he Rio Grande
SIERRAN

JANUARY / FEBRUARY
1981

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

As you all probably know by now, we gained),060 acres of National Forest Wilderness in New xico last year, thanks to the efforts of hundreds people over many years and our Congressmen and presentatives. As soon as we know exactly where e boundaries are for each Wilderness we'll let u know. Many of our favorite areas didn't get otected, however. We'll need your continued help watch for road building, timber-cutting, and her activity in those areas.

Another big effort this year will be centered in e coal region of the San Juan Basin in NW New xico. Our concerns there are many. Among them e protection of Chaco Culture National Historic rk and related archeological sites, preservation a few key paleontological sites, and preservation some special desert wilderness areas. We believe is essential that thorough Environmental Impact atements be written for all coal and related velopment activites in the San Juan Basin. This is e only way that all potential impacts can be udied, understood, and mitigated. Coal mining will oceed, but it need not start everywhere at once, d it need not be done recklessly.

A third major area of concern will be defense of e Clean Air Act as it comes before Congress this ar for review. You'll find more about that elsere in the Sierran.

There are many other issues before us. I ask each e of you to watch this year for opportunities to ite letters to the editor of your local newspapers out environmental and conservation issues. We must come more visible and we must do more to let the blic know we care and that we need their concern so.

cont....

cont...

And a special appeal to those of you who live outside of our major metropolitan areas where we have organized Groups. If you've decided this is the year to give a little more time to the Sierra Club, please call or write to me and we can explore ways you can help protect and preserve a little of our beautiful state. My address and telephone number are in the directory in this issue. Gallup, Grants, Roswell, Portales, Hobbs, Taos, and all the rest; let's hear from you.

One of my goals this year is to substantially increase our membership in New Mexico and El Paso. You can help by talking to your friends about the Sierra Club and asking them to join us.

PHILLENORE HOWARD

1981
MARK YOUR CALENDAR

BLM SCOPING FOR: San Juan Basin Cumulative Overview and New Mexico Generating Station Environmental Impact Statements Preparation at:

Feb.3	Albuquerque,NM (Taos Rm,Convention Ctr.)
Feb.4	Gallup,NM (Gallup Holiday Inn)
Feb.5	Farmington,NM (Exhibit Hall #1,Civic Ctr.)
Feb.11	New Mexico Clean Air Coalition meets in Albuquerque (265-0732)
Feb.18	Close of public comment period on EPA's proposed groundwater quality protection strategy (268-3428,268-8185)
Feb.21	Citizens for Alternatives to Radioactive Dumping (CARD) workshop in Santa Fe P.O.BOX 555 Albuquerque, NM 87103 898-9387
Feb. 28	New Mexico Clean Air Coalition workshop in Albuquerque (265-0732)
March 7	Rio Grande Chapter Sierra Club ExComm meets in El Paso(268-8185)
March 25	New Mexico Conservation Coordinating Council meets in Albuquerque(881-7423)
March ?	Close of public comment period for NM Water Quality Control Commission proposed definition of toxic pollutants(296-0944)
March 25	Send what you want published for the March/April issue of the Rio Grande Sierran

SIERRAN PROFILE

DAVE GLOWKA

I am an environmentalist. And, even in these times when environmentalists are scapegoats for everything from energy shortages to inflation, I am proud of being an environmentalist. I have been a member of the Sierra Club for about four years, but I have had a lifetime membership with the Club through the sharing of ideals. Destructive development has angered me for as long as I can remember. As I have grown older, my anger has evolved from a purely instinctive reaction to an anger which is guided by knowledge and understanding. I still cannot understand though, the greed and self-centered characteristics of some people who destroy nature for personal profit.

As one who reveres nature and was raised in a rural area, I have never enjoyed city life. As a result my wife, Jan, and I live "out in the sticks" in the Manzanito Mountains east of Albuquerque. Most of our weekends are spent back-packing into remote areas in and around New Mexico. We feel that we are in a race against time to see the wilderness. To see the wilderness before its bits and pieces are chopped away by the mining and timber companies.

Winter is our over-all favorite time of year for back-packing. As the temperature drops, so does the number of people to be found in the wild.

I am currently chairman of the Chapter's Chaco / Bisti Task Force. We are doing our best to ensure that energy development does not destroy all its natural values. We have a tough job ahead of us, and we can use all the help you can give.

The outcome of the recent national elections and the current hysteria over energy, spell hard and challenging times ahead of us in the environmental protection movement. Only through increased grass-roots activism can we hope to maintain the environmental protection laws for which we have worked so hard.

Environmental action means vocal support of the environmental cause. Few environmental issues are put before the public to decide upon. In fact, even though Congress and the President are responsible for enacting general environmental laws, it is the appointed rather than the elected officials who work out the details which can mean the difference between preservation or destruction of an area.

The implication is clear—let these officials know your concerns. Demand that the environmental side of an issue be given a fair and equal hearing. Respond to agency questionnaires, public hearings, environmental impact statements, scoping meetings, and open houses. Raise hell whenever you feel that a project will damage the environment. It does not require a lot of detailed or technical knowledge, just determination, dedication, and concern for the type of world in which we want ourselves and future generations to live.

TOXIC POLLUTANTS...CHEMICAL POLLUTANTS

(ed.note: see Nov/Dec'80 issue p.2"Chemical Pollutants: More than a National Headache",p.3"Define Toxic Pollutants")

The mere mention of the words "toxic pollutant" engenders visions of unseen, indiscriminating, tiny chemical goblins of vague origin, obscure use, and sometimes untraceable previous ownership. Indeed, there are such sinister little "beasts", but their formal, generic definition requires some thorough head-scratching and ponderance over and above that just given.

Since we are dealing with two words, i.e., "toxic" and "pollutant", it is fair to deal with the two--separately and then togeather.

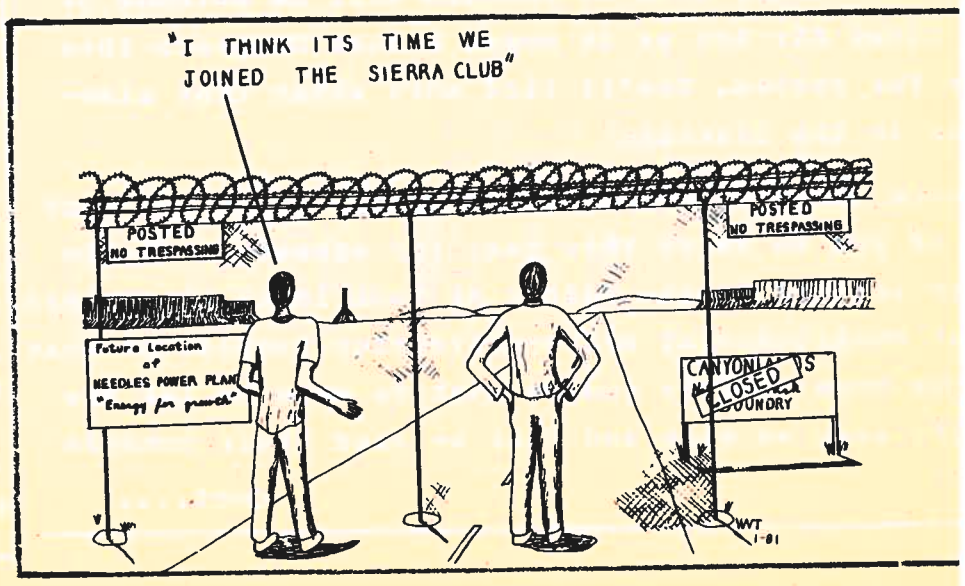
"Toxic" has various meanings to various factions but is formally defined as an adjective meaning "that which is destructive,harmful, deadly, or poisonous". Generally, a toxic substance is related to its effect(s) on plant or animal life forms, but it must be remembered that what is toxic to one life form might not be toxic to another (the deadly effect of a weed killer used on a lush, green lawn--decimating the weeds but not harming the grass--is a good example of this).

Still more formally, degree of being toxic, or toxicity, has been studied closely for several chemical substances. Most of these studies have been undertaken on animals, with the their results extrapolated to humans. With regard to such studies, toxicity has been assessed on the basis of various factors, with levels of toxicity ranging from effects such as "none--harmful under unusual conditions--or in high doses only" (examples being water or common table salt), to "causing easily reversible changes, such changes disappearing after exposure," to "causing death or permanent injury after exposure to relatively small quantities." Additionally, degree of toxicity for a given substance may vary, depending upon mode of contact with the toxic substance, including inhalation, ingestion, or skin contact. Note, too, that the effects of a toxic substance may be strictly physical and/or medical (including mental), and they maybe short-term, long-ranging, or both.

As for the word "pollutant," it is being used too frequently and with little regard to its formal definition. Classically, a "pollutant" is that (substances) which dirties, renders impure, or fouls air, soil, or water. "Pollutant" must be distinguished from "contaminant" and "trace component" if it is to have any self-standing meaning at all.

A "contaminant" is that which renders something (air,water, or soil, in this case) impure; yet, a contaminant can be naturally occurring. A "trace component," then, is that which is naturally occurring at a given (normal) level in, in this case, air, soil, or water. To distinguish between a contaminant and a trace component, let us take a hypothetical case: a wilderness river, flowing with water containing "trace components" of certain heavy metals, carbonate salts, and bacteria --all of natural origin and in low, normal levels--winds past a hot spring containing warm water, very high levels of salts certain sulfide-containing minerals, and high level of certain heavy metals. The hot spring empties into the river, and, at that point, what was normal, natural, and unremarkable in the spring now contaminates the river which previously contained only trace components. This cannot and must not be considered pollution; it is a natural process of introduction. It is, then, the mode of introduction of a substance intothe ecosphere that distinguishes pollution from contamination; a contaminant enters through careless handling and disposal techniques,

cont... page 8



RIO GRANDE CHAPTER EXCOMM MEETING
January 17, 1981 Albuquerque

All chapter members are welcome and encouraged to attend the Executive Committee meetings held throughout the year. Call any of the people listed in the Directory (last page of Sierran) for meeting information.

The agenda for the last meeting was extensive in scope:

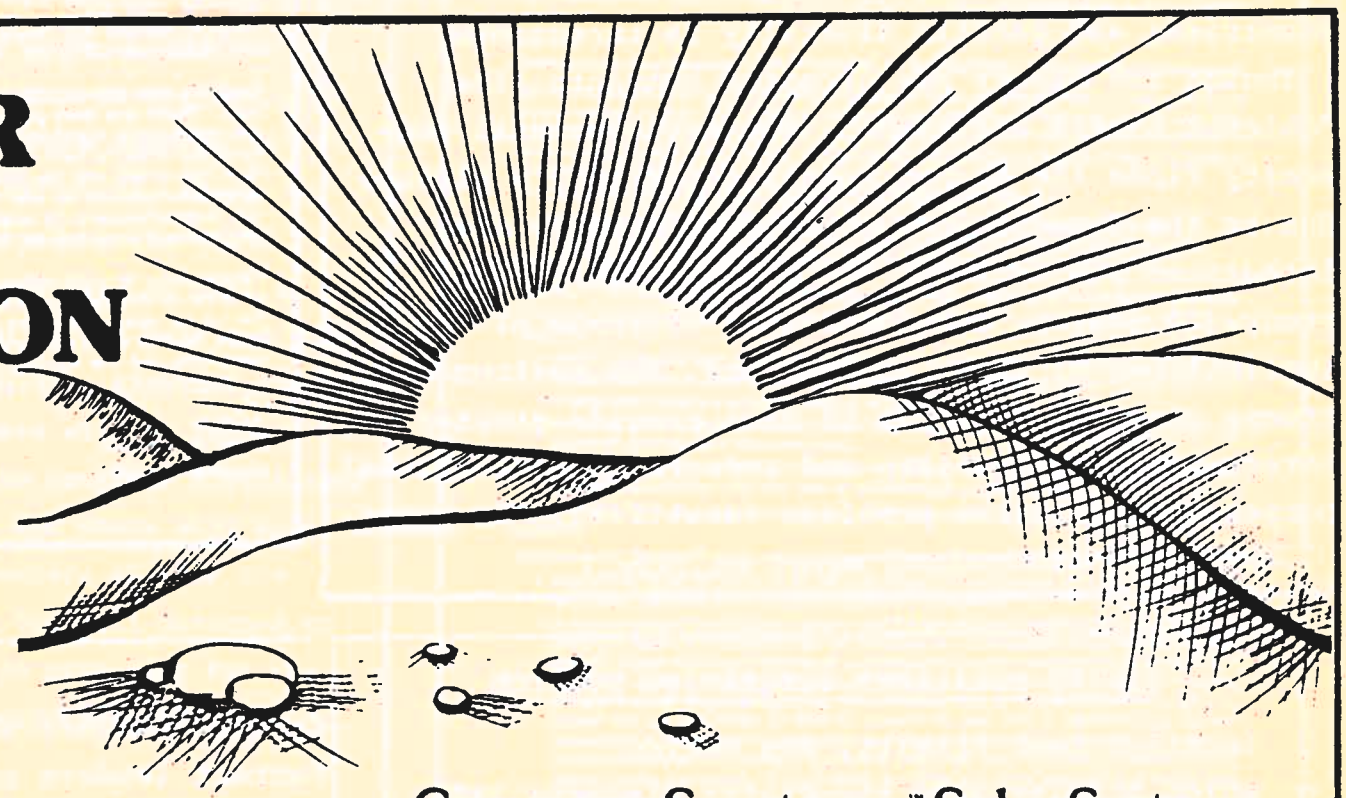
- o Election of Officers
- o Discussion of Southwest Regional Conservation Council
- o Molycorp
  Grove Burnet discussed possible actions concerning Molycorp's contamination of the Red River with tailings
- o NM Water Quality Control Commission Meeting in Santa Fe January 13,14,1981 on "toxic pollutants"; and status of Commission participants
- o Non-game wildlife bill
- o Bottle Bill
- o Pat Fry of the Sierra Club Committee on Political Education presented letters written to the Congressmen involved in the New Mexico Wilderness Legislation
- o BLM River Plan
- o Sierra Club representation at the NM Conservation Coordinating Council, and at the NM Clean Air Coalition
- o Chama River uses
- o Rio Grande Chapter Sierra Club had members attending the EPA's Proposed Ground Water Quality Protection Strategy Hearings in January, in both Dallas, Texas and Denver, Colorado. A Chapter response to the Strategy is being prepared.
- o Santa Fe Group publication on hiking the Santa Fe area
- o personnel policies of the Rio Grande Chapter Sierra Club
- o Inter-City Outings
- o Guadalupe National Park
  Rio Grande Chapter support letter to be written by Jim Owen for alternative B; public comment period ends Feb.15
- o BLM Wilderness appeals process

RIO GRANDE CHAPTER EXCOMM MEETING
December 6, 1980 Albuquerque

Agenda included:

- o Distribution of Chapter meeting minutes to RGCSC news editors
- o Council report by Ken Adams
- o Albuquerque Vehicle Inspection/Maintenance System; Chapter supports aim of I/M—that being clean air, discussion of other state's I/M programs
- o Clean Air Act
- o Distribution of Chapter meeting minutes to RGCSC news editors
- o Council report by Ken Adams
- o Albuquerque Vehicle Inspection/Maintenance System; Chapter supports the aim of I/M- - that being clean air
- o Clean Air Act
  and how it will fare the next year
- o MX Missile System
  Sierra Club observer at MX hearings in Santa Fe
- o Radiation Treatment of Sludge in Albuquerque
- o Albuquerque Open Spaces Task Force
- o Water Quality Control Commission meeting
- o EPA Ground Water Quality Protection Hearings
- o Conservation Chair, Jean Herzeg Reported on:
  request committee formation on Off-Road Vehicles
  Wilderness
  Sage Brush Rebellion
  Wilderness designation in NM
- o Treasury status
- o Central Arizona Project
  Hooker Dam & mailing labels

AN ANSWER TO INFLATION COMES UP EVERY MORNING.



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BOOK REVIEW

GLOBAL 2000
REPORT ENDORSED BY ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

The Global 2000 Report, an interagency study on population, resource and environment trends undertaken at President Carter's 1977 request, is now avaiable. The Report projects, rather than predicts, "conditions that are likely to develop in the year 2000 if there are no changes in public policies, institutions, or rates of technological advance, and if there are no wars or other disruptions."

Principle findings indicate that population will increase by 46% to 6.3 billion with 90% of the increase in developing countries; while aggregate GNP growth is projected at 145%, per capita GNP growth deflates this to 53%, and neither takes into account environmental limitations projected by the Report. Moreover, much of the projected increase reflects the higher real costs of resources rather than increased production to raise living standards. Global per capita food production will increase by only 15%. Since arable land will increase by only 4%, food increase will result from more intensive agricultural methods, but agricultural soil is jeopardized by erosion, desertification, salinization, etc. Fuel needs will be gravely inadequate; water requirements will double but supply will be highly erratic; deforestation looms as an immense problem, with 40% loss of forests in the developing countries; and genetic diversity is threatened.

Though the Report has prompted comments like "Chicken Little was right", the environmental community finds the Report paints too bright a picture due to the Government's inability to carry out integrated projections, the short range of the study (20 years), and inadequate coverage of the implications of their projections. The environmental groups stressed that the US must provide greater international leadership and encourage international cooperation to solve problems identifiedin the Report.

Sierra Club International Report vol.IX,no.1

SEND A POLITICAL MESSAGE

Sending a Political Opinion Message through Western Union costs $3.50 for a 20 word message. Send to your Senator or Representative at: State Capitol, Santa Fe, NM 87503

Political Opinion Messages can be sent by telephone and billed to your telephone number.

To send a Political Message call toll free: 1-800-257-2241

NEW MEXICO CLEAN AIR COALITION

ATTEND THE

WORKSHOP

Clean Air CAMPAIGN

NEW MEXICO CLEAN AIR COALITION

216 Truman NE, Albuquerque, NM, (505) 265-0732

COALITION MEMBERS:
Nancy Bartlit, Chairman, NM Citizens For Clean Air And Water, ALA
Roy E. Moody, Media Contact, American Lung Association

League of Women Voters: Ann Hyde, Patty Adam
New Mexico Citizens For Clean Air And Water: Jim Lewis
Sierra Club: Sue Small
United Steelworkers, Local 890: Juan Chacon

January 19, 1981

On March 1, 1981 Congress will receive a report which will affect the nation's clean air program for the next decade! The National Commission on Air Quality, which was charged by Congress to review the adequacy or shortcomings of the Clean Air Amendments of 1977, will place in the New Mexico delegations' hands, the recommendations from numerous studies.

What are those recommendations? How do they affect New Mexico? How can we participate in this process to protect the integrity of our clean air?

The New Mexico Clean Air Coalition is inviting you and your organization to become a member of the Coalition or to work actively with us. This is an ad hoc committee of five organizations who have been interested in New Mexico's air in the last decade and plan to be involved again in this decade. We invite you to participate with us for the next few months, next few years or however long it takes to work on the Congressional review.

Please join us at our next meeting on Wednesday, February 11th at 9:15 AM at the American Lung Association offices, 216 Truman NE, Albuquerque, NM. For further details contact Roy Moody in Albuquerque at 265-0732 or myself, Nancy Bartlit, in Los Alamos at 672-9792. Please let us know if you can attend.

Business and industrial interests have already publicized their criticisms of the Act. There are many proposals to weaken it. In New Mexico we must be sure that our relatively clean air stays protected. Did you know that if you can only see 15 miles clearly half the days of the year that the air is considered "clean" by both the state and the federal standards?! We have fought hard to have Congress adopt protections in the 1977 law to help us not allow our air to get that dirty, but some proposals to weaken it may prevail unless we are active and let our Congressmen know how we feel.

Please join us with other members from your group on Saturday, February 28, 9 AM to 3 PM in Albuquerque for an in depth workshop on the issues and an opportunity for us to adopt positions which will be publicized and sent to Washington, DC and Santa Fe, NM decision makers. Attached are some articles to inform you more about ourselves and the national groups assisting us.

Nancy R. Bartlit,
Coordinator 1981

PLAINS ESCALANTE GENERATING STATION

- location near Prewitt, New Mexico
- which utility owns it--Plains Electric,2401 Aztec Road, N.E., Albuquerque, NM
- contact at Plains--Ed Grisham 884-1881
- generating capacity--210 MW (NET)
- coal fired power plant--coal to come from Wyoming
- Santa Fe Railroad to ship coal to new generating station
- power is to be used in the western 2/3 of New Mexico
- Public Service Commission case #1528 final order issued Feb.2,1980.

HIKES

Contact leaders of an outing to make a reservati
Contact leaders of the other Groups for informat
about their outings.

El Paso Group Outings were available at press time:

Feb.7-8	Gobbler Know Clean up and Backpack, Sacrament Escarpement Leader: LeBran Hardie(915-581-2021)
Feb.21	Carnudas Mnts. Day hike Leader: George Mader (915-778-4564)
Feb.28 March 1	Rabb Park Winter Backpack, Gila Nat.Forest Leader: Rollin Wickenden (915-598-8042)
March 7-8	Organ Mountains Leader: Rafaela Schuller

NON-GAME WILDLIFE

During the current legislative session, a bill will be introduced to the House of Representatives granting the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish management authority over game and furbearing animals and also over threatened or endangered species, but not over the majority of the state's fauna, which are classified as non-game. Yet these species are biologically and aesthetically important, and deserving of attention. If granted authority, Game and Fish would set up an autonomous section which would be an advocacy agency for non-game wildlife. The executive committees of both the Albuquerque Group and the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club have supported the principle behind this bill. And a coalition of many wildlife and conservation groups has worked for its introduction. The agricultural industry, however, has previously opposed similar proposals; thus this bill will need a great deal of support if it is to have a chance. Interested individuals should contact their representatives and urge their support. We would also like to pack the committee hearings in Santa Fe during this legislative session, with supporters of this bill. We do not yet have a bill number or a time for the hearings, but these should be available soon. If you are interested in helping support this bill, or if you would like further information, contact Carol Cochran, 831-1111, ext.217, or 345-1412.

Carol Cochran

BOTTLE BILL

The sixty day session of the 35th. New Mexico Legislature fast approaching and one of the bills to be considered is guaranteed to generate lively debate. This is the beverage container deposit bill. Representative John Padoven, a Republican from Bernalillo County, District 21, along with several co-sponsors, plans to introduce the bill. As in the 1979 bill, the main provisions will be that a minimum deposit of 5¢ will be required on all beer and soft drink containers sold in New Mexico (glass, alumimum,steel, plastic); detachable pull-tab containers will be banned; the retailer is to be paid a fee by the beverage distributor of 1¢ per returned container handled, and there will be a provision for setting up redemption centers if they are needed. There will be some changes in the bill designed to primarily assist the small retailers in preparing for the returnable system, but these changes probably will not affect the major provisions.

The organization that will be serving as an information center for citizen participation in the attempt to pass this bill is the Council For Conservation,Inc. The CFC is a new organization designed to facilitate and encourage individual and group action to support legislative and administrative efforts to protect and conserve our natural resources. The CFC office is located at 4328 Mesa Grande Pl., S.E. Albuquerque, NM 87108, 268-8790.

Aileen Gatterman

DISCOVERY IN A WEEKEND
at
BEAR MOUNTAIN GUEST RANCH

Backpackers: accommodations the nights before and after going out; ranch transportation to trailheads and pick up at trail's end; safe Ranch parking for backpackers' cars

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Myra B. McCormick, owner
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CONTRIBUTORS TO
JAN/FEB 1981 RIO GRANDE SIERRAN

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PROPOSED GROUND WATER PROTECTION STRATEGY

POLLUTION CONTROL EFFORTS

EPA's strategy is the first comprehensive attempt to address the issue of groundwater quality. Until now, efforts have been patchwork, with 43 federal statutes and several state laws touching on groundwater. Five of these federal laws — the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Toxic Substances Control Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act — deal more extensively with groundwater, but there are serious gaps in regulation and monitoring because no one agency is responsible for groundwater protection. EPA intends to take this responsibility by developing a groundwater protection strategy that identifies the goals, the priorities, and the management approach necessary to carry out a comprehensive national groundwater program.

The Proposal — a Summary

EPA's proposed strategy addresses broad policy issues and does not provide a detailed implementation plan. The strategy emphasizes a preventive approach to assure that groundwater quality is protected for future generations. No new federal legislation is proposed but better coordination, follow-through, and implementation of existing federal programs are stressed.

The stated overall goal of the National Groundwater Strategy is:

> "It shall be the national goal to assess, protect, and enhance the quality of groundwaters to the levels necessary for current and projected future uses and for the protection of the public health and significant ecological systems."

Goals And Objectives

The goal is to prevent groundwater contamination before it occurs, and specifically *by 1985 to:*

- Initiate groundwater protection strategies in all states to meet the goals and objectives, and to develop necessary institutional capacities (legal, personnel, etc.);
- implement presently enacted federal regulatory programs;
- evaluate groundwater quality, correct the most hazardous conditions, and manage areas of groundwater contamination;
- provide a process for states, local governments and the public to set priorities among competing activities that may use or contaminate groundwater;

and by 1990 to ensure protection of groundwater resources in each state through a complete program.

Management Approach

- States will be encouraged to develop strategies to implement the national goals and any state and local goals through regulatory programs.
- A groundwater classification system will be developed based on the premise that different levels of protection can be provided for groundwater according to various factors. Areas needing a high level of protection should receive first investment and attention, and the least environmentally sensitive areas should be identified for siting of future waste disposal facilities. Groundwater that is of drinking water quality or better will be protected by EPA to ensure its use until a classification system developed with full public participation is adopted. Factors to be considered in making classifications include present and future projected uses, volume of water available, water quality, availability of other water supplies, and local geologic and hydrologic conditions.
- Minimum national requirements will be established for selected high priority problems, such as highly toxic chemicals and pesticides.
- EPA will coordinate existing federal agency programs on groundwater protection. EPA intends to encourage states to develop strategies through state/EPA Agreements, funding channels, and increased research and development. EPA will continue to involve the public and various institutions in the implementation of the strategy.

Technical Requirements

The principal technical requirements to be used are:

- Siting practices, which involves the designation of where and how certain facilities should be located;
- Best management practices, which specify the best operating practices, and recommended design and construction practices;
- Effluent Standards, which set numeric limits for allowable levels of discharge of specific groundwater contaminants;
- Performance Standards, which specify performance levels that must be attained. Any technology may be used to attain the specified standard.
- Economic incentives may also be considered.

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

ENERGY/ ENVIRON-MENT INFORM-ATION

Regional Energy/Environment Information Center
Denver Public Library
1357 Broadway
Denver, Colorado 80203

PHONE

303-837-5994 (collect calls accepted)
FTS 327-5994
Kay Collins, Librarian

HOURS

Tuesday – Saturday: 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Denver Public Library

CONSERVATION LIBRARY

The Conservation Library was opened in 1960 at the Denver Public Library. It currently maintains the first and largest collection on conservation and the environment in a public library. It collects material on energy resources – their development, utilization, and conservation.

The creation of the Regional Energy/Environment Information Center within the Denver Public Library offers users the services of a special collection of information resources within the framework of a well-established, extensive public library system.

WHY?

The Regional Energy/Environment Information Center has been established in the Conservation Library of the Denver Public Library (DPL) to act as a clearinghouse for energy and environmental information to the 10-state Rocky Mountain-Plains Region. It will serve as the region's "first source" in searchs for energy information. The staff will answer your questions or will refer you to other expert information sources when available.

SERVICES

* Answers to Questions about Energy/Environment
* Computer Assisted & Manual Compilation of Bibliographies
* Referrals to Outside Information Sources
* Assistance in Locating Publications
* Identification of Experts in the Energy/Environment Field
* Serves as a Regional Depository

INFORMATION

* Energy Conservation & Consumption
* Conventional & Alternative Energy Sources
  * Coal
  * Oil
  * Gas
  * Nuclear
  * Hydro-electric
  * Solar
  * Wind
  * Oil Shale
  * Tar Sands
  * Waste
  * Wood
  * Geothermal
  * Methane
  * Hydrogen
* Environmental, Social, & Economic Impact
* Policy & Planning
* Research & Development
* Production

FEES

Most services are free. Extensive informational searches and/or photocopying require a service fee. Estimates are available. No charge will be made without the authorization of the user.

YOU, THE USER

The Center responds to inquiries for information related to the energy/environment field. As an individual, you may want to know how to insulate your home. As a local planner, you may need some information on the effects of energy developments on your community. As a student, teacher, or consultant, builder, engineer, or lawyer, as a politician, mining company executive, or governmental agency employee, you will find help in getting the information you need.

SOURCES

* Referral Directories
* Indexes to Conservation Library Manuscripts, Documents, & Magazines
* Energy Information Abstracts
* Energy Users Report
* Pollution Abstracts
* Selected Water Resources Abstracts
* Solid Waste Management
* U. S. Government Reports Announcements (NTIS)
* Energy Abstracts for Policy Analysis
* ERDA Energy Research Abstracts
* Solar Energy Update
* Fossil Energy Update
* Selected Reports & Publications from All Sponsoring Agencies

DATA

(ON LINE FOR COMPUTER ACCESS)

* ERDA Energy Data Base (EDB)
* Nuclear Science Abstracts (NSA)
* National Referral Center (NRC)
* Nuclear Structure Reference (NSR)
* Heated Effluent Bibliography (HEF)
* Energy R & D Projects (ERD)
* Environmental Science Index (ESI)
* Nuclear Safety Information Center (NSC)

Commercial and other federal data bases are available at the current user fees which vary with individual data bases. These include Energyline, GEOREF, NTIS, Pollution, BIOSIS Previews, and Dissertations.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN-PLAINS STATES

* Arizona
* Colorado
* Montana
* Nebraska
* Nevada
* New Mexico
* North Dakota
* South Dakota
* Utah
* Wyoming

YO'ALL'RE INVITED!

The next Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee meeting is in El Paso on March 7,'81. All members are welcome. The meeting will begin at 1pm at the home of George and Barbara Mader, 8704 Catalpa Lane, El Paso, TX. There will be a party that night with the El Paso Group and plenty of time Sunday for a quick run to Juarez, Mexico. If you'd like to go, call Phillenore Howard at 268-8185 to car-pool or get directions.

NOTES
From the
NM CONSERVATION COORDINATING COUNCIL

- MX Missile and WIPP are issues of concern to all the NMCCC representatives
- discussion of the formation of the NM Clean Air Coalition
- discussion of the RARE II bill, by the National Park Service
- NM Chapter of the Wildlife Society presented information on the non-game species protection bill
- the Central NM Audubon Society reported twenty five (25!) Whoopers in New Mexico, and that the foster Whooping Crane program is doing well
- the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association cited areas where cattle growers and other members of the NMCCC have common interests; and cited the shared opposition of the National Cattle Growers Association, the National Sierra Club, and the Wildlife Federation to the proposed MX missile system; discussed the proposed increas in size of the Melrose bombing range
- Guests included: Pam and Russ Butcher of the National Parks and Conservation Association, whic is an association of 50,000 people, whose purpos is to increase public appreciation and awareness of the National Park Service; (founded in 1919)
- WARNING: Senate Bill #77 introduced by Morgan of Farmington, along with representatives from Grants and Gallup might gut the New Mexico Ground Water Quality Protection Laws

MARY KIRSCHNER

AD RATES

The Sierran is published six times a year

	one issue	six issues (per issue)
Column inch	$2.40	$2.15
1/8 of a page	$10.60	$9.00
1/4 of a page	$21.20	$18.00
1/2 of a page	$37.00	$31.80
one full page	$74.20	$63.60

COAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Strip-minable coal exists in abundant quantity in the San Juan Geologic Basin located in northwestern New Mexico. The upcoming coal development poses severe and long-lasting environmental problems, and some Sierra Club members are attempting to understand and grapple with those problems. The concerns, not listed in any order of priority, include the following:

1. Strip mining creates damaging, long-lasting, and complete disruption of the surface lands. Such disruption is particularly long-lasting in the arid lands of the San Juan Basin.
2. Ground water and surface waters are affected by coal extraction, in some instances more so than in others.
3. Paleontological, archeological, historical, and scenic resources can be negatively impacted or destroyed.
4. Air quality is substantially affected by mining activites.
5. Ecological systems are affected by disruption of habitats, food chains, predator-prey relationships, behavior patterns, etc.
6. Intensive coal development brings more human population into the fragile, arid environment of the San Juan Basin.
7. Coal is a non-renewable resource.
8. Transportation of coal from the mine site to power plants creates severe impacts.
9. Mine-mouth power plants and their relationship to coal development, energy development, air quality [illegible] the environmental degradation which they cause.

Sierra Club concerns about environmental quality in respect to coal development can generally be stated in the following broad areas:

- Reclamation and restoration of land
- Air Quality
- Power plant siting
- Water Quality

New Mexico's statutes and regulations must address these four broad concerns for maintenance of reasonable environmental quality during mining, and especially for establishment of environmental quality and stability after abandonment of mining.

Reclamation is primarily concerned with post-mining land use, prevention of erosion, and re-building of visual qualities. In any given instance any one of these three aspects may take precedence over others. Because of the arid nature of much of the potential coal mining areas, long term prevention of wind and water erosion must be the primary concern.

Air quality disruption by motor vehicle equipment and by blasting will occur. Such disturbance is temporary in that it will last only while the mine is being worked. More permanent damage to air quality can occur if wind and water erosion are not prevented by post-mining reclamation efforts. Of far more serious concern is the air quality deterioration caused by additional coal-fired power plants to be built in the vicinity of the coal mines.

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Surface water disruption, temporary and permanent, must be closely examined with respect to eventual water use and to erosion. More importantly, strip mining can irreversibly polluted acquifers, and the public policy aspects of this damage to a competing resource must be carefully studied and acted upon.

Unsuitability of some areas for coal strip mining is an aspect which is, in theory, of more concern to the state than to the federal government. Areas unsuitable for surface mining would be those where reclamation (primarily erosion control) would be technologically impossible or too expensive or where there are resources of more value (social,economic, environmental) than the coal resource. Examples of the latter would be paleontologic, historic, archeologic, or scenic resources.

Some people have the unmistakable impression that the various state agencies involved in the coal development in particular, and energy development in general, are too interested in fostering such development and are too allied with the industries promoting such development. The state must show more concern for the social, and environmental aspects. Strong leadership from the state government, along with possible changes in the statutory framework for regulation, are necessary for control over the development-at-all-cost propensities.

The advisability of State regulation over Federal regulation of coal surface mining (and over energy development in general) must be closely examined. Historically, industry has played states against each other in developing coal resources. It took decades of unmitigated strip mining in the Eastern coal fields before there was enough political pressure to pass the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA)—which itself was passed by President Carter after vetoes by Presidents Ford and Nixon. An obvious example of this industry practice is apparent now in the lobbying occurring in the State Legislature regarding the severance tax on uranium. The uranium industry is saying that if we don't lower our severance tax then they will mine their uranium in states other than New Mexico.

SMCRA sill be substantially weakened by the new Congress and Administration. To date the Governor and state agencies in New Mexico have lobbied hard for such weakening changes. Since SMCRA is now the only effective legislation controlling surface mining, and since the present comprehensive state regulations have been adopted only because SMCRA mandates such regulations, the Governor and his administration in this state will have the primary role in protecting the state's environment during coal strip mining operations.

The Sierra Club in New Mexico is addressing these questions now, and if any members or non-members are int-interested in the issues and problems posed by the strip mining and other energy developement in the northwestern area of this State, then they should contact John Tiwald (office 247-9536) or Dave Glowka (home 281-1488).

John Tiwald

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(the inclusion of the word "intentional" with regard to contaminant allows for the definition to cover such processes as chlorination or fluoridation used in treating drinking water.)

This brings us to a juncture that, until recently, has gone unmentioned, and that is the fact of background levels of contaminants and trace components. Again, let us take a simple example: a creosote bush, through natural processes, exudes certain (easily detected) amounts of the hydrocarbonaceous [illegible] Certain industries process or otherwise use creosote as a wood preservative. Assume that one industry spills creosote, thus releasing it directly--as the concentrate--into the ecosphere. Now, both the native plant and industry have placed essentially the same mixture of chemical substances into the environs, but one is a natural mode, possibly resulting in background contamination, (locally) and baseline trace component levels (more widely), and the other is highly irregular and results in pollution. Note, in this example, that the mode of entry and the concentrations of the substances differed.

It is now recognized by atmospheric scientists that the plant kingdom contributes--collectively--a greater variety of chemical species to the ecosphere than any other point source. And, if naturally caused forest fires are considered, total mass of chemical species emitted by plants is staggering and could rival that omitted by mankind.

The point of this regression from the definition at hand has been to establish the fact of naturally released background contaminants and baseline trace level components, as distinguished from pollutants, to complete the picture, it must be recognized, too, that the baseline for contaminants and trace components will vary with climate, geography, and seasonal conditions, among others, according to the principles of chemical-,or, on a grander scale, eco-, equilibria.

Now, more comfortably, and with more precision we can proceed to our definition of a toxic pollutant. In a generic sense, then, a toxic pollutant is that substance (or life form) which is present-above background contaminant or trace level component concentrations-in air, soil, or water and adversely and detectably affects-simply or in combination-the health (mental and/or physical) and general well being of humans, animal, or plant life to varying degrees, depending upon length and route of exposure to that substance (or life form).

Through such a definition, distinctions among toxic pollutants, contaminants, and trace components are obvious; background chemical levels can be accounted for; and willful intent to pollute (and concomitant) legal guilt can be more readily assessed. Of additional benefit, these definitional differences create a more comprehensive public awareness of the pollution phenomenon.