs, dace, and suckers.

In our service week, we surveyed six river reaches with three sweeps of each one — 18 sweeps in total. The Park Service told us that these and other reaches are surveyed twice a year. This has been an ongoing project for 10 years, building a longitudinal profile of how the fish have responded to climate change and disasters, like the recent wildfires.

The fires devastated the fish population, but, interestingly, the native species bounced back quicker than the invasive fish.

The Valles Caldera is also threatened by illegal grazing by “trespass cows” from nearby ranches. We saw much evidence of this, but we also saw herds of elk and mule deer families. So it’s not all bad, and the astounding vistas and natural beauty of the Valles Caldera are their own reason for hope.

Nor was it all work for us Sierrans. We had perfect autumn weather for hikes in the Jemez basin and the Caldera along a canyon stream. And we enjoyed a soak in the celebrated Jemez hot springs.

This service trip is popular and has been offered in the past. The Park Service rangers appreciated our help and let us know it. So, watch for the next opportunity with the Sierra Club. Fair disclosure: it’s HARD work! But, at a picnic lunch break on our hike day, framed by granite cliffs channeling the upper San Antonio River and with new friends, I couldn’t help but think to myself, “It doesn’t get better than this.”

Bears and Cougars lose
with new hunting rules

BY MARY KATHERINE RAY
Wildlife Chair

In October, the New Mexico Game Commission unanimously voted to approve new bear and cougar hunting rules that will be in place for the next four years.

The Commission failed to consider the effects of the massive Black Fire, the second-largest in state history, and its destruction of habitat in the Gila as it allows 50 more black bears to be killed in that hunting zone. The season to pursue black bears with dogs will start in mid-August rather than the first of September in the Sacramento Mountains of Southern New Mexico.

Cougar-hunting quotas remain unjustifiably high in 16 of 18 cougar zones. Cougar hunting with dogs is already allowed year-round, and that, sadly, will continue. Cougars and bears that die outside of hunting either, from depredation complaints or as roadkill, will not be counted against the hunting quotas.

Before the vote, Game Commissioners offered no discussion beyond obsequious praise for the Department of Game and Fish and its proposals. No Game Commissioners nor any representative of the Department responded to our extensive and well annotated concerns (you can find them posted at riograndesierraclub.org/wildlife/).

Dr. Ken Logan, a wildlife research biologist who spent 40 years studying cougars and documenting his work in peer-reviewed scientific journals with his wife, Dr. Linda Sweanor, sent written comments and testified that even if the cougar population numbers were accurate, the proposed 17-24% harvest rates would likely cause a decline in cougar populations. If cougar declines are not the intent, the science indicates that the harvest should be no more than 14% of the overall population. Because of the minimal information provided by the department, the public has no way to know if declines are the intent. Dr. Logan noted that most other western states

have detailed statewide cougar management plans and that New Mexico should too. But he was thoroughly ignored. Also ignored were the thoughtful comments from more than 1,000 of you who emailed and testified in open meetings.

Never has it been clearer that New Mexico needs game commissioners who have the ability to critically review scientific information, see beyond the narrow goal of providing “hunter opportunity,” and understand the significance of large carnivores to the biotic community and the negative impacts that recreational hunting has on them. This will have to be remedied by the state legislature. Stay tuned.

Burns can meet or defeat forest goals



Photo by Teresa Seamster

The Black Canyon area treated five years ago still has unburned slash piles taller than the deer.

BY TERESA SEAMSTER
Soil Research Project
Coordinator

Take a match and apply it to a collection of natural fuels from around your home — leaves, twigs, a scoop of dry topsoil, sage, grasses, pine needles and even cacti. They all burn when there is enough heat, oxygen, airflow and lack of moisture.

The devastation left after the northern wildfires last year has changed ways of thinking about what can burn and under what conditions.

Prescribed fires lit in Santa Fe National Forest when there was snow on the ground in Calf Canyon continued to smolder below ground until low soil moisture combined with wind and a prescribed fire at Hermit’s Peak caused ignition — scorching a third of a million acres before it was put out.

Historically, needed pile

burns could be successfully conducted in Black Canyon during winter without fear of a fire smoldering until windy spring weather could re-ignite it. Those conditions have changed.

This year, scientists at the National Soil Moisture Monitoring Network Conference determined that fire managers must evaluate more factors, particularly the correlation between soil moisture and plant moisture, to adequately predict fire risk and conditions of advanced drought. Ideal prescribed burn “windows” will be fewer.

State Forester Laura McCarthy, speaking at the November International Association of Wildland Fire Conference, mentioned that “Soil moisture is on my mind” as a key gap in data collection and an important factor in evaluating fire. While other agency leaders from BLM, USFS, FEMA and Bureau of

Indian Affairs emphasized their regret along with the “lessons learned” from the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon fire, McCarthy focused on the “unforeseen realities” of this fire and the need to learn and respond to those new realities.

In response to these new needs, Lisa Markovchick, PhD (WildEarth Guardians) and I recently formed the Santa Fe Mountains Soil Research Project to monitor soil health, with lab support from St. John’s College’s Evans Scientific Lab, and permission and staff time from Santa Fe National Forest.

During a November visit to a proposed prescribed burn area in Black Canyon, the Soil Research team looked at ground conditions that showed poor results in previously treated areas, with large slash piles and dry and non-native vegetation.

Testing of soil moisture levels, soil biota and fuel moisture should help

Northern
New Mexico
Group contacts

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Executive Committee

Chair: John Buchser
(water issues) (505) 820-0201
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determine what impacts thinning and prescribed burn treatments are having on the ability of treated forests to regenerate properly.

The team is checking locations for spring monitoring in 2024. Santa Fe National Forest has provided assistance with mapping and treatment schedules, and St. John’s College has kindly donated space at their Evans Scientific Lab. For more information: etc. seamster@gmail.com.

Groups seek Mimbres Peaks monument status

BY LUIS GUERRERO
Chapter Legislative Organizer

BY KIM POPE
Conservation Field Organizer

The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter has joined a collaborative effort launched on Dec. 6 to protect lands overseen by the Bureau of Land Management in Luna County, N.M.

About 245,000 acres in the Mimbres Peaks — the Florida Mountains, Cooke's Range, Good Sight Mountains, and Tres Hermanas — have been identified for permanent protection. These lands are home to documented cultural and historic sites, are important to modern-day tribes and pueblos, and provide critical water resources and room for wildlife to migrate. These same places provide visitors diverse recreation opportunities including hunting, hiking, horseback riding, biking, camping, picnicking and photography.

Southern New Mexico's way of life and local economy are built around public lands. The arid valleys and mountains surrounding Deming also hold a deep spiritual connection for Native people and provide solitude for those who heal and are refreshed by being in nature. These lands also filter and hold critical water resources and are important for breeding, foraging, and migration of the region's rich wildlife. Prominent species include the Persian Ibex, pronghorn, mountain lion, mule deer, Coues deer, black bear, elk, javelina, fox, badger, eagles and other raptors, and quail.

County and city leaders have recognized the immense value that public lands provide for the community and have witnessed the positive

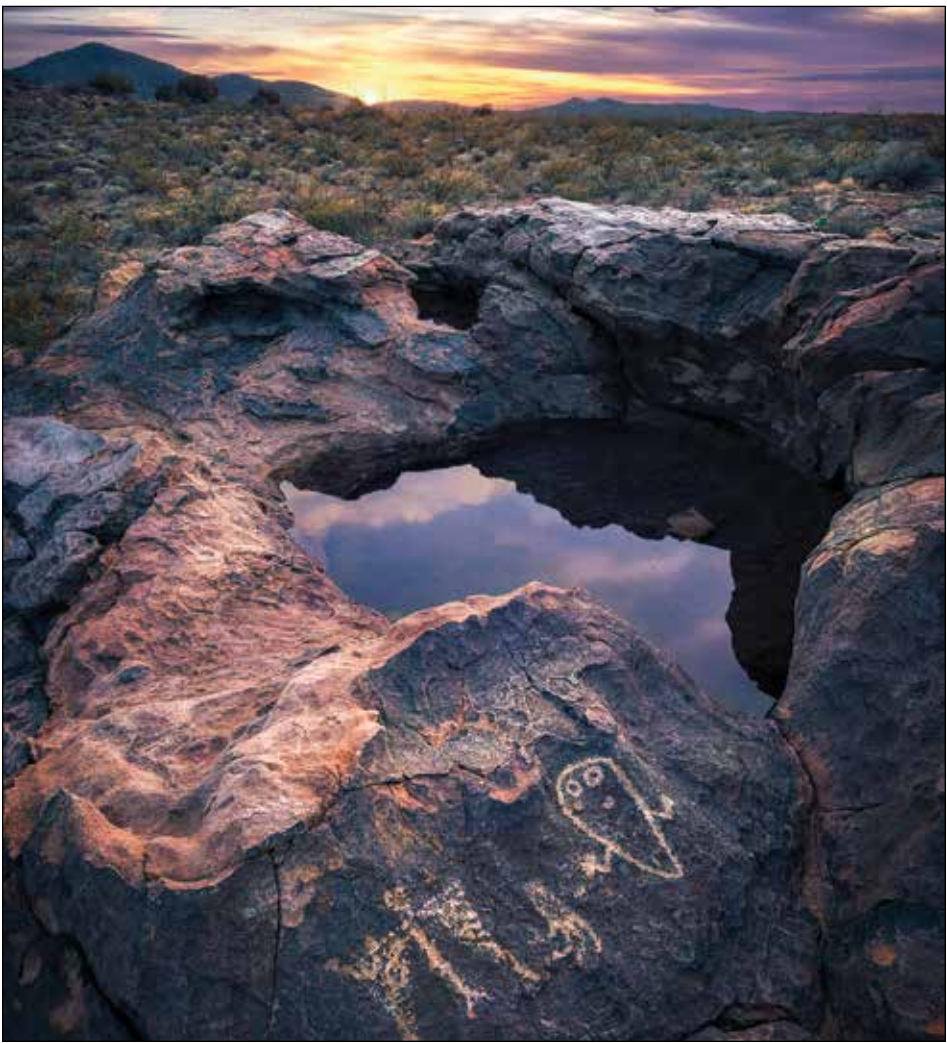


Photo by Wayne Suggs

A local coalition is seeking monument status for about 245,000 acres in Luna County, including Cooke's Range, above.

impact protected lands in neighboring Doña Ana County — home to Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument — have had on the region. Southern New Mexico's economy has seen strong and steady growth over the past decade, no doubt in part due to the increased tourism from the new Monument and the wealth of other natural treasures to visit.

The effort announced this month is led by a coalition of local stakeholders who are asking Tribes, local leaders, and the federal Congressional delegation to work with President Joe Biden to protect the area as the Mimbres Peaks National Monument.

Please visit protectmimbrespeaks.org to learn more, share feedback, and add your name to the growing list of supporters calling for protection of this special place.

Plan would block mining near Placitas sacred sites

BY MIYA KING-FLAHERTY
Our Wild New Mexico

After 25 years, efforts to protect more than 4,000 acres of public lands from gravel and mineral mining in the community of Placitas, N.M., have gained traction.

The Bureau of Land Management held a meeting in November to hear from the public about the agency's action to initiate a 50-year mineral withdrawal that would prevent any type of mineral mining from occurring in Buffalo Tract, the Crest of Montezuma, and two other tracts of land in Placitas. These lands are sacred to the Pueblos of San Felipe and Santa Ana and hold cultural resources and sacred sites. The areas under consideration also provide wildlife corridors for animal species and ample opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The BLM's public meeting was held at Placitas Community Library, and it was packed — every seat was full, and many were standing. Issues and concerns raised by community members included caring for wild horses in the region, the loss of cultural resources and sacred sites, quality of life, property owners' mineral rights, and questions and concerns with the BLM's processes in general, such as how they tend to prioritize mineral leasing over other uses for public lands. Despite the various issues raised, not one single person present opposed the Placitas mineral withdrawal.

The meeting was also attended by Tribal representatives from San Felipe Pueblo, State Rep. Matthew McQueen, State Sen. Brenda McKenna, and Sandoval County Commissioner Katherine Bruch.

If approved, the withdrawal would be temporary, but efforts to make it permanent in law are still being pursued by Placitas residents and members of the New Mexico congressional delegation. Earlier this year, Sen. Martin Heinrich and U.S. Rep. Melanie Stansbury reintroduced the Buffalo Tract Protection Act, which would permanently protect these areas. The legislation was initially introduced in 2016.

The BLM's public comment period ended on Dec. 19. Sierra Club submitted comments on behalf of our members and supporters. For this go-around, the BLM simply needed to hear whether the public was in support or opposition to the proposed action. They will plan a full environmental analysis in early 2024 that will be available for public comment. Thank you for engaging in this important effort. Given that a significant portion of public lands managed by the BLM in New Mexico are open to oil and gas leasing and mineral development, we are encouraged to see conservation made the priority in this case.

Los Alamos High EcoClub: effective activism

BY JODY BENSON
Chapter Executive Committee

Fifty years ago, many students in the world protested for civil rights for both humans and the Earth by marching, sitting in, and staging protests. We also assumed saving the Earth would happen with personal actions: If we built self-sufficient communes, the only liveable planet within 100 light years would roll on just fine.

Our actions worked for a while before Reaganomics started running government like a corporation with the goal of private-sector profit, and before our relatively small national population began consuming a grossly disproportionate share of the world's resources.

The good news? Los Alamos High School EcoClub understands that in our current climate (both political and planetary), we will need more than just individual action or group protest to make a lasting difference. The student members understand that we need global policy to ensure survival. Members also know that global policy starts locally. It is toward that policy — first local, then global — that the Club is working.

These students are organized and



Photo by Jenifer Thayer

Los Alamos EcoClub co-president Charlotte Butcher met with GWE members at Chamisa Elementary as part of their shared work to make Los Alamos Public Schools fully electrify their schools.

active, and they are working with the school board and county council to end the school's fossil-fuel use by fully electrifying LAPS, including school buses.

The students understand that electrifying the schools won't reduce emissions unless the source of the power is renewable. To those ends, they lobbied the school board and superintendent for school-located solar — on the rooftop in the new construction, and possibly onsite solar for schools whose roofs won't support panels. They are meeting with the county government and leadership (Los Alamos owns its utility) to support the Los Alamos goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse-gas emissions and to advance other sustainable practices countywide.

They are creating collaborative relationships and gathering ideas from local and regional entrepreneurs, scientists, and activists to take to the leadership. These EcoClub activists expect no excuses. Their lives depend on our leaders committing at every level to science-based solutions.

Endorsed local candidates kick butt

BY RICHARD BARISH
Rio Grande Chapter Political Chair

Our endorsed candidates did extremely well this election cycle. Overall, 20 of our 24 endorsed candidates and ballot measures won their races! Equity has become increasingly prominent in how we look at candidates and issues, and it was particularly noteworthy that the Santa Fe Affordable Housing Trust funding ballot measure (the “mansion tax”) passed and that all of our endorsed school board candidates won, including Ronalda Tome-Warito, a Navajo woman, who ousted an incumbent “Moms Defend Liberty” culture-war conservative.

In Albuquerque, we held strong, winning in the two progressive districts, but falling just short in the more conservative District 4. It’s frustrating that we are able to elect so many great progressive candidates to the state Legislature from Albuquerque, but that we are saddled with what is, despite a few great councilors, a decidedly conservative city council overall. We’ve got our work cut out for us in 2025 to turn that around!

In Santa Fe, all of our endorsed City Council candidates won, while Las Cruces was a split decision, with



Nichole Rogers celebrates her Dec. 12 City Council runoff victory with supporters, including Rio Grande Chapter Political Chair Richard Barish (in back under the sconce).

Kasandra Gandara losing her mayoral bid and Tessa Abeyta losing her bid for re-election to City Council, but incumbent Johana Bencomo and newcomer Cassie McClure winning their Council races.

I want to give a big shout-out to all of you who helped with campaigns, whether in big ways or small!! Without you, good candidates would not get elected, and without you, our influence with our elected representatives would

not be what it is.
Here are the complete results for our endorsed candidates:

Santa Fe

- City Council 1: Alma Castro WON
- City Council 2: Michael Garcia WON
- City Council 3: Pilar Faulkner WON
- City Council 4: Jamie Cassutt WON
- Mansion Tax Ballot initiative: WON
- Santa Fe Community College Board: Lina Germann WON

- Central NM**
- ABQ City Council 2: Joaquin Baca WON
 - ABQ City Council 4: Abby Foster LOST (by about 150 votes)
 - ABQ Council 6: Nichole Rogers WON
 - APS Board District 1: Janelle Astorga WON
 - APS Board District 2: Ronalda Tome-Warito WON
 - APS Board District 4: Heather Benavidez WON
 - Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District: Daniel Conklin WON
 - Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District: Maria Young: WON
 - Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District: Tom Allen WON
 - Valencia Soil & Water Conservation District: Pam Cordova WON
 - Valencia Soil & Water Conservation District: Abel Camarena WON
 - Valencia Soil & Water Conservation District: Duana Draszkievicz LOST

Las Cruces

- Mayor: Kasandra Gandara LOST
- City Council 1: Cassie McClure WON
- City Council 2: Tessa Abeyta LOST
- City Council 4: Johana Bencomo WON
- Las Cruces Public School Board District 1: Patrick Nolan WON
- Las Cruces Public Schools District 4: Teresa Tenorio WON
- Las Cruces Public School District 5: Edward Frank WON

Climate, water on agenda for ‘budget’ session

BY LUIS GUERRERO
Rio Grande Chapter Legislative and Political Organizer

Another legislative session is around the corner. This year, our legislators will spend 30 days working on budget items, tax credits, bills that were vetoed and additional bills on the “governor’s call.” This year’s state revenue is near \$13 billion (yes, billion!), with around \$3.48 billion in new revenue, from oil and gas, tax reform, and climate-related federal funds. If invested right, these funds could lead to profound protections for our air, water, lands, kids, and communities. Here’s what we’re expecting (and thanks for the many partner groups leading on these bills):

Oil and gas reform: A bill establishing setbacks for oil and gas wells, reducing water use in fracking and assuring that industry is financially responsible for its cleanup is back again, sponsored by Rep. Kristina Ortez and led by the Oil Conservation Division.

Climate tax credits: Gov. Lujan Grisham announced this fall that she would bring back EV tax credits. Pro Tem Mimi Stewart will work to increase the amount of funds going to rooftop solar credits. And the geothermal home, commercial and industrial tax credits will be reintroduced.

Transportation: The Clean Fuels Act helps to decarbonize transportation by allowing utilities and entities like municipalities to earn credits from transportation electrification that they would then be able to invest in further transportation electrification. The School Bus Modernization Act would help school districts bring on electric school buses and build out charging needs.

Renewable energy: We’ll see the geothermal development bill come back. And the “Local Solar Access Fund” would create a grant fund for community-owned solar and storage projects at the New Mexico Finance Authority.

Land of Enchantment Fund: We’ll seek further investments in this fund so

it can produce enough annual returns to be self-sustaining, weather economic downturns, access hundreds of millions of federal matching dollars, and reach all 33 counties and Tribal communities.

Water: We’ll seek funds to protect waters like intermittent arroyos that were left unprotected when the Supreme Court decision in Sackett v. EPA upended the definition of “Waters of the United States” under the Clean Water Act. This year we will be advocating for three appropriations to ensure the New Mexico Environment Department is able to meet this critical moment. The funding includes a \$150,000 one-time appropriation for mapping to better understand which New Mexico waters have lost protections; \$690,000 to expand water-monitoring efforts and ensure enforcement, and \$600,000 to establish a database that is a critical step in setting up a permitting program focused on surface-water quality and in meeting our goals under the Water Data Act.

The Green Amendment will also be reintroduced. This joint resolution aims to amend Article II of the state constitution to provide that all New Mexicans are entitled to clean and healthy air, water, soil and environments and a stable climate and includes provisions for equity and accessibility to a clean environment.

Our annual Environment Day at the Roundhouse is Friday, Feb. 9, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. We will host nearly 40 of our partner organizations and as many grassroots lobbyists as can make it — that means YOU! We’ll explain how to talk with your legislator, how to navigate the maze we call the Roundhouse and what our legislative priorities are for the session. Join us and make a difference at the Legislature!

The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter lobbying team will keep you up to date during the session. As we do every year, we will be holding weekly meetings and trainings. If you’d like to be added to these trainings, please reach out to luis.guerrero@sierraclub.org.

New building codes would save energy, money

BY CHRISTY BOLOGNANI
Southwest Energy Efficiency Project

New Mexico is taking an important step toward protecting the climate and lowering energy costs in buildings by proposing adoption of the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code.

The New Mexico Construction Industries Division will hold public hearings on Jan. 3 on codes that establish energy-efficiency standards for new construction and major renovations.

Modern energy codes are critical for decarbonizing through enhanced insulation, better windows, tighter buildings, and more efficient heating and cooling equipment. This will translate to lower energy bills, more

comfortable and healthy buildings, and more resilient communities.

New Mexico’s proposed codes also include requirements for EV-charging infrastructure at a small percentage of parking spaces at new residential and commercial buildings.

Automakers like GM and Ford are planning to produce 100% electric vehicles by 2035, and New Mexico’s recently passed Clean Cars standards ensure we get there. Making sure builders are including charging infrastructure at some parking spaces in new multi-unit housing and workplaces is critical to giving all New Mexicans access to the cost-saving benefits of electric vehicles by allowing them to charge at home or work. EVs are cheaper to operate and maintain

compared to gas-powered vehicles, and EV sales are increasing each year, so more and more New Mexicans will be looking for apartment and condominium complexes where they can charge.

The codes would require most new construction to include EV chargers at 5% of parking spaces, and another 5-15%, depending on the building type, must have the electrical infrastructure to accommodate future chargers.

New Mexico’s major utilities already offer incentives that could cover most or all of the cost of these improvements: PNM, for example, offers up to \$5,000 for installation costs for each charger.

Your support of these proposed changes is critical.

You can show your support in person or

submit written comments. An in-person public hearing will be held at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 3, at the Regulation and Licensing Department, 5500 San Antonio Drive NE, Albuquerque, Sandia Conference Room.

Written comments can be sent to: Construction Industries Division, Regulation and Licensing Department, 5500 San Antonio Drive NE, Suite F, Albuquerque, NM 87109. Or email comments to: Quindi.Otero@rld.nm.gov. Submit written comments by 5 p.m. Jan. 2 or in person at the Jan. 3 hearing. There is not a virtual option for the hearing.

For more information, please contact Camilla Feibelman at camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org.

January · February · March outings

TUESDAY, JAN. 9

Easy Hike to Explore the Valle de Oro NWR. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Meet at the Visitor's Center at 11. Refuge staff will tell us the history and plan for these 570 beautifully undeveloped acres in the South Valley. We will then board the electric shuttle to access the bosque for a 2-mile stroll and check on the Rio Grande. Our easy amble back will include stops at the murals and mosaic artworks. Plan on stopping at the gift shop for a few unique items and support the Friends of the Valle de Oro! No dogs. **Trip leader:** Diane Reese, DianeAbqNM@gmail.com 505-507-6416 **Level:** Easy (mix of shaded-unshaded, flat trail, root trip hazards). 3-4 miles. **Location:** Valle de Oro, 7851 2nd St SW, Albuquerque. **Sign up:** www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

THURSDAY, JAN. 11

Zero Waste Tour of BARCO Recycling Facility (formerly Freidmans): 1 to 2:30 p.m. Come see how all of our blue-bin recycling is sorted. Find out how much is actually recycled and get answers to other recycling questions. Must be able to climb stairs and not be bothered by a very noisy environment. Vests, helmets, eye protection and ear plugs will be provided. Dress warmly as buildings are not heated. Register early; space is limited to eight adults. Deadline to register is Jan. 9. Meet at 12:50 at 5029 Edith Blvd. NE, Albuquerque. Contact trip leader if you need or can give a ride. **Trip leader:** Laurie Zunner, 505-440-5337, lmzunner@gmail.com **Level:** Easy **Location:** 5021 Edith Blvd. NE, Albuquerque **Sign up:** www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, JAN. 13

Dirty Bosque bike ride to Valle del Oro. Meet at the Hispanic Cultural Center parking lot in Albuquerque by 9:45 a.m. We'll depart promptly at 10 a.m. and return at about 1 p.m. We'll be riding on a flat and curvy trail in the bosque for about 20 miles on all dirt trails and ditch banks. We will see the river, cranes and geese, and maybe even porcupines. This is not difficult riding, but distance on dirt feels longer than on the road. A mountain or dirt bike is needed due to sand and possible mud. Please have your bike in good order. You will need the tools and knowledge to fix flats on your bike. Sealant in the tires will prevent flats from goat-heads; please have tires ready with this. Helmet is mandatory, along with water and snacks. We will look for a place to have a snack and warm up if needed. Children 12 and up allowed with parent or legal guardian. Register by Jan. 11. **Trip Leader:** Rose Rowan rose.rowan7@gmail.com **Trip Level:** Moderate **Location:** Albuquerque **Sign up:** www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, JAN. 20

Coffee-tasting tour through Downtown and Bosque Chase the cold away with a bike tour of Downtown Albuquerque coffee shops! We will visit local coffee roasters, tea shops and cafes in the vicinity of the bosque. Meet at the Hispanic Cultural Center at 9:30 a.m. for this 1.5-hour ride. Find

12 Rio Grande Sierran



Shout to the heavens! Greet the dawn with your song. Express your art — like these Sandhill cranes photographed by Jonathan Dowell at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge on a cold winter morning.

out how easy it is to get around Albuquerque neighborhoods by bicycle. The route is about 10 miles and relatively flat. Participants should be able to maintain a speed of 12-15 miles per hour on their road, mountain or gravel bike. This is not recommended for cruisers or similar single-speed bikes and is appropriate for ages 14 and up. Bike helmet, pump, tools, and patch kit or spare tube, with sealant in tires are required. RSVP by Jan. 18 at the link provided below. **Leader:** Patrick Burton 505-550-5534 patrickburton9@icloud.com **Level:** Easy-Moderate **Location:** Albuquerque **Sign up:** www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

FRIDAY, JAN. 26

Sunset and full-moon snowshoe hike. Look forward to glistening snow, a chill in the air and the crunch of snow under your feet while we celebrate the rising of the full Wolf Moon. Snowshoeing under a full moon is magical. The leader will cover techniques to help you safely traverse in an alpine environment while exploring the beautiful Sandia Mountains. About 3.5 miles round trip with 500 feet of elevation gain. Snowshoeing takes about 1.5 to 2 times as much effort as walking. We'll depart at 5 p.m., going along the crest for views of the setting sun, the full moon and the city. Participants must be in good physical condition and tolerate high altitude. An all-wheel-drive or four-wheel-drive vehicle is highly recommended to get to the crest, depending on snowfall. Required clothing and gear list will be provided a week in advance. Children 14 years and older with parent or legal guardian are welcome. No dogs. RSVP by Jan. 22

at the link provided below. **Leaders:** Debbie Bryant bryade@gmail.com and Terry Owen, teowen@comcast.net **Level:** Moderate **Location:** Sandia Mountains **Sign up:** www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

FRIDAY, FEB. 2

Sierra Club and Beer: Winter outdoors safety. Do you venture into the mountains in winter, for hiking, snowshoeing, skiing or snowboarding? Great! Did you know that hypothermia is one of the primary risks to those of us that spend time outdoors in New Mexico? Do you know if you're in avalanche terrain? Do you know how to recognize and avoid avalanche hazards? If you answered "well, kinda ... sort of," then here's your chance to tune up your awareness. Our guest speaker, Rob Suminsby, is a long-time backcountry skier who has sought out untracked snow on four continents. He'll provide you with the tools you need to stay safe this winter as well as some resources to help you learn more. You don't have to be a member to join us for a beverage, snacks and camaraderie. The meeting starts at 7 p.m. and ends at about 8:30 p.m. Please RSVP at the link below. **Leaders:** Susan Gorman sbginabq@aol.com and Diane Reese dianeabqnm@gmail.com **Location:** St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 431 Richmond Pl NE, Albuquerque, NM. **Sign up:** www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

TUESDAY, FEB. 6

Bosque Walk at Durand Open Space. 10 a.m. to noon. 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 then take a break at the covered picnic area. Meet at the Durand parking lot by 9:55 a.m. No dogs. **Trip leader:** Diane Reese DianeAbqNM@gmail.com 505-507-6416 **Level:** Easy (no elevation gain; mix of shaded-unshaded, flat trail, root trip hazards) **Location:** Durand Open Space, 4750 Isleta Blvd SW, Albuquerque

FRIDAY, FEB. 16

Winter ride along the Rio Grande. 10 a.m. to noon. About 10 miles on paved bike trail and compressed gravel in the bosque and relatively flat. A road or gravel bike should be fine; wider tires would be more comfortable. We may see porcupines and other wildlife. Be prepared with warm clothing and a small pack to carry clothes. Helmets are mandatory. Please have your bike in good order. You will need the tools and knowledge to fix flats on your bike. Bring water and a snack. Meet at the west parking lot of the Hispanic Cultural Center. We will look for a place to have a snack and warm up if needed. Riders age 12 and up with parent or legal guardian. **Trip Leader:** Rose Rowan rose.rowan7@gmail.com **Trip Level:** Easy **Location:** Albuquerque **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 and ride 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 allowed. Registration deadline: Feb. 12; limit 5 participants. **Trip Leader:** Patrick Burton, 505-550-5534 patrickburton9@icloud.com **Level:** Moderate **Location:** Albuquerque **Sign-up:** www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

SATURDAY, FEB. 24

Sunset and full-moon snowshoe hike. Look forward to glistening snow, a chill in the air and the crunch of snow under your feet while we celebrate the rising of the full Snow Moon. Snowshoeing under a full moon is simply magical. The leader will cover techniques to help you safely traverse in an alpine environment while exploring the Sandia Mountains. This is about 3.5 miles round trip with 500 feet of elevation gain. If you are not familiar with snowshoeing, it takes about 1.5 to 2 times as much effort as walking. We'll depart promptly at 5 p.m., going along the crest for views of the setting sun, the full moon and the city. Participants must be in good physical condition and tolerate high altitude. An all-wheel-drive or four-wheel-drive vehicle is highly recommended to get to the crest. Required clothing and gear list will be provided a week in advance. Children 14 and older with parent or legal guardian are welcome. No dogs. RSVP by Feb. 21. **Leaders:** Debbie Bryant bryade@gmail.com and Terry Owen, teowen@comcast.net **Level:** Moderate **Location:** Sandia Mountains **Sign up:** www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

MONDAY, FEB. 26

Zero Waste Tour of Soilutions Compost and Soil Yard. 10-11:30 a.m. Come prepared with your compost questions and learn about the many types of compost and soils this facility makes and sells. Tour is outdoors, so dress for the weather. Comfortable footwear recommended as we will be standing the whole time. Parking is very limited; please contact Laurie if you can offer or need a ride. No dogs. Register by Feb. 23. Limit 12. **Trip leader:** Laurie Zunner 505-440-5337, lmzunne@gmail.com **Level:** Easy **Location:** 9008 Bates Road SE, Albuquerque. **Sign up:** riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

TUESDAY, MARCH 19

Zero Waste E-recycling Tour. 10-11:30 a.m. at Albuquerque Computer and Electronics Recycling Company. Find out what you can e-recycle beyond just computers and cell phones and what happens to them. We will be standing the whole time, so wear comfortable closed-toed shoes. Register by March 10. Limit: 12 people. Contact Laurie if you need or can give a ride. **Trip Leader:** Laurie Zunner 505-440-5337 lmzunne@gmail.com **Level:** Easy **Location:** 3726 Hawkins St. NE, Albuquerque **Sign up:** riograndesierraclub.org/calendar