

The Rio Grande SIERRA



THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

November/December 1984

SAN JUAN BASIN WILDERNESS AT LAST

By Dave Glowka, Albuquerque

After years of uncertainty, significant portions of the Bisti Badlands of northwest New Mexico have finally been afforded permanent protection. The San Juan Basin Wilderness Protection Act, passed unanimously in the final days of the 98th Congress, establishes the Bisti Wilderness and the De-na-zin Wilderness and provides permanent protection to the Fossil Forest as a scientific preserve. The Ah-shi-sle-pah Wilderness Study Area will remain in its current status, subject to the selection of major parts of it by the Navajo Tribe under the Navajo-Hopi Resettlement Act.

The Bisti Wilderness comprises 3968 acres of the best-known part of the Bisti Badlands. The presence of multiple thin layers of white sandstone amid softer shales and clays has created a high density of mushroom-shaped rock formations or "hoo-doo's" throughout this area. Colorful minerals, clay mounds and canyons, and an abundance of petrified wood and other fossils also opportunities for solitude.

Unfortunately, the integrity of this relatively small wilderness has been severely compromised by the presence of the Gateway Mine, which lies on state land in the heart of the wilderness area. This coal strip mine, operated by a subsidiary of Public Service Co. of New Mexico (PNM), went into production in late 1982, at a time when the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was studying the Bisti for wilderness designation. Although the mine could still be shut down by an ongoing Sierra Club lawsuit, the damage already done to this fragile ecosystem will be visible from parts of the Bisti Wilderness for many years to come. (See related story, page 8)

The De-na-zin Wilderness is wilderness in every sense of the word. Encompassing 23,872 acres, this area contains a remarkable diversity of land forms and ecosystems. In addition to the types of scenery found in the Bisti Wilderness, massive layers of red sandstone found in De-na-zin combine with softer sediments to form giant rock structures. Topographical relief in larger scale than that in the Bisti

Wilderness, resulting in the occurrence of arid grasslands, pinyon, juniper, and even Ponderosa pine trees within its borders. The size of the area, together with its rugged topography, assures the visitor abundant opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

The De-na-zin Wilderness is larger than the original area studied by the BLM due to the inclusion of 2520 acres of state land. State Land Commissioner Jim Baca supported the provision which mandates an exchange of surface and subsurface between the state and the BLM in order to consolidate the wilderness boundaries.

Within the De-na-zin Wilderness boundaries are also 1280 acres of Indian allotment trust lands, some of which are home to Navajo families. The wilderness legislation grants these families the right of historic access to their lands and also permits grazing to continue within the wilderness boundaries. It further allows for an exchange of the trust lands for federal

see Bisti, page 4

NEW MEXICO SUCCEEDS IN CLOSING SCOFFLAW STRIP MINE

by Jonathan Teague, Albuquerque

The New Mexico State Coal Surface Mining Commission (CSMC) voted for the first time to revoke an outstanding surface mining permit last month when it rejected appeals by Albert Firchau, owner of the Arroyo Mine near Cabezon in Sandoval County. The Arroyo Mine was one of about a dozen permitted coal strip mines in New Mexico. The Mining and Minerals Division (MMD), charged with enforcing state and federal surface mining and reclamation laws, had sought to close the mine after numerous and flagrant permit violations and refusals to comply with cessation orders. "Mr. Firchau has not planted a single blade of grass" stated one MMD official in describing the total failure to reclaim the mine, in operation since 1980. While resorting to a variety of corporate dodges and evasions, Firchau received extremely lenient treatment at the hands of the CSMC, being granted extensions and delays that left the staff of MMD amazed and disgruntled.

It is now clear that the Arroyo Mine was not required to post a bond sufficient to cover the costs of reclamation, which is to be taken over by the state under the Abandoned Mines Lands program of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. All surface mine operators are required by law to post bonds adequate to meet all

costs of reclamation for current operations during each five year permit term; nevertheless, Firchau was able to offer the State of New Mexico a parcel of cut-over mountain real estate in the state of Washington worth an estimated \$100,000 as bond for what is now gauged at \$400,000 worth of clean-up work at Arroyo. Several other mines currently operating in New Mexico under interim mine plans have not yet been required to post bonds.

The Secretary of the NM Energy and Minerals Department, Paul Biderman, has vowed to get the state's surface mining program working after years of neglect, including the review and updating of current mine permits. A 1984 report by the Public Lands Institute (Still Stripping the Law on Coal, by C. Johnson and E. Hildebrandt, PLI/NRDC) severely criticized New Mexico's enforcement of the strip mining laws. The Anaya Administration, while acknowledging that MMD has suffered from lack of support and staff under previous administrations has responded to the criticisms contained in the report by pledging to straighten out the state's inspection and enforcement program and pointing to progress made since Governor Anaya took office in 1982.

Conservationists can hope that the recent actions of the commission mark a new era in which environmental laws will be enforced. It would be welcome if the CSMC struck a better balance between leniency towards corporate violators and vigilance in environmental protection.

NM EID ELEVATED TO CABINET LEVEL

by Denise Fort, Director, NM Environmental Improvement Division

I am pleased to have the chance to write to you, and I look forward to writing from time to time in future issues of your newsletter on environmental issues in state government. Fittingly, this first column will be devoted to a new development—an important piece of proposed legislation that will mark a major step forward in the effort to protect the state's air, water, and health of its citizens.

As you may know, the Environmental Improvement Division is a relatively small part of the state's Health and Environment Department. With some 3600 employees, the Department must deal with a complex variety of medical, psychiatric, human health, and environmental health matters. The 300 members of the Environmental Improvement Division have faced hard competition for legislative attention and adequate budgetary consideration in this structure. Recently, Governor Anaya, recognizing the acute importance of New Mexico's natural environment to its future, signed an Executive Order giving the Division independent status, with cabinet-level standing.

The 1985 legislature will consider a bill to create a permanent department for environmental protection. The legislation would establish a new department to administer the

see EID, page 4

WILDERNESS WINS BIG IN 98th CONGRESS

by Jonathan Teague, Albuquerque

Conservationists across the land have much for which to thank Congress this Christmas, with special appreciation to John Seiberling and Mo Udall and the other dedicated leaders in the Congress. Despite the wiles of Reagan, Watt and Clark, the American public can take heart from the designation of an additional 8,567,000 acres of wilderness among 21 different states. This is a 35% increase in wilderness acreage in the Lower 48 states for a total of some 32 million acres outside of Alaska. 1984 saw the single largest addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System in any one year. The state by state tallies given below represent the long hard efforts of thousands of wilderness activists nationwide; they demonstrate that with the support of Congress even the most stone-age minded Administration can be overcome.

We need not rest (for long) on our laurels, however, for there is a lot more de facto wilderness out there, both protected as RARE II roadless areas and unprotected as "multiple use" or "planning areas". Wilderness advocates succeeded in halting several major anti-wilderness bills such as the RARE II bills for Montana and Idaho; millions of acres of North America's finest wildlands await permanent protection in the meantime. The Colorado wilderness bill failed as Senator Bill Armstrong attempted to strip wilderness areas of any reserved water rights (an issue now under litigation), and the Cache la Poudre Wild and Scenic River proposal faces an uncertain fate as a result. Millions of acres of BLM desert wilderness await consideration by Congress, and in New Mexico the RARE II Clean-up bill and our own statewide BLM wilderness bill lie close ahead. [see Statewide Wilderness Update, this issue]

It is unfortunate but true that the Reagan Administration opposed almost all of the pro-wilderness bills in both the 97th and 98th sessions of Congress and ironic that President Reagan should now seek to claim credit for the passage of these bills. He earned the dubious historical record of being the first president to veto a wilderness bill -- the Osceola National Forest bill in Florida on its first passage through Congress -- despite the support of a state's entire Congressional delegation. So much for state's rights!

These achievements should be put into perspective, lest it be said that environmentalists are locking up the country in the name of preservation. According to the National Agricultural Lands Study (CEQ/USDA 1981), the total U.S. land base for all fifty states is 2,263 million acres. Of this amount, some 751 million acres is federal land under various agencies. Of this amount of public domain, slightly more than 88 million is now in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS), including Alaska. This is to say that 11.7% of the federal lands or 3.9% of the entire land area is now protected in a wild state. Compare this with the 69 million acres or 3.1% of the nations land that was in urban areas as of 1977!

James Watt showed us that wilderness status doesn't free natural areas from

the assaults of destructive exploitation. But the wilderness system is our strongest statement that natural values are worth conserving for their own sake and for ours.

STATE BY STATE WILDERNESS ACREAGES

Arkansas	91,103 (FS)
Arizona	782,980 (FS) 291,600 (BLM)
total	1,054,580 [67,930]*
California	1,800,000 (FS) 1,400,000 (BLM)
total	3,200,000 [96,200]** [1,700,000]***
(wild & scenic rivers)	83 miles
Florida	49,150 (FS) [11,000]*
Georgia	14,439 (FS)
Missouri	18,500 (FS)
Mississippi	5,500 (FS)
Montana (Lee Metcalf)	259,000 (FS/ BLM)
New Hampshire	77,000 (FS)
New Mexico (Fossil Forest)	27,840 (BLM) 2,720
North Carolina	69,000 (FS)
Ohio	24,500 (BLM)
total	850,000
Pennsylvania (Allegheny NRA)	9,705 (FS) [23,100]
Tennessee	24,942 (FS)
Texas	34,346 (FS)
Utah	749,550 (FS)
Vermont	41,000 (FS)
Virginia	55,984 (FS) [25,075]*
Washington	1,022,900 (FS) 7,100 (BLM)
total	1,030,000
Wisconsin	24,300
Wyoming	884,000 (FS) 195,500 (WSA)

* Wilderness Study Area(s) in bill
 ** Forest Service further planning
 *** Forest Service roadless areas
 [Compiled from the National News report]



REAGAN'S REELECTION CAUSE FOR CONCERN

During his last campaign tour before the election, Ronald Reagan looked at a group of protesters and said, "You ain't seen nothing yet!" We should not regard this as an idle threat. In his first term of office, Reagan appointed James Watt and Anne Burford to two of the most important government positions relative to the environment; crippled the Environmental Protection Agency by drastically cutting funds; delayed acquisition of new park lands that had already been authorized by law; vetoed important wilderness legislation; tried to open wilderness areas to mineral leasing; supported hunting in national parks; gutted regulations designed to protect our lands from destructive strip mining practices; increased timber quotas for the nation's forests; dropped important wilderness study areas from the study process; threatened to privatize "excess" public lands; and embarked on a coal giveaway program, backing off only when it threatened to become a major election-year issue.

With that kind of record, what can we expect during the next four years, when the opportunities for re-election and thus the need for moderation are gone? We should brace ourselves for an attack on environmental laws, policies, and ideas such as we have never seen before. Armed with what Reagan will portray as an overwhelming mandate, he will no doubt try to reverse the trends started by the environmental movement. In the name of economic recovery, expect to see attempts to relax the laws and regulations protecting our air and national security, expect to see increased attempts to open our parks and wilderness areas to mining. In the name of energy independence, count on wholesale leasing of public coal, oil, and gas at fire sale prices. And in the name of reducing the national debt, expect to see attempts to sell off some of our public lands and to cut funding needed to clean up toxic wastes.

This is clearly a time that calls for increased volunteerism. THE SIERRA CLUB NEEDS YOUR HELP! We are a grassroots organization with opportunities for anyone that shares the goals of environmental protection and preservation to become a leader and work toward fulfillment of those goals. We will endeavor to publicize in the Rio Grande Sierran all environmental issues on the local, state, and national levels that need activists. Pick an issue of interest to you and carry the banner! There is far too much work to be done to assume that someone else will do it.

We need leaders who are interested in becoming experts on a given issue, defining goals and the tasks needed to achieve them, and leading the effort required to realize those goals. And if leading an effort does not interest you, there are many other tasks available. Get to know other conservationists -- attend your group meetings. Let the group and chapter leaders know of your interests and talents. At a time when self-interest and short-term ideals and profits seem to be increasingly popular, it will take the involvement of many dedicated people to assure a quality future for this planet.

Get into the outdoors -- get a friend to join the Sierra Club.

funding, much shoe leather, and phone banks) have supported all endorsed candidates. The Santa Fe POLITICAL FORUM on September 4 drew a crowd of eleven candidates (including Judy Pratt, Bill Richardson and Lou Gallegos) and resulted in a lot of environmental visibility and publicity.

The street and telephone impact of our dedicated volunteers has probably exceeded the well known efforts produced during the 1982 election. The Mondale/Ferraro/Sierra Club bumper stickers for all Chapter club members have drawn national attention and, we hope, a few votes, as well as some ire from some of our club members!!

Unfortunately the efforts and impacts were not consistent throughout the Chapter--some groups were terrific, some good, and some are still to be heard from as far as SCCOPE activities are concerned. Non-starters worked, we hope, through other channels--such as the CVA--in support of candidates.

SF TIMBER SALES DAMAGE CULTURAL SITES from the Sierra Club Land Letter

Logging activities in New Mexico's Santa Fe National Forest have already damaged more than 500 archeological sites. The Sierra Club, Save the Jemez and other groups have filed suit to stop further damage here and in the other national forests of Region 3 (Arizona and New Mexico). The suit charges that the Forest Service is failing to inventory and protect cultural and archeological sites prior to disturbing the ground and entering into timber sales, in violation of the National Historic Preservation Act. It seeks a halt in timber harvesting within Region 3 which could damage cultural sites until the Forest Service has taken the necessary inventorying and protection steps. It also seeks restoration of damaged sites. The State of New Mexico has filed a similar, separate suit.

The cultural sites in the Jemez Mountains of the Santa Fe National Forest include a 2000 room village from a civilization that flourished in the period 1200-1450. 3,500 sites have been identified in the national forest but there may be as many as 26,000 additional sites. These sites are important to the Jemez tribe and some rival those of Chaco Canyon and Bandelier National Monument. Attorney Grove Burnett of Vallecitos, New Mexico, pointed out that there have been flagrant violations of the Act for at least six years, with loggers routinely taking heavy equipment through large pueblo ruins. [from the Sierra Club October 1984 Land Letter, edited by John Hopkins. For how you can help, contact Myles Brown, 3321 Avenida de San Marcos, Santa Fe, NM 87501, (505) 471-5075.]

Commission's regulations.

Among other things, SCCOPE guidelines require that any political activity by an entity of the club (group, chapter, or national) must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the committees (executive or SCCOPE) at two levels (local, state, or national). For state races, the approval must be by the chapter SCCOPE and executive committee--except for congressional and senate races which must also be approved by the national SCCOPE committee.

In New Mexico, the Rio Grande Chapter SCCOPE Committee and the Chapter Executive Committee agreed not to endorse a candidate in the U.S. Senate race (Domenici v. Pratt), but to permit other levels of activity, including allowing Sierra Club leaders to use their membership and titles for identification only in political activities for either candidate. This action was taken July 1, 1984, and the necessary papers were sent to the national SCCOPE office for the committee's action. By mid-September, the national committee had neither approved nor disapproved of the Chapter's recommended action.

Meanwhile, Sierra Club members who had an interest in the political scene had been working for the senatorial candidate of their choice without the blessing or curse of the national SCCOPE committee, but neither they nor the candidates could use any material about the Sierra Club, pro or con, in his or her campaign.

In early September, a group of environmentalists who favored Senator Pete Domenici's re-election formed an organization called "Environmentalists for Domenici," and a press release was issued which named the members of the steering committee and stated that some of them belonged to local and national environmental organizations including the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, the New Mexico Wilderness Study Committee, and others. The release did not identify any person as a member of any particular organization and did not state that any of the organizations endorsed Domenici's re-election.

An Albuquerque Journal reporter contacted at least two of the people named and asked if they were members of "Environmentalists for Domenici" and if they were officers--national vice-president and chapter chairman--of the Sierra Club.

Since untruth is infinitely more damaging than truth, both replied that they were members of the new group and were, indeed, officers of the Sierra Club. When asked by the reporter, they also stated their opinions regarding the candidates.

Both also stated that they were not acting as individuals and not as representatives of the Sierra Club. The news report did make a comment to



SANTA FE GROUP ACTION IN POLITICS, CONSERVATION

by Jack Kenney, Santa Fe

Much of our recent effort has gone into Political Action in support of Mondale/Richardson/Coll/Maes. Our Mondale party raised \$550 for that campaign and drew a nice crowd. The Group SCCOPE committee has worked involved and have rendered invaluable volunteer support. Each week-end has seen another task to be accomplished for a candidate. And all candidates know whom to call upon for a task to be performed.

Meanwhile the Santa Fe Group hikes go on--now normally four per week on Saturday and Sunday, with informal hikes on both Wednesday and Thursday.

Conservation activities continue to keep all of the activists busy. Hot topics as of the end of October include:

- PNM studies, to include BIA development of an EIS which includes an alternative to install a new power line through the Santa Fe National Forest between Los Alamos and Coyote. (This in addition to the Norton-Tesuque line through BLM and Indian land north of Santa Fe.)

- Santa Fe National Forest proposal for an Elk Mountain road to assist the timber industry in logging spruce (to include cable logging) in previously unlogged areas. (We thought that we had this one won during the early 70's, but new spruce (and cable) logging requirements have raised the proposal to the level of a road contract.)

- Molycorp visits and preparation for the EIS expected shortly on the Guadalupe Mountain tailings ponds.

- USFS hearings on spruce budworm problems in the Carson National Forest.

- Research/observations of purported water contamination via the Ortiz Gold Mine in Cerillos.

- Revision of the Santa Fe National Forest Plan--now expected in May/June 1985. (meanwhile the timber cutting continues at an accelerated pace.)

- Etc.!

Bisti (from page 1)

only at the request and approval of the allottees involved.

A 2720 acre portion of the Fossil Forest has been withdrawn from mining and mineral leasing to preserve its aesthetic, natural, scientific, educational, and paleontological values. Contrary to information printed in the popular press, this protection is permanent. The legislation does mandate that rules and regulations be promulgated within one year for the administration of the Fossil Forest to protect these values. It further directs the BLM to conduct a long-range study to determine how best to manage these values and to forward the study results to Congress within eight years; but during the study period and until Congress directs otherwise, the Fossil Forest is to be managed to protect the values listed above.

In addition to the stunning scenic beauty found in its "hoo-doo" formations, the Fossil Forest contains a wealth of paleontological resources. Its large number of in situ prehistoric tree stumps preserved upright in their original growing location is unique, and together with the dinosaur skeletons and other fossils that lie on and below the surrounding surface, it affords paleontologists the opportunity to study a forest floor as it existed 65 million years ago. Fossils in this area represent the transition period between the Mesozoic Era (Age of Dinosaurs) and the Cenozoic Era (Age of Mammals). Their study has and will continue to yield important information about this critical period and could someday help determine the reasons why dinosaurs became extinct and mammals became the predominant life form on Earth. The enacting legislation allows paleontological study, excavation, and interpretation to continue.

The Fossil Forest represents a tremendous potential for education as well as scientific research. The area has been likened to an outdoor natural history museum where the displays are gradually uncovered and placed on pedestals by the forces of natural erosion. A great deal about prehistoric environments and natural processes can be learned by the novice with proper guidance in this area. Interpretive trails, if combined with adequate measures for protecting and preserving the resource, may be one appropriate use for the Fossil Forest.

The great disappointment with the San Juan Basin Wilderness Protection Act is the fact that the 6563 acre Ah-shi-sle-pah Wilderness Study Area was not designated wilderness. This area contains the typical rock formations found throughout the Bisti Badlands. Three things, however, make it unique and dictate the need for its preservation. First, its general topography is such that views from within the WSA are restricted in the direction in which strip mining is likely to occur in the future; long-range views are oriented toward Chaco Canyon, along a path where significant development is not likely to occur. Thus the chance exists to preserve an area where the visitor can enjoy unspoiled views and understand the beauty of the San Juan Basin in its natural state. Secondly, the Ah-shi-sle-pah contains a large island of arid grasslands that represent some of the

best stands of native grasses in the San Juan Basin. The chance to preserve this ecosystem in its virgin state somewhere in the Basin may be unique to the Ah-shi-sle-pah WSA. Thirdly, the close proximity of Ah-shi-sle-pah to Chaco Culture National Historic Park (2 miles) provides an opportunity for diversifying the recreation opportunities in the immediate vicinity of the park. Ah-shi-sle-pah has already been used by the National Park Service as an alternative for primitive camping when campgrounds in Chaco Canyon become full during the busy summer months. Furthermore, strip mining in Ah-shi-sle-pah would be visible from the park and from the main access road leading to it.

Almost all of the Ah-shi-sle-pah WSA has been selected by the Navajo Tribe under authority of the Navajo-Hopi Resettlement Act. This 1980 legislation allows the Navajo Tribe to select 35,000 acres of land in New Mexico in lieu of lands transferred to the Hopi Tribe in Arizona. In addition to the lands selected in Ah-shi-sle-pah, part of this selected acreage lies in the Fossil Forest. The Navajo Tribe, however, recognizes the environmental significance of these areas and sought a provision in the wilderness legislation which would have allowed them to amend their selections so that these areas could be preserved.

The San Juan Basin Wilderness Protection Act does contain a provision that mandates an exchange for selected lands in the Fossil Forest. It does not, however, allow for an exchange of those selected in Ah-shi-sle-pah. Furthermore, it clarifies the Resettlement Act by directing that subsurface rights also be transferred to the Navajo Tribe when the selections are approved by the Relocation Commission. These rights were made subject, however, to preference right lease applications that are pending for some of the lands in question. In other words, if the BLM finds these applications for non-competitive leases to be valid and grants the applicants a lease for the coal, these leases will be transferred with the land and must be honored by the Navajo Tribe. Although legal questions surround the preference right lease program in general and these PRLA's in particular, the possibility does exist that Ah-shi-sle-pah will eventually be strip mined to provide coal for PNM's power plants.

Conservationists did not get everything we had hoped for in the San Juan Basin Wilderness Protection Act; nevertheless, it is a significant and historic piece of legislation. It establishes the first BLM wilderness areas in the state, among the first in the nation. It provides an area where scientific research of important fossils and prehistoric ecosystems can be conducted in a deliberate, unhurried fashion without the threat of impending mining. And though Ah-shi-sle-pah has not yet been saved, there is still hope that, with help from the Navajo Tribe, this important area can also be afforded permanent protection. The Sierra Club, together with other groups and individuals, has worked toward preservation of parts of the Bisti Badlands for at least 13 years. The many individuals that have worked on this issue, as well as the thousands who have supported it, can be proud of the results.

The New Mexico congressional delegation deserves a lot of credit for this legislation. Our champion in this effort in the House of Representatives was Rep. Bill Richardson. He arranged a joint hearing of two subcommittees of the House Interior Committee held in Santa Fe in May, 1983. Nearly 500 New Mexicans attended this hearing, and testimony from over 70 witnesses showed overwhelming support for permanent protection of the four areas in the Bisti Badlands. As a result, Richardson introduced legislation to that effect in the House.

Rep. Manuel Lujan opposed designation of Ah-shi-sle-pah as wilderness. A compromise between Richardson and Lujan in June led to overwhelming passage by the House of a bill to designate Bisti and De-na-zin as wilderness, establish the Fossil Forest as a scientific preserve, and designate Ah-shi-sle-pah as a congressional wilderness study area, guaranteeing that it could not be dropped from study administratively. Furthermore, this bill contained provisions allowing the Navajo selections in Ah-shi-sle-pah and the Fossil Forest to be amended.

Senator Jeff Bingaman consistently supported our position in the Senate. He had also attended the Santa Fe hearing and became convinced that all four areas deserve permanent protection. He introduced identical legislation to Rep. Richardson's, but the Senate leadership effectively stalled any action until very late in the session.

Sen. Pete Domenici did not support wilderness designation for Ah-shi-sle-pah, apparently accepting PNM's arguments about the value of the coal in that area. As a result, Domenici refused to agree to provisions that would allow the Navajo Tribe to amend their selections in Ah-shi-sle-pah. Furthermore, the provision that effectively reserves the coal in Ah-shi-sle-pah for applicants for noncompetitive (preference right) coal leases became a condition for any compromise to which Domenici would agree. At that point, it became clear that this would be the best legislation achievable this session and perhaps was our last chance for any bill for several years to come.

Nevertheless, we owe thanks to our entire congressional delegation. Despite the disappointments, we have achieved permanent protection for over 30,000 acres of the Bisti Badlands. Please take the time to write to members of the delegation, as well as State Land Commissioner Jim Baca and Governor Toney Anaya, thanking them for their efforts and support for this important piece of legislation.

EID (from page 1)

environmental laws of the state. Since the Environmental Improvement Act of 1971 states that the Division shall be the chief agent for these laws, the elevation of the Division to permanent cabinet rank will strengthen the state's commitment to the protection and improvement of its great and popular assets.

In a separate department, those who work on your behalf to carry out the mandates of state laws protecting our environment will have direct access to the chief executive and the legislature with their legitimate requests. A department within the executive branch

of state government has much more influence than a mere branch of a department. We would be better able to review proposals and act as an advocate within state government for environmental protection. We would be able to be more responsive to questions calling for careful scientific replies. We would be more effective in seeking solutions with New Mexico's business community to environmental problems.

The technical staff of the Environmental Improvement Division has a well deserved reputation for excellence. Inadequate salaries, insufficient staffing to perform mandated responsibilities, and the wearing battles fought within a major bureaucracy have taken their toll on morale. By separating EID from MED the dedicated employees of the agency will see more evidence of their effectiveness in carrying out the agency's mission.

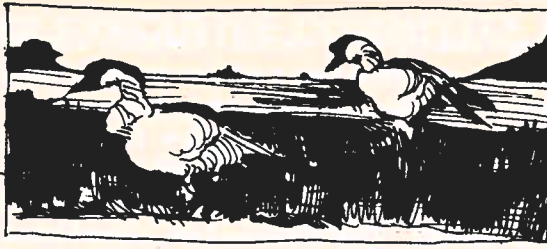
Questions have been raised about the structure of a new EID. No additional responsibilities would be added to the agency from other governmental agencies. (In my opinion the resource planning function needs careful examination to see how it is now handled within state government.) The new agency will be established in a fiscally responsible fashion and additional costs, if any, minimized.

Readers of the *Sierran* don't need to be convinced that environmental protection is as important to New Mexico as the work of other cabinet level agencies. Ground water pollution and hazardous waste contamination have become critical issues in the state. Our drinking water is thoroughly dependent on underground sources.

drinking water comes from deep within the earth, in New Mexico ninety percent of our domestic water must be mined. The expense of restoring such water for personal use if it has been polluted is considerable.

Of more visible concern, of course, is the air in which we live and which we breathe. The existing air quality program has succeeded in reducing older problems, but we face new ones. Visibility and acid rain are the spectres of the 1980's. New approaches are necessary. A separate state department could provide them. Clean air has been a hallmark of New Mexico. Let us not let that mark blur in the haze of inattention.

I welcome your questions and comments on this bill, and on any other matter related to this agency's work. The Sierra Club has contributed much to the state and I look forward to a productive relationship with it.



GRIZZLY BEARS FACE EXTINCTION

Populations Dwindle due to Roadless Area Development

by Jonathan Teague, Albuquerque

Quick and decisive action is demanded if even a remnant population of grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos horridus*) are to be preserved in their remaining home range centered on the Yellowstone Basin in the northern Rockies. Increasing intrusions into the bears' habitat by human activities such as oil and gas exploration, road building and timber sales, and recreational developments such as ski resorts have disrupted the feeding and breeding patterns of the bears. The increased opportunities for human/bear encounters has usually resulted in the killing of more bears. Since female grizzlies do not usually breed until six years of age and then bear on the average of two cubs every three years, this rate of mortality cannot be sustained.

Grizzlies need from a few dozen to hundreds of square miles of range in which each bear can forage; human encroachments on this range have both reduced the available food supply for the bears and habituated them to the presence of human beings. Since grizzlies are as behaviourally dominant as humans, the results have been tragic for both. Wildlife biologists have argued uses of all kinds, including recreation, in certain critical areas in order to maintain viable breeding populations of bears. The presence of people is clearly part of the problem.

The Forest Service to date has failed to take any vigorous action to either protect the range of the bears from harmful development or to include the bears' need for habitat as a major factor in resource planning. In light of this failure and the urgent plight of the bears, over twenty conservation organizations, including Greenpeace USA, Friends of the Earth, and the Idaho Wildlife Federation have banded together to prepare a "Citizens' Proposal to Save the Yellowstone Grizzly Bear." The 26-point proposal outlines a core area of Yellowstone National Park to be protected from all development and gives other recommendations to ensure the bears' survival. The actual range of the bears to be protected through planning measures encompasses all of Yellowstone, Grand Teton park north of Signal Mountain, and portions of the five surrounding national forests from ten to thirty miles from the park boundaries.

Species such as the grizzly bear serve as indicator species for the health of the ecosystem as a whole, and their pending demise is cause for grave alarm. It has been said that wildlife is the soul of the land, and in the Yellowstone Basin a part of that life is slipping away. For more information on how to help with the grizzly bear rescue effort and the Yellowstone ecosystem preserve proposal, contact Campaign for Yellowstone's Bears, P.O. Box 416, Boulder, Colorado 80306.

Steel Mill (from back page)

\$10 million mill had grown to greater than \$120 million in size!

Operation of the proposed mill is likely to harm the generally high air quality of the Socorro region, a fact acknowledged by the NM Environmental Improvement Division. On September 6, Zia Steel Company applied for an air quality permit from the NM EID; this application was subsequently denied on the grounds that it was incomplete. EID determined that the stack emissions from the proposed steel mill would degrade the pristine (Class I) air quality now found in the Rio Grande Valley near Socorro and that current regulations on the maintenance of air quality in clean air areas (called "Prevention of Significant Deterioration" or PSD for short) would be violated. The airshed in the valley is relatively self-contained and little natural dispersion of pollutants would occur at the present site. Zia Corporation must now submit a new application to the EID showing that the project can meet all conditions of the PSD regulations.

Additional concerns have surfaced about the potential for pollution of near-surface groundwater in the agricultural areas adjacent to the proposed mill as well as the project's impact on tourism. Aside from the potentially severe environmental conflicts of the project, uncertainty about the actual operations of the mill remains. The mill is slated to use the "SL/RN" process for direct reduction of iron ore, which employs coal directly rather than using coke. An existing plant now located at Casa Grande, Arizona, would be one of two SL/RN plants in the U.S. and has been shut down for the past ten years.

The suitability of New Mexico iron ore with the SL/RN process is unknown, since no trials have been made using ore from the Bingham deposit, on which Zia Steel claims to have an option, nor have ore reserves been positively delineated. As of this date, it is not known how much water would be required to operate the mill or whether water rights have been obtained for the project.

What you can do: Write the EID and demand that they hold public hearings in Socorro, Santa Fe and Albuquerque on Zia's application for an air quality permit when it is resubmitted. Say that impacts on air, groundwater, and surrounding land uses such as agriculture and tourism must be accounted for before any steel mill project can proceed. [For EID's address, see reference list, this newsletter.]



CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

by John Colburn, Albuquerque

It's been a long time since the last Rio Grande Sierran, but volunteer editors are hard to come by. I am grateful to Dave Glowka and Jon Teague for coming forward to help the Chapter communicate with its members.

While the majority of our members are in one of the local groups and receive those newsletters, there are several hundred Sierrans scattered around New Mexico who are not part of a group and who rely on the chapter newsletter for information about what's happening in the Land of Enchantment and those three counties in western Texas.

Thanks to Barbara Davis and her family for their work in putting out the Rio Grande Sierran for the past several years. Barbara gathered, typed, and pasted up everything that went into each issue, delivered the copy to the printer, picked up the finished newsletters, and--with the help of her family--pasted the labels, sorted and bundled the papers according to ZIP codes, and delivered them to the Post Office. It was a big job well done.

As all of you know by now, the San Juan Basin Wilderness Protection Act of 1984 was signed by the President, and the Bisti and De-na-zin areas are part of the National Wilderness Preservation System and the Fossil Forest is set aside as a scientific preserve until Congress decides otherwise. While the bills were before Congress for only about a year and a half, the battle--and that's what it was at times--to preserve those areas had been going on for at least ten years that I can remember. Before we can relax completely, there will be more efforts to preserve the Ah-shi-sle-pah WSA and to stop further mining at the Gateway Mine next to the Bisti Wilderness.

The "Bisti Battle" was fought by many people over the years, and I'm not even going to try to list the names I know. However, Dave Glowka and Jon Teague probably did more to make the Bisti a national issue and to get protection for those San Juan Basin areas than any other two people, and they deserve special recognition and appreciation. (The President hadn't even signed the bill when Dave and Jon volunteered to edit the Sierran--talk about going from the frying pan into the fire!)

The New Mexico Congressional delegation also merits our thanks for putting through a compromise bill that was acceptable to all of the varied interests in the San Juan Basin. Senator Pete Domenici introduced a "Bisti only" bill back in the Spring of 1983 and then managed to get the final bill through the Senate over rather strong administration opposition. Representative Bill Richardson and Senator Jeff Bingaman introduced a more comprehensive bill in the Summer of '83 and really pushed for protection for all three WSA's and the Fossil Forest.



Representative Manuel Lujan helped work out a compromise that overcame Republican opposition in the House and that became the basis for the final bill.

Since this will probably be my last column as Chapter Chairman, I would like to thank the Executive Committee for their efforts and help during the past two years. They are really great people, and I have been honored to be a member of that group.

Being Chapter Chairman has been an experience, but I think it's time that someone else had the honor.

ACTIVISTS NEEDED**ADOPT A PARK OR REFUGE**

The Sierra Club Public Lands Committee is building a network of activists who live near a national park or wildlife refuge and wish to ensure its proper use and protection. We need to find an adopter for each unit. Adopters participate in park or refuge planning processes, monitor inappropriate uses of the land, identify activities on adjacent lands which may harm a park or refuge, publicize those threats, and identify budget deficiencies or needs for land acquisition. Please contact: c/o Rose Strickland, 1685 Kings Row, Reno, NV 89503, for parks; and Abbie Avery, Box 246, Lincoln Center, MA 01773, for refuges. Also please let the Sierran know about your interest so we can pass the information along to the proper chapter leader.

PUBLIC LANDS DEFENSE NETWORK

This is a network of Congressional district and state coordinators working to develop more grassroots activity on key federal lands issues. It currently covers over 150 Congressional districts. Coordinators' activities include ensuring input to their legislators on federal lands issues, using or developing local letter-writing/phone networks, and maintaining or establishing contacts with legislators' staff. Coordinators receive various materials, updates, and alerts. Please contact: John Hopkins, 48 Mt. Pleasant St., Cambridge, MA 02140.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE NETWORK

ORV's are an issue from the California desert to the Atlantic beaches. The ORV subcommittee of the Sierra Club Public Lands Committee is forming a network of local activists who want to work on this issue. Please contact: George Barnes, 960 Ilima Way, Palo Alto, CA 94306.

ADOPT A WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

This important program needs more adopters to ensure eventual protection of important areas as Congressionally designated wilderness. Adopters do not need to live near their area, but visiting and becoming familiar with it would be helpful. Please contact: Judy Bishop, 3005 Calle Quieta, Santa Fe, NM 87501.

EDITORS' NOTE:

As you read the new Rio Grande Sierran, we hope that you like what you see. We seek contributions of all kinds from our members: photographs, news articles, stories, poetry, announcements, drawings and maps. We welcome letters to the editor and also hope to have periodic guest columns on conservation events and issues. As you will note, we have an advertisement in this issue and will be experimenting with this in the future.

A major part of the life of any organization is shared information, and it is our hope that the revived Sierran will contribute to the renaissance of membership interest and activism. We would like to publish as much environmental news about the Southwest as we can cram into each issue, and we need the help of our members to collect this news. We would also like to better publicize chapter and group outings and we urge all group outings chairs to send us their trip announcements. We have ideas for features such as a chapter photo contest, with the winners to be published in the Sierran. Let us hear from you! Traditionally the Sierran has been published bimonthly; if sufficient material can be gathered we want to shorten the time between issues. We echo John Colburn's vote of appreciation to Barbara Davis for her diligent and relentless work in publishing the Sierran, and her record of timely publication month after month will be hard to equal.

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE
January 10th!**

CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTION

The Rio Grande Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) is composed of nine members elected at large by Sierra Club members living within the Chapter boundaries. Each ExCom member serves three-year terms, staggered such that three of the members' terms expire each year. The members whose terms expire at the end of this year are Jim Owen (El Paso), George Mader (El Paso), and Jack Kenney (Santa Fe). Many thanks to these folks for giving their time and energy for the betterment of the Chapter and preservation of the environment.

Listed below are statements submitted by candidates for the ExCom positions being vacated. Please take time to read these statements and vote. A ballot is enclosed in this issue of the Rio Grande Sierran. Ballots must be received in the Chapter office by December 15, 1984.

HAL REYNOLDS (Alamogordo)

B.S. Degree in Forestry from the University of Michigan. Joined Sierra Club in 1973. Presently Chair of the Tularosa Basin Group. Served as delegate from the Society of American Foresters to the NM Conservation Coordinating Council for two years. Retired in January 1984 after 34 years of service with the U.S. Forest Service.

Have worked actively on my own for the past 30 years to protect our natural environment by writing numerous letters and making numerous phone calls to newspapers and public officials on behalf of our natural environment. Have spoken to many groups and have taught classes about natural resource conservation. Have always loved and enjoyed the wild country and have always worked to protect and preserve it.

If elected, I would like to work primarily to protect and preserve our Human Life Support Systems; i.e., Air, Water, and Soil, and to conserve Energy. In New Mexico, I would like to work against the public policy of perpetual growth of population and consumption, and to protect and preserve New Mexico's wide open spaces. I am particularly concerned about the ultimate destroyer -- Nuclear War.



Read the *Chaco-Bisti News* - A San Juan Basin environmental report

JIM STEWART (Albuquerque)

I have been a member of the Sierra Club and the New Mexico Wilderness Study Committee for about ten years. I have served on the Chapter ExCom before and was Chairman for one year. I am on the Board of Directors of Project Lighthawk, which provides aviation services to conservationists throughout the west.

My primary interest is in wilderness protection. With the exception of the Club's work on the Bisti region we have drifted away from the broader concern for Forest Service and BLM wilderness throughout the state.

Another area of interest is energy policy. Several years ago I served on Albuquerque's Energy Conservation Council. The issue has lost some glamour but none of its importance.

JOHN J. (JACK) KENNEY (Santa Fe)

Born in Santa Fe; Sierra Club member since 1969; Santa Fe Group Chair since June 1982; member of the Chapter ExCom for the last two years (appointed to fill vacancy); and Chapter SCCOPE Chair 1983-84.

Environmental perspective developed as a child in the Sangre de Cristo mountains; sharpened by summer archeological jobs during college years in Santa Fe and the Four Corners area; and further tempered by extensive travel and observation of what can happen (and has happened) to portions of the world where the population is not aware of the fragile environment around us -- the hills, trees, wildlife, and land.

The Chapter's geographical area is so widespread and diverse that in my view the job of the Chapter is to nurture local groups, to encourage and coordinate the conservation activities of the groups, and not attempt to control or stifle local enthusiasts.

The Groups within the Chapter face enormous and challenging problems in the near future. We need to protect our five forests from the well camouflaged Crowell (Forest Service) Planning System; we need to be vigilant as BLM finalizes their wilderness planning in New Mexico; we need to push efforts to clean up the local tailing/toxic waste residues; we must be in the forefront in focusing on Clean Air and Clean Water programs; and we must support our enthusiasts working for wilderness areas; wildlife protection; and a new mining law.

JOHN HAMILTON (El Paso)

Member of Sierra Club since 1981. Past Chairman of El Paso Group Inner City Outing Committee (ICO), Chairman of water quality committee, member of El Paso Group Executive Committee, present Chairman of El Paso Group and Chairman of El Paso Clean Air Coalition.

I am a teacher, and an environmentalist. I try to live by the same principles which guide our Club and have devoted time and energy to Club work. I believe in involving others in the wilderness experience - currently lead both adult and ICO outings. I believe in being informed on Club issues - attended and participated in ExCom meetings as well as attending a workshop on stripmining, on leadership, and a graduate level course at the Univ. of Texas at El Paso on water problems. I believe in our being politically involved - worked in the '82 Coleman campaign. I believe in actively solving the environmental problems of our community - helped found and presently chair of the El Paso Clean Air Coalition.

I choose to be an advocate for the environment because it is where I live. I can further this cause by working as a member of the Executive Committee. My job will be to act as a sounding board to the Chairman, and promote the active participation of our members in Club business. I will work with anyone who is environmentally correct.

LELSIE C. KING III (Los Alamos)

I am an attorney. My Sierra Club activities have included Chapter Chairman; Chapter ExCom; Group Chairman; Group Conservation Chair; Outings Leader (in Florida); Northeastern Regional Vice-President; Sierra Club Council; and I am currently on the National Finance Committee, Development Committee and Volunteer Fundraising Committee.

I have been a Club activist since 1976 when the Corps of Engineers threatened my favorite river. I've been active in both conservation and administration, and I've seen that the Sierra Club formula works: dedicated volunteers with the right information, good political judgement and a bit of luck can and do beat large corporations and the government, not just once, but over and over again.

To keep this formula working, I would like to see the Rio Grande Chapter:

- Establish a strong lobbying program in Santa Fe, including a Sierra Club lobbyist during the legislative session and a newsletter on legislative issues.

- Strengthen volunteers and the various Groups around the state through additional training and funding.

- Develop a strong fundraising program.

I think these are reasonable goals for the next three years. And I would appreciate your vote to work on them.

Tell other Sierra club members what's happening! Send your announcements to the *RIO GRANDE SIERRAN*, c/o Jonathan Teague, 1917 Gold S.E., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106

WILDLIFE REPORT

by Carol Cochran, Albuquerque

In Praise of Mountain Lions is a 45-page book published by the Chapter's wildlife committee. It contains the speeches given by Ed Abbey and John Nichols at the Sierra Club's rally for the mountain lion at the Kimo theater in Albuquerque last February. Neither Abbey's introduction nor Nichol's entire speech has been published anywhere else. The book contains line drawings by Mary Beth Watkins-Arterburn. An excerpt from Nichol's speech follows:

"... Every time I fish the Rio Grande del Rancho, I know that bears are out there hiding someplace, or waddling through the trees, eating berries, maybe just ahead of me fishing for trout in their own inimitable fashion. Sometimes I spy their pawprints. Occasionally I check out a rotten log that has been torn apart for ants. And I remember the two bears I have seen, and I eagerly await a third experience.

"And my life in the wild is made a hundred times more exciting by the simple fact of the bears' existence in that territory we are sharing. And it doesn't matter if I never see another one again. Just knowing that the chance exists is sufficient.

"And that knowledge makes magic the wild areas I habituate."

The book has been selling for \$3.50, but as Club members you may buy one for \$2.50. It's a good book to own and a good book to give. Profits support the efforts of the wildlife committee. ~~Clip and send the order blank below or call Helen Miff (281-1326) or Carol Cochran (345-1412).~~

Mountain lion slide program:

An anonymous donor has given the wildlife committee \$1500 to complete and upgrade an educational slide program on the mountain lion. There will be two programs: one for adults and one for children, both about 20 minutes long. The programs are entitled "The Mountain Lion: Fact and Fiction." They aim to dispell the mythology surrounding the lion and to accurately explain mountain lion life history and current controversies.

The slides come with recorded narration and informational pamphlets. They will be loaned free to any teacher or group. The programs should be ready around December 1, 1984. If you would like to borrow a copy of either program, call or write Carol Cochran, 1415 Phoenix N.W., Albuquerque, N.M. 87107, 345-1412.

STATEWIDE BLM WILDERNESS UPDATE

by Judy Bishop, Santa Fe

In August 1984 BLM released the final environmental assessments (EAs) for each of the BLM districts in New Mexico (these are Albuquerque, Roswell, and Las Cruces). These EAs are the basis for the next stage in the BLM's wilderness study process, which is the preparation of a statewide wilderness environmental impact statement (EIS). In September the BLM held well-attended "open houses" throughout the state to explain to the public the alternatives for wilderness designation contained in the EAs and to receive comments on what issues should be addressed in the EIS.

Preparation of the draft wilderness EIS is now underway and copies should be available for public review and comment soon after the first of the year. The BLM has not yet stated what its "preferred alternative" for wilderness will be, and it is important for us to know that we do not have to accept the range of alternatives proposed by the BLM if other wilderness recommendations are preferable.

This winter people who have adopted BLM wilderness study areas (WSAs) should make every effort to make one more field trip into their WSA, taking along as many other folks as they can. During the 90-day comment period following the release of the draft EIS the BLM must hear from as many knowledgeable members of the public as possible that we want protection for these wildlands! You don't have to visit each BLM WSA to support wilderness, but it is much easier to write persuasively about something that you have experienced personally.

The New Mexico Wilderness Study Committee, the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society plan to hold a series of New Mexico Wilderness workshops prior to the release of the draft EIS to educate people on NM wilderness issues and on how to do a wilderness study. Mark your calendar for late January or early February; precise dates will be announced. For more information on what's happening in your area, contact: Tom Brasfield [Southern NM: El Paso, Las Cruces, Alamogordo] 5223 Santa Elena, El Paso, Texas 79932, (915) 584-8739; Carl Popp [Central NM] 1213 Vista Drive NW, Socorro, NM 87801, (505) 835-0263; Judy Bishop [Northern NM] 3005 Calle Quieta, Santa Fe, NM 87501; (505) 471-4439.

RECLAMATION PROBLEMS AT GATEWAY?

by Alison Monroe, Albuquerque

The Gateway coal mine, 35 miles south of Farmington, has long been a focus of controversy. Situated in badlands surrounded on three sides by the recently designated Bisti Wilderness and operated by a subsidiary of Public Service Company of New Mexico, the mine was opened in late 1982 over the objections of the Sierra Club. The Club filed an unsuitability petition attempting to declare the area unreclaimable under the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. The petition was denied by the responsible state agency (the Mining and Minerals Division) and is being appealed in state court.

In granting the Gateway mine a permit the Mining and Minerals Division approved the company's plan to contour the mined area into two large closed depressions and distribute crushed sandstone in lieu of soil over the areas to be reseeded. A 1983 review of the state program by the federal oversight agency involved, the office of Surface Mining, found numerous technical deficiencies in this plan, and found little evidence in the record that this proposed reclamation plan would result in a stable, erosion-resistant topography approximating the original contours of the area.

Recent actions by Mining and Minerals, however, indicate that the state may be having second thoughts about the ease of reclamation in this soilless, rugged landscape. On August 21 and again on October 11, the state wrote to Sunbelt Mining Company requesting the company to change its permit and submit the following information: chemical analyses of topdressing materials, and an assessment of whether they are too salty or contain sufficient nutrients to support plant growth; an assessment of whether sufficient topdressing material is available on site; and a revised postmining topography showing slopes of 10% or less.

The state has also been more aggressive in the last year or so in serving mines with notices of violation, when permit conditions or the laws are not being complied with. The Gateway mine received a notice of violation in September for having excessively steep slopes in areas to be reclaimed, and in February received a \$1300 fine for blasting at night.



IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

- ** Governor Toney Anaya on his administration's environmental programs
- ** Lynda Taylor on the New Mexico Legislature -- what to expect, what must be done
- ** Allan Savory on Holistic Resource Management and the values of grazing
- ** BLM Wilderness Areas -- Where and how to find them
- ** and whatever comes over the wire to us from our readers!

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Total = _____

Make checks payable to Sierra Club
 Send to : Sierra Club/Mountain Lion
 207 San Pedro NE
 Albuquerque, NM 87108

CHACO PARK PLANS OUT FOR REVIEW

The National Park Service has released draft General Management and Land Protection Plans for Chaco Culture National Historic Park for public review and comment. The plans cover expanded visitor services to meet growing public use of the park as well as necessary conservation measures to protect an additional 13,205 acres of land added to the park by Public Law 96-550 in December 1980. Plans include cooperative agreements with land owners to protect Chacoan outliers on non-NPS property; fee acquisition of additional lands for outlier protection has been minimized. A meeting on the plans was held November 1 in Albuquerque, and copies are available for review at Park Service offices in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Farmington, at the UNM Chaco Center on campus and at Aztec Ruins National Monument and Chaco itself. Comments are requested by November 29. [Sorry for the short notice, folks]

The Park Service has done a creditable job in preparing the draft plans, which are readable, informative and clearly directed to the twin missions of protecting archeological resources and maintaining a quality experience for park visitors. Issues that need to be addressed include protecting significant vistas from the park from intrusions of coal strip mining (as at the Ah-shi-sle-pah WSA north from Pueblo Alto on the rim of Chaco Canyon) and preservation of the park's Class I air quality. Contact Doug Farris or Ben Moffet, NPS, (505) 988-6886 or 988-support for the Park Service is needed if they are to withstand pressures from within the Department of Interior to allow degradation of park resources.

"Until recently, modern society has all but bypassed the San Juan Basin -- the Chacoan homeland. This fact should receive more than casual mention because so much of the park's character is a product of the vast, sparsely inhabited landscape that surrounds the canyon. The isolation, remoteness, and unobstructed views, broken only occasionally by livestock, hogans, windmills, and dirt roads, are very much part of the mystique that is Chaco. This perception of an almost forgotten landscape has done much to enhance the visitor experience and has served to romanticize the canyon and its ruins for people who make the journey to this remote outpost."

"However, what has been may soon change. Our needs for energy may soon necessitate changes in the landscape that surround the canyon. Energy development, more people, and a paved highway are all possibilities that may combine at any moment, bringing Chaco into full swing with the energy boom and into the mainstream of National Park Service visitation." [from the preface to the draft General Management Plan]



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SIERRAN BULLETIN BOARD

The editors welcome items of information, meetings and other announcements, new publications, and environmental news for the region to include in the BULLETIN BOARD.

GROUNDWATER POLLUTION REPORT AVAILABLE

The contamination of groundwater by oil and natural gas extraction and refining operations is a growing problem in New Mexico, Texas and other oil- and gas-producing states, according to a report in the October/December 1984 issue of The Workbook, a quarterly publication by Southwest Research and Information Center. The report documents case histories of oil field pollution of shallow groundwaters in New Mexico's two chief oil and gas regions, the Permian and San Juan Basins. Much of the pollution involves excessive levels of toxic organic compounds such as benzene. The Workbook is available for \$3.50 per copy from SRIC, P.O. Box 4524, Albuquerque, NM 87106. For more information on oil- and gas-related water pollution, contact Chris Shuey at SRIC (505) 262-1862.

NATIONAL FOREST PLANNING SYMPOSIUM

"How can we get forest management out of the courts?" The Mission Symposium in San Francisco, California on December 14-15 may provide some answers. You are invited to participate in a summit conference in which the Forest Service and public forest interest groups will meet to discuss the future of national forest forest plan published to date has been appealed. One appeal led to withdrawal of the plan (for the Santa Fe National Forest). Others are likely to go to court. If polarization in national forest management continues to increase, actions by special interest groups in the next session of Congress could threaten the organization and mission of the Forest Service. The issues in many of these appeals are the same: conflicts between timber and wildlife or timber and recreation, allocation of roadless areas, and timber sales below cost. The symposium will bring the Forest Service together with its constituent groups to focus on such issues and decide how to work together in the future to resolve them. For more information, call or write Mission Symposium, P.O. Box 3479, Eugene, Oregon 97403, (503) 686-2432. [plagerized from the flyer on this conference]

EPA TO AUTHORIZE NM HAZARDOUS WASTE PROGRAM

On November 28th, 1984 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will hold a public hearing on its draft decision to approve New Mexico's Hazardous Waste Program. This approval will enable NM to take over EPA's responsibilities for the transportation, storage, and disposal of hazardous wastes within the state, in lieu of the federal program. The federal law that mandates the program is the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), which was just reauthorized in this past session of Congress. The hearing will take place at the Albuquerque Public Schools

Administration Building, 725 University Boulevard S.E., Albuquerque. For more information call the NM EID or contact H.J. Parr, Hazardous Materials Branch, U.S. EPA, Region VI Library, 1201 Elm Street, Dallas, Texas 75270 (214) 767-2645. Comments may be sent to the EPA at the Dallas address through November 28th.

[Editor's note: The Coal Surface Mining Commission is likely to soon adopt regulations allowing the disposal of hazardous wastes in coal strip mine pits; watch the Sierran for more information on this issue.]

SIERRAN SEEKS CONTRIBUTORS

The Rio Grande Sierran is looking for volunteers to write regular feature columns on, for example, Chapter outings and social events, natural history, photography and backpacking. Contact Dave or Jon for more information.

NEW MEXICO OLD GROWTH TIMBER UNDER THE AXE

Forest Service timber sales in the Lincoln National Forest scheduled for Fiscal Year 1985 will destroy one of New Mexico's finest old growth timber stands, if all proceeds as planned. Bypassed by the logging operations that cleared the area around 1910, the fifty acre tract lies in a branch of Water Canyon in the Sacramento Mountains and is now surrounded by second growth forest. The grove is unique for its ecological, historical and educational values. Having explored this area, the Tularosa Basin Group has resolved to seek amendments to the FS plans to save it... but more public support is needed. find out what you can do, and call the Forest Service to request to be placed on their mailing list for planning in the Lincoln National Forest.

MEETING ON THE OUTDOORS

This gathering, the first of its kind, is cooperatively sponsored by the Sierra Club, the Wildlife Federation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This unique gathering will bring together concerned individuals and organizations from all over New Mexico to share information and ideas on New Mexico's environmental future in an atmosphere of intimate and relaxed communication. This gathering, January 18, 19, and 20 in Cloudcroft, New Mexico, is specifically timed to provide an opportunity to address major environmental concerns prior to the meeting of the state legislature. For more information or to register to attend, return the form below or call: Mary Beth Watkins-Arterburn, Chairwoman, Committee on the Outdoors, at 505-299-0741.

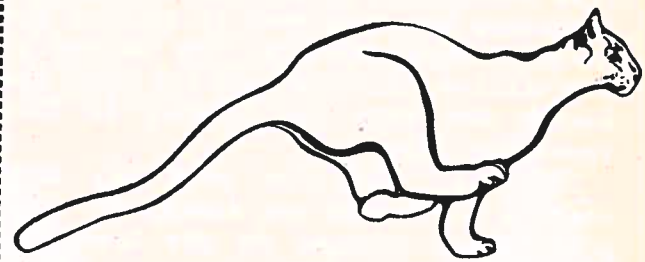
COURT REJECTS REAGAN STRIP MINE REGULATIONS

For the second time this year, the Reagan Administration's attempts to severely weaken environmental and public health protection provisions of the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act have been found illegal by a federal district court judge. The regulatory revisions, made by the Office of Surface Mining during James Watt's tenure as Interior Secretary, would have eliminated minimum federal standards on several aspects of surface mining and reclamation, leaving the establishment of any standards up to each state.

The Sierra Club, acting jointly with seven other environmental groups, filed suit to reverse the revisions. U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Flannery ruled against several of the revisions in July and overturned a second group in October. A third and final round decision on the remaining revisions is expected by the end of the year.

The second round decisions constitute favorable rulings for the environment on virtually every major issue brought in the lawsuit and considered in this round. Among other things, these decisions re-establish regulations that:

- Require that successful reclamation of mined prime farmland be measured by demonstrated crop yields rather than merely post-mining soil testing;
- Prohibit the usual industry practice of leaving a lake at the end of their mines on prime farmland;
- ~~Reject Watt's exemption of undeveloped lands and small tracts of alluvial valley floors from stringent permitting and reclamation standards designed to protect the fragile hydrology of those valleys;~~
- Require that permit applications contain data that is evaluated to ensure the preservation of the essential hydrologic functions of alluvial valley floors;
- Direct that mine operators post bonds for their entire permit area, rather than just a partial area; and
- Insist that standards be established for mine operators to reclaim mined land as contemporaneously as practical with mining.



Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____

Return to: Mary Beth, c/o Sierra Club, 937 San Pedro S.E., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87108

CHAPTER DIRECTORY

RIO GRANDE CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

John Colburn (Chairman)	P.O. Box 37199	Albuquerque, NM 87189	505-268-3606
James Owen (Vice-Chair)	9905 Cork	El Paso, TX 79925	915-598-9332
Carol Cochran (Secretary)	1415 Phoenix NW	Albuquerque, NM 87107	505-345-1412
George Mader (Treasurer)	8704 Catalpa Lane	El Paso, TX 79925	915-778-4564
Jack Kenney (SCOPE)	954 Santo Nino Pl	Santa Fe, NM 87501	505-988-3205
Ned Sudborough	Rt. 3 Box 66B	Santa Fe, NM 87501	505-982-5374
Ron Grotbeck (Council Del.)	8812 Harwood NE	Albuquerque, NM 87111	505-296-0944
Dan Jones	1201 Flor del Valle	Socorro, NM 87801	505-835-2784
Hank Taylor	4121 Terrace Dr.	Farmington, NM 87401	505-325-3756
Jonathan Teague (Co-Editor)	1917 Gold SE	Albuquerque, NM 87106	505-243-1507
David Glowka (Co-Editor)	Star Rt. Box 282B	Tijeras, NM 87059	505-281-1488

ALBUQUERQUE GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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STEEL MILL LOOMS NEXT TO BOSQUE DEL APACHE

by Dan Jones, Socorro

A Dallas, Texas investor, Edward Bottinelli, is moving forward with plans for a steel mill just south of Socorro, despite major unresolved technical and environmental problems with the proposal. Local conservationists are up in arms over the threat that this project poses to the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge (winter home to one of the two nesting flocks of whooping cranes left in the world), adjacent farmlands and the clean air of the region. Iron ore for the plant is to be trucked from the Jones Camp ore deposit near Bingham between San Antonio and Carrizozo, with coal to be shipped by rail from Raton where high grade deposits of metallurgical coal exist. Bottinelli, president of Zia Steel Corporation, had previously met rejection of his proposal to site a steel mill in New Mexico from the towns of Carrizozo and Raton.

So far Zia's proposals have an erratic history. In late summer of 1983 Bottinelli approached the Socorro City Council with a request for \$10 million in industrial revenue bonds with which to finance a "mini-steel mill" to be located just south of San Antonio. The proximity of the site to the

boundary of the wildlife refuge caused much concern. In fall of 1983 the Council denied the request but then later granted an inducement issuance of the bonds. As matters proceeded too slowly for Zia's request, Bottinelli resorted to pressure tactics.

Just prior to the December 5 council meeting Bottinelli peppered the local newspaper with advertisements offering employment at the proposed mill and encouraging prospective employees to attend the council meeting in order to apply for jobs. After the council demurred on his proposals at that meeting, he publicly denounced the mayor and members of the council as "idiots", with the result that the council rescinded its previous inducement resolution at a subsequent special meeting. Bottinelli then vowed that he would carry out his proposal with conventional financing.

On August 13 of this year word was released that Zia Steel had acquired an option to purchase 75 acres of land just south of Socorro, north of the originally proposed site. The greater distance from the refuge boundary was offset, however, by the greatly increased scope of the project; the

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