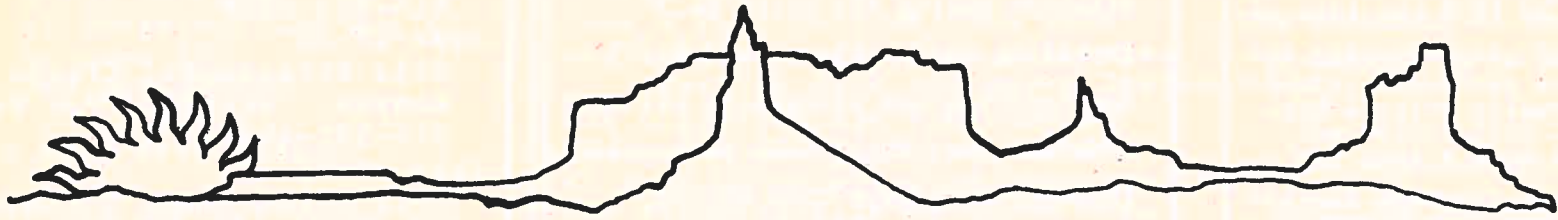


# The Rio Grande SIERRAN



THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

May-June 1981

## CHACO DECISION BY JULY 27

Time is drawing near for the release of three very important BLM documents regarding energy development in the San Juan Basin. The first is the PRLA Draft Environmental Assessment. This report will address certain aspects of the environmental impacts of the federal government granting leases to coal companies which have filed Preference Right Lease Applications (PRLA's). Such applications are essentially attempts by these companies to obtain coal leases without competitive bidding. (These were legal prior to the early 1970's and have been "grandfathered" by regulations currently in force.) Most of the coal (77,000 acres) in the Chaco/Bisti area is under PRLA's, so the importance of this matter cannot be overstressed.

The second document is the Ute Mt. Exchange Draft Environmental Assessment. It will address PNM's proposal to exchange public land adjacent to the Bisti Badlands for land which PNM owns on Ute Mountain. PNM wants to build a power plant and a town on the acquired land, but we have been informed that this document will NOT address the end use of the land. How then can environmental impacts of the land exchange be assessed?

The third document is the Chaco/San Juan Planning Update for Coal. It includes the recommendations of BLM planners and resource specialists as to what use public lands in the San Juan Basin should be put. Specific recommendations for preservation or mining at different sites are anticipated. It should be interesting to see

how the recommendations of environmentalists, reported in last month's Albuquerque Group newsletter, have been received by the BLM.

The following table shows the comment period for each of these documents:

June 8-July 18 - Comment period for PRLA draft EA  
 June 22-July 17 - Comment period for Chaco/San Juan Planning Update for Coal  
 June 22-July 24 - Comment period for Ute Mt. Exchange draft EA  
 July 9 - Albuquerque Open House for public input, Albuquerque Convention Center, Acoma Room, 3-9 PM

The Albuquerque District Manager, Paul Applegate, will use these documents and public comments to make his final decisions on these matters July 27-29. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IS VERY IMPORTANT. Call the BLM (505-766-2890) and ask for a copy of the May 28 information sheet entitled, "Coal in the Chaco/San Juan." It will explain things in much more detail.

If you would like more information about the Chaco/Bisti issue, call me at 505-281-1488.

Dave Glowka  
 Albuquerque Group

IN ORDER TO KEEP CALIFORNIA'S PARKING LOTS AND BILLBOARDS LIT, MANY COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS HAVE HAD TO BE BUILT NEARBY, CONSEQUENTLY, VISIBILITY IN THIS REGION MAY SUFFER YOUR UNDERSTANDING IS APPRECIATED. THANK YOU

### NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP - MORE IS BETTER!

As you may have read in your current SIERRA, National membership is now well over 200,000 and still rising. We are, of course, pleased to see this significant growth in the organization and hope you will all continue to tell your friends about the Sierra Club.

This is a particularly good time to solicit new members, since the National Membership Contest in effect from May 1 to Sept. 30, 1981, will give the Chapter a \$3.00 rebate for each new membership received. (Look for a special membership blank in this newsletter.)

In addition to the rebate, there will be individual awards ranging from the grand prize of a National outing for two, personalized Sierra Club cups, calendars and pins.

Don't forget: MORE IS BETTER - MEMBERS, THAT IS!

Rio Grande Chapter  
 Sierra Club  
 1709 Paseo de Peralta  
 Santa Fe, NM 87501

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 SANTA FE NM 87501

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# HIKING GUIDE

For several years the idea of putting together a hiking book under the Sierra Club name had been brought up from time to time by different members. In May of 1979 the idea resurfaced and a few of us decided to see if we could really write a hiking book. It has been a long two years, but "Day Hikes in the Santa Fe Area" is now completed and available. When you see it, I think you will agree that it has been well worth the effort.

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The body of the hiking book consists of twenty-two day hikes, chosen and written by various members of the Santa Fe Group of the Sierra Club. Each member is credited with his/her particular hike. The day hikes described present a selection of easy through strenuous hikes in the widely diversified natural areas that Santa Fe abounds in, from the wilderness areas of the Pecos to the geologically and culturally rich areas of the Jemez. Some hikes in the high country are summer hikes only, some are winter hikes; many are turnaround hikes, so that you can do as much or as little of the hike as you prefer. Each hike refers to a carefully drawn sketch map, done by Wes Horner, in addition to written driving and hiking instructions.

To round out the book there is an introduction by Betsy Fuller, a section on the background of the Sierra Club by Ken Adam, a hiker safety section by Herb Kincey, and a short bibliography at the end.

The Santa Fe Group hopes that this hiking book will be a small but significant source of income for the Group, after Frontera del Norte is reimbursed for the cost of printing and binding the book. The suggested price is \$4.95, plus tax, total \$5.17. (Sierra Club members will get a 10% discount making the price \$4.70 including tax). Please add \$0.75 for handling and postage on all mail orders. The hiking book is available through the Sierra Club Office, 1709 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe, NM, 87501. Buy one for a hiker friend, too. Or tell your favorite sporting good shop or book store about it.

Ann M. Young

## OUTINGS

### SANTA FE GROUP

June 20

Strenuous hike, ski basin-Nambe River - Windsor Trail loop. Leader Bill Chudd, 505-982-5334

June 21

SUNDAY PICNIC at 5:00 P.M. Call Norma McCollum at 505-983-8144, 988-4026 or at work at 827-2033

June 27

Moderate hike. Leader Wynette Lee, 505-983-1682

June 26-27

Backpack in the Pecos. Leader John Lowrey, 505-982-9570

July 5

"Easy" strenuous hike in high country somewhere. Leader Betsy Fuller, 505-983-8870

July 12

Moderate hike on the West Fork of the Santa Barbara. Leader Ingrid Vollenhofer, 505-983-1096

July 18

Strenuous hike in the Pecos. Leader J. Muchmore, 505-983-1250

July 19

Easy hike, Borrego-Windsor-Chamisa loop. Leader Don Lowry, 505-982-9570

July 26

Moderate hike in Frijoles Canyon. Leader Norbert Sperlich, 505-983-1962

July 25-26

Pecos backpack. Leader Walter Kunz, 505-983-7994

Aug. 2

Moderate hike along the Nambe River. Bring wine, sneakers & bathing suit. Leader Mike Oothoudt, 505-471-1096

Aug. 8

Easy splashing in the Jemez, bring sneakers & bathing suit. Leader Alan Karp, 505-983-6965

### OUTINGS

#### EL PASO GROUP

June 14

Innertube float on the Rio Grande, Truth or Consequences to Avery, NM. Leader: George Mader, 915-778-4564

June 19-29

Gila Wilderness Backpack Glenwood to the cliff dwellings. Leader: Carl Ostertag, 915-593-0220

June 27-28

Gila Wilderness, Little Bear Canyon. Leader: Pat Dreston, 915-592-0682

July 18-19

Gila Wilderness, Whitewater Creek. Leader: Rollin Wickenden, 915-598-8042

#### ALBUQUERQUE GROUP

Embudo trail maintenance once a month. Leader: Nick Nicolaus, 505-268-2040. This is the trail "adopted" by the Albuquerque Group.

Trips "IN THE WORKS" include geology-oriented day trips in the Albuquerque area, a visit to a ghost town, a trip to the LaDrons, etc. Call Outings Chairman Kathy Chaney at 296-4320 for further information.

#### HIKERS: WATCH THE WATER!

Do you know about GIARDIA? It's as bad as it sounds, so be careful of the water you're drinking!

GIARDIASIS is an intestinal disorder caused by the microscopic GIARDIA LAMBLIA. The cystic form of GIARDIA may be found in streams and lakes. It's deceiving - the water may appear good in all other respects; i.e. clear, running and cold, BUT THE GIARDIA MAY BE THERE.

The Forest Service says the only certain treatment to be sure your drinking water is safe is to boil it for at least one minute, or 3-5 minutes at high altitudes. IODINE OR CHLORINE ARE NOT CONSIDERED RELIABLE TREATMENT AGAINST GIARDIA.

But, cheer-up! Most trips are over and people are home from vacation before the effects of GIARDIA are felt, so it probably won't spoil your hike. However, if after you're home you have a problem, be sure to tell your doctor there's a possibility that GIARDIA may be the culprit that's causing all your trouble.

Published every other month by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club. Subscription rate for nonmembers is \$2.00 per year. Articles, clippings, letters to the editor, cartoons, drawings, photographs, outings information, personals, etc. may be sent to the editor: Barbara Davis, P. O. Box 739, Sandia Park, N.M. 87047 (505-281-1248)

## CHAPTER GOURMET BACKPACK

MORA FLATS  
PECOS WILDERNESS

July 4-5, '81

Class II (Moderate to Moderately  
Fattening)

Leader: Rollin Wickenden  
(915) 593-8042

Limit: 12 (Reservations req'd.  
by June 20)

Cost: \$25 per person

### HERE'S A HIKE WITH CLASS!

We're pulling out all stops and promise a pleasant hike with all food and drink prepared in a gourmet fashion.

The Committee on Gastronomic Delights has come up with some truly tasty tidbits, and among the pines we will enjoy a variety of fine wines.

We'll meet Saturday morning in the Santa Fe area and then drive to the trailhead at Iron Gate Campground. The hike will ascend Hamilton Mesa and then drop to our campsite at beautiful Mora Flats.

Meals provided will be breakfast, snack, lunch, and dinner on Saturday, and breakfast and lunch on Sunday.

To make reservations, please send your check made out to Rio Grande Chapter of Sierra Club to:

Rollin Wickenden  
11113 Wharf Cove  
El Paso, TX 79936

WE CATER TO YOUR PALATE!

### CHAPTER FUND APPEAL

It was reported at the last Chapter Xcom that donations totaling just over \$1500 had been received in response to the Chapter fund appeal. Thanks to all of you who were able to contribute at this time.

### SUSAN MILLER SIERRA CLUB COUNCIL AWARD

Janice Lucas of the El Paso Regional Group has been honored with the Susan Miller Award given by the Sierra Club Council for outstanding efforts in organization or management. Nominees from all chapters in the U.S. and Canada are considered and the Sierra Club Council may select from 0 to 3 persons each year who meet the selection criteria.

For the past two years Janice has organized and operated an Inner City Outings program in El Paso which gives an opportunity for disadvantaged children from the city to experience the wonders and joys of nature. Janice has organized and lead some 17 outings including day hikes and overnight backpacks, with children from the El Paso area schools. As part of her efforts, she has canvassed local businesses for donations of money or equipment to aid in the conduct of these outings. She has also received aid from the Rio Grande Chapter and the El Paso Group.

Janice also received the Rio Grande Chapter Service Award for being the Chapter's nominee for the Susan Miller Award.

Congratulations to Janice for being the first person in the Rio Grande Chapter to receive this great honor!

George Mader  
El Paso Group

### SPROUL SELECTED AS EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTOR

John Sproul, El Paso Group Conservation Co-chairman, has been selected as one of sixteen persons on the El Paso Herald-Post Board of Editorial Contributors. All sixteen members are area leaders who will write guest editorials in their respective fields of expertise. John will write on the environment, while others will represent business, labor, education, economy, history, the arts, energy, medicine, and law.

George Mader  
El Paso Group

# COUNCIL REPORT

Twice a year leaders and activists of the Sierra Club get together in San Francisco -- the Board of Directors, the Council, Regional Vice Presidents, Committee members, and others.

The Sierra Club Council is composed of one representative from each Chapter and meets at these May and November meetings to discuss administrative matters.

This past May meeting had a workshop on fundraising. Each Council delegate was provided with a copy of our new fundraising handbook filled with many practical ideas to help Chapters and Groups raise money. More copies are available from the Club office for \$5 each postpaid by writing to: Volunteer Services, 530 Bush Street, San Francisco, CA, 94108. The Council elected Carroll Tichenor of the Cumberland Chapter as its new Chair. Carroll has been active on many levels of the Club. He promises to continue the fine work of the past Chair, Bob Howard, of the Rio Grande Chapter in helping the Council to provide the nuts and bolts the Club needs to build a strong volunteer organization.

Club President Joe Fontaine announced that despite the election of Mr. Reagan and his appointment of an avowed anti-environmentalist, Jim Watt, as Secretary of the Interior, concern for the environment is as strong a force as ever in America. The Sierra Club membership is up 15% since November, finances are healthy, and plans are being made to protect existing environmental laws from attacks by industry and the administration. The Club plans to continue our fight for clean air, clean water, and a healthy, safe environment.

At its November meeting the Council plans to hold a media workshop to show volunteers how to communicate with both the written and electronic press. The training will include actual practice in giving interviews on a closed-circuit TV and writing press releases.

The Council Delegate is the one member of each Chapter who has been to San Francisco recently to learn the administrative setup of our Club. He/She acts as a link between the National organization and the local Club entities such as Chapters and Groups. He/she has copies of Club policies, lists of Club publications, names of Club Staff, and a desire to help each individual Club member in dealings with the national organization. The Council Delegate from the Rio Grande Chapter is Ken Adam, 416 Apodaca Hill, Santa Fe 87501, 983-1949. Ken is enjoying the Sierra Nevadas for the summer. In the interim you can contact former Council Chair, Bob Howard, with any questions at 268-8185.

### 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

- stay in Pinos Altos Mountains adjacent to the Gila National Forest
- visit Lower and Upper Sonoran, Transition, and Canadian life zones

Bear Mountain Guest Ranch  
P.O. Box 1163  
Silver City, New Mexico 88061

Myra B. McCormick, owner

505-538-2538

# Editorial

## REPLACE INTERIOR SECRETARY WATT!

No doubt you have all read various accounts of Mr. Watt's anti-conservationist viewpoints. The statement which startled me personally was Mr. Watt's comment at a conference of National Park Concessioners:

"I went down in September on the Grand Canyon Colorado River. And the test...is whether we ought to keep motors on these rafts or not. The first day was spectacular. I'll tell you it was an exciting, thrilling day. The second day started to get a little tedious, but the third day I wanted bigger motors to move that raft out. There is no way you could get me on an oar-powered raft on that river--I'll guarantee you that. On the fourth day we were praying for helicopters, and they came."

"You folks will quickly understand why I bring so much controversy and flack. I don't like to paddle and I don't like to walk."

In April I spent a week backpacking along the Escalante River in the canyonlands of Utah. The sandstone formations were spectacular, there were ruins to explore, many kinds of plants and life zones to live with, and, of course, the incredible peace of a wilderness area to experience.

HOW COULD ANYONE FIND THE GRAND CANYON "TEDIOUS?"

# Wilderness

Most people when asked "What is Wilderness?" would probably answer something like "A wooded area with no roads, no development, a wild area." Actually there's a technical difference between a wilderness and a Wilderness. You who remember the Wilderness hearings of the early 70s will know the difference, but it recently occurred to me that those of you who are relatively new to the Sierra Club may not fully understand the distinction.

In 1924 Aldo Leopold, a Forest Service official in New Mexico who understood the value of wild lands persuaded the Forest Service to set aside 433,000 acres of the Gila National Forest as a wilderness area which would be protected from mining, roads, timber cutting, and other development. The Gila was the Nation's first wilderness area to be protected as such, by an administrative action.

In 1960 Congress passed the Multiple Use - Sustained Yield Act affirming wilderness as a resource worth protecting as one of the "multiple uses" of Federal land.

In 1964 Congress adopted the Wilderness Act. "...to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness." This Act provided a mechanism for protecting by law de facto wilderness as Wilderness.

The Wilderness Act defines Wilderness as an area where the earth and its community of life is untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.

The Act provided for immediate inclusion of 9.1 million acres of National Forest land to be designated as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. Of the 54 areas so designated four were in New Mexico; the Pecos, San Pedro Parks, Wheeler Peak, and Gila. The Congressionally designated Gila Wilderness was only a portion of the original area designated by Aldo Leopold because the Forest Service had put a service road through the middle of the original Gila Wilderness and only the western portion was included in the 1964 Act. The eastern portion was designated the Black Range Primitive Area. It

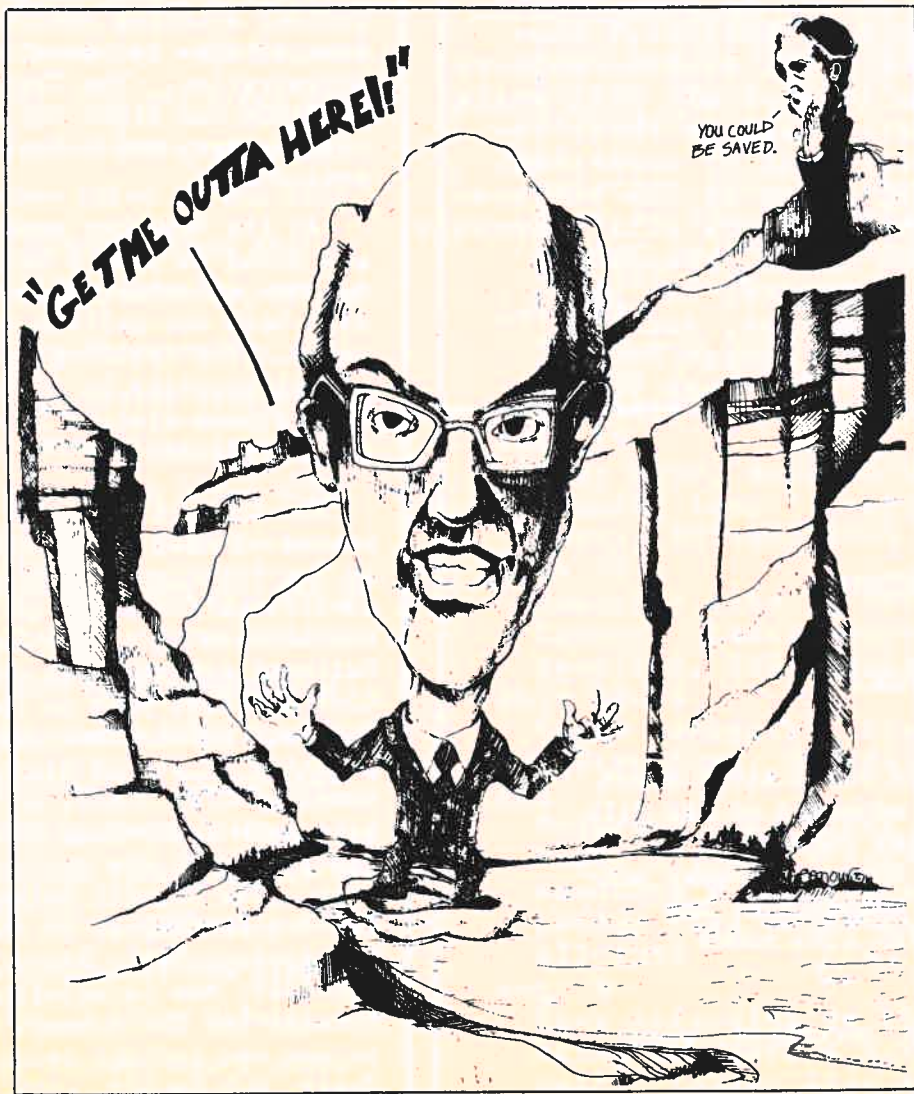


was only recently, in 1980, that the heart of the Black Range became the Aldo Leopold Wilderness by act of Congress, after many, many years of effort by the Sierra Club, the NM Wilderness Study Committee, and the Wilderness Society.

It has been a long, difficult road since 1964 to achieve official Wilderness designation for portions of the Sandia and Manzano Mountains, the Cruces Basin, the Aldo Leopold, Capitan, Bandelier National Monument, the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, and many more areas in New Mexico. And the effort continues here and throughout the country. There are still thousands of acres of National Forest land and BLM land in America which are de facto wilderness and should be protected in the National Wilderness Preservation System. With a timber industry advocate as Chief of the Forest Service and a development advocate, anti-wilderness person as Interior Secretary we're going to have to fight harder than ever just to protect those lands until we can get Congress to add them to the Wilderness Preservation System.

Only in wilderness can ecological systems evolve naturally. Wilderness provides maximum protection for wildlife habitat and water sheds. And people need wilderness -- even if they don't visit it for recreation and relaxation we need to know it's there. It will be a sorry day for mankind when there is no more wilderness.

Phyllenore Howard



## Hayakawa Bill

There's a bill before Congress, S. 842, introduced by Senator Hyakawa of California, which would set rigid, short-term deadlines for Congress to consider wilderness proposals before it. Thereafter the Act would release these lands to development, and forbid the Forest Service ever again from studying any of its lands for Wilderness or managing them as wilderness without explicit Congressional approval.

The Sierra Club is unalterably opposed to this bill. We support a State-by-state review of wilderness study areas in National Forests.

Your help is needed. Please contact Senators Schmitt and Domenici expressing your opposition to this bill. Send copies of your letter to Congressmen Lujan and Skeen. A companion bill, HR 3358, has been introduced in the House by Rep. Bill Hendon (R-NC).

## NEWS REPORT

Would you like to know from week to week what's happening in Congress and throughout the country concerning the nation's environment? Subscribe to the National News Report, published by the Sierra Club 35 times a year as a service to its members and the public. Subscriptions are \$12 per year. Send orders to the Sierra Club/NNR, 530 Bush Street, San Francisco, CA, 94108.

## excom meetings

### CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The next Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee meeting will be held in Albuquerque on June 20. Contact Chairman Phyllenore Howard at 505-268-8185 for the exact location, agenda, etc.

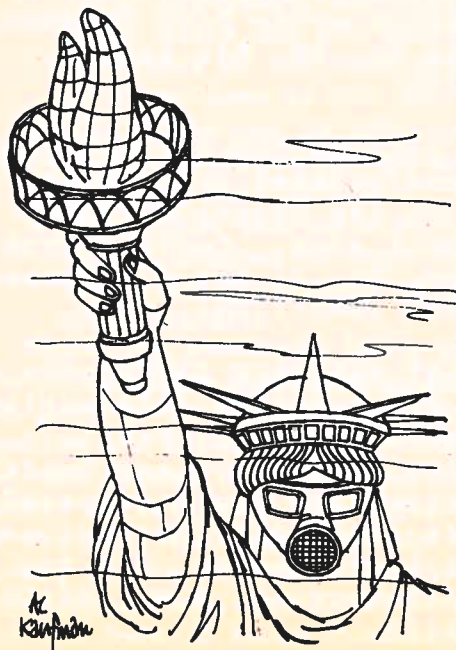
The August Xcom meeting will be held August 8. The location for this meeting is yet to be determined.

## Clean Air

The Clean Air Act of 1970 and its 1977 amendments come up for reauthorization this coming September. Activity surrounding the Act shifted into higher gear recently when James T. Broyhill (R-NC) introduced a comprehensively revised, emasculated Clean Air Bill into the House. The administration in turn is planning to submit its own Clean Air Bill on June 30. There is reasonable concern that the President wishes to completely dismantle the Clean Air Act and to set it as the primary example of where to remove government from the lives of individuals (or rather, from the lives of those individuals who hold major shares of the auto, utility, smelter and refinery industries).

All this activity could in the near future translate to increased health risks, to markedly reduced visibility, and to major damage of ecosystems. The Sierra Club has therefore targeted the campaign to uphold and strengthen the Clean Air Act as a highest priority.

We in the Rio Grande Chapter are also getting into the clean air fracas. The threatened "visibility" and "prevention of significant deterioration" provisions of the Clean Air Act, as well as the involvement of our region in copper and energy development, make it crucial that our air quality concerns are considered during the debates. At the recent Sierra Club Workshop held in the Gila Wilderness, a group of 12 Sierra Club members identified provisions of the Act which need protection or improvement.



We mapped out a three-pronged strategy for our campaign involving: recruiting additional volunteer support, intensive lobbying, and public education. Specific objectives and tasks were developed. Folks, this is important. If you can help or want to find out how you can help contact:

Rafael Harpaz  
3533A Vail SE  
Alb. 87106  
265-0956

Nancy Bartlett  
113 Monte Rey N  
Los Alamos 87544  
672-9792

## GILA WORKSHOP

Fifty Sierrans from all over New Mexico and from El Paso attended the second Chapter Leadership Workshop in May. We learned organizational techniques, practiced skills, were inspired by reports of past environmental successes, and planned strategy for upcoming environmental campaigns.

The Clean Air Act Task Force has an active program planned to start immediately. There is a separate article in this issue telling a little of what they plan and how you can help.

The Federal Land Management Task Force planned to establish personal contact with all BLM and National Forest District Offices this summer to become up-to-date on management plans. If you would like to help in this project call Chapter Chair, Phyllenore Howard, 268-8185, for the name of the experienced Club member near you to team up with.

Jon Teague, 266-4875, plans to talk to BLM about more adequately addressing groundwater issues in the San Juan Basin. If you can help call Jon.

Ken Ferguson, 268-0398, is forming a task force on the Sagebrush Rebellion. Call Ken if this interests you.

The Water Quality Task Force plans to keep a close eye on the activities of the NM Water Quality Control Commission and learn more about water quality problems and issues in NM. Call Kay Grotbeck, 296-0944, for ways you can help in this very important campaign.

Brant Calkin, Southwest Representative of the Sierra Club, gave us a fascinating lesson on how to approach our elected officials, Senators, and Representatives about environmental issues. The key points of Brant's talk will be published in the next Sierran.

# WIPP

## WIPP HEARING IN ALBUQUERQUE

On May 18 Representative Morris Udall, Chairman of the House Committee on Interior & Insular Affairs and of its Subcommittee on Energy & Environment, conducted a hearing in Albuquerque on the matter of "consultation and cooperation" between the Department of Energy (DOE) and the state of New Mexico with respect to the WIPP project. Representatives Manuel Lujan (R-NM) and Douglas Bereuter (R-Neb) sat with Chairman Udall.

DOE's General Ernest Hardin sought to demonstrate his department's willingness to consult and cooperate by presenting a 15-page computer printout labeled "Consultation and Cooperation Compliance Status as of May 12, 1981." It listed 189 compliance events. He also presented to the committee several pounds of documents as examples of DOE communications to the state.

Larry Kehoe, Chairman of New Mexico's Nuclear Waste Disposal Task Force, complained that DOE's version of consultation and cooperation was a deluge of paper so great that no one with a useful occupation could possibly read it all. He pointed out that the bulk of the documents presented to the committee by Hardin were prepared by Westinghouse, a firm deeply committed to the promotion of nuclear power generation.

The hearing also dealt with withdrawal of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land for the WIPP site. Larry Woodard, Deputy Director of the BLM in New Mexico presented a historical review of DOE/BLM WIPP site negotiations. Attorney Stephen Sprague, speaking for Citizens for Alternatives to Radioactive Dumping, charged that the DOE has been circumvent-

## NEW SIERRAN EDITOR

Barbara Davis of the Albuquerque Group is the new editor for the Rio Grande Chapter Sierran. All articles (How about some photographs, too?) should be sent to Barbara at P.O. Box 739, Sandia Park, N.M. 87047 (telephone 505-281-1248). Items for the July/August issue should be received by July 15.

## WIPP Hearing cont'd.

ing Federal law on land withdrawal since 1976. Instead of applying for permanent withdrawal, which would require an impact statement, public hearings and Congressional approval, DOE has been making successive applications for two-year cooperative segregation agreements, which are approved administratively. An application for an eight-year withdrawal (which is subject to Congressional veto) is being processed, but DOE is not waiting for action on that. The machinery of Constructors of Carlsbad, Inc. is on the ground and General Hardin said that sinking of half-mile-deep six-foot and twelve-foot shafts would commence some time in June.

A judge from the BLM legal office will conduct hearings in the Albuquerque Convention Center from 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM on July 15. Applications for making 10-minute presentations should be received before June 30 by the Bureau of Land Management (912), P.O. Box 1449, Santa Fe, NM 87501. Written comment should reach the same address before July 31. The BLM requests that comment be directed to the effect of the withdrawals, not to the feasibility of the national nuclear waste management program.

Ed Burns  
Las Cruces Group

## ACTIVE ORGANIZATIONS YOU SHOULD KNOW

**SAVE THE JEMEZ**-A multicultural citizens group dedicated to preserving the Jemez Mountains and halting geothermal exploitation in the Jemez area. Board members of the group are from Albuquerque, Santa Clara Pueblo, Jemez Pueblo, Jemez Springs and Los Alamos. For more information contact Ted Davis, President, Box 4067, Albuquerque, NM 87106 (842-9296/262-1862).

**EARTH FIRST** - The group that unfurled a 300-foot-long strip of black plastic down Glen Canyon Dam to symbolize the first crack in the dismantling of the dam, a demand of Earth First! For more information write Dave Foreman, 1802 Sun Ct. SE, Rio Rancho, NM 87124

**ENERGY ASSOCIATION OF TAXPAYERS**-A pro-environment group being formed in the Grants-Gallup-Crownpoint area. Contact Arch McCallum, Rt. 2, Box 3, Thoreau, NM 87323 (862-7503).

**SOUTHWEST RESEARCH CENTER**-The Center has compiled information on water and mining, public utilities, radiation and health, and radioactive waste disposal, which is available for your use. Contact Lynda Taylor, P.O. Box 4524, Albuquerque, N.M. 87106 (262-1862).

## HOOKER DAM BRIEFING IN SILVER CITY

Sierra Club members from Las Cruces and El Paso drove to Silver City on May 21 for a public meeting at which Hooker Dam, alternate dam sites and the Upper Gila Water Supply Study were explained and discussed. It was conducted by John Redlinger from the Phoenix office of the Water & Power Resources Service. Redlinger offered a slide presentation with unbiased commentary. Also heard were New Mexico Interstate Stream Commissioner Hilton Dixon and Philip Moots, an engineer for the commission; both are Hooker advocates.

Formal presentations by members of the public were not part of the agenda, but interested parties had a chance to make themselves heard during a question and answer period. The majority of Grant County people at the meeting were sold on Hooker, though some water rights holders were troubled about how a dam would affect them. And Henry Zeller was there, of course he has spent several years at making an intensive on-site study and is opposed to any damming of the Gila in New Mexico.

The best--but probably not the most effective--arguments against a dam are damage to the environment, invasion of the Gila Wilderness and endangering of species of flora and fauna. There is a fine article on the extinction of species by Paul and Anne Erlich in Mother Earth News, Mar/Apr and May/June 1981, and more on the subject by Paul in NRDC's Amicus Journal, Spring 1981.

In the current Washington climate the economic argument can be expected to be more effective. The February 1981 Fortune carried an excellent story on this aspect. In Arizona there is loud and cogent opposition to completion of the \$1.8 billion Central Arizona Project

(CAP). Without CAP, Hooker is dead; Safford area users must be reimbursed with Colorado River water for the 18,000 acre feet of Gila water to be yielded to New Mexico. Anti-Hooker people should work with the people of Arizona. Some material on Arizona activities will be placed in the Rio Grande Chapter Hooker Dam file.

There also are geological reasons for not building a dam at the Hooker site. Dam and lake will rest on a fault line in an area of seismic activity. This could add leakage loss to the 3600 acre feet annual evaporation.

Anyone wishing to be placed on the Upper Gila Water Supply Study mailing list should write to Water & Power Resources Service, Arizona Projects Office, Suite 2200 - Valley Center, 201 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85073.

Ed Burns

# Sierra Club & NMCCAW VS MOLYcorp

by Grove T. Burnett

For more than a decade, two citizen environmental groups, New Mexico Citizens for Clean Air and Water and the Sierra Club, have battled relentlessly to abate Molycorp's pollution of the Red River. Molycorp operates a molybdenum mining and milling site near Questa, New Mexico, in the Sangre de Cristo mountains. In operation since the 1920s, the Questa mine became a major open-pit site in 1955. The pit operation is now being phased out and a shaft sunk for underground mining of the remaining ore. "To make a smooth transition from open-pit to underground with a minimum effect on production and on the present Questa workforce," the company in early February started a new "highline slice" on the northeasterly side of the pit that will generate slightly more than three tons of ore to supply the mill in 1982-83, until the underground ore is available.

The Molycorp mill generates over 16000 tons of tailings per day, which are transported by slurry pipeline to tailings ponds some 15 miles from the mill. The slurry, 60% water and 40% solids, settles in the tailings ponds, leaving the water to drain from the top into Red River. This discharge has high levels of molybdenum and other contaminants, causing serious pollution to the Red River.

Molycorp has been plagued with frequent breaks in its tailings pipeline since it opened in 1966. These pipeline failures often result in tons of tailings spilling into the Red River, killing fish and recklessly degrading the river -- including that portion designated by Congress as an original component of the Wild and Scenic River System.

In 1976, Citizens for Clean Air and Water and the Sierra Club joined as intervenors with the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and New Mexico Environmental Improvement Division to counter Molycorp's challenge of the effluent limitations for molybdenum contained in the National Pollution Discharge Emission System (NPDES) permit proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency. For five months, EPA and the intervenors engaged in lengthy negotiations and meetings with Molycorp. Finally, in 1977, a settlement agreement was executed by all the parties to the hearing, and an NPDES permit was issued to Molycorp.

Under the terms of the stipulation and NPDES permit, Molycorp will be permitted to discharge a daily average of 78 pounds of molybdenum into the Red River until July 1, 1983. As of July 1, 1983, however, the company will be limited to a discharge of 25 pounds per day, a limitation which must be achieved by whatever method is necessary -- including curtailing or ceasing production at the mill. The 1983 limit of 25 pounds per day is based on meeting water quality standards for irrigation usage and municipal drinking supply for the Red River, thereby achieving the Act's goal of making the Red River "fishable, swimmable water."

Equally important, the stipulation and NPDES permit contained rigid provisions for the prevention and control of spills into the Red River from the pipeline that transports the mill slurry to the tailings ponds. Essentially, as of October 1, 1977, Molycorp was required to prevent any and all spills from their pipeline into the Red River. Each spill thereafter was to be subject to a stiff \$10,000 fine. EPA stated at the time the stipulation was executed that this provision would be rigidly enforced.

It is important to understand that all relevant issues concerning the issuance of Molycorp's permit were exhaustively studied and resolved by all parties during the adjudicatory process. These issues included:

- Effluent limits for molybdenum;
- Provisions for preventing spills into the Red River;
- Environmental effects of molybdenum, including degradation of the waters of the Red River, impact on fish, wildlife, domestic livestock, downstream water users and the recreational waters of the Wild and Scenic River area of the Red River;
- The technology to achieve the effluent limits and to prevent pipeline spills; and
- The costs and economic impact on the company to meet the terms and conditions of the NPDES permit.

Since the summer of 1977, when the stipulation was entered into by all parties to the adjudicatory hearing and the effective NPDES permit was issued, Molycorp has experienced no less than ten major spills of its mill tailings into the Red River, all in direct violation of the stipulation, the NPDES permit, and the Federal Water Pollution Act.

Many of these spills had a major environmental impact on the Red River, including direct kills. EPA was informed of the scope of these spills by reports from the staff of the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Division. By letter dated April 6, 1979, New Mexico Citizens for Clean Air and Water demanded that EPA take immediate enforcement action. EPA never responded to the letter.

It is the position of both New Mexico Citizens for Clean Air and Water and the Sierra Club that these spills into the Red River constitute undisputed violations of the stipulation and NPDES permit, and require strict and immediate enforcement -- including imposition of a civil penalty of \$10,000 per day under the provisions of the Act. We can find no extenuating circumstances about these violations which would recommend less than maximum enforcement.



We fought for almost a decade to get Molycorp to clean up and then severely compromised our position in the adjudicatory hearing to settle this matter. In return, we believed we were obtaining a permit which would be enforced promptly and to the letter. We will not permit Molycorp to continue its historical pattern of pollution without penalty. We have initiated appropriate legal action against EPA and Molycorp to obtain enforcement of the stipulation and NPDES permit.

(Grove T. Burnett, of Glorieta, New Mexico is the attorney for the Sierra Club and New Mexico Citizens for Clean Air and Water in their legal battle with Molycorp.)

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