



Shoot From The Hip Decision

November 14, 1975

Central Clearing House
338 E. DeVargas Street
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Gentlemen:

The Ocate-Black Lake Road controversy has again reared its ugly head. There is pressure again to put a 24' highway through Manueles Canyon.

There are several spots in the canyon where it will be impossible not to directly adversely affect the stream. At points approximately 7.1 miles from Ocate and through narrow rock canyon 8.8 to 10.4, it will be impossible to widen the road at all without channeling the stream in a culvert under the road bed. The up-hill banks of

the existing road are very unstable as evidenced by the rocks in the road. Furthermore, the stream has shown adverse affects of even the narrow road, with removed vegetation and maintenance debris dropping from the road surface into the stream. Likewise, there is considerable sedimentation coming from the road because of poor drainage which could be remedied without widening.

The water, in general, is of high quality flowing clear with temperatures and bottom fauna indicative of a prime trout stream. At the upper end of the canyon the flow was about 3 second feet running very clear. At the County line, 5 second feet was estimated. It is my feeling that the road can be made useable without widening, simply by installing adequate drainage and dressing the surface. *(continued on page 3)*

NUCLEAR DEBATE

by Sally Rodgers

One of the country's leading nuclear critics, Dr. Dean Abrahamson, will testify before the Legislative Interim Water Study Committee on December 11, at 9:50 a.m. in Room 559 in the State Capitol building.

The Rio Grande Chapter and the Central Clearing House are sponsoring his trip to New Mexico. In addition to his committee presentation, Dr. Abrahamson will appear on both Channels 7 (KOAT) and 15 (KGGM) on half hour discussion programs with Dr. Gilbert Cano, the Governor's Science Advisor.

(The programs will probably be aired the weekend of December 13 and 14. Check the TV Guide for specific times.)

Dr. Abrahamson is Professor of Public Affairs and Chairman of the All-University Council on Environmental Quality at the University of Minnesota. He is a member of the Advisory Board to the Ford Foundation Energy Policy Project, the Liquid Metal Fast Breeder Reactor Advisory Panel to the U. S. General Accounting Office, the editorial board of Environment Magazine, and the Scientist's Institute for Public Information.

The social, environmental and economic costs of an increased reliance on nuclear energy are poorly understood by both the pub-

lic and the decision-makers. There is, as yet, little public debate about these costs in our State. Consequently, plans for increasing uranium mining and milling (in the absence of adequate water quality controls), establishing a hexafluoridation treatment facility, a uranium enrichment facility and promoting "storage" of the nation's radioactive wastes, have largely gone unquestioned and unchallenged.

Dr. Abrahamson's appearance in New Mexico will be brief, but what he has to say should provide us with a basis for questioning our State's commitment to nuclear power. The Committee meeting is open to the public -- please attend!

Another Nuclear Debate Event

The Legislative Interim Energy Study Committee will be meeting December 18 and 19 at the State Capitol. That Committee will hear testimony by the Western States Nuclear Board, which will no doubt have different advice & opinions to offer than those of Dr. Abrahamson. The Rio Grande Chapter and the New Mexico Citizens for Clean Air and Water will also be asked to present testimony. The exact time of our presentation has not yet been scheduled. If you can attend this second event, check with either Betsy Barnett or Sally Rodgers at the Central Clearing House in Santa Fe (982-4349) after December 1st for the exact time and place.

CLEAN AIR REVISITED

by Mike Williams

The proposed Senate amendments to the federal Clean Air Act are currently being marked up in the Senate's Public Works Committee. Work up until November 20 went poorly from an environmental standpoint. A subcommittee draft based on months of hard work by Senators Muskie, Domenici and Hart was brought before the full committee during the week of November 17. The first provision to suffer was the requirement that half of the autos meet current 1978 statutory standards by 1978. This was changed so that compliance for NO_x would be delayed until 1980, and by 1979 compliance with hydrocarbon and carbon monoxide stand-

ards would be required, while only 10% of the autos would have to comply with the modified NO_x value of 1.0 gm/mile. The final statutory value of 0.4 gm/mile for NO_x was changed to 1.0 gm/mile; the former value was used as a "research objective" with no evident incentive for any research. Both Domenici and Montoya (by proxy given to Senator Randolph) supported the weakening provisions. However, on November 21 both rejected attempts to further weaken this legislation.

There is a wide discrepancy between the votes cast by Senator Montoya himself and those which are cast by Senator Randolph for Senator Montoya. Senator Montoya has a good record of supporting clean air goals while Senator Randolph appears to be less interested. With critical votes coming up on such issues as 'nondeterioration', it is

(continued on next page)

most important that Senator Montoya cast his own votes and not give his proxy to Senator Randolph.

The subcommittee draft provisions dealing with nondeterioration are generally good. However, some strengthening amendments, such as a requirement that the Environmental Protection Agency promulgate regulations for pollutants other than SO₂ and particulates -- rather than merely study and report back to the Senate -- would be useful. It is clear that business interests are exerting pressure to force committee members to back off from the nondeterioration provisions. It is extremely important that committee members (from New Mexico: Montoya and Domenici) be encouraged to support the subcommittee recommendations. In Montoya's case, it is important that he not give his proxy to Randolph if he cannot vote himself.

Senator Domenici deserves credit for the hard work he and his staff have put into the subcommittee draft. For a politician the Clean Air Act is thought of as a "no win" game. Now would be a good time to write a short letter to New Mexico's Senators; the address is: Senate Office Building, Washington D.C., 20210.

(continued from page 1)

Shoot from the hip...

To up-grade the 5 miles of canyon road in question to the proposed high speed road can only amount to a 5 to 10 minute time saving at most, certainly not worth the irretrievable damage done to the canyon environment.

In May of 1973 the N M State Highway Dept. was taken to court by Glasscock, the Water Control Commission and the Environmental Improvement Agency, as a result of plans by the Highway Department to put a 24' paved road from Ocate to Black Lake through Manueles Canyon. As a result of evidence presented, it became quite obvious the plaintiff case had considerable merit and it was suggested that a letter of stipulation be drawn up which basically stated that the Highway Department would stabilize the existing road but would not acquire any more land in the canyon, and would clean up the mess they had already made. Nothing at all was done until this summer when the Highway Department did some grading.

Now Mr. D.K. Simpson, District Engineer of the State Highway Dept., has decided that the May 31, 1973 stipulation signed by all parties during the Ocate-Black Lake Road litigation in the Fourth Judicial District Court can be ignored and is again trying to squeeze his 24' highway through a 15 mile long gap in Manueles Canyon. He has some maintenance money available; this is where he wants to spend it, and no damned outsiders are going to tell him his business. This points to a basic problem with the decision-making apparatus in many of the agencies we deal with. Shoot-from-the-hip decisions are made by the "D.K. Simpsons" and as an after-thought the planning and legal apparatus is brought into the fray to rationalize the decision. With all the engineering, economic, environmental and legal talent in the Highway Department, we certainly should expect better planning of the taxpayers meager maintenance funds.

Included is a copy of the stipulation and general comments on roads through narrow canyons -- Manueles in particular; use as you see fit.

Sincerely,
John P. Gavahan
Environmentalist IV
Environmental Improvement
Agency

The Rio Grande Sierran

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REPORT FROM "LA VOZ DEL RIO"

by Esther Gutierrez

A group of well organized residents of Velarde, Alameda, and the Santa Cruz area have achieved a major victory in their struggle against the Bureau of Reclamation's El Llano Canal Project. Last week Senator Joseph M. Montoya stopped appropriations for the canal in the Senate Appropriations Committee's subcommittee on Public Works. He asked that construction money be withheld until both sides in the dispute were able to meet with the Bureau of Reclamation and arrive at a consensus. This move came as the result of six months of work on the part of the Association of Communities United to Protect the Rio Grande.

Some time last April, surveyors began placing stakes on the property of Velarde residents who knew nothing about the Bureau's plans. The Association began as a small committee of concerned citizens who organized for the purpose of seeking information about the proposed El Llano Project.

Subsequent meetings with Bureau officials and persistent digging for information slowly uncovered the plan for an 11-foot high dam on the Rio Grande above Velarde and a 17-mile long canal from this dam to the Santa Cruz River southeast of Espanola. The canal, designed to divert one half to two thirds of the water in the Rio Grande, would irrigate new lands in the Espanola area. The depletion of water would leave the Rio Grande a trickle and at times even empty of water for as long as three weeks during the heavy growing season.

Valley farmers, who use a 400 year old acequia system to irrigate 3000 acres of land, are strongly opposed to the canal. The ancient acequia system has been a vital part of community self-government. But the depletion of water in the river

will make the traditional rock and brush dams used to divert water into irrigation ditches, inoperable.

Furthermore, the construction of new dams would cost approximately \$250,000 for each of the nine ditches. Diversion of so much water from the Rio would drastically lower the water table, making the three acre feet of water allotted to farmers, inadequate for irrigation. The damage to the surrounding bosque on both sides of the river would be extensive, as the lowered water table would wipe out most of the cottonwoods in the area, thereby destroying wildlife as well.

When the Association first met with the Bureau of Reclamation, officials indicated they had not yet begun working on an Environmental and Social Impact Study, as required by federal law, although the proposed date for beginning construction was June, 1976.

The work which finally led to Montoya's action in Congress, began with a petition to the Appropriations Committee with approximately 1000 signatures, calling for a delay in funding until a feasibility study could be made and until the environmental and social impact statements were submitted. Further work of the Association resulted in resolutions opposing the Canal on the part of the Santa Clara Pueblo, the Sierra Club, Santa Cruz Irrigation District residents, the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, and the New Mexico Shooting Sports Association.

The story of the formation of the El Llano conservancy district, by the vote of a handful of members of the Espanola City Council, is all too familiar to the people of Northern New Mexico. The failure to put information in the hands of people most directly affected by the project is typical of government agencies.

4 At the present time, the legal commi-

tee of the Association to Protect the Rio Grande is completing research concerning the legality of the Conservancy District. Valley residents are also preparing for the Environmental Impact Hearings which will probably take place in February. You may write for copies of the Environmental and Social Impact Study to: J. A. Bradley, Regional Director, Bureau of Reclamation, Southwest Region, Amarillo, Texas. Refer to: El Llano Canal, San Juan River Basin, Chama River Diversion Project. Available also, on request, is the entire Social Impact Assessment, an excellent study prepared by Dr. Sue Ellen Jacobs.

As Dr. Jacobs wrote in her report, "Until the people here have the full right

Don't Go Near The Water

We have recently acquired information about water pollution resulting from two major industries in New Mexico: uranium and copper mining.

The New Mexico Environmental Improvement Agency and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, in a co-operative effort, evaluated uranium mining activity in the Grants Mineral Belt in early 1975. The studies found that:

1) In some places shallow aquifers are being contaminated by seepage from tailings ponds, infiltration of effluents from mill tailings ponds; and discharges from settling lagoons and ion exchange plants.

2) Sodium concentrations in the perennial stream, Arroyo del Puerto, near Grants, exceed N.M. and U.S. water quality standards.

3) Wastes injected into the Yeso Formation by the Anaconda Company do not seem to be confined to that formation, but there is not an adequate monitoring program in existence.

4) Erosion at one surface mine carries

to make their own decisions, and are involved as full participants in decisions affecting their children's and their own future, they will continue to be the subjects of colonialism..."

While optimistic and encouraged by events of the past few weeks, Association members nevertheless see their work as just beginning. Their purpose is not only to defeat the El Llano Canal permanently, but also to protect the waters of the Rio Grande from future misuse.

Address any contributions or requests for further information to: Asociacion de Comunidades Unidas para El Rio Grande, Drawer 113, Velarde, New Mexico 87582.

uranium and selenium-rich minerals into Rio Paguete.

5) Company-sponsored ground-water monitoring programs are inadequate or non-existent. It is fortuitous that no significant and extensive contamination of ground water quality was found.

6) Effluent from the Kerr-McGee ion exchange plant and one mine discharge did not comply with requirements of their federal (NPDES) permit and state uranium-milling license conditions.

7) The United Nuclear Corp. Churchrock mine may be in violation of NPDES conditions.

8) Discharges from the United Nuclear
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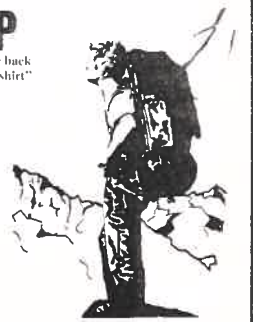
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Don't Go Near cont'd...

Homestake Partners ion exchange plant contributes to pollution of Arroyo del Puerto and is in violation of the applicable state license.

- 9) Company radiochemical analytical methods are inadequate.
- 10) A number of conditions exist around the mines which have the potential of contributing to water pollution in the future.

The report then recommends certain actions. Among these are:

- That individuals with contaminated wells (contaminants are radium-226 and selenium) be warned. This has been accomplished and alternate domestic water supplies are being developed.
- That improvement of industry monitoring systems be instituted.
- That seepage control measures be adopted for Anaconda and Kerr-McGee tailings ponds.
- That mining practices be improved to reduce the amount of radium leached from ore solids by ground water present in operating mines.
- That waste and ore piles be stabilized
- That discharges be treated to meet NPDES permit requirements.

The New Mexico Environmental Improvement Agency will be attempting to implement these recommendations in the coming year. Their task will be considerably easier if and when the N.M. Water Quality Control Commission adopts ground water standards. However, with regard to the problems identified in the uranium mining areas, I have not yet heard the NMWQCC acknowledge that a problem does, indeed exist. Nor have the Commission members indicated that they wish to see the problems solved. Primarily they seem to be looking at the report passively, and even indicating resentment that the results received as much press coverage as they did.

We shall be watching to see how expeditiously they adopt ground water and surface water quality regulations.



SWRCC Report

Twenty-four chapter and group leaders from Arizona, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and El Paso met in Sedona, Arizona, on Nov. 8-9 to organize activities for the Sierra Club's Southwest Region in 1976. The main purposes of the meeting were (1) to identify the major environmental problems shared by all or most of the four chapters in the region (2) set priorities and outline projects to cope with the most significant problems within annual budget limitations (the region has funds for four meetings, conferences and workshops yearly, including the organizational meeting) (3) review the activities and priorities of the Southwest Regional Representative and (4) select regional officers and delegates to national committees.

The meeting began with a review of the previous year's activities, followed by an overview of current environmental problems during which each participant identified the issues of greatest concern to him. The actions taken are summarized below:

Wilderness: Marty Sorensen of Denver was reappointed as the region's delegate to the National Wilderness Committee. Roadless area survey work is progressing well in Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. Utah, which is the only state in the region without funded wilderness study staff, has just received several thousand dollars from the Sierra Club's National Wilderness Committee for this purpose and is considering applications for the position. It was the consensus that wilderness studies are most appropriately handled at the chapter level, and appeals for help on individual proposals as they come before Congress will be handled through articles in the chapter newsletters.

Land Use: Betsy Rieke of Tucson was reappointed as SWRCC's delegate to the National Land Use Committee. Since land use legislative campaigns are either national or state level, it was decided that regional activity in land use planning should be primarily to facilitate the flow of information.

6 Conservation Education: Deb Jordan of

Cortaro (Arizona) was reappointed as regional delegate to the National Environmental Education Committee. Her responsibilities to the region will also be primarily as a facilitator for environmental education information.

Water: All four chapters in the region share major concerns about water supply & distribution as these issues relate to agricultural and Indian use and energy development. While it is widely recognized that Colorado River water is over-allocated, a breakdown of data giving a clear picture of competing claims is unavailable. A task force consisting of Phyllis Howard, Marty Sorensen, Betsy Rieke and Nina Dougherty is planning a workshop which envisions presentations of papers by outside experts and discussion of environmentally compatible answers to water problems based on more complete data.

Energy: Sherm Janke of Salt Lake City was reappointed as regional delegate to the National Energy Committee. The following significant regional issues were identified:

1) **Kaiparowits Power Project:** Interior Dept. decisions on whether to authorize this 3000 MW power plant in Southern Utah are expected in February or March. In the event the project is authorized, the region will need to review strategies to prevent the construction of this highly destructive project, and funds were earmarked for such a meeting, if needed.

2) We need a better understanding of many facets of **energy economics:** energy efficiencies of various projects and technologies, rate structures, increasing pressures for federal subsidies of synthetic fuel development, institutional arrangements which prevent internalization of energy production costs, etc. Sherm Janke is coordinating a workshop on energy economics.

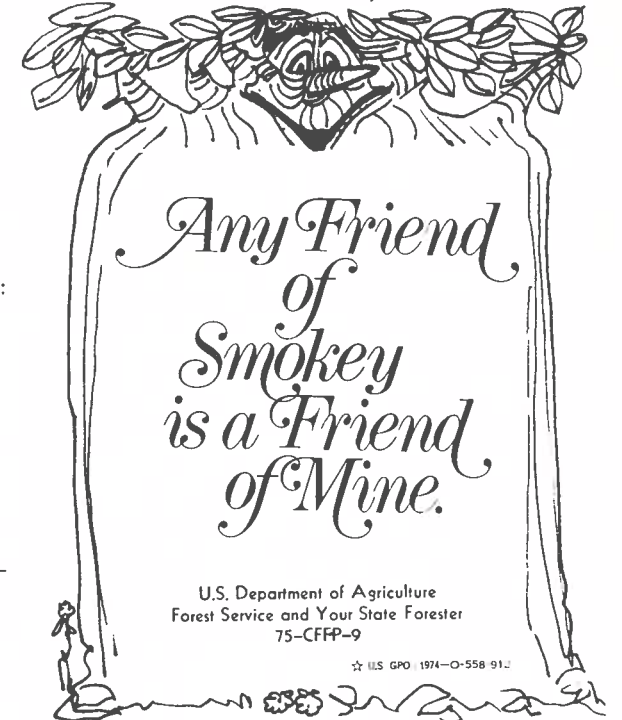
3) **Solar Energy:** Nan Nalder of Santa Fe is coordinating a research project. Components of this project include an explanation of low technology systems, what tradeoffs are involved in making utilization of solar energy a viable alternative to other energy sources, potential for reduction of fossil fuel use in the Southwest and a bibliography of available resource materials and people in the Southwest.


4) **Nuclear Power Expansion:** Until recently, electricity production proposals in 7

the Southwest have relied on fossil fuels. The Palo Verde nuclear generating station west of Phoenix is on its way to becoming a reality and other nuclear proposals are gaining momentum. If human and financial resources are available, a task force will define problems and appropriate activities.

Officers: The following were re-elected as officers of the Southwest Regional Conservation Committee: Chairman - Betsy Barnett, Vice-Chairman - Ruth Frear, Treasurer - Marty Sorensen, and Secretary - Terry Lane.

--Betsy Barnett





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Land Use Planning — The Ladrons

The Socorro District of the Bureau of Land Management is soliciting information which would aid them in the future management and use of 233,000 acres of national resource lands in the Ladron Planning Unit.

Located primarily in Valencia, Socorro and Catron Counties, the area is bounded on the north by the Laguna and Acoma Indian reservations, on the south by the Cibola National Forest, Alamo Reservation and the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge. It extends from the Rio Puerco on the east to approximately five miles west of the Socorro/Catron County line.

Of particular interest to the environmental community is the fact that the Planning Unit contains the Ladron Mountains which have been discussed for some years for possible Primitive Area designation & possible wilderness designation at a future time when the Wilderness Act may apply to BLM lands.

Send your suggestions to the Bureau of Land Management, Box 1456, Socorro, N M 87801, or visit the BLM Office at 200 Neel Ave. N.W. in Socorro.

Examples of relevant information are: historic sites, archaeological sites, information about animals and plants, suggestions for recreational use, soil erosion problems, information on wells, etc.

5512 VICTORY!

It's nice to win one once in a while. It's even nicer to be around for a resounding victory.

House Bill 5512 was designed to undo the damage the Interior Department was doing to the Wildlife Refuge System. You will recall that in February of this year the Interior Department made some moves to turn over three game ranges to the exclusive jurisdiction of the commodity-oriented BLM. The ranges were the Kofa in Arizona, the Charles Sheldon Antelope Range in Nevada and Oregon and the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Range in Montana.

House Bill 5512 essentially bars the sale or transfer of any lands within the Wildlife Refuge System without the explicit approval of Congress; it blocks the Interior Department's intended transfer.

There was a last minute flurry before House action because it was known that Rep. Sam Steiger of Arizona (that irrepressible member of the environmental "dirty dozen") was going to introduce an amendment which would, in his own words, "gut the bill".

5512 sailed through the House (without the Steiger Amendment) 340 to 10. Neither Congressman Lujan nor Congressman Runnels voted.

There is still the Senate. The current area for citizen activity is to write to Senator Domenici and ask him to pressure the Senate to act on House Bill 5512 or its equivalent in the Senate.