



Volume 62, Issue 2

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

April | May | June 2024

Session Wins and Woes

Some solid wins for climate in the 30-day session & what to expect next. Page 3



Advocates and legislative leaders gather at the Clean Fuels bill signing by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham. Photo by Ahtza Dawn Chavez



Photo by USFWS

Wild lobo population grows slightly: Page 9



Photo by David McGahey

2024 NM Legislature: Environmental gains in 30-day session: Page 3



Photo by iStock.com/Moussa81

Our endorsements for the New Mexico primary: Pages 6-7

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Sierra Club
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Santa Fe, NM 87505

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Inside:

Learn about Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) savings for Earth Day

Benefits range from tax credits for EVs to energy-efficiency and home improvement rebates. Page 10.

No LNG in Rio Rancho

The PRC denies New Mexico Gas Company's permit to build a facility near Rio Rancho. Page 5.

Read more online

Sacrifice zones, Upper Pecos contamination, Solar Tax Credit, Rio Arriba County pesticide spraying, New staff. Page 4.

More: **Directors' Column:** Page 4. **Member picnic:** Page 8. **Rescue wildlife safely:** Page 9. **Spring outings:** Page 12.

SIERRA CLUB RIO GRANDE CHAPTER CONTACTS

RIOGRANDESIERRACLUB.ORG

FACEBOOK.COM/NMSIERRACLUB

TWITTER: @RIOGRANDESIERRA

INSTAGRAM.COM/RIOGRANDESIERRACLUB

Executive Committee

Diane Reese, Chair
505-507-6416
DianeAbqNM@gmail.com
Anita Gonzales, Vice Chair
505-718-9517
anita.a.gonzales@gmail.com
Carlos Trujillo, Secretary
505-918-5736
carlosfrujillo@gmail.com
Jody Benson
505-662-4782
anteaterjb@gmail.com
Karl Braithwaite
505-850-3369, karl@braith.net
Susan Martin
505-670-3279, smartin317@gmail.com
Tricia Snyder
575-636-0625, pjsnyder1029@gmail.com
Derrick Toledo
505-401-7932
derrick.toledo@gmail.com
Consuelo Walker
conejitalinda1@comcast.net
Laurence Gibson, El Paso Group Representative
915-309-5419
lgibson@utep.edu
Kurt Anderson, Southern New Mexico Group Representative, 575-635-7871
kurt@nmsu.edu
Debbie Bryant, Central New Mexico Group Representative bryade@gmail.com
832-692-1881
Ken Hughes, Northern New Mexico Group Representative
b1family@icloud.com

Offices & Staff

Albuquerque office
2215 Lead Ave SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106
505-243-7767
Camilla Feibelman, Rio Grande Chapter Director, camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org, 505-715-8388
Caroline Funk, Chapter Coordinator, caroline.funk@sierraclub.org 505-243-7767
Miya King-Flaherty, Our Wild New Mexico Organizing Representative, miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org, 505-301-0863

Rio Grande 'Sierran' publication info

The Rio Grande Sierran is published four times a year, in January, April, July and October, by the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter as a benefit for members in New Mexico and West Texas.

The opinions expressed in signed articles in the Sierran are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club.

Products and services advertised in the Sierran are not necessarily endorsed by Sierra Club.

Contributions are

Melissa Bernardin, Climate Organizer, melissa.bernardin@sierraclub.org, 603-828-2442
Connie Huffmire, Treasurer: 505-382-5769
Northern New Mexico Office, 1807 Second St, Unit 45, Santa Fe, NM 87505 505-983-2703
Genie Stevens, Climate Education director, genie.stevens@sierraclub.org
Claire McKnight, PAC treasurer, 646-684-0209
claire.mcknight@gmail.com
Brintha Nathan, bookkeeper, 505-310-0595
brintha2709@yahoo.com
Southern New Mexico Antoinette Reyes, Southern New Mexico organizer
575-342-1727, antoinette.reyes@sierraclub.org
Sierra Club National
2101 Webster St., Suite 1300
Oakland, CA, 94612
415-977-5500

Local Groups

El Paso Group, P.O. Box 9191, El Paso, TX 79995, Chair: Laurence Gibson, 915-309-5419, lgibson@utep.edu.
Southern New Mexico Group, P.O. Box 735, Mesilla, NM, 88046; Chair: Howie Dash, howiedash@aol.com, 575-652-7550
Central New Mexico Group, 2215 Lead Ave. SE Albuquerque, NM 87106, Chair: Susan Gorman, 602-386-7112, susangorman1945@gmail.com
Northern New Mexico Group, 1807 Second St., Unit 45, Santa Fe, NM 87505, 505-983-2703, Chair: John Buchser, jbuchser@comcast.net, 505-820-0201

Outings

Chapter Outings Chair: Debbie Bryant, bryade@gmail.com, 832-692-1881
Central New Mexico: Debbie Bryant
El Paso: Laurence Gibson, lgibson@utep.edu
Northern New Mexico: Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com
Southern New Mexico: Howie Dash, 575-652-7550
howiedash@aol.com
Inspiring Connections Outdoors: open

Military Outdoors Program: Terry Owen

Conservation Issues

Conservation Chair: Karl Braithwaite, 505-850-3369
karl@braith.net
Energy/Climate Change: Karl Braithwaite, Melissa Bernardin
Water: Tricia Snyder
Dairy: Dan Lorimier
dlorimier1948@gmail.com
Water Sentinels: Shannon Romeling
sromeling73@gmail.com
Public Lands: Derrick Toledo
Bosque Issues: Richard Barish, 505-232-3013
richard.barish@gmail.com
Nuclear-Waste Storage: John Buchser, Patricia Cardona
patriciacardona24@yahoo.com
Wildlife: Mary Katherine Ray
mkrscrim@gmail.com
575-537-1095
Climate Coordinator: Melissa Bernardin
Four Corners: Miya King-Flaherty
Methane: Antoinette Reyes
Mining, Sand & Gravel: Allyson Siwik, allysonsiwik@gmail.com; Teresa Seamster, etc.
seamster@gmail.com
Transportation: Ken Hughes, b1family@icloud.com
Zero Waste: Laurie Zunner
lmzsunne@gmail.com

Activism Teams

Rio Grande Sierran/Communications Team: Chair: Shannon Romeling
Members: Laurence Gibson, John Buchser, Ken Hughes, Mary Katherine Ray, Jody Benson, Richard Barish, Reed Eckhardt
Sierran Production: Caroline Funk
Miya King-Flaherty
Web Editor: Ellen Loehman, loehman@msn.com
505-328-2954
Elections: Chair: Claire McKnight, Jan Cohen, Caroline Funk
Nominating Chair: Diane Reese, John Buchser, Gayle Eads, Laurence Gibson, Ken Hughes
Finance: Chair: Connie

Huffmire, Brintha Nathan, Claire McKnight, Caroline Funk, Camilla Feibelman
Friends and Funds: Chair: Susan Martin, Shannon Romeling, Tricia Snyder
Legal: Richard Barish
505-232-3013
richard.barish@gmail.com
Legislative: Open
Personnel: Diane Reese, Connie Huffmire, Tricia Snyder, Anita Gonzales
Political Committee: Chair: Richard Barish, richard.barish@gmail.com, 505-232-3013. Northern Group: Ken Hughes; Central Group: Richard Barish; Southern Group: Gayle Eads; El Paso Group: Laurence Gibson; Members: Susan Martin, John Buchser; Patricia Cardona, Chris Calvert, Joe Wells, Carlos Trujillo, Melinda Smith, Jim Hannan, Jody Benson, Wendy Pomeroy, Alissa Keny-Guyer
Trade Issues: Richard Barish
Compliance officer: open
Sierra Student Coalition: open

Coalitions/Working Groups

Caja del Rio: Miya King-Flaherty, Teresa Seamster
Chaco Coalition: Miya King-Flaherty, Teresa Seamster
Coalition for Clean

Affordable Energy: Karl Braithwaite, Camilla Feibelman
Dairy Coalition: Dan Lorimier
Doña Ana County Coalition: Howie Dash
Otero Mesa Action Team: Antoinette Reyes
Rio Grande Water Fund: Teresa Seamster
Valles Caldera Coalition: Teresa Seamster, Tom Ribe
calderaaction@gmail.com
Green Amendment: Consuelo Walker
Southwest Alliance for a Safe Future: John Buchser, Patricia Cardona
New Mexico Permian Environmental Justice Coalition: Antoinette Reyes

National Representatives

Council of Club Leaders
Delegate: Diane Reese
Alternate: Anita Gonzales
Building Healthy Communities Team: Ken Hughes
Sierra Club Wildlands and Wilderness BLM Subteam: Miya King-Flaherty
National Water Sentinels: Teresa Seamster, Shannon Romeling

Page 1 banner: Ken Hughes

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NM passes EV, geothermal credits

BY RIO GRANDE CHAPTER LOBBYING TEAM (CAMILLA FEIBELMAN, LUIS GUERRERO, MELISSA BERNARDIN)

This year's 30-day legislative session, as usual, came with some solid wins for the climate, and some disappointment. Thirty days is enough to get the state budget and tax package done but not a lot else. Next year's 60-day session gives us more time, but also will come with lots of new legislators and hopefully a good opportunity to support big ideas and legislation to protect our air, land, water, climate and communities.

Unsure of what exactly went down this year? Your Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter Lobby Team has you covered! Let's start with some good news:

We supported a climate and renewable-energy friendly budget which included \$300 million to fully fund the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund (SB9 Wirth, Small), \$75 million to state matching funds for federal climate grants (HB177 Dixon), \$50 million to the Water Trust Fund, a permanent fund that generates interest to invest annually in local water projects, \$10 million for developing a low-income, low-interest climate lending



Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signs the Clean Fuels Act. Photo by Ahtza Dawn Chavez

program, \$7.6 million for building and supporting surface and groundwater permitting programs, as well as \$5 million for developing the geothermal industry in New Mexico (HB 91 Roybal Caballero, Ortiz y Pino). Not everything in the budget has an accompanying, stand-alone bill associated with it.

New Mexico's climate tax package came back in force. There were seven climate-related tax credits as part of the \$200 million package, three of which create incentives for every day New Mexicans to buy electric vehicles (Tallman, Hochman-Vigil), heat pumps (Soules), and rooftop solar (Stewart)! Some of these were vetoed last year by the Governor, but true to her promise and thanks to your support, she expanded and strengthened the credits. Also big kudos to the Governor

for her line item veto of a tax give away to oil and gas companies for complying with methane capture rules on high pollution, low producing wells.

The Clean Fuels Act (HB 41 Ortez, Stewart) FINALLY passed and was signed by the Governor!! This bill will create an incentive program to drive the decarbonization of transportation fuels, of most interest to us, through electrification. The next step will be rulemaking to craft the best approach for our state, using lessons learned in other states.

Several bills of concern to us didn't pass. The Strategic Water Supply would have invested \$500 million to buy treated brackish and produced water from industry (SB 294 Stefanics, Muñoz, Sharer). HB 9 (Dixon) would have created a Climate, Energy and Water Division at the Economic Development Department

to bring decarbonization industries to the state. While well intentioned the bill did not put guardrails to prioritize and incentivize clean, renewable energy. Finally the geologic sequestration bill (SB 215 Sharer, Dixon) would have put immediate liability on the state for sequestered carbon dioxide, a technology that is unproven and uneconomical.

Now for the losses, and some context. Most bills don't pass on their first, second or third try. Each time a bill is heard it moves closer to success in future sessions:

The Oil and Gas Reform (HB133 Ortez, Stewart) bill failed to get a hearing on the House Floor despite passing through two committees. Rep. Sariaña brought three bills calling attention to industry impacts on health, water and spills. These bills weren't ruled "germane" to the session but were important to the oil and

gas narrative in the session. And the State Land Office **Oil and Gas Royalty Rates** (HB48 McQueen, Tallman) increase failed to get a hearing in Senate Finance, even though it passed the House.

The Green Amendment (Sedillo Lopez, Ferrary) didn't make it out of Senate Rules due to a lot of misinformation out there on frivolous lawsuits. We want to thank every sponsor of this bill for their hard work and tenacity in continuing to fight for the right to a livable environment.

All bills to **Modernize our Legislature** (Rubio, Figueroa) failed to pass as well. The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter has been involved in these efforts and we will continue to work with the various organizations and sponsors behind this to help bring the government of New Mexico into the 21st Century.

Keep an eye open for opportunities to be involved: you can talk to your elected officials at their post-legislative session Town Hall events, or join Climate Town Halls coordinated by the Rio Grande Chapter and community partners in the coming months.

Finally, thanks to each of you who called, wrote, spoke, attended trainings, and reached out to your legislators – all to keep New Mexico's enchantment alive.



Left: Camilla Feibelman leads the Environment Day rally. Photo by Alissa Keny-Guyer. Right: Sierra Club volunteers Pamela Furhmann and Tom Gorman at the Environment Day registration table at the Roundhouse. Photo by Lindsay Beebe



Join us for a Celebration of Democracy

Sierra Club members are invited to meet and hear from Club-endorsed candidates on Friday, May 17 at 5 p.m. at the Travel Bug, 839 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe. Santa Fe County Clerk Katharine Clark, Representative Reena Szczepanski, and others will talk about measures to preserve, protect, and enhance voting and legislative measures to protect democracy. Register online at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/.

Authorized and paid for by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club Political Action Committee.

Environment Day at the Roundhouse

BY DIANE REESE
Chapter Chair

Our action at the Roundhouse this year was a joyful, energetic and powerful experience. After modified events due to the pandemic, this year we were back with hundreds of grassroots lobbyists, students and partner organizations acting on their environmental priorities. We met with our legislators, spoke at committee hearings and observed floor action from the galleries.

The highlight of the day was a loud and proud Rally for the Environment started off with a joyful parade of Global Warming Express students. We are grateful to our lunch co-sponsor Conservation Voters New Mexico!

Our co-hosts for 2024: 350NM, Amigos Bravos, Environmental Justice Caucus of DPNM, Green Amendments For The Generations, Moms Clean Air Force, NM Health Professionals for Climate Action, NM and El Paso

Region Interfaith Power and Light, NM Land Conservancy, NM Sustainably Green, NM Wildlife Center, Positive Energy Solar, Public Power NM, REIA (Renewable Energy Industries Association of NM), ReNew Mexico, Santa Fe Conservation Trust, Sol Luna Solar, Trout Unlimited, and Water Advocates for NM. Thank you partners!!! Join our grassroots lobby list by emailing miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org

Grieve, breathe, act

Did you miss out on receiving the solar tax credit because it ran out before you applied? The legislature appropriated \$20M to pay you back! See our articles online to find out more.

There's a real, worrying tension between what the climate crisis demands that we do and the pace of action we're achieving. Focusing on all we should do and aren't can cause paralysis. Paralysis delivers us to grief, before we've done all that we can. Take a moment with your grief, fear and paralysis and then breathe through it, and remember all that we can do, right now.

Nationally, there's a huge array of EPA rulemaking that will reduce emissions from cars, oil and gas and power plants. And that comes with the huge climate benefits that are the result of President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act and New Mexico's Climate Tax Package. Our homes and neighborhoods are the

canvass for our climate organizing. Every home insulated, door or window replaced, every



CAMILLA FEIBELMAN
Director's Column

vehicle charged with clean electricity, is an act of resistance and of hope. By transforming our own lives, we reduce our impact. And we also lead our neighbors. In fact when one family gets solar the likelihood of another neighbor installing solar increases significantly. When a neighborhood acts, the City takes note, deepening their commitment to action, which in turn makes the possibility of state legislative success that much

greater.

New Mexico is a climate leader. On electricity, thanks to the Energy Transition Act, we'll be 100% zero carbon by 2045, and maybe sooner. On oil and gas we've passed nation-leading methane and smog rules that now come with federal safeguards that protect our climate and air from Texas pollution.

We've made huge progress on clean cars in New Mexico in the last 6 months, passing Clean Cars and Trucks rules in November (though Auto Dealers are suing) that will bring more EVs to New Mexico. In the legislative session we passed EV Tax Credits and Clean Fuels that will help tribes, local governments and utilities further decarbonize transportation.

There is clearly more to do. New

Mexico is the second largest oil producer in the nation and polluters fight tooth and nail against even basic fair play practices like increased insurance bonds against future failure or basic distance requirements between wells and schools and homes.

But let's not let what we haven't yet achieved keep us from taking the action we can. As the conversation about climate grief emerges, I ask people not to skip the action step. Grieve, but also act. Grieve, but also take joy in the natural world around us. Grieve, but know we can help you convert your fear and even paralysis into action that can make a world difference.

Global Warming Express at the NM Legislature

BY GENIE STEVENS

Chapter Climate Education Director

Twelve years ago, 9-year-old Marina Weber-Stevens dressed her teddy bear in one of the first Global Warming Express (GWE) t-shirts and gave the first, one-minute GWE speech at a press conference in the Roundhouse. One would have thought it was Obama taking the podium, as the cameras flashed and applause echoed.

One year later, GWE, the nonprofit was born, and, true to its name, the Global Warming Express took off, speeding its way to join forces with the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, seven years later, to create a state-wide, in-school and after-school program in science, climate science, climate solutions, arts, advocacy and action.

On Environment Day, 2024, over 60 Global Warming Expressers from Las Vegas, NM, Raton, White Rock, Tijeras, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe converged on the State Legislature to give voice to their collective experience of gratitude for, connection to, and protection of all species. This year's GWE program began integrating a new emphasis on inner and outer awareness celebrated with our new GWE t-shirts with the words: "Kids' Conscious Climate Curriculum" on the front and "Breathe! Learn. Dream. Do. Inspire. Kids Change Their Worlds" on the back.

At the 2024 NM Legislature, the GWE students became a child-forest with branches from native NM trees and giant puppets, courtesy of Wise Fool New Mexico. With African drummer Eric Simpson leading them, they marched around the Roundhouse, then joined the press conference in the Capitol rotunda, where GWEers Pearl, Elodie, Addy and Sophie gave their memorized, 1-minute speeches. Senator Liz Stefanics and Senator Antoinette Sedillo Lopez led them in a mock Senate committee session, and by day's end, all the GWEers were filled with the thousands of sights and multitudes of sounds of their state's



Senator Sedillo-Lopez leads GWEers Austin, from Manzano Mesa School, Albuquerque and Alyssandra, from Rio Gallinas School, Las Vegas, NM in a Mock Senate Committee session. Photo by David McGahey.



GWEer Leroy, from Raton Intermediate School, one of the Mock Senate Committee members with Senator Stefanics. Photo by David McGahey.

Roundhouse in action.

Shoutouts and gratitude to the Rio Grande Chapter, Conservation Voters New Mexico (for transportation funding), Senators Stefanics and Sedillo-Lopez, GWE Artist-in-Residence Bobbe Besold, Drummer, Teacher and Drum maker Eric Simpson, Chapter volunteer photographer David McGahey, the admin staff of the Roundhouse, as well as to the school administrators who worked with us, the teachers who took off a day to accompany the

children on buses, and, of course- to our extraordinary GWE volunteer mentors who dedicate many hours of every week, for the entire school year to bringing the GWE program to life! Twelve years, one girl, one teddy bear, one t-shirt, and one speech – whoever would have guessed? Today's GWE kids continue to directly impact their schools, their families, their communities, their state, and themselves!

Breathe! Learn. Dream. Do. Inspire. Kids Change their Worlds.

Read more Sierran online!

There was too much news for just one Sierran issue. Read more online at riograndesierraclub.org/news/

What is a sacrifice zone? Frontline communities like Alto face continued pollution threats. By Galen Farrington.

Public opposition to pesticide spraying in Rio Arriba. APHIS plans to spray in Cebolla area again. By Teresa Seamster.

New staffers join Rio Grande Chapter. Melissa Bernardin as Climate Organizer and Caroline Funk as Chapter Coordinator.

Update on the Solar Tax Credit. 2020-2023 solar tax credits available again! By EMNRD

Seasonal contamination found in Upper Pecos. Metals, E. coli. and nutrients data revealed. By Teresa Seamster

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Would you like to support the Rio Grande Chapter campaign



to promote clean, renewable energy? How about our outreach efforts such as Global Warming Express? Your donations make things happen!

Protections for Buffalo Tract and Crest of Montezuma

BY MIYA KING-FLAHERTY
Our Wild New Mexico Organizer

The Biden administration committed to protecting 30% of US lands and waters by 2030 and slashing greenhouse gas emissions by 50% below 2005 levels by 2030. If we are to meet these goals, actions like mineral withdrawals that prevent new mineral leasing and mining will be key and play an important role in conserving ecosystems, protecting ecological and cultural resources, and protecting wildlife corridors.

The first comment period on the withdrawal process was simply to hear from the public on whether they supported or opposed the plan. The BLM received nearly 800 comments with over 90% in support – thank you to our members and

supporters who commented! In February, the BLM released its draft Environmental Assessment on the proposed withdrawal that kick-started the 30-day comment period that ended on Mar. 15. Over 150 of you responded to our call to action to support the withdrawal. We also signed on to technical comments submitted by our partners at NM Wild. Commenting ensures the BLM considers all important issues like protecting sacred sites, boosting local recreation opportunities, and protecting wildlife corridors.

The Pueblos of San Felipe and Santa Ana were central in advocating for the protection of these places that are their ancestral homelands. For over twenty-five years, residents in and around Placitas have worked to protect Buffalo Tract, the Crest of Montezuma, and adjacent lands from gravel mining. Community members have long raised concerns

about the negative impacts of mining on public health, quality of life, sacred sites, and air and water resources.

Buffalo Tract and the Crest of Montezuma are essential wildlife corridors for important species like black bear, mountain lion, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and elk. New Mexico’s wildlife and ecosystems face increasing pressure from climate change and encroaching development. Now more than ever, protecting vital wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity is crucial.

Senator Heinrich and Congresswoman Stansbury’s proposed Buffalo Tract Protection Act would make protections from new mineral leasing and development permanent. In the meantime, if finalized, the Placitas mineral withdrawal will provide strong interim protection.

PRC rejects proposed Rio Rancho LNG Plant

BY ANNI HANNA
New Mexico Climate Justice

In a win for the climate and New Mexico’s clean energy future, the Public Regulation Commission (PRC) unanimously rejected New Mexico Gas Company’s (NMGC) application to construct a liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant in Rio Rancho. The final order emphasized NMGC’s failure to demonstrate a net public benefit, adequately consider alternatives, or prove cost-effectiveness compared to feasible solutions.

Resident, Michael Sweringen, said, “It made NO sense to put an LNG facility close to schools and neighborhoods, risking leaks and explosions, increasing heavy truck traffic, and locking us into decades of dependence on fracked, methane gas. This victory was a powerful collaboration between neighbors, West Side HOAs, churches, New Mexico Representatives, organizers,



Community advocates gathered at the New Mexico Gas Company’s headquarters in Albuquerque protesting the gas utility’s request to build a new LNG facility near Rio Rancho. Photo by Anni Hanna.

and legal and environmental experts. Each group played a key and necessary part. In one final irony, this proposed LNG facility was half a mile from a 3,000-acre solar panel farm. Do we invest in the past? Or the future?”

The Hearing Examiner’s Recommended Decision,

which informed the Commission’s Final Order, aligned with arguments that highlighted NMGC’s inability to provide convincing evidence in support of the project’s necessity or cost-effectiveness and criticized the utility for not conducting a thorough investigation before

pursuing such a significant resource decision.

Internal documents unearthed during the case revealed NMGC’s underlying motive behind the proposed LNG plant – an explicit strategy to expand gas usage and bolster shareholder returns without adequately

considering the implications for ratepayers or the community.

PRC Chair Patrick O’Connell questioned the viability of the proposed facility, pointing out its higher costs compared to the existing infrastructure and its failure to address significant risks, such as expensive customer bills and potential supply disruptions. Commissioner James Ellison echoed concerns about NMGC’s lack of consideration for alternatives and emphasized the need for a careful analysis of the benefits of financial hedging strategies.

This decision stands as a victory for the health, safety, and economic security of New Mexicans. New Mexico should redirect its focus towards investments in energy efficiency, electrification, and the transition to renewable sources like solar, wind, and geothermal energy, ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come.

Thousands of comments urge Caja Del Rio protection

BY TERESA SEAMSTER
Northern NM Group

The Caja del Rio Coalition submitted 23,275 public comments in February opposing the “redundant” Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) 115-kV transmission line across 14 miles of the irreplaceable Caja del Rio Plateau.

On Feb. 15, a second large public meeting was hosted at Santa Fe Community College, by the National Nuclear Security Administration and LANL, to collect mounting public input from tribal governments, local residents, elected officials, and environmental advocates who vehemently oppose this infrastructure that would bisect the Caja plateau.

This highly significant cultural and ecological area covers 107,000 acres and is ranked by the Climate Atlas in the top 20% of unprotected Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service land in the US with the highest conservation and biodiversity values.

Transmission lines create invasive corridors for illegal off-road access, perching bird “target” shooters, high-risk fire ignition zones, and low-frequency sound barriers that disrupt the terrestrial migration of wildlife. Opponents are encouraging LANL to develop on-site energy generation as an alternative to installing a new line to meet their projected “redundancy” energy needs.



To the left: Methane coalition partners in DC (left to right): Jon Goldstein with the Environmental Defense Fund, Celerah Hewes with Moms Clean Air Force, Senator Martin Heinrich, Mahyar Sorour with the Sierra Club, and Antoinette Reyes, and Camilla Feibelman with the Sierra Club. Rio Grande Chapter photo files.

Celebrating 10 years of methane work in DC

BY ANTOINETTE REYES
Southern NM Organizer

After close to 10 years of work by environmental and frontline communities in New Mexico and around the country, a national coalition of partners gathered in Washington DC to celebrate the finalization of the Environmental Protection Agency’s oil and gas

methane rules. We met with some of our Congressional champions (Senators Heinrich and Luján and Congresswoman Stansbury) and with the administration to engage on the rollout of the Methane Emission Reduction Program as well as inquire about the status of the Pipeline Methane Rule and BLM Oil and Gas Waste Rule. Altogether it was a wonderful and

productive trip that let us celebrate with our allies from around the country, many of which also came from oil and gas states. We are hopeful that many of the new federal rules will benefit the climate and the air quality in our home state by reducing drifting air pollution from states like Texas.

PRIMARY ELECTIONS 2024 ENDORSEMENTS

The following are most of our endorsements of candidates who have opponents in the June primary. Endorsements of candidates who are unopposed are pending and will be disclosed at a later date.

Check our website at www.riograndesierraclub.org/elections/ for additional endorsements that may be made prior to the primary. And please be sure to vote on June 4.



Senate District 3: Sen. Shannon Pinto

Senator Shannon Pinto's top priority is the clean-up of legacy uranium mining waste throughout the northwest of the state. She was also a sponsor of the Environmental Rights Constitutional Amendment, and she chairs the Senate Indian, Rural and Cultural Affairs Committee.



Senate District 8: Sen. Pete Campos

Throughout his career, Pete Campos has worked to support clean water and a healthy and safe environment. Since the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon fires and floods, he has worked to secure resources to restore the affected lands through reforestation and to help those who lost their homes and animals, as well as for hot shot crews to fight future fires.



Senate District 9: Cindy Nava

A DREAMer, Cindy Nava was appointed by the White House as Senior Policy Advisor at HUD, where she oversaw the Climate Resilience Charter Group and worked on the expansion of resources devoted to affordable housing, innovative methods to address homelessness, and Tribal engagement. As the Executive Director of Transform Education NM, Cindy worked to incorporate the diverse cultural heritages of our state into education.



Senate District 11: Sen. Linda Lopez

Linda Lopez was first elected to the Senate in 1996. Since then, she has been a strong supporter of many progressive causes. On the environmental front, she was a co-sponsor of the Community Solar Act and of the Green Amendment, which would create a constitutional right to clean and healthy air, water, soil, native ecosystems and environments, including a safe climate.



Senate District 15: Heather Berghmans

Heather Berghmans is a policy analyst and finance consultant. Until recently, she was the finance director for the New Mexico House Democratic Campaign Committee. She profoundly understands the imperative to safeguard our air, water, forests, and public lands for future generations. She is committed to doing everything possible to meet the climate crisis and promote green technologies.



Senate District 21: Athena Christodoulou

Athena Christodoulou is an environmental engineer. She served as president and a board member of the NM Solar Energy Association, where she advocated for solar energy before the PRC, to legislators, and to the public for over a decade. She served as analyst for the House Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Committee in 2023. She is currently vice-chair of the NM Democratic Party Environmental Justice Caucus.



Senate District 26: Julie Radoslovich

Born and raised in the South Valley among a family that grew their own produce and kept chickens, Julie Radoslovich has lifelong connections to New Mexico's land and water. A retired public school teacher and principal, she will champion legislation to bolster water resilience, as well as protections and resources for frontline communities hit hardest by oil and gas development.



Senate District 30: Angel Charley

A first-time candidate with a deep commitment to environmental justice and Indigenous rights, Angel Charley stands firmly against environmental degradation caused by extractive industries. Her stance is rooted in part in the correlation between these industries and the disproportionate violence against Indigenous women. Charley's work has highlighted the intersection of environmental harm and human rights abuses and sought to eliminate both.



House District 4: Joseph Hernandez

Joseph Hernandez works for NAEVA as their Indigenous Energy Organizer and lobbyist. He has been one of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter's closest partners on climate and energy legislation like the Energy Transition Act and the Community Solar Act. He served on the New Mexico Climate Change Taskforce and is a recipient of the Dr. Espanola Jackson Energy Justice Award for his work.



House District 6: Rep. Eliseo Alcon

Eliseo Alcon proudly supports initiatives and legislation that promote environmental responsibility. He continues to fight to clean up the toxic mess left behind from uranium mining so as to help ensure that his grandchildren and great-grandchildren inherit a healthy, vital planet. Alcon is also a champion of rail transportation.



House District 9: Christopher Hudson

Christopher Brian Hudson, a Navajo (Diné) man from Tsayatoh, NM, works and organizes with his community to facilitate grass-rooted advocacy & collective action on environmental justice, healthcare inequities, and other community priorities. Together, they have opposed transportation of uranium waste, demanded remediation from the Church Rock uranium mill spill of 1979, and called out false solutions like blue hydrogen. Photo by S. Love.



House District 12: Art De La Cruz

Art De La Cruz has a 100% lifetime CVNM voting record, supporting not just our environmental priorities, including supporting our ban on storage of high level nuclear waste, the Conservation Legacy Fund and the Clean Transportation Fuels Act, but also key democracy bills for voting rights and legislative reform.



House District 13: Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero

Patricia Roybal Caballero has an impressively long list of environmental bills that she has sponsored, including the Community Solar Act, the Energy Transition Act, the Geothermal Resource and Development and Geothermal Tax Credit legislation, the Green Amendment, and the Holtec bill, to prevent New Mexico from becoming a nuclear dumping ground. She is especially interested in bills addressing environmental justice.



House District 16: Rep. Yanira Gurrola

During her first term as a legislator, Yanira Gurrola Valenzuela has advocated for environmental sustainability, clean energy and other climate solutions to protect our natural resources and combat climate change. She sponsored legislation promoting electric school buses, clean car tax credits, and water reuse requirements. She is committed to continuing to work on issues of water and climate.



Photo by istock.com/Bulat Silvia

To register to vote or view a sample ballot, go to nmvote.org.

Early voting begins at your County Clerk's office (Clerk's Annex, 1500 Lomas NW, in Albuquerque) on May 7 and at additional locations on May 18. Check your County Clerk's website for hours and locations.

You can request an absentee ballot online at <https://portal.sos.state.nm.us/OVR/WebPages/AbsenteeApplication.aspx> or contact your county clerk. Absentee ballot applications must be received by May 21.

ENDORSEMENTS CONTINUED



**House District 18:
Anjali Taneja**

As a family physician and executive director of a non-profit clinic that provides care to uninsured and Medicaid patients, and as an emergency room physician in the Navajo Nation, Anjali Taneja has over two decades of lived expertise on how harmful environmental policy impacts the bodies of New Mexicans. She pledges to work with stakeholders to devise solutions that will reduce and eliminate harm from climate and pollution.



**House District 27:
Greg Seeley**

Greg Seeley is a retired U.S. Air Force Tech Sergeant. As a staffer for then-Congresswoman Deb Haaland, he worked on the Kirtland AFB Bulk Fuels Spill and on the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act, as well as working on clean energy development, environmental protection funding and accelerating adoption of clean energy on military bases.



House District 35: Rep. Angelica Rubio

Since her election to the House in 2016, Angelica Rubio has focused on protecting communities that are disproportionately impacted by extractive industries and working towards a vision of building a restorative economy for all New Mexicans. Angelica is a champion for equitable outdoor recreation access, expanding outdoor opportunities for younger New Mexicans, and has been a mobility justice champion.



House District 41: Rep. Susan Herrera

As Chairperson of the House Agriculture, Acequias, and Water Resources Committee, Susan Herrera has worked tirelessly to modernize our water infrastructure laws. She championed the Water Regionalization Act of 2023 and Water Project Prioritization Act of 2024, which will provide strategic funding to the Water Trust Board to fund water and wastewater projects in New Mexico for years to come.



**House District 53:
Jon Hill**

Jon Hill strongly supports the Green Amendment because he believes it will create a north star for all environmental initiatives. He states, it will equip us to weave together an array of legislative proposals, everything from air and water to energy and climate, to create a rugged fabric that will endure for years into the future.



House District 69: Paulene Abeyta

Since childhood, Paulene Abeyta has nurtured a deep connection to and understanding of the importance of our environment. Her indigenous culture and teachings have blended with her western education to strengthen that relationship and provide her with the tools to be an effective advocate for our environment. The knowledge that we are all connected is paramount to her.



**House District 70:
Anita Gonzalez**

Anita Gonzales is a STEM educator who loves the beauty of our open space and nature's classroom in Northern New Mexico. She is the vice-chair of the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, as well as an acequia commissioner who understands the importance of water. She believes that conservation, climate, water, environmental justice, and democracy issues are all connected.

Santa Fe County Primary Endorsements

County Commission District 2: Lisa Cacari Stone. Dr. Cacari Stone has dedicated 34 years of public health leadership to advancing health equity and community health. She credits her Chicana-Mexican Indian roots with her lifelong respect for land and the natural world.

County Commission District 4: Adam Fulton Johnson. Dr. Johnson is Executive Director of the Old Santa Foundation and a historian, preservationist, and community advocate. He is committed to open space protection and transit-friendly development.

County Clerk, Katherine Clark. Incumbent Clark has assembled a track record that promotes and protects democracy, including boosting voter turnout in underserved communities, increasing access to voting locations and drop boxes, and shortening the wait for voting results.

Endorsement content authorized and paid for by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club Political Action Committee.

We need a new compliance officer!

This is a volunteer position. The Chapter Compliance Officer advises Chapter political activists on questions about how to conduct our electoral activities in compliance with state and local campaign laws. This is an essential position. If we don't have a Compliance Officer, we can't have a political program. This would be a great way for an attorney (active or retired) or any person comfortable reading statutes and regulations to help the Chapter accomplish its legislative goals. For more information on what the position entails, contact Richard Barish, 505-232-3013, richard.barish@gmail.com.

NORTHERN NEW MEXICO GROUP

Los Alamos students present climate resolution

BY JODY BENSON

Chapter Executive Committee

Los Alamos High School EcoClub and Chamisa Elementary Global Warming Express presented their Resolution for a Commitment To Renewable Energy And Electrification to the Los Alamos School Board in February. Both clubs are joining the youth movement to help save our solar system's only living planet through eschewing greenhouse-gas-emitting fuels and switching - quickly - to renewable energy. They are focusing on the schools because, as stated in their resolution, "...in the United States, public schools are one of the largest public sector consumers of energy, using the equivalent of 18 coal-fired power plants or 15 million cars each year."

These kids know about the realities of climate catastrophe as they live on a mountain where two devastating fires

reduced the Jemez Mountains "sky island" of spruce-fir forests watered by summer monsoons and the heavy snow sequestered through the summer as springs and streams, into a crispy high desert with few trees to call the rain. Their resolution points up to those hills and asks the School Board and County Council to "...commit to the use of renewable energy and the electrification of current and future appliances and vehicles..."

While adults claim that "kids are our future," the kids know that unless we each do something now, there's no future for them to claim. (To see an EcoClub OpEd, please visit at ladaily.com/op-ed-eco-club-pushes-for-real-change-in-los-alamos/.)

The School Board will vote on the resolution at a future meeting.



Members of Chamisa School's Global Warming Express present to the Los Alamos School Board in support of the Los Alamos High School EcoClub's Resolution For A Commitment To Renewable Energy And Electrification. Left to right: Ruby (4th grade), Chamisa School GWE Sponsor Susan Hettinga, Araba (6th grade), Addy, and Sophie (both 5th grade) (with 6th-grader Dorian among the supporters in the audience). Photo by Jody Benson.

Air Quality Board still alive, for now

BY DIANE REESE
Chapter Chair

The health and future of the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board (AQCB) is unclear. Legal actions are currently proceeding, and the leader of the assault on the board has taken over as President of the City Council.

The First Judicial Court has stayed the dissolution of the Board while the merits of the case are considered.

The AQCB is an independent, appointed, volunteer, citizen-led board created to prevent or abate air pollution under

the New Mexico Air Quality Control Act and the federal Clean Air Act. The Air Board serves as a joint local authority acting on behalf of both the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County.

In late 2023, City Councilor Dan Lewis introduced legislation to remove the City-appointed members of the AQCB – ignoring the fact that this is a joint board with three of seven members appointed by the County Commissioners – and restructure the Board.

The bill passed, was vetoed, and the veto overridden with the help of Democrats Klarissa Pena and Louie Sanchez. The

issue is now in the courts, and the removals have been stayed with the court considers the merits of the case.

We thank the members of the County Commission who supported a resolution to remind the Council members that this is a joint board which has a legal mandate to protect our air.

Seven professionals, all with outstanding credentials, who volunteer their time to serve us all, safeguarding our health and Albuquerque's air have been insulted and harassed by elected officials and local journalists. The Albuquerque Journal editorial stated on Dec. 6, 2023

“Out-of-control air board's insubordination is evidence of its extremism.”

What seems to have sparked these attacks was the Health, Environment and Equity Impacts (HEEI) rule. The proposed HEEI would increase protection for communities with inequitable pollution burdens. Through much chaos (a meeting dramatically interrupted by City Councilor Dan Lewis and an announcement that all the AQCB members would be “fired”), the AQCB continued working and adopted a modified rule. This rule is less protective than the original

version and is really only a tiny piece of what the community requested. Is it true movement towards environmental justice? There are numerous pending legal challenges to the rule and the actions of the City Council. So we need to continue to be engaged.

Hundreds spoke at public meetings demanding the AQCB be respected and allowed to follow procedure and law. When citizens care and take action, justice can prevail. Please continue to be supportive of your AQCB. Consider sending a thank you email to: airboard@cabq.gov and attending an air board meeting!



Last summer's Member Appreciation Picnic at Doc Long Picnic Site in the Cibola National Forest. Photo by David McGahey

Join us for the Sierra Club Member Appreciation Picnic in June

BY DEBBIE BRYANT
Chapter Outings Chair

BY TERRY OWEN
Central Group Secretary

Calling all Sierra Club members and friends for our Second Annual Member Appreciation Picnic. We look forward to seeing you, and we hope you'll bring a friend.

When: 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. Saturday, June 15

Where: Capulin Spring Picnic Site in the Cibola National Forest

Bring a potluck offering to share.

For those that don't have a Cibola Forest pass or National Parks Pass, we have a limited number of free parking passes to distribute, first come-first served. Please pre-register no later than Jun. 13 at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/.

Sierra Club and Beers June 7: featuring author David Ryan

BY SUSAN GORMAN
Central New Mexico Chair

We hope you can join us for our next Sierra Club and Beers event featuring David Ryan, the co-author of the most recent edition of 60 Hikes within 60 Miles: Albuquerque. He'll speak about his new book, Wandering in the Clear Light of New Mexico, about places only found in our state compelling enough and important enough to warrant a drive across the country.

To begin, the nation has only 25 UNESCO-designated World Heritage Sites. Three of them are in New Mexico – more than any other state. And when you add the state's amazing

landforms, a distinct sense of place, archaeological sites, and historically and culturally significant locations, you have an amazing state for wandering and exploring.

The meeting is on **Friday, Jun. 7 at 7 p.m.** RSVP at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar/.

Location: **St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 431 Richmond Place NE, Albuquerque.**

2024 Sierra Club and Beer Dates for your calendar: August 2; Oct 4; Dec 6 Potluck Celebration!

Skip the stuff NM

BY LAURIE ZUNNER
Chapter Zero Waste Chair

Are you tired of the excessive quantities of napkins and condiment packets that are automatically thrown in with your takeout order? Do you hate getting unnecessary plastic cutlery, straws, and stirrers wrapped in more plastic? Are you tired of all the waste?

YOU CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!
Join the "Skip the Stuff NM" campaign

It's easy! When you place a takeout order, tell them you want to “Skip the Stuff.” Then explain which extras you don't want such as, “no plastic, forks, spoons, knives or straws” or maybe “one ketchup and one mustard only but nothing else!”

Then when you get your order, tell us how they did. Take a smiley selfie with your order if they did what you asked, or a frowny selfie with all the stuff they included. Feel free to substitute emojis or get creative. Be sure to name the food establishment. Tag us [@riograndesierraclub](https://www.instagram.com/riograndesierraclub) #SkiptheStuffNM. Tell your friends to Skip the Stuff too!

This campaign is a little different from the national campaign launched by Upstream. Instead of starting with the food vendors, we are encouraging customers to take



Graphic by Ingrid Mahler.

the lead and choose where they want to Skip the Stuff. It will take time for takeout places and food vendors to catch on, so be patient and keep trying. It will become easier. Food vendors will see they can save money by not ordering so much stuff, and you will be happier knowing you helped reduce a lot of plastic waste.

A few facts on disposable foodware waste:

- One trillion disposable foodware items are used in the U.S. each year, generating 9 million tons of waste.

- Restaurants spend \$24 billion purchasing disposable foodware items on average in the US.

- Local governments in the US spend \$6 billion managing the waste.

For more information visit www.upstreamolutions.org/model-policies.

Central New Mexico Group contacts

Executive Committee

Chair: Susan Gorman
susangorman1945@gmail.com
602-386-7112

Vice Chair: Diane Reese
DianeAbqNM@gmail.com, 505-507-6416

Treasurer: David Ther, grelbik@gmail.com

Secretary: Terry Owen
teowen@comcast.net

Ray Shortridge
rshortridge@gmail.com

Transportation: Patrick Burton
patrickburton9@icloud.com

Outings: Debbie Bryant,
bryade@gmail.com
832-692-1881

Zero Waste: Laurie Zunner
lmzunner@gmail.com

Political/Bosque: Richard Barish,
richard.barish@gmail.com

Military Outings: Terry Owen

Volunteer Coordinator: Open

Wildlife: Open



Left: Mexican wolf captured and collared during the 2023 annual count in Eagle Creek Arizona. **Right:** Mexican wolf in the snow with a new collar. Photo credits: US Fish and Wildlife.

Wild lobo population grows slightly in 2023

BY MARY KATHERINE RAY
Wildlife Chair

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) flies over wolf country each year hoping to see, to collar, and to count the Mexican wolves in the wild in AZ and NM. This year, the agency announced that the wild population numbers at least 257. This is an increase of only 6% over the previous year. Eighty-seven pups that were born in 2023 were still alive at the beginning of 2024. Sadly, among the 16 wolf pups cross fostered from captive litters into wild litters last spring, only one is still alive. (That one is included in the 87). In fact, of the 99 wolf pups

cross fostered into the wild since this strategy has been employed, only 14 are still alive in the wild now. Only 10 have produced wild litters of their own.

The purpose of cross-fostering is to increase the genetic diversity of the wild population. Mexican wolves came to the brink of extinction in the 1970's with only five living wolves remaining to contribute their genes to restore their entire species. Over time, the wild population has become more inbred than the captive one, which is why there is a pressing need to move genes from captive wolves to wild ones. But the numbers show cross-fostering alone is not sufficient to meet this need. The larger the wild wolf

population becomes, the more difficult increasing its genetic diversity becomes. It's like adding a drop of ink to a teaspoon of water or to a gallon of water. The effect in the latter is much less noticeable.

To help improve this situation, the USFWS should also be releasing entire wolf families. The last time the agency did this was in 2006. It takes a minimum of two years for a cross-fostered pup to reach breeding age and perhaps longer to actually breed, which is the only benchmark of successfully improving the gene pool. An adult breeding pair hurries that process along. No waiting is needed.

Tell the USFWS to free Asha & her pen mates!

Asha, the wolf who wandered across New Mexico almost to Colorado twice in as many years, was placed into captivity with two males, Arcadia (M1966) and Horizon (M1968) last winter in hopes she would breed with one of them. And now she has!!! Asha has paired with Arcadia. Nevertheless, all three wolves, if they are getting along, should be released back to the wild to quickly improve the gene pool of the wild wolf population.

The genetic and behavioral value of these wolves in the wild is incalculable. Asha wandered hundreds of miles through New Mexico once in 2022 and again in 2023 and did not prey on livestock once. Until she got to the Valles Caldera last December, it doesn't appear that any non-agency humans even saw her. She knows how to live in the wild and how to avoid conflict with people. She can teach Arcadia and Horizon, both with important wolf genes to do the same. You can help!



Please send a message to the US Fish and Wildlife Service to free Asha along with Arcadia and Horizon. Tell them more adult wolf pairs must be released to have any hope of truly addressing the genetic crisis facing this essential, beautiful, and iconic species. **Use the QR Code to send your message today!**



Left: A baby Great horned owl rescued and released back to the wild. **Middle:** A baby Curve-billed thrasher rescued and released back to the wild. **Right:** Baby Rock squirrels rescued and released back to the wild. Photos courtesy of the New Mexico Wildlife Center.

Rescuing wildlife safely and successfully

BY LAURA SIEGEL, CWR
New Mexico Wildlife Center

Spring and summer are known as “baby season” for wildlife rehabilitators, and it always comes with an increased volume of injured and orphaned wild animals being admitted to wildlife hospitals. Here are some tips to keep in mind if you ever encounter a wild animal that seems to be in need of help!

If you find an animal that appears to be injured, sick, or orphaned, the first step is to contact New Mexico Wildlife Center (NMWC) or your nearest licensed wildlife rehabilitator for advice on how to handle the situation.

If you call us and describe what you are seeing, we can help you decide how to proceed and determine if the animal needs to be brought in for care.

If the animal does need help, get it into a secure container and transport it to us. Choose your container – a taped cardboard box or a pet carrier usually works well – before picking the animal up, and wear gloves to protect your hands if you have to touch the animal. You can line the container with newspaper or a piece of cloth for bedding, but make sure the cloth doesn't have any loose threads that the animal could get tangled in.

Some people may be tempted to try to offer food or water to the animal, but that can be dangerous and usually does more harm than good. Very debilitated animals may not be capable of digesting food or swallowing water, and being given the wrong food for their species can make wild animals very sick. It might also be tempting to hold or pet the animal, but being handled by humans is frightening to wild animals, not comforting! We know you want to help the animal, and the best way to help them is to contain them securely and transport them to a rehabilitator as soon as

possible. Please do not ever try to raise or rehabilitate wild animals on your own without proper professional training and permits.

The goal of wildlife rehabilitation is to release healthy wildlife back into their native habitats. That process starts with you, the rescuer, caring enough about wildlife to notice and take appropriate action when an animal needs help! You can contact NMWC at 505-753-9505, find us online at www.newmexicowildlifecenter.org, and follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

Northern New Mexico Group contacts

Executive Committee Chair: John Buchser (water issues) (505) 820-0201
jbuchser@comcast.net

Vice-chair, secretary: Shannon Romeling (518)-275-7681
sromeling73@gmail.com

Political chair: Ken Hughes (505) 474-0550
b1family@icloud.com
Chris Calvert
chriscalvert82@gmail.com

Susan Martin, (505) 988-5206
smartin316@gmail.com
Norman Norvelle
norvelhome@msn.com

Tom Gorman, (505) 438-3932
gormantd@gmail.com

Carlos Trujillo
carlosftrujillo@gmail.com
Joe Wells
joe.wells@sbcglobal.net

Outings: Alan Shapiro (505) 424-9242
nm5s@yahoo.com

Book Distributor: Janet Peacock, (505) 988-8929

SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO GROUP

Another attempt to privatize public land – this time in Sierra County

BY MARY KATHERINE RAY

Chapter Wildlife Chair

Kingston, NM is a tiny town that abuts the east side of the Black Range in Sierra County. Last year, a wealthy landowner locked a gate across a previously publicly used road that accesses the Aldo Leopold Wilderness behind it. The road runs through his newly acquired property to US Forest Service land beyond it. Actions like this are happening with increasing frequency

across our state. Often the motivation is to create a private hunting reserve, not only usurping public land but also the public's wildlife. Such privatization can bring huge monetary rewards to the landowner.

But the residents of Kingston are not taking this lying down. They are suing the landowner to open the gate. Unfortunately, at a hearing in December, a district court judge in Truth or Consequences sided with the landowner and denied a preliminary injunction to open the gate while the case winds

its way through the court. The judge ignored substantial evidence that the road has been in use as a prescriptive easement for decades. Our own David Baake, a Southern Group Executive Committee member, is one of the attorneys for the residents of Kingston. They have filed an appeal of this erroneous decision.

Heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended the hearing. The outcome of this case could have broader ramifications to public access on public land in the future.

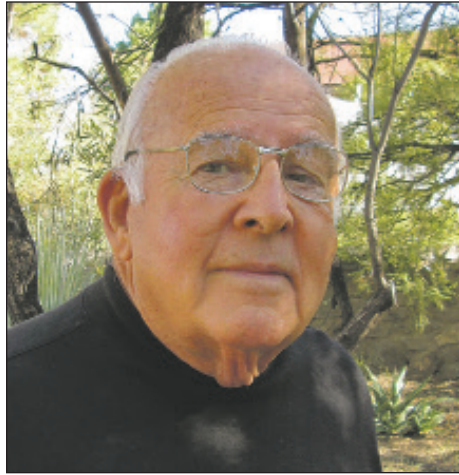
Volunteer Spotlight: Kurt Anderson

BY MIYA KING-FLAHERTY

Our Wild New Mexico Organizer

This month's volunteer interview is with long-time Sierra Club volunteer Kurt Anderson of Las Cruces. From entering as an outdoor enthusiast enjoying hiking and backpacking to expanding interests in geothermal-energy development and serving on the executive committees in the Southern Group and Chapter, Kurt has made invaluable contributions to the chapter over the years. Here's Kurt in his own words.

Raised in the flatlands of northern Illinois, I moved to Southern California for college. There I discovered the mountains of the Sierra Nevada and first encountered the Sierra Club. It was, at that time, a very California-centered organization for hikers and climbers. The Sierra Club offered free courses in backpacking, wilderness survival, and winter mountaineering, and I took advantage of these. Later, graduate school left more time for weekend solo hikes and climbs. I joined the Sierra Club in



Kurt Anderson. Photo by Mona Blaber.

1967 as David Brower was making the organization the leader in the nascent environmental movement.

A series of postdoctoral appointments carried me east to less mountainous terrain. I remained fairly inactive until I came to New Mexico in 1974 to join the New Mexico State University Astronomy Department. My other interests grew to include geothermal-energy development and water planning. I did about two decades of wilderness search and

rescue and technical rescue, partly as an excuse to get back into the mountains. I've served as Chair and Political Chair for the Southern Group and am currently its representative to the Chapter.

Pastimes included racing, with the occasional triathlon or marathon, reading, and learning new stuff. I earned my Taekwondo Black Belt but did little competition. Age and some medical issues now preclude much of the more strenuous stuff, and I mostly read and study for relaxation.

I still try to stir up trouble, mainly in connection with environmental matters. I care about these things because I've derived great pleasure from wilderness, and fear for our environmental future. Besides, I have grandchildren who are going to be facing an increasingly nasty world. I hope to see the Southern Group grow in geographical coverage, acquire younger and more active members, and strengthen our associations with other regional groups.

Environmental Justice Presentation in Alamogordo, April 20

Join us on Saturday, April 20 at 2:30 pm in Alamogordo for an Earth Day presentation on **Environmental Injustice, the Past to Present**. Our Southern New Mexico Organizer, Antoinette Reyes, will go over an introduction to environmental racism throughout history to present times. Communities of color often carry the brunt of environmental harms from health impacts to the degradation of local air quality.

Where: New Mexico State University in the Pro-Tech Building, Room 128, Alamogordo, NM.

When: April 20, 2:30pm

For more information contact Antoinette.Reyes@sierraclub.org

Southern New Mexico Group contacts

Chair and Outings: Howie Dash
howiedash@aol.com
575-652-7550

Treasurer: Cheryl Blevins
spotblev@earthlink.net
575-524-4861

Secretary and Wildlife:
Mary Katherine Ray
mkrscrim@gmail.com
575-537-1095

Political: Gayle Eads
gayle.s.eads@gmail.com

Chapter rep: Kurt Anderson
kurt@nmsu.edu, 575-646-1032

Dan Lorimier (Copper Flat, Dairy Coalition) dlorimier1948@gmail.com

El Paso Group Contacts elpasosierraclub.org

Chair: Laurence Gibson
915-309-5419
laurenceagibson@gmail.com

Secretary: Ann Falknor
915-833-9162
afalknor@sbcglobal.net

Liz Walsh
915-342-7630
ewalsh@uteedu

Jerry Kurtyka
Neysa Hardin
915-227-5154
nrhardin@yahoo.com

Mimbres Peaks: new monument in Southern NM?



By ANTOINETTE REYES
Southern NM Organizer

After the initial call for President Joe Biden to make Mimbres Peaks a national monument, an array of misinformation fueled local opposition to the proposal.

For example, when BLM lands are declared a monument, grazing rights are retained as are many other uses such as biking, using ATVs, hunting, hiking, and camping.

The Coalition in favor of protecting these special lands is bringing in even

more partners, both environmental and social justice groups, including the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, and identifying ways to move forward. Use the QR to the left to add your name to a letter of support.

EARTH DAY FESTIVAL APRIL 21 ALBUQUERQUE

Save money with the Inflation Reduction Act at the Earth Day Festival

By CAROLINE FUNK
Chapter Coordinator

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) created dozens of federal programs to make efficient electrification affordable for every household in the United States, including renters. Passed into law in August 2022, it is meant to help the US reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030.

Inflation Reduction Act benefits are available now. The Rewiring America savings calculator helps you plan home improvements and electric vehicle purchases that qualify for federal tax rebates and incentives (homes.rewiringamerica.org). Other provisions in the IRA focus on energy efficiencies in city planning, conservation actions taken by farmers and ranchers, and contractor training programs.

Clean, safe and energy efficient households include more than electric vehicles, appliances, and solar. Many homes need weatherization and updated

electrical systems.

IRA benefits for basic weatherization and electrification upgrades are available and, like the other rebates for new technology, these are based on income levels. Households with income over 150% of the area median are not eligible for IRA rebates, but are eligible for the tax credits. Households with income between 80% and 150% of the area median income can get 50% of the rebate amount. Households with income below 80% of the area median can receive rebates up to \$14,000, the maximum amount.

Efficient electric appliances like heat pumps for heating and cooling, hot water heaters, and induction stoves require far less energy than fossil fuel-powered ones and produce zero direct pollution, while saving you money on your energy bills. Households can run the Rewiring America calculator to begin to understand what options are available. Typical retrofits and upgrades with IRA tax incentives and rebates include basic weatherization with up to \$1,600 in

discounts and \$1,200 in tax credits, or whole-home rewiring with up to \$2,500 in discounts.

A great first step is to have a professional perform an energy audit to determine what systems your household needs to become more energy efficient. Everyone should get multiple quotes from installers who are informed about IRA and local rebates and incentives. And, tax professionals trained in the IRA benefits can help plan electrification and weatherization retrofits and upgrades to maximize Inflation Reduction Act benefits over multiple years.

There are a few local ways to learn how to access IRA benefits, and state and local savings. At the Earth Day Festival on April 21 at Balloon Fiesta Park, our Energy Guides help visitors find Energy Experts, vendors. Spring Town Halls throughout New Mexico will share information, too. **Get your Earth Day Festival ticket at earthdayfestivalnm.com.**

New Mexico's 50-year Water Action Plan

BY TRICIA SNYDER

Chapter Water Chair

In January Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham released her 50-year water action plan. Central to the plan is the recognition of climate uncertainties and their impacts on water availability.

The scientific foundation for the plan investigated the impacts of climate change on New Mexico's water resources over the next 50 years. The primary findings paint a picture of New Mexico's hotter and drier future with reduced streamflow, unpredictable precipitation, rising temperatures, and increasing demands.

The plan includes strategies under three broad topics: water conservation, water and watershed protection,

and new water supplies. Some key activities under water conservation are: developing a public water education course, incentivizing agricultural water conservation, and investing in our water infrastructure to reduce leaks and improve water storage and conveyance systems. Much of New Mexico's water infrastructure is aging rapidly and requires significant investment to ensure clean, accessible water for all.

In water and watershed protection, the plan outlines four important activities: cleaning up contaminated groundwater sites, developing a state-led surface water quality permitting program, modernizing wastewater treatment plants and stormwater infrastructure, and watershed protection and restoration.

Advocates and legislative champions made major progress this past legislative session (see our legislative update for more!) to set up this program. Notably missing from this section are any actions to keep more water in New Mexico's streams, a critical step in ensuring all of our communities, human and non-human, are supported as we face increasing water scarcity challenges.

The new water supply strategy includes the Governor's proposal to establish a \$500 million Strategic Water Supply, as well as expanding water reuse, and improved mapping and monitoring of our groundwater resources.

We have outstanding questions around the Strategic Water Supply and its impacts to New Mexico's aquifers, how the proposal as planned could

change existing water governance structures, and the financial pathway of the proposal.

We also remain concerned about investing such a large sum while other actions, like the recommendations developed as part of the Water Infrastructure and Policy Task Force remain unfunded.

Overall, the 50-year water action plan outlines a number of important measures to secure New Mexico's water future. It also overlooks some key strategies to ensure that this future supports all of our communities and the values we hold. It will require all of us to ensure these values and the place we call home are protected for future generations.

Getting outside in NM safely



Hiking Mt. Taylor in New Mexico. Photo by Debbie Bryant

BY DEBBIE BRYANT
Chapter Outings Chair

BY TERRY OWEN
Central Group Secretary

New Mexico is wildly beautiful, with over 1.6 million acres of wilderness and 23 million acres of public lands. It's the perfect setting for hiking, backpacking, skiing, and more. The Sierra Club hosts about 150 outings a year, welcoming many to the beautiful outdoors. Our outings leaders have Wilderness First Aid certification and are trained in managing risks in the backcountry. But what if you're hiking alone or with friends? How prepared should you be, and for what?

New Mexico Search & Rescue Resource Officer Bob Rodgers advised that there were 55 hiker rescues in 2023. The majority were caused by people overestimating their capabilities. Some examples are not being able to carry on, exhaustion, dehydration, or injury because of over-exertion.

What can you do to enjoy yourself safely?

1. Always leave an itinerary with someone who will be your lifeline; don't deviate from your plan, and make sure you set up a check-in time to let that person know that you're safe.

2. Don't overextend yourself. Make sure you familiarize yourself with a topographical map of the hike beforehand. Work up to hard hikes to make sure you're in shape to attempt them. It's natural to have an aversion to giving up before making it to the top, but if you can feel yourself struggling, turn around. Remember, even if you make

it to the top, you're only halfway done. In Colorado, the number of rescues for people on their way down from climbing 14ers is more than double for those ascending, and that's often attributed to fatigue or lack of attention.

3. Hypothermia is a problem in New Mexico. Three hikers were rescued on La Luz trail last April. Already in 2024, eight hikers had to be rescued from the same trail because of hypothermia. Rescue crews urge carrying extra clothing, like a lightweight puffy jacket and bringing a large black trash bag for rain protection and warmth.

4. Have the 10 essentials, including a map and compass, and know how to use them. If hiking in new terrain, check your location on the map at regular intervals. A hiker was lost in the Manzano Mountains in April 2023. His cell phone showed one location but search crews believed that the mountain contours affected the cell signal. He described what he saw, but it didn't match the trail. He was found eventually.

5. Begin your hike with a fully charged phone. Consider using airplane mode to extend battery life. Don't drain your phone battery because of excessive photography.

6. Keep your group together unless it is necessary to separate to coordinate a rescue.

If you'd like to take a class, wilderness first aid is recommended. Classes are available online or in person at various locations throughout the state. Please contact Debbie Bryant at bryade@gmail.com for more information.

Become a Water Sentinels citizen scientist



Water Sentinel volunteer using a handheld meter to sample water quality the Rio Fernando de Taos. Photo by Shannon Romeling

BY SHANNON ROMELING
Northern Group Vice Chair

The Water Sentinels - Rios de Taos has been sampling surface water quality in Taos County since 2007 and submitting those data to the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED). Without the Water Sentinels, the NMED would only be able to monitor each river in the state once every 8-10 years. Water Sentinel volunteers are trained each spring, in close partnership with the non-profit water protection organization Amigos Bravos.

Join us in Taos on Saturday, May 18 at 10 am at Fred Baca Park to become part of this citizen science team. You can also attend if you are simply interested in learning more

about water quality, but are not ready to commit to the team.

Once trained, new and past volunteers will collect samples at four locations on four or five rivers in Taos County three times a year for a variety of constituents including temperature, pH, metals, nutrients, and several others depending on the river.

Over the years, Water Sentinels data has brought to light an E. coli impairment and subsequent planning and clean-up funding on the Rio Fernando de Taos, the on-going aluminum impairment on the Red River, and contributed to improvements to the Rio Pueblo through upgrades to the Taos Wastewater Treatment Plant.

April • May • June outings

Sign up for outings at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar

FRIDAY, APR. 19
Easy Hike to Explore the Valle de Oro NWR. 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. **BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!** Meet at the Visitor's Center at 10:00. 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 so we can access the Bosque for a 2 mile stroll and check on the Rio Grande. Our easy amble hike back will include stops at the many murals and mosaic art works. Plan on stopping at the Gift Shop to pick up a few unique items and support the Friends of the Valle de Oro! No dogs please.

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, NM 87105

SATURDAY, APR. 20
Rio Puerco Archaeology Service Project. Apr 20 - Apr 21: This outing is sponsored by the Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome to join. Celebrate Earth Day weekend by learning first-hand about the geology and archaeology of the Rio Puerco basin near San Ysidro, NM. We will backpack approximately 3 miles into the backcountry and go with BLM staff archaeologists on a guided tour of the area's cultural resources. Saturday evening we'll enjoy camping under the stars and learning more about the area's history. Sunday morning, we will continue our efforts until lunch, then we will depart. Participants should be in relatively good physical condition and be able to backpack at least 6 miles over uneven terrain with 250 feet of elevation change. This outing is appropriate for children 14 years of age and up when accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. RSVP no later than Apr. 15.

Trip Leaders: John Buchser, jbuchser@comcast.net; Terry Owen, teowen@comcast.net
Level: Moderate. Location: Near San Ysidro, NM

SATURDAY, APR. 20
Earth Day 10:30 a.m. Hike and 12 p.m Lunch. The Southern NM group is having a hike in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument at La Cueva Trail. Please park at the Las Cueva Picnic Pavilion. The hike will be led by a BLM archaeologist who has interesting stories to tell about the Cave and the monument area. Wear good shoes – the trail is gravel. Bring a bag lunch for a picnic after the hike at the Pavilion. Sierra Club is providing water and cookies.

Trip Leader: Gayle Eads, gayle.s.eads@gmail.com, 575-430-1671

And BLM archeologist
Level: Moderate
Location: Las Cruces

SUNDAY, APR. 21
Earth Day Festival. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Learn about rebates and incentives to electrify and weatherize your home. Tickets free in advance using the "Earth" ticket

12 Rio Grande Sierran



Snowshoeing outing in the Sandias. Photo by Debbie Bryant

category at earthdayfestivalnm.com Contact caroline.funk@sierraclub.org. Easy. Location Balloon Fiesta Park Sid Cutter Pavilion.

FRIDAY, APR. 26
SC Gilman - Fenton Lake - Jemez Springs Drive with Photo Stops. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Meet promptly at 9:00 a.m. in Bernalillo to carpool. Join us for a pleasant dose of nature and fresh air and camaraderie. This approximately 6-hour outing includes one hour of driving each way from the departure point, along lovely winding mountain roads, Highway 4 and Forest Road 604 along the Rio Guadalupe and Rio Cebolla, then Road 126, and back to Highway 4. Photo stops at the Gilman tunnels and Fenton Lake, then lunch in Jemez Springs at Highway 4 Cafe. We will have rest breaks at the Jemez Pueblo visitor center and at La Cueva Country Store. This is a lovely drive in a beautiful area, your photos are bound to be spectacular. This outing is appropriate for children over 12 accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. No dogs. Register no later than Apr. 24.

Trip leader: June Parsons, (832) 723-4533, comicsilver@gmail.com
Level: Easy. Location: Jemez Mountains

SATURDAY, MAY 4
Spring Birds Along the Animas River in Farmington. 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Spring Birds Along the Animas River in Farmington, about three miles round trip, along trails on flat terrain. We will compare the birds we find with lists of resident and migrant species discovered last spring. Eighteen year olds and up only. No dogs please. Limit of 7 people, as this is a joint trip with the Colorado Mountain Club. Register no later than Apr. 29. Trip leader: Mike Foster, (303) 594-1431, mike4ffoster@gmail.com
Level: Easy. Location: Farmington, NM

THURSDAY, MAY 9
Hovenweep Hopalong. 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. This is a bike - hike tour of the Hovenweep National Monument Ancestral Puebloan archaeological sites located in Southeastern Utah and Southwestern Colorado approximately 50 miles west of Cortez, CO. We will hike and explore the main Square Tower complex from the Visitors' Center, and then bike to the Horseshoe, Hackberry, Holly, and Cutthroat

Castle outliers. We will also bike to Ruins Point in the Canyon of the Ancients. The bike trip and hikes to the many sites will total approximately 10 miles. We will bike over paved roads, improved dirt roads and unimproved 2-tracks. Hiking will be on packed dirt and rocky trails. Registrants should be in good enough bike shape to ride 5 miles up a 5% grade. There will be short hikes of 100-200 yards to sites. Gravel, Mountain or Ebike are strongly advised. Road bikes are discouraged and motorized bikes are prohibited. Hovenweep has a campground Lodging, dining and gas are available in Bluff, UT and Cortez, CO. The outings leader has extensive knowledge of the region and communities nearby and can advise on travel, etc.
Leader: Hart Pierce, (505) 320-1055, shpierce73@outlook.com
Level: Moderate to Strenuous
Location: Hovenweep (leader will provide meet up location)

SATURDAY, MAY 11
Yoga In The Mountains.

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Come celebrate the day with us. If you'd like to explore the wonders of nature, hiking and outdoor yoga in the company of really nice people this is the hike! We'll embark on an easy ~3 mile hike that incorporates a one hour outdoor yoga and mindfulness break midway. Includes 300 feet of elevation gain and amazing views of the mountains. Everyone is welcome! Limited to 15 participants, children over the age of 12 are welcome when accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. A \$10 cash donation for our amazing yoga instructor, Pamela Cook would be appreciated. Good well-behaved dogs are welcome. Sign up no later than May 9.
Trip leader: Debbie Bryant bryade@gmail.com. Level: Easy. Location: Ponderosa trail loop (out by Oak Flats in Tijeras)

TUESDAY, MAY 14
Zero Waste Tour of Magpie Motors. 10 to 11:30 a.m. Come learn about and test drive a used EV. Dave, the dealer, loves to talk about the benefits of EV ownership even if you're not ready to buy. We will be out in the parking lot, mostly standing, so dress for the weather with comfortable shoes and a hat. Bring a valid driver's license and proof of insurance if you would like to test drive a car. If you need or can give a ride contact the trip leader. Limit 8 but we can also do it the next day if more people are

interested. Register by May 11.
Trip leader: Laurie Zunner, 505-440-5337, lmzunne@gmail.com
Level: Easy. Location: 2511 First St. NW, Abq, NM 87102, just south of Menaul

FRIDAY, MAY 17
Las Conchas Trail Hike along the Jemez River East Fork. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Meet in Bernalillo. This outing includes one hour of driving each way along the lovely winding Highway 4. This easy pine forest hike alongside the mountain stream is approximately 3 miles round trip with 50 feet of elevation gain. Join us for a dose of nature and camaraderie. Bring your own water and lunch, hat, and wear outer layers as the mountain air may be chilly. This hike is appropriate for children over 12 accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. No dogs. Register no later than May 15.
Trip leader: June Parsons, (832) 723-4533, comicsilver@gmail.com
Level: Easy. Location: Jemez Mountains, North of Jemez Springs

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29
Gutierrez Hubbell House and Lunch at Abuelita's. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Easy hike with a bit of South Valley culture. Visit the Gutierrez Hubbell House (GHH) Open Space, a fine example of adobe architecture dating back to the 1860s. The property includes 10 acres, much of which is farmed and also fed by an historic acequia. We will walk the perimeter trail, an easy 1 mile loop. Then we will tour the museum.

And since you have come to the South Valley, let's go over to Abuelita's New Mexican Kitchen and enjoy lunch at this family-owned eatery. The onsite Sisters Gift Shop offers unique and handmade items. No Dogs please. Register no later than May 21.
Trip leader: Diane Reese, (505) 507-6416, dianebqnm@gmail.com
Level: Easy. Location: Albuquerque

FRIDAY, MAY 31
Wild Rivers Recreation Area Service Project. **Friday - Sunday.** This outing is sponsored by the Military Outdoors Program and everyone is welcome to join. Here's your chance to give back to the Land of Enchantment. We'll meet up at a group campsite at Wild Rivers Recreation Area on Friday afternoon and enjoy campfire therapy in the evening. Bring your van, tent or small RV to spend the night. On Saturday we'll conduct light trail maintenance and then enjoy another evening under the stars. On Sunday, we'll go for a hike or bike ride, clean up the campsite and then depart by noon. Participants should be in relatively good physical condition, be able to hike at least 3 miles and be able to use various hand tools to conduct trail maintenance. This outing is appropriate for children 12 and up when accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Sign up no later than May 24.

Trip leaders: Terry Owen, teowen@comcast.net; Rose Rowan, rose.rowan7@gmail.com; Alan Shapiro, nm5s@yahoo.com. Level: Moderate
Location: Vicinity of Taos, NM

SATURDAY, JUN. 1
Early Summer Birds Along the Animas River in Farmington. 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Join Mike Foster for birdwatching, about three miles round trip, along trails on flat terrain. Leisurely pace.

We will compare the birds we find with lists of resident and migrant species discovered last spring and summer, as well as last month. Eighteen year olds and up only. No dogs please. Limit of 7 people, as this is a joint trip with the Colorado Mountain Club. Sign up no later than May 27.

Trip leader: Mike Foster, (303) 594-1431, mike4ffoster@gmail.com
Level: Easy. Location: Farmington

SATURDAY, JUN. 8
Sandia Mountain Adventure Hike - Restricted/Private. 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This outing is designed exclusively for Sandia National Laboratories Summer Interns and Support Staff. It is not open to the general public.

On this outing you'll get to experience mountain wilderness first hand while learning a little about this amazing geological feature that's such a prominent massif located just east of the city. We'll also share with you why New Mexico is the Land of Enchantment. This hike is rated as easy and is approximately 3.5 miles round trip with 300 feet of elevation gain.
Leader: Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@comcast.net
Level: Easy. Location: East Mountains

SATURDAY, JUN. 8
Learn to Table - Become an Activist! 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Sharing information and activating people on critical issues is a big part of what we do in the Sierra Club. The best way to do this is to go where people are and table.

"Tabling" is literally setting up a table, bringing forward critical issues information, and talking to people. Tabling mostly happens on the weekend and takes a couple of hours out of your Saturday or a weekday evening every now and again. We'll teach you how to talk about issues, what the Sierra Club is all about, and how to engage people in meaningful conversations. This is an activist activity Leaders: Caroline Funk and Laurie Zunner, caroline.funk@sierraclub.org
Level: Easy. Location: 2215 Lead Ave SE, ABQ

TUESDAY, JUN. 18
Zero Waste Tour of FUSE Makerspace. 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Have you ever wanted to make or fix something but didn't have the right equipment? This makerspace has a 3D printer, laser cutter, carpentry equipment, and more. Come see what they have, how to learn to operate them and their flexible membership offerings. Comfortable closed-toed shoes are recommended. Minors welcome if accompanied by an adult. Limit 15. Register by Jun. 17.

Trip leader: Laurie Zunner, 505-440-5337, lmzunne@gmail.com
Level: Easy. Location: 101 Broadway NE, Suite 3100, Abq, NM 87102