

The Rio Grande SIERRAN



THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

JUNE 1983

COAL HEARING SUCCESSFUL

SANTA FE COAL HEARING GETS RESULTS!

by David Glowka (Albuquerque)

New Mexicans turned out by the hundreds on May 21 to attend the House Subcommittee's hearing on federal coal development in the San Juan Basin. Estimates of attendance range up to 500 persons. On the receiving end of the proceedings were Representatives Bill Richardson (D-NM) and Jim Weaver (D-OR) and Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) who listened to over 95 witnesses during the nine hour event. Representatives from the State of New

Mexico, the Navajo Indian Nation, coal companies, environmental groups, affected Basin residents, pro-development groups, labor unions, scientists, and concerned citizens were all heard. The overwhelming message that came out of the hearing was that all three Wilderness Study Areas in the Bisti Badlands plus the Fossil Forest should be given permanent protection and that coal leasing in the San Juan Basin is not necessary in the near future.

Governor Toney Anaya led off the list of witnesses and called for a ban on leasing until October 1984. He repeatedly criticized Interior Secretary James Watt for his attempts to give away public resources to the energy companies at fire sale prices. This would be the result of leasing the huge reserves proposed by the Bureau of Land Management at a time when the market for additional reserves is basically nonexistent. Governor Anaya pointed out that there are already enough coal reserves leased in New Mexico to support mining at present levels for 100 years.

Governor Anaya also expressed concern for the environment and supported, without reservation, the designation of the Bisti, De-na-zin, and Ah-shi-sie-pah Wilderness Study Areas as Wilderness. These WSA's contain some 30,000 acres of badlands with outstanding scenic, recreational, and wilderness values. In light of the fact that they contain less than 2% of the San Juan Basin's federal coal reserves, common sense and concern for our natural heritage demand that these areas be preserved. (Continued Page 4)

RUCKELSHAUS TO VISIT ALBUQUERQUE

New EPA administrator William Ruckelshaus and Senator Pete Domenici will be in Albuquerque July 6 for a hearing on environmental issues in New Mexico. In the form of a panel discussion, Jay Sorenson, John Bartlett and Paul Robinson will review items of concern with Mr. Ruckelshaus. Discussions will take place at the Albuquerque downtown public library between 2:00 and 5:00 P.M.; interested members are welcome to attend.

MORE MOLYCORP

MOLYCORP VS. SIERRA CLUB (AGAIN)

by Grove Burnett

Environmental groups, including the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club, are gearing up for another fight with Molycorp. Molycorp operates a molybdenum mining and milling site near Questa, NM. The company's present open pit operation is being phased out in favor of an underground mine scheduled to open this year, market conditions permitting. The new mine means that Molycorp will need additional tailings disposal area because the existing tailings area will reach capacity within the next ten years.

The site selected for the new tailings disposal area is Guadalupe Mtn., a volcanic cone located about three miles west of the village of Questa. BLM owns this land and is being used by Molycorp pursuant to the unconscionable 1872 mining law. The size of the facility is staggering - 1,320 acres of BLM land containing up to 200 million tons of molybdenum tailing with dams up to 400 feet high. Notwithstanding the magnitude of this project BLM has taken the wholly untenable position that they are NOT required to prepare a full-scale EIS on this project. To date they have only prepared an Environment Assessment (EA) which is woefully deficient in evaluating the environmental consequences of the proposed tailings area.

Members will recall that environmental groups battled for more than a decade to abate Molycorp's pollution of the Red River that resulted from frequent breaks in its tailing pipeline. These pipeline failures often resulted in tons of tailings spilling into the Red River, killing fish and wrecklessly degrading the river, including that portion designated by Congress as an original component to the Wild & Scenic River System. Finally in 1981 the Sierra Club and New Mexico Citizens for Clean Air & Water, sued Molycorp under the citizen suit provision of the Federal Clean Water Act for violations of the company's NPDES

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RIO GRANDE
SIERRAN

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

The month of May was a pretty full one for the Sierra Club and other environmental organizations in New Mexico.

On May 21, Congressman Bill Richardson arranged a public hearing by the House Interior Subcommittee on Public Lands and Mining in Santa Fe to get New Mexicans' views on coal leasing in the San Juan Basin; preservation of the Bisti, De-na-zin, and Ah-shi-slepah Wilderness Study Areas; and protection of the Fossil Forest. Congressman James Weaver of Oregon chaired the hearing, and Senator Jeff Bingaman and Congressman Richardson both participated. (See the major article for other details.)

I would like to thank everyone who worked very hard to make arrangements for the hearing, to get out the word so people would attend, and to do all the many other things that made the hearing a tremendous success.

On May 28, the Rio Grande Chapter celebrated the 91st anniversary of the Sierra Club at the Sheraton Old Town in Albuquerque. Brock Evans, Sierra Club director and Audubon Society vice-president, gave an inspiring talk that pointed out just how important the work we, Rio Grande Sierrans and New Mexico Audubon members, do is on the national environmental scene. He indicated that many times we are on the "cutting edge," setting the example for environmentalists across the country. It was good to hear that someone else knows what we've been doing.

Many thanks to Phyllenore Howard for making all of the arrangements, to Bob Howard for doing an excellent job as master-of-ceremonies, to Betsy Barnett and Brant Calkin for their talks on how the Rio Grande Chapter works with the state government and on the political scene, and to everyone who came to have a good time--and we sure did.

Next year is the 21st anniversary of the Rio Grande Chapter, and we're going to really have a party to celebrate that, especially when all 3400 Sierrans who missed this year's bash show up. It will be a little earlier in the month of May to avoid interfering with the Memorial Day weekend.

At next year's party we would like to honor some of the long-time Sierra Club members and the original Rio Grande Chapter executive committee. According to available records, the earliest joining date for a chapter member is February 1934. If anyone joined the Club before that, please let me know. Also, I would like to have the addresses of any members of the original ExCom.

The new Sierra Club Southwestern Representative, Maggie Fox, was in Santa Fe for the Bisti hearings and to move the office to Boulder, CO. We wish her the best of luck in her new job and hope she'll visit us often.

The Chapter ExCom decided not to maintain an office now that the SW Rep's office has moved. If you need information or have a matter to take up with the ExCom, contact your group chairman or the appropriate member of the Chapter ExCom. (See the directory on the back page of this Sierran.)

See you at Snowmass!

-John Colburn-

GROUP NEWS

ALBUQUERQUE

Nick Nicolaus and Mike Jackson have started their trail maintenance program on Embudito trail; they can use all the help they can get. If you're interested, call Nick at 268-2040.

Fred Hanselmann's issue meetings will inform you about local current items of concern; the last one was on the proposed new bridge over the Rio Grande. Watch the Group newsletter for upcoming meetings.

Thanks to Rhoda Riley for organizing a very successful potluck at Simms Cabin. These kinds of activities are a good way for members to get to know each other.

David Dell and his wife Sheila have Sierra Club books for sale all year around. If there's one you would like and they don't have it, they'd be happy to order it. Call them at 844-3325 if you need anything.

A big THANK YOU to newsletter editor Lenore Pardee who sees that the Group newsletter gets out each month. She also can use help all the time; call her at 266-0683 and give her a hand on the next issue.



Ken Adam from Santa Fe with 50 years of Sierra Club membership coming up in April, meets new member Jule Benedic at the Chapter banquet May 28.

Southwestern New Mexico - by Jim Graham

The SWNM Group has been addressing the BLM wilderness recommendations and organizing a task force for the Upper Gila Water Supply Project. This project is an offspring of the CAP (sort of a son of Frankenstein). The project favored by the BuRec is called Conner Dam. The purpose of the project is to divert 18,000 acre feet/year, from the Gila River for use by Silver City. The project will cost 1/4-1/3 billion dollars and will have a pipeline to pump water 2000 ft. uphill. It will evaporate 9,000 acre feet per year and inundate habitat critical to approximately one-half the endangered species in the state. The

water in the Gila is already fully utilized. The net benefit of the project will be transfer water from agricultural use in California to copper mining in New Mexico at a cost to someone (?) of over \$1000/acre foot, a hundred times its normal value.

If anyone wants to help or has information of value, Contact Jim Graham, Box 986, Mesilla Park, NM.

P.S. The Las Cruces BLM only recommended two WSA's for wilderness designation, a majestic 1/3 of 1% of their jurisdiction!

Tularosa Basin Group - by Norm Martin

Members of the TBG recently attended public meetings sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service at which the budworm infestation in the Lincoln National Forest was discussed. According to the Forest Service, there is a choice between using carbaryl, acephate, and malathion, all chemical insecticides which are toxic and possible carcinogenics. The other choice is bacillus thuringiensis (BT) which is an organic insecticide. According to Forest Service spokesmen, there may be some question as to whether this project will be funded. Cost for the project is \$8-\$10 per acre. The acreage involved is approximately 200,000.

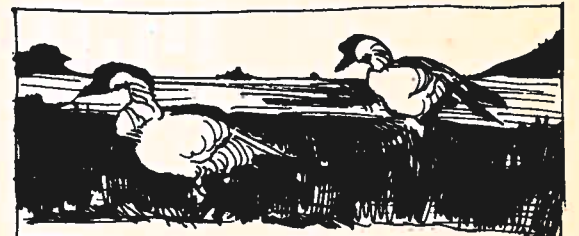
The TBG has gone on record as opposed to the chemical spraying of the Lincoln and we will continue to monitor this problem as it evolves.

Another project that the TBG is becoming involved in is saving a virgin stand of timber in the Lincoln National Forest. This section, composed of approximately 50 acres, is located off Water Canyon where Penasco Creek cuts east. Local TBG members recently completed an outing to this area and measured the tallest tree at 182 ft. Many of these giants have a diameter in excess of 50 inches.

It is the intent of the Forest Service to open this area to lumbering with logging roads to be cut into the area. It is our philosophy that this is the last remaining virgin timber area in the Lincoln and it should be protected for the public to enjoy. We'll keep members advised about what's happening on this project.

The TBG recently completed conducting its Community Education class on the Tularosa Basin. According to questionnaires filled out by the students taking the course, it was a tremendous success. We received some interesting suggestions on how to improve the class, and we will incorporate some of them in the next session. We were complimented on the class by the Community Education leaders and have been asked to conduct another class in the fall session.

(Group News continued Page 3)



IPP POSITION BY CHAPTER

by Bruce Martin (Alamogordo)

In a statement dated May 12, 1983, the following position was established by WIPP by the Rio Grande Chapter:

Resolved:
The Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club does not accept the findings of the Department of Energy as to the suitability and safety of the proposed Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, New Mexico and therefore requests the immediate halt to all construction or development of the project.

The Rio Grande Chapter recommends,
1. The state of New Mexico, the office of Governor and Attorney General and the State Legislature and all other state representatives should use their authority and powers to discontinue construction or other development of WIPP.

2. No construction on WIPP should occur until its mission is completely and finally determined by the President.

3. No construction on WIPP should occur until a new and complete worst case analysis by the Department of Energy takes place which will include calculations involving high volumes of pressurized brine and the probability of deep dissolution effects.

4. No construction on WIPP should occur until all transportation and containment methods have been tested for failure points and all accident scenarios analyzed.

5. No construction at WIPP should occur due to the potash and natural gas deposits in the area and the unacceptable risk that future generations could unknowingly breach the repository.



GROUP NEWS CONTINUED

Santa Fe Group - by Jack Kenney

Spring/summer activities of the group are more varied and intense than ever. Highlights include:

- The activities relating to the May 21 Congressional hearings on the San Juan Basin.
- Letter/phone tree activities on the Alaska "hunting" bill.
- Group picnic June 12. Over 90 attended.
- Three Rio Grande trips. (Still room on July trip)
- Comments on Molycorp (Questa) EA.
- Contingency planning for office move resulting from the move of the SWSCO from Santa Fe to Boulder.
- Preparation of comments on BLM Wilderness proposals.
- Enjoying David Douglas' article in May/June SIERRA Magazine.
- Scheduling of 36 summer hikes/backpack trips/outings.

WILDLIFE REPORT

by Carol Cochran (Albuquerque)

Mountain Lions

In April 1983, the Sierra Club submitted to the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish a position paper on management of the mountain lion. The paper described current problems with management, primarily that, despite its recognition that its "first responsibility is to the wildlife resources," the department currently manages the lion only by destroying it - by killing depredating lions, by liberalizing hunting regulations, by failing to enforce its own laws against killing of the lion.

This mismanagement is all the more serious because recent evidence gathered by the department indicates that the lion population statewide is declining steeply enough so that today's population may be only 37% of the population in 1971.

We made a series of recommendations for lion management, including the following:

1. The Department should place the welfare of wildlife species and their habitat above the appeasement of humans and their interests.
2. The Department should vigorously enforce its depredation and hunting policies and prosecute violators.
3. The Department should reassess its predator control policies and practices in light of lion population dynamics. It may well be that lion biology proves all predator control counterproductive.
4. Lion control for livestock must be conducted only in connection with verified losses and only after it has been ascertained that the operator's mismanagement has not contributed to his losses.
5. Predator control in conjunction with desert bighorn reintroduction should be eliminated after the sheep are released from the holding area.
6. The Department should research ways to reduce the conflicts between lion and livestock.
7. Lions should be neither sport hunted nor trapped until we understand lion population trends.

After receiving our proposals, the department formed a committee to draw up a policy on the lion. There are signs that the policy will be a good one; already the department has tightened up on its depredation policy. However, there are many enemies of the lion within the department. Please call or write Harold Olson, Director, and urge him to adopt stricter measures to protect the lion (New Mexico Department of Game & Fish, Villagra Building, Santa Fe, NM 87503, 827-7899).

Mountain Lion Suit

Thanks to a new state administration, mountain lions will not be hunted in the national parks and the Sierra Club did not have to go to trial to make sure of that. Dr. Shirley Hill Witt, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, wrote the Department of Interior withdrawing the state from the plan to track lions into Carlsbad

Caverns and Guadalupe Mountains National Parks. "I have concluded," wrote Witt, "that the most reasonable course is to attempt resolutions of depredation problems other than the killing of offending lions pursued into the parks." In response, the Dept. of Interior has withdrawn its interest in the plan. Letters of appreciation should go to Dr. Witt and to Gov. Anaya.

1080 Collars

New Mexico's Experimental Use Permit for 1080 collars expired in February, but the State Department of Agriculture has requested an extension. So far, EPA has not acted on the request.

In the two years of its existence, the program proved very ineffective (e.g. only seven collars were punctured in 17,900 collar nights of use) and was subject to accident, misuse, and violation (e.g. collars were accidentally punctured, 1080 was syphoned from collars, and a nontarget species was killed). See the Nov. 1982 Sierran for more information.

We may launch an effort to get the Experimental Use Permit cancelled. If you'd like to help or need more information, call Carol Cochran, 345-1412.



Share with Wildlife

Proposals for the Share with Wildlife funds are being solicited by the Department of Game & Fish and will be accepted until July 28, when there will be a public meeting in Albuquerque where comments also can be made. (See local newspapers for the time and place.)

Proposals for actual projects should be as specific as possible. However, general guidelines for spending the money would also be useful. The department says it has received very little comment so far this year and that comments for spending the money on nongame species are balanced by those for spending it on game species. Make your feelings known. For more information, call John Somers, 268-2350 (Albuquerque).

Carol Cochran has been appointed one of the three nondepartment members to serve on the Share with Wildlife panel.

HEARING RESULTS (CONT.)

Brant Calkin, Deputy Secretary of the State Department of Natural Resources, pointed out that Wilderness, not coal, is the uncommon resource in the San Juan Basin.

State Land Commissioner Jim Baca and Attorney General Paul Bardacke echoed the Governor's concerns. Mr. Baca further pledged that he would work with the BLM to trade sections of state land and mineral resources out of the Wilderness Study Areas in order to block up the boundaries and provide more comprehensive management of the wilderness resources. Mr. Baca stated that he did not want to see another Gateway mine, which is a new mine that Public Service Company of New Mexico has constructed and hopes to operate on the border of the Bisti Wilderness Study Area.

Representing the Navajo Tribe was Louis Denetsosie, who pointed out that the Navajo people have been treated unfairly by the BLM and have not even been consulted on major issues regarding so-called federal coal beneath tribal lands outside the reservation. Mr. Denetsosie gave the support of the Tribe for wilderness designation of all three WSA's plus protection of the smaller Fossil Forest. He also said that the Tribe may be willing to drop its selection of certain lands in the WSA's under the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act, in exchange for other lands in the region. This would, in effect, eliminate all legitimate claims within the WSA's and clear the way for proper Wilderness designation.

Coal companies and pro-development groups testified with their usual arguments that leasing would create jobs and that the Bisti Badlands are perfect for strip mining. Also, as usual, they could show no legitimate proof for their views. Not well received by the hearing audience, one company official said he felt like a brown shoe in a sea of tuxedos. State Senator Jack Morgan, an ardent supporter of the energy companies, said that he had already located the back door.

The dozens of other people who testified also supported preservation of the outstanding natural areas and a suspension of the federal coal leasing program. An environmental panel testified that leasing would not create jobs but would damage the environment. A panel of local residents of the lease area gave powerful testimony about their fears of being moved off of the land that they and their families have lived on for generations. Archeologists and paleontologists spoke of the threat that massive coal development holds for the fragile cultural and fossil resources of the San Juan Basin. State Representatives Judy Pratt, Kelly Mora, and Max Coll all testified that the BLM's coal leasing program would be detrimental to the economy and the environment of the state. Labor union representatives from Raton and Questa urged that San Juan Basin coal development not be promoted at the expense of the existing coal industry in other parts of the state.

In contrast with the many BLM hearings on these issues, the comments of concerned citizens at this hearing did

not fall on deaf ears. Before the hearing, both Representative Richardson and Senator Bingaman said they were undecided with respect to their stands on these issues. After the hearing, both issued very detailed and thoughtful statements on their positions. These positions include:

*wilderness designation for the Bisti, De-na-zin, and Ah-shi-sle-pah WSA's. Rep. Richardson, who took a helicopter tour of the San Juan Basin the day after the hearing, said that when he visited the three WSA's, he saw some of the most beautiful land in the entire Southwest. Both Richardson and Bingaman plan to introduce bills to permanently protect these areas.

*directing the BLM to study the Fossil Forest and make a recommendation to Congress for preserving its unique fossil resources.

*suspension of the Interior Department's coal leasing program until confidence and accountability are restored and fair market value for these public resources is assured.

Other, more technical positions contained in these position papers demonstrate that Rep. Richardson and Sen. Bingaman have become very knowledgeable about the complex issues of the San Juan Basin coal development.



Your help is needed to keep the ball rolling toward an outcome favorable to the people and the environment of New Mexico. Please take the time to do one or more of the following:

(1) Write Rep. Richardson and Sen. Bingaman (address below). Thank them for taking the time and effort to listen to the people of New Mexico on San Juan Basin coal issues. Thank them for their positions on Wilderness designation, on the Fossil Forest, and on the suspension of federal coal leasing.

(2) Write Senator Pete Domenici and Rep. Manuel Lujan and ask them to explain their positions on San Juan Basin coal development. Both support Wilderness designation for only the Bisti WSA, less than 10% of the Bisti Badlands. Ask Sen. Domenici why he has lobbied against suspension of the federal coal leasing program, when Congress' own research organization, the General Accounting Office, has determined that the program is costing the federal government millions in lost revenue.

The effort to save the San Juan Basin from the excesses of James Watt and the coal companies has definitely entered a new phase, but the struggle is far from over. Congress must hear from New Mexicans again and again if the battle is to be won. Now, more than ever, your voice must be heard. Please take the time to let Congress know how you feel.

Addresses for representatives and senators:

Governor Toney Anaya
State Capitol
Santa Fe, NM 87501 827-3000
Albuquerque: 841-8791

Representative Bill Richardson
House of Representatives
Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515
Santa Fe: 988-6177
Farmington: 327-7898
Gallup: 722-6522

Senator Jeff Bingaman
U.S. Senate
Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510
Santa Fe: 988-6647
Albuquerque: 766-3637
Las Cruces: 523-8273
Roswell: 622-7113

COAL COORDINATOR POSITION OPEN FOR COMMITTEE ON COAL:

Part time, temporary position for person to fund raise, organize volunteer work, public education on issues surrounding coal development in New Mexico. Must be available immediately. Hard work, low pay. Send resume and statement of interest to:

Dave Glowka, Star Route Box 282B,
Tijeras, NM 87059
281-1488 (evenings)

or

Jonathan Teague, 1917 Gold SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106
243-1507 (evenings)

SAN JUAN CONGRESSIONAL HEARING

by Ned Sudborough (Santa Fe)

The Congressional Field Hearing on the San Juan Basin cleared the heads and warmed the hearts of the many environmentalists who were present.

New Mexicans stayed with congressmen past the 5:00 o'clock scheduled close until the hearing end was announced at 6:30 p.m. In the morning, the auditorium had been so full that spectators sat in aisles halfway down to the stage.

Outside people sat at picnic tables listening to the hearing from two loudspeakers placed along the wall in the blooming lilac bushes. A mealmobile was parked nearby. The hearing continued nonstop through lunch. By late afternoon, the length of spoken testimonies was necessarily halved. The witnesses more elaborate written statements remained complete in the record of the hearing.

CHACO EXHIBIT OPENS



THE CHACO PHENOMENON

"The Chaco Phenomenon," a major exhibition about the expansive prehistoric cultural and architectural complex that is centered in Chaco Canyon, opened June 12 at the University of New Mexico's Maxwell Museum of Anthropology. It explores the most recent findings and theories about Chaco society and features more than 200 artifacts excavated at Chaco during the past 100 years.

For more than 200 years a dynamic, prosperous social system established by Anasazi ancestors of modern Pueblo Indians developed in the high desert lands of northwestern New Mexico. Though they successfully managed a fragile environment for two centuries, the complex Chaco culture collapsed and was abandoned. Researchers believe that a combination of factors, including drought, over-use of resources and internal discord may have led to Chaco's collapse.

"Environmental damage and overpopulation may have been critical factors in the abandonment of Chaco," said Dr. J. J. Brody, Maxwell Museum Director. "Greater numbers of people meant greater hardship when droughts reduced food supplies. Forests were cut for fuel and building materials. This led to soil erosion, loss of farmlands and reduction of wild food resources. People left their ancient homes to begin new lives elsewhere. The collapse of the Chaco system was the beginning of the end of an era."

Factors that made the Chaco system work for more than two centuries apparently included the association of outlying communities throughout the San Juan Basin. A road system and a signaling network tied the Chaco communities together. Researchers speculate that the "outliers" may have supplied food and other perishable goods as well as durable raw materials and manufactured products to the canyon. Chacoan style architecture was also a unifying factor. Such buildings of varying sizes are found throughout the San Juan Basin.

"A key to the Chaco system may have been the collection and storage at Chaco of surplus corn and beans grown during bumper years," Brody said. "When disasters struck, this food could be distributed as needed. Rare goods such as turquoise, cotton, shell from the Pacific coast and Mexican imports also may have been collected and processed at Chaco and then traded to outliers."

The nature of Chaco politics is unknown. It is probably not correct to call Chaco a state or a nation, but its certainty was a network of communities. At its peak, Chaco Canyon became the center of an economic, ritual and social system that extended over a 26,000 square mile area.

"The roads and the outlying communities were the phenomenon," Brody said. "It was a much more sophisticated system of relationships among communities than we are used to thinking about in the Southwest."

Although Chaco's roads were known to exist by early researchers, modern scientists with the aid of remote sensing and aerial survey methods have been able to verify 250 miles of straight, well-engineered roads. Some roads were bordered with sandstone slabs or boulders. Stairways were cut into cliffs where needed and many spectacular staircases are located near Great Houses and where roads begin.

Luxury and ritual objects found at Chaco also tell of a complex way of life. The political, economic and social systems were apparently all linked to religious life. "Wooden objects recovered from Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl give rare insights to Chacoan ceremonial life and suggest rich theatrical and artistic traditions," Brody said. "One room at Chetro Ketl had fragments of painted wood scattered over the floor. Some of these could be pieced together as headdresses, bird-shaped puppets and costume elements. Others may have been fragments from an altar.

Comparison with ceremonial objects used at modern pueblos supports the view that these objects had ritual use. Other wooden objects such as carved staffs, wands and painted boards are

more mysterious. Some may have been insignia of rank or office as used in ancient Mexico or by the pueblos in modern times."

As a society without money, luxury goods were symbols of wealth and status at Chaco. Religion was also closely linked with status and wealth. "Construction and maintenance of the Great Houses and public works required planning and management. It appears that the people who organized and managed the Chaco system used luxury objects, Great Houses and Great Kivas as symbols of their high status."

But no new buildings were constructed at Chaco after 1130 A.D. and a century later all the Great Houses were empty. Not only Chaco, but the entire San Juan Basin was almost emptied of people during the 12th and 13th centuries.

(Editor's note: A significant contribution to the Chaco exhibition is several fiberglass reproductions of the stonework at Chaco. I think you will be truly impressed by the quality and faithfulness of these samples. Done as a volunteer effort by a group from Sandia Laboratories, I was fortunate enough to be able to participate in the fabrication of these latex and fiberglass molds. Worthy of note is the fact that all work was completed at Chaco without any trace that the work had ever been done.

Designed as a traveling exhibit, The Chaco Phenomenon will go to the Denver Museum of Natural History and the American Museum of Natural History in New York after closing at UNM in May 1984.)



Sierran newsletter editor Barbara Davis and husband Ric get a close look at stonework reproductions exhibited at "The Chaco Phenomenon," an exhibition currently at the Maxwell Museum in Albuquerque. (See Page 5.)

LOOKING DOWNSTREAM: CONGRESS TAKES ON THE CLEAN WATER ACT

(from Sierra Club Environmental News Service)

The United States Congress has been trying since 1899, when it passed an act prohibiting the discharge of wastes (sewer liquid excepted) into navigable waters without a permit, to reconcile the conflicting ideologies of how a society should relate to its natural waterways. Success in that effort has been elusive: the host of water pollution laws passed over some 80 years failed to keep up with industrial growth, and many lakes and streams grew untouchable, let alone drinkable. Finally, as if in a desperate attempt to call national attention to the growing calamity, in 1969 the waste-choked Cuyohoga River in Cleveland, Ohio, burst into flame.

The major problem, as critics saw it, was the basic strategy embodied in existing water pollution legislation. That strategy depended on use-designation and on state-established water quality standards. Under the system, individual states would determine the "best use" of each segment of a waterway--it might be fishing, or drinking, or industrial. The state would then negotiate with dischargers along the waterway to achieve standards sufficient for that use.

Predictably, a cumbersome negotiation procedures, minimum enforcement, industrial bickering, and political bargaining rendered this strategy ineffective. By the early 1970s, Congress saw that it was time for a different approach, and in 1971 began consideration of new--and improved--water pollution legislation.

Calling it a "bill whose laudable intent is outweighed by its unconscionable price tag," President Richard Nixon vetoed the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (FWPCA) on October 17, 1972. But Congress, not invulnerable to the rising tide of environmental awareness that was sweeping the country, overrode the veto the next day, thus establishing for the first time national definitions of water pollution, goals for clean-up, and a regulatory structure to meet those goals.

Five more years have gone by. It is 1983, the year by which most of the nation's rivers and streams were to have been "fishable and swimmable." Likewise, 1985, when the discharge of pollutants into navigable waters was to have been eliminated, is fast approaching.

Not surprisingly, Congress is once again under pressure from polluting industries and now from the Reagan EPA to extend deadlines, weaken provisions, and re-write the goals of the act. Following are a few of the issues at stake:

--The Original Goals. While some interests have simply asked Congress to delay the "fishable, swimmable" goal until 1990, the EPA and other industries are attempting to undermine the goal by encouraging states to relax their water quality standards. Changing the designation of a waterway from fish propagation to industrial supply, for example, handily dismisses the need for clean-up.

Consider this water which flows toward the city...See how pure and fine it is! But when it enters the city...people wash their hands and faces and feet and other parts in it, and their clothes and carpets, and the urine of all the quarters and dung of horses and mules are poured into it and mixed up with it. Look at it when it passes out the other side of the city! Though it is still the same water, turning the dust to clay...making the plain verdant...disagreeable things have been mingled with it.

-Rumi

a Sufi poet of Persia, 1202-1273

Many industries have achieved "zero discharge," but this goal, too, is being attacked by the EPA and polluting utilities. They are proposing a cost-benefit approach: the environmental benefits of clean-up must be proved worthy of their costs.

Environmentalists are seeking congressional affirmation of the national goals for clean water as stated ten years ago, and are asking for a recommitment to the preservation of the waterways in national parks, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas.

--Control Technology. Approximately 92 million pounds of toxic metals are currently dumped into the nation's waterways each year; if dischargers used BAT, an EPA study shows, that figure would drop to 18 million pounds per year. But, charging that BAT is "clean water overkill," the chemical industry and the Reagan EPA are proposing a return to pre-act days, wherein BAT requirements would be waived if no clear demonstration of environmental harm could be made.



Environmentalists recognize that the July 1, 1984 deadline will be impossible to meet--the EPA has yet to issue guidelines for many industrial categories--and are in favor of amending the law to provide that each discharger be required to meet BAT limits as soon as possible, but no later than 3 years after the EPA has regulated its category (the same provision as that in the 1977 amendments).

Since one of the act's basic principles is that dischargers must meet uniform levels of treatment that are based on workable, affordable technology, environmentalists will be working to see that Congress stands firm in its commitment to BAT without waivers and variances.

There are some places in the country where the discharge of toxic pollutants is so great that even BAT would not be enough to achieve "fishable and swimmable" water quality. Environmentalists are asking that a time schedule for identifying these waterways be set up and the necessary steps for clean-up be taken.

--Permit Terms. Congress is being pressured to extend the 5-year term of Clean Water Act discharge permits to 10 years. Environmentalists oppose such a change, however, as discharge limits should reflect advances in treatment technology, discoveries of new toxic hazards, or decisions by states to strengthen their water quality standards.

--Pretreatment Standards. More than half of the nation's polluters dump their wastewaters into municipal sewage treatment plants. Although these plants do a good job of removing common residential wastes, they are often not equipped to handle the influx of industry's wastes, which can include such toxic pollutants as lead, mercury, cyanide, and arsenic. These wastes can damage or even destroy equipment, can contaminate the sludge of municipal treatment plants, making it unsafe for landfill or agricultural use, or can pass through the treatment process, leaving the water still dangerously polluted.

For these reasons, the Clean Water Act requires pretreatment of industrial wastes before they are discharged into a municipal system. It has taken a decade to get the pretreatment process underway, and it is now under the siege of Reagan deregulation. The EPA and some industries, using the now familiar tactic of calling for further study, are seeking to stall and weaken the pretreatment program.

Environmentalists favor the pretreatment program as prescribed by law, and are opposing any provision that would allow municipalities to avoid pretreatment requirements.

--Non-point Pollution. Equal to the threat posed by industrial discharge is that known as "non-point" pollution. The run-off from city streets can be as oxygen demanding as raw sewage, and can contain startling amounts of such heavy metals as lead, mercury, and zinc. Agricultural run-off contains sediment, fertilizers, and pesticides. Sediment from logging can choke streams and pesticides sprayed on forests often drain into waterways. Surface and deep mining result in acid drainage, and toxic heavy metals may dissolve in rainwater or underground waters. Every high school, highway, and high-rise constructed disturbs the soil and sets in motion a chain reaction resulting in more water pollution.

(Continued Page 7)

MORE MOLYCORP

MOLYCORP (Continued)

permit. The 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.

The suit culminated in a landmark consent decree with Molycorp that provided (1) that Molycorp pay \$31,500 into a fund administered by Frontera del Norte to be used for water pollution research, (2) for each additional spill Molycorp will have to pay into the fund \$6,000, the Federal Treasury \$2,000 and the State \$500, (3) the payment of attorney's fees to the Sierra Club and NM Citizens for Clean Air & Water in the amount of \$3,500 for prosecuting the enforcement action, and (4) to completely upgrade and relocate its tailing pipelines between its mill and tailings area.

Molycorp has recently proposed some changes in the consent decree which do not alter its substance or result in any impact to water quality. These changes have been approved by both the Sierra Club and NMCCA&W.

The Sierra Club, along with NMCCA&W and the Concerned Citizens of Questa have, however, objected strenuously to Molycorp's proposed Guadalupe tailings area. On behalf of these environmental groups, Grove Burnett has advised BLM that NEPA compels BLM to prepare an EIS on the proposed tailing project. The present EA only confirms this conclusion: It shows that the environmental consequences, especially water quality effects, need to be more fully studied and explored. By BLM's own admission there is insufficient information to adequately evaluate the impact of this project on air and water quality. Because of the lack of information and data, the EA is deficient; it cannot be substituted for the whole scale analysis mandated by NEPA and an EIS.

The analysis contained in the EA of water quality effects is incomplete and superficial. The EA concludes: "Effects to ground water at this time are unknown." Furthermore, the EA reports that Molycorp has made a startling finding regarding its proposed facility: The expected seepage loss from the site will be 3,600 acre feet per year (almost 5 cubic feet per second). The water from this seepage is expected to reach the Wild & Scenic section of the Rio Grande within ONE year after tailings disposal begins. These critical findings alone should persuade BLM that a more comprehensive study is necessary to fully evaluate the impact of this facility on the environment.

In addition, the impact of fugitive dust emissions (a longstanding problem in the Questa area) from the proposed facility on local air quality is wholly inadequate. The EA concludes that "resolution of this impact will require additional data and analysis." Again, this lack of data confirms the contention that a full EIS must be prepared.

The deficiencies of the EA show that the Guadalupe Mountain tailings facility needs to be studied more carefully and thoroughly. Such expanded

research can only be accomplished in an EIS. BLM has been informed that we will seek appropriate relief in U.S. District Court to obtain full and exact compliance with the terms of NEPA if BLM fails to follow the NEPA process, including the issuance of an EIS. The law requires nothing less than BLM as the trustee of public land rigorously explore and objectively evaluate this project.

CLEAN WATER (Continued)

In early February, Sen. John Chafee (R-RI) introduced S.431, his bill to amend and reauthorize the Clean Water Act. Environmentalists feel that his proposals offer a good beginning and they support many of the bill's provisions; at the same time, they will be working on some changes and additions to Chafee's amendments. There has so far been no action on the Clean Water Act in the House Public Works Committee, which will consider its own set of amendments.

Please write to your senators and representative, asking them to support a strong Clean Water Act that includes the following:

- Re-affirmation of the original goal of fishable and swimmable water,
- Enforcement of BAT with no waivers, and attention to those areas which require even more stringent controls,
- Continuation of 5-year discharge permits,
- Strong pretreatment standards, to be met by all municipalities and industries (Senator Chafee's bill would allow municipalities to opt out of the federal pretreatment requirement if they have their own programs),
- Establishment of controls on non-point sources of pollution.

SOUTHWEST EXALTATION

Streaks of lightning
from
deep
blue
steel
gray
storm
clouds
Dance through a backdrop
rose-colored sky
multi-shades of pale blue mountainsides

Here and there
Falling veils of rain
Play upon the desert scene

High overhead
A waving moon
Reflects back
A sun already set

Wind in the cottonwoods
Over by the spring
Aspens up above

Here
In juniper
I pitch a tent
In case of passing rain
Late at night
Or falling dew
Before the dawn

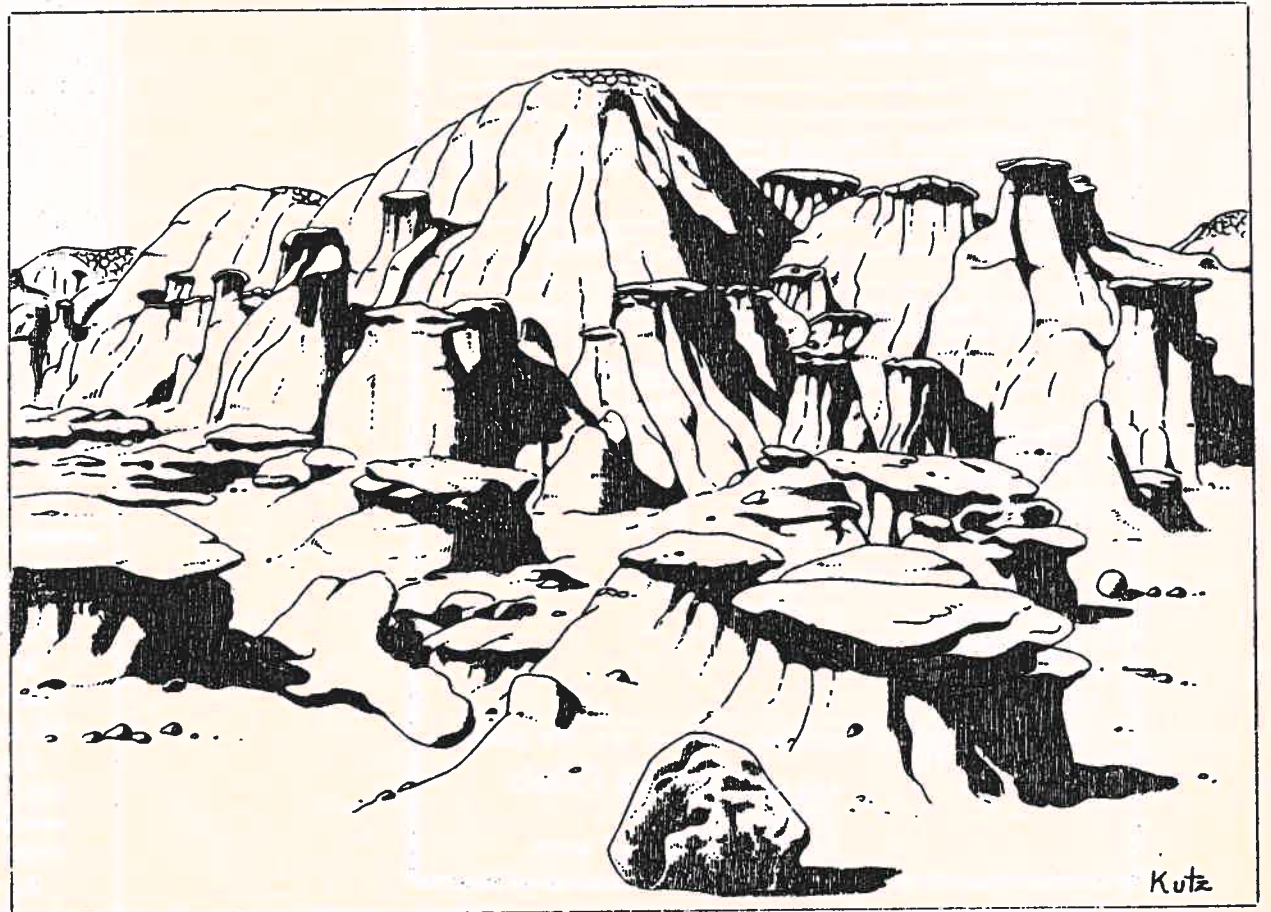
The wind dies down

Starlight

Firelight

The setting moon

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