

The Rio Grande SIERRAN



THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

January/February 1987

THE FUTURE BRIGHTENS FOR EL MALPAIS

by Jim Fish, Placitas

As reported in the last issue of the *Sierran*, a compromise bill to protect El Malpais died when Congress adjourned last fall. The same bill has now been reintroduced by Rep. Bill Richardson (D-NM), Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), and Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM). This time, Sen. Domenici did not attach the controversial water-rights amendment to the bill.

Provisions contained in the new bill include:

* About 126,000 acres of El Malpais, including the main lava flow and Bandera Crater, will be managed by the U.S. Park Service as a National Monument.

* All other land in the previous House-passed Richardson bill (about 254,000 acres) will be managed by the BLM as a National Conservation Area with strong management directives.

* Five areas totalling about 115,000 acres will be designated as BLM Wilderness within the National Conservation Area (West Malpais, Rimrock, Little Rimrock, Sand Canyon, and Pinyon).

* Two additional areas (Chain of Craters, 16,600 acres, and the main El Malpais unit, 126,000 acres) will be restudied for wilderness in management plans required for the Monument and Conservation Area.

* The Masau Trail, which will link El Malpais, El Moro, Chaco, West Mesa Petroglyphs, and other archeological sites as a tourist loop, will be authorized.

Although some members are not entirely happy with the proposed role of the Park Service, the New Mexico BLM Wilderness Coalition has agreed to support the bill provided:

1) no water-rights language is attached to the legislation; and

2) the east boundary between the National Monument managed by the Park Service and the National Conservation Area managed by the BLM is along NM State Road 117.

The importance of the second point is that the current map associated with the legislation shows the Monument boundary wandering across NM 117 to take in the Natural Arch and a chunk of the mesa top in Rimrock WSA. Such a boundary would severely interfere with the ability of the BLM to package its portion of the region for presentation to the public. Also, a strong BLM presence on the east side of El Malpais is critical to assure protection of resources within the National Conservation Area. Local BLM and Park Service officials, who must live with the legislation, also

see El Malpais, page 7

CONSERVATION NEWS

by Jack Kenney, Santa Fe

As your new Conservation Chair, I will endeavor to keep you informed over the months to come about conservation issues that should be of interest to you. As usual, we have no shortage of issues to keep us all busy!

BLM WILDERNESS

The Chapter comments on the New Mexico Statewide Wilderness Study, Revised Draft EIS, supporting the BLM Coalition comments were submitted in early December. Those who ordered a copy of the comments will receive them soon (all Groups will get a copy).

EL MALPAIS

Senate hearings will be held in Washington, DC at 10 AM on February 19. (See story beginning on this page.) The Chapter Representative will testify. Have you thanked Senators Bingaman and Domenici and Representative Richardson for their support of the preservation legislation? PLEASE DO SO.

see News, page 7

VOLUNTEER POSITIONS OPEN IN ALASKA

Volunteer Assistants are wanted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska for the North Slope Bird-Habitat Project. Assistants will conduct waterfowl, shorebird, and raptor surveys on the arctic coastal plain for a 3-month period in late May-August 1987. Food, primitive camping, and \$3 a day will be provided.

Volunteers must be enthusiastic birders and willing to live under rigorous field conditions in a remote setting for the entire three months. They must also be mature, responsible, and good team players. Several assistants with botanical and invertebrate backgrounds are also being sought.

If you are interested in this exciting opportunity send resume, name and phone number of three references, and cover letter by March 15, 1987 to:

William Knauer
Volunteer Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 E. Tudor St.
Anchorage, AK 99503

WILDLIFE ISSUES FOR THE 1987 NM STATE LEGISLATURE

by Susan Larsen, Albuquerque

Several issues related to wildlife loom on the horizon this legislative session. Unfortunately, these issues have nothing to do with protecting our beleaguered wildlife populations--in fact, just the opposite.

MEXICAN WOLF

A bill may be introduced that would prohibit reintroduction of the Mexican Wolf into New Mexico. The Mexican Wolf is currently listed at both federal and state levels as an endangered species. A wolf recovery plan was established several years ago, and a number of breeding animals were taken from the remaining wild population in Mexico to start a captive breeding program. The Rio Grande Zoo in Albuquerque is one of three sites in the United States currently involved in the breeding program. The goal is to reintroduce the wolf into areas it had once occupied and hopefully establish a viable population in the wild.

Areas in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico are being considered as potential release sites for

see Wildlife, page 7



ROBLEDO AND LAS UVAS MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

Robledo Mountains WSA and Las Uvas Mountains WSA, located in Dona Ana County between Hatch and Las Cruces, encompass a diversity of habitats such as deep canyons, limestone cliffs, gentle slopes, caves, and riparian areas. Lookout and Robledo Peaks command impressive views of Mesilla Valley. An abundance of rimrock along the mesas in the region provides nesting sites for many raptors, including the golden eagle. The variation of vegetation supports a diverse wildlife community.

Naturalness, Solitude, and Recreation: Although relatively close to Las Cruces, the areas retain the vast majority of their wild character and offer outstanding opportunities for solitude and for activities such as backpacking, day hiking, nature photography, hunting, rappelling, caving, and horseback riding. Geronimo's Cave, located east of Lookout Peak in the Robledo Mountains, is visited regularly by the Mesilla Valley Grotto.

Supplemental Values: Rare and endangered species found in this region include the bald eagle, the peregrine falcon, the Trans-Pecos rat snake, and the night blooming cereus. Mule deer, banded rock rattlers, rock squirrels, and both scaled and Gambel's quail are common. Vegetation includes creosote, oak, sotol, barrel cactus, Apacheplume, penstemon, and lyreleaf greengages.

There are 20 known historic and prehistoric sites in and along the boundaries of the Robledo Mountains WSA. The most significant of these sites, small caves and pithouse villages, are undisturbed. Recently, a cave site containing a Folsom point was found just south of the region, the first find of its kind in the southern part of the State. Lookout Peak was the site of a heliograph station during the early 1880's, used by the explorers to communicate with similar stations elsewhere about Apache activities. Located just outside of the boundary of Las Uvas Mountains WSA are two Lithic Indian sites in Horse Canyon and two Lithic sites and an excellent petroglyph site in Whitegap-Kerr Canyon.

ROBLEDO MOUNTAINS
WSA ACREAGE: 12,946

LAS UVAS MOUNTAINS
WSA ACREAGE: 11,067

BLM RECOMMENDATION: 0
COALITION PROPOSAL: 123,003

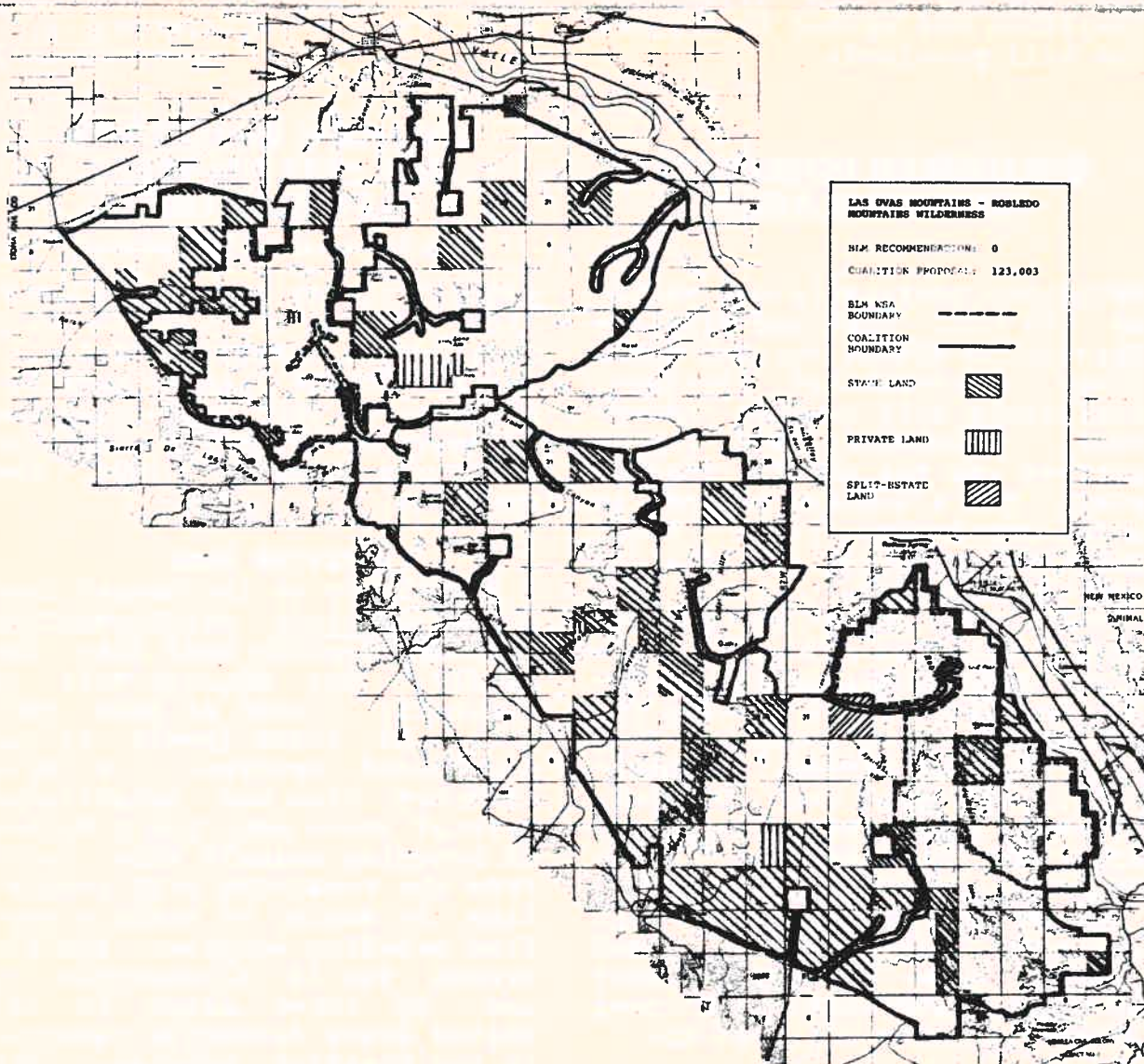
DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE OF DIFFERENCES:

The BLM, in the 1986 statewide wilderness study stated that the wilderness values of the Robledo and Las Uvas Mountains were "marginal", "of low quality", and "lacking in diversity". The Coalition disagrees with this assessment and with the BLM recommendation against wilderness for the two areas. The Coalition proposal is based on extensive review of the relevant BLM documents and on numerous field trips to the WSAs and the surrounding areas.

The BLM identified conflict over resources as a major problem in the Robledo Mountains WSA. On the other hand, the 1986 study states that "designating the Robledo Mountains WSA as wilderness would have no significant impact on geothermal resources, high-calcium limestone, or magnesium. Geothermal potential in the WSA is low. Local demand for high-calcium limestone and magnesium is not high and would be met by existing or alternative sources". It appears that the BLM "resource conflict" is based on a high potential for building stone on 1,300 acres in the southeastern portion of the WSA. The Coalition feels that this minor resource is not reasonable justification for recommending against wilderness designation for the Robledos.

Based on naturalness, on opportunities for solitude and for unconfined and primitive recreation, on supplemental values, and on a lack of significant resource conflicts the Coalition recommends both Robledo Mountains WSA and Las Uvas Mountains WSA for wilderness designation. Furthermore, we recommend a major expansion of the boundaries of these areas to include outstanding wildlands adjacent to the WSAs.

The expanded boundary for the Robledos encompasses the majority of the Robledo Mountains chain, almost twice as much as is found within the WSA. Much of this area was in the original BLM inventory unit, but was dropped because of current and potential off-road vehicle (ORV) conflicts. The Coalition does not consider this rationale to be legitimate.



needed source of primitive recreation only a few miles from home. Given that Las Cruces is predicted to have a population of one million by the year 2040, protection of the remaining wildlands now is critical.

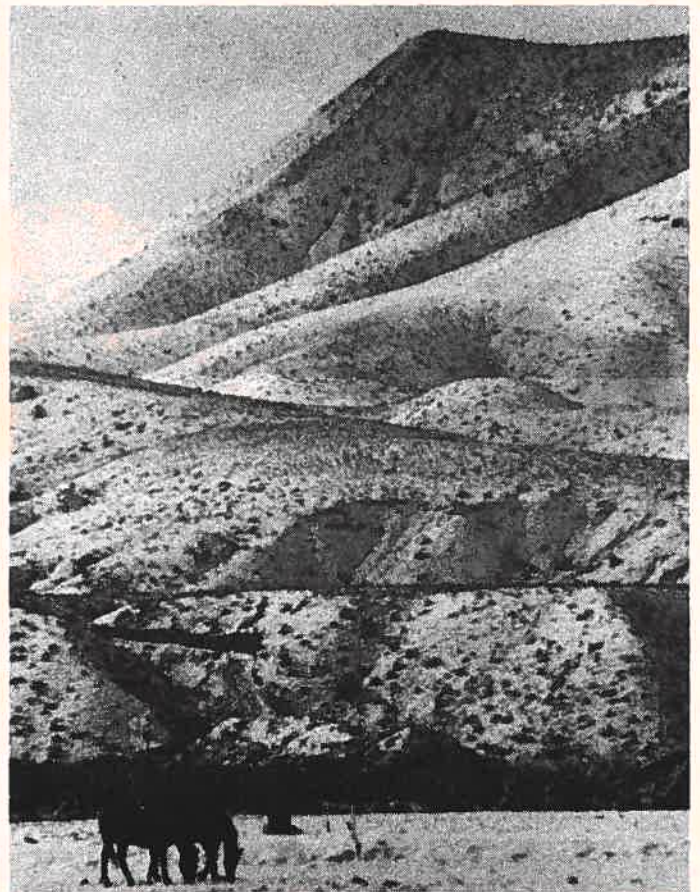


Petroglyphs of Mogollon Culture-Las Uvas Mountains



Sotal and White Cliffs — Las Uvas Mountains WSA

Adoptees are desperately needed for these two areas. Unless we can counter the BLM assessment with photographs, analyses, careful documentation, letters, and testimony at hearings, we are going to lose both areas completely. Anyone interested in helping, please contact Bob Taffenelly at (505) 526-9380.



East Side of Lookout Peak — Robledos Mountain WSA



Robledos Mountains WSA in Snow

Note: The Robledos and Las Uvas are two of 55 areas covered by the Coalition Proposal. Copies of the 236-page document, **WILDLANDS**, from which this writeup came, can be reserved for a tax-deductible contribution of \$10 or more. For details, contact Jim Fish (505) 867-3062. ★

CHAIR'S COLUMN

by Tom Brasfield, El Paso

Everyone joins me in thanking Jack Kenney for serving as Chapter Chair for the past two years. Jack devoted an enormous amount of time and energy to this job, and it is greatly appreciated by all. Jack has agreed to serve as Chapter Conservation Chair, so we will continue to benefit from his considerable experience. Thanks, Jack, for a job well done!

I would also like to thank John Somers and John Hamilton for their service on the Chapter ExCom. Both have contributed much to the Chapter and decided not to run for re-election.

The Chapter election was held in December, with a strong field of candidates, thanks to the efforts of the nominating committee. The winners are Ike Eastvold, Dan Jones, Nick Nicolaus, and Gary Williams. Congratulations to all and welcome to new members Ike and Gary. Thanks to Kay and Norm for running, and I hope you will consider running in the future.

The Chapter is currently involved in a great many issues. BLM Wilderness, Forest Service Plans, Lion and Mexican Wolf, Wild and Scenic Rivers, El Malpais Preservation, Clean Air and Water, and the list goes on and on. YOU, the members of the Rio Grande Chapter, have made our past successes possible, and it is YOU who will make our environment a better place in which to live.

Your commitment to a better environment is evidenced by your membership in the Sierra Club. We need you to volunteer to help with one of the many conservation issues, write a letter to your congressman, help with a newsletter mailing party, bring refreshments to a general meeting, or on and on (the list is endless). I realize that many of you have limited time available, but many of these tasks, such as writing a letter, only take a few minutes. Call your group chairs listed in the Chapter Directory on page 5. Get involved now!!!

In March you will be receiving the Chapter's annual fund appeal. The Chapter's main source of funds for conservation issues is this one-time-a-year appeal. I ask that each of you make a contribution this year if you can. Of course we like large contributions, but five and ten dollar contributions are equally appreciated.

SWRCC REPORT

by Dan Jones, Socorro

The Southwest Regional Conservation Committee (SWRCC) met in Tucson on January 17-18. The committee, which is made up of three delegates from each of the Sierra Club chapters in the Four Corners states, elected Joni Bosh of Phoenix to a second year as chairperson. The other officers for this year are Lewis McCool (Durango, CO) Vice Chair, Mark Pearson (Grand Junction, CO) Treasurer, and Kirk Cunningham (Denver) Secretary.

The Rocky Mountain Chapter reported on proposed southwest Colorado ski area developments, ORV races in northwest Colorado, and the Chapter's 1-million-acre BLM Wilderness recommendation.

The Utah Chapter reported on the giant Utah BLM Wilderness Coalition proposal for 5 million acres.

The Grand Canyon Chapter reported on the Grand Canyon overflights issue and the failure of the National Park Service and the FAA to effect any real improvement in the situation. The only way the problem stands a chance of alleviation will be an act of Congress. We were also informed that the Grand Canyon is awash in uranium mining claims, resulting from the discovery that the many brechia pipes in the area have concentrated the uranium ore. There are now about 5000 claims on the North Rim and six mines open. On the South Rim there are about 4000 claims and one operating mine. The imminent closing (now fact) of the pollution-controlless Douglas, AZ copper smelter was announced. The dinosaur has finally been laid to rest.

Regional Sierra Club representative Maggie Fox (Boulder, CO) and assistant rep Rob Smith (Phoenix) gave a summary of national conservation activities, especially relating to clean air and the brewing battle over oil vs. wilderness in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Sierra Club position is against oil development there, with no compromise. We already compromised on the Alaska pipeline.

National Board of Directors member Sandy Tepfer reported on Board doings. A New executive director is being sought and a search committee has been formed, consisting of Board members Richard Cellarius, Larry Downing, Sally Reid, and Michelle Perault. Due to the very unusual and complex structure of the Sierra Club, their task will not be an easy one.

The Board also passed a dues increase (\$29-\$33 for regular members) and established a low income membership category. Sandy also informed us that he is a member of the International Assembly Commit-

tee which is organizing an Assembly for July 3-5 in Colorado.

SWRCC delegates chose a mining law reform campaign as the central activity to be pursued specifically by SWRCC. The plan is to collect examples of the need for reform, establish a network, and work up a case against the 1872 mining law. A SWRCC mining committee chaired by Dan Daggett (AZ) and Mark Pearson was initiated to get this effort started.

A resolution was passed supporting the Albuquerque West Mesa National Monument proposal.

A budget was established which included \$1500 to the Rio Grande Chapter for legal expenses in the Gila and Lincoln National Forest Plan appeals.

The next SWRCC meeting will be April 11 and 12 in Durango, Colorado.

SEATS AVAILABLE FOR COLORADO RIVER EXPEDITION

Santa Fe Mountain Center has announced an expedition down the Grand Canyon, September 15-27, 1987 that should capture the excitement of the Colorado River at its best.

This trip hopes to experience the river in a non-obtrusive manner and in a participatory style. Participants will have the opportunity to serve as members of paddle crews in small boats, with the option to ride larger row boats for the less daring.

The river guides are all certified boatmen with many Grand Canyon trips under their belts. The food will be superb, and the group size will be kept to a maximum of 22, with a minimum of 18. Participants will put in the river at Lee's Ferry and take out at Diamond Creek. The cost is \$1300, and \$200 deposits are currently being received at:

Grand Canyon Expedition
Santa Fe Mountain Center
Rt. 4, Box 34-C
Santa Fe, NM 87501

ALFRED S. FORSYTH AWARD ESTABLISHED

The Alfred S. Forsyth Award has been established at Columbia Law School, to be granted annually to an outstanding student in the field of environmental law. Contributions may be made to:

Alfred S. Forsyth Prize Fund
Columbia Law School
435 West 116th St.
New York, NY 10027

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Thanks to the Albuquerque Group for helping to mail the Sierran.

The Rio Grande Sierran is provided at no charge to Sierra Club members as a membership service. Otherwise, subscriptions may be obtained for \$10/year by contacting Membership Chair Nick Nicolaus (see Chapter Directory at right).

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OUR EDITORIAL POLICY

Opinions expressed in the Rio Grande Sierran are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club or the Rio Grande Chapter unless so stated. Other organizations may use non-copyrighted materials appearing in the Sierran as long as acknowledgement is made. We welcome contributions of articles, essays, prose, poetry, photographs, drawings, and other submissions. We request that all submissions be signed and accompanied by a telephone number and address at which the author may be contacted. Please send submissions to the Editor (see Chapter Directory).

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Legislature (from back page)

be appointed by the Governor, we fear an industry-stacked commission which could lessen the established regulations as a means of stimulating industrial growth. These positions would also be exempt from conflict of interest laws, making it possible for them to vote against regulations which could adversely affect their business incomes.

This bill is being considered by the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the Appropriations and Finance Committee.

HOUSE BILL 29
WATER QUALITY CONTROL
COMMISSION REAUTHORIZATION

SPONSOR: REP. HENRY SAAVEDRA
We are supporting this bill, which provides for the continuance of the Commission without changing the members. Will be heard by House Appropriations and Finance Committees and the Government and Urban Affairs Committee.

HOUSE BILL 34
THE BOTTLE BILL

CO-SPONSORS: CISCO MCSORLEY
PAULINE EISENSTADT
The Bottle Bill was recently considered by the House Energy and Natural Resource Committee. HB 34, which has been endorsed by the Sierra Club, would attach a minimum 5-cent deposit to beverage bottles and cans sold in New Mexico. Seven states currently have some form of bottle bill, and they enjoy decreased amounts of litter as well as increased recycling.

Unfortunately, an alternative bill has been introduced by Rep. Mary Thompson. This bill, HB 63, would exclude aluminum cans and plastic containers over one liter in size. This weaker bill survived the committee hearing and will go to the Business and Industry Committee next week.

We continue to support the stronger bill, so let your legislators know that aluminum cans and large plastic containers should be included in New Mexico's Bottle Bill.

HOUSE BILL 95
RIGHT-TO-KNOW

SPONSOR: REP. MICHAEL OLGUIN
This legislation would give all employees access to hazardous chemical information. It will be heard by the House Business and Industry Committee.

HOUSE BILL 105
HAZARDOUS WASTE DISPOSAL

SPONSOR: REP. DAN SILVA
The "LUST" (leaking underground storage tanks) bill provides for clean-up of tanks leaking petroleum by-products into the groundwater supply. Will be heard by House Appropriations and Finance Committee and Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

SENATE BILL 13
AMBROSIA LAKE MILL TAILINGS

SPONSOR: Sen. Eoff
This bill provides the state's share of monies to clean up uranium mill tailings. This bill passed the Senate Finance Committee and goes to the Conservation Committee next.

SENATE BILL 11
STATE LOTTERY

SPONSOR: Sen. James Caudell
This bill would earmark 10% of the profits to go to a land endowment fund or to the Natural Resources Dept. for the acquisition of lands for uses such as scenic and recreational.

SENATE BILL 57
WATER QUALITY PROGRAM

SPONSOR: SEN. NARANGO
This bill would provide for a statewide educational program on water quality protection. It has passed the Senate Finance Committee and goes next to the Public Affairs Committee.

SENATE BILL 199
NATURAL LANDS PROTECTION ACT

SPONSOR: SEN. MARSHALL
This bill would provide a mechanism for the state to buy lands for endangered species and wildlife protection. This bill will be heard by the Senate Finance Committee and the Conservation Committee.

SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 1
WEST MESA PETROGLYPHS

SPONSOR: SEN. JOE CARRARO
This is a non-binding memorial to support preservation of the petroglyphs on Albuquerque's West Mesa.

In addition to these bills, there are several issues at the state level that affect wildlife in New Mexico. (Please see the separate article starting on page 1.)

Your help is needed to help assure adequate resolution of all the environment-related issues currently before the State Legislature. Please contact your legislator and let her or him know how you feel about these issues. Call (505)-984-9300 or write:

Rep. or Sen.
c/o Executive/Legislative Bldg
Santa Fe, NM 87503

In addition to your own representative, calls and letters to members of the committees that will hear the bills are important. These members are listed at right.

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Kelly Mora, Chair
Nick Salazar, Vice-Chair
Thomas Atcitty
Stuart Hill
Cisco McSorley
Don Silva
Garth Sims
Joe Stell
Mary Thompson
Charlie Winters

House Agricultural Committee

G. X. McSharry, Chair
Barbara Casey, Vice-Chair
Glenn Briscoe
Blake Curtis
Ben Hall
James Roger Madalena
Gary Robbins
Leonard Sheffield

House Judiciary Committee

Rep. Foy, Chair
Cisco McSorley, Vice-Chair
Pauline Eisenstadt
Vincent Gallegos
Rep. Green
Stuart Hill
Gary King
Rep. Knowles
Rep. Luna
Ray Sanchez
Bert Shirley
Ray Vargas

Business and Industry Committee

Fred Luna, Chair
Michael Olguin, Vice-Chair
Jerry Alwin
Ben Hall
Ralph Hartman
George Galanis
Vincent Gallegos
Alfonso Otero
Leonard Lee Rosen
Leo Watchman



DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE IS APRIL 1, 1987

El Malpais (from page 1)

support NM 117 as the boundary.

The Coalition and local BLM officials also call for wilderness designation for Chain of Craters, which the current wording of the bill leaves as a study area. The area clearly meets all of the wilderness criteria, and further study is a waste of time and money.

A hearing on El Malpais is taking place in Washington on February 19. Letters to Sen. Bingaman, chair of the hearing, as well as the rest of our Congressional delegation are in order. (See page 5 for the addresses.)

For more information contact Chuck Wiggins 505-266-3622, John Somers 505-344-6541, or Jim Fish 505-867-3062. ★

Wildlife (from page 1)

the Mexican Wolf. The only site in New Mexico lies within the boundaries of the White Sands Missile Range. Farmers and livestock owners oppose the reintroduction of the wolves, fearing depredation of their stock. Every effort to minimize contact between the wolves and livestock is being made in selecting the release sites. Banning the reintroduction of the Mexican Wolf at this point would be premature and shortsighted.

MOUNTAIN LION

A bill is being considered which would remove the cougar, or mountain lion, from the big-game species list. The mountain lion, the only predator left in New Mexico, is currently listed as a big-game species in our state. This allows the New Mexico State Game and Fish Commission to set the length of season for hunting and allows the Department to manage the mountain lion population.

The mountain lion was first included on the big-game list in 1971 and was allowed to be hunted for 11 months out of the year until 1984. At that time, thanks to the hard work of the Sierra Club and other wildlife activists, the hunting season for mountain lions was reduced to three months. A significant reduction in the number of mountain lions killed was observed.

In 1985 and 1986, the season was increased to four months. Ironically, almost as many animals were killed during the four-month season as were killed when the 11-month season was in effect.

Now livestock owners and professional hunters would like to "unlist" the mountain lion. There is no current scientific information on the status or dynamics of the mountain lion population. The mountain lion serves a vital role in the ecological balance of New

Mexico's wildlife. If the mountain lion is removed from the big-game list, its fate could follow that of the Mexican Wolf and the Grizzly Bear in New Mexico--GONE!

GOVERNOR'S RE-ORGANIZATION

The Governor's reorganization plan would put the State Game and Fish Department under the Natural Resources Department. Many fear the department would be politicized.

Currently, the director of the department comes from within the department, i.e. a long-term employee. Under reorganization, the director would be a political appointee and therefore subject to change every 4 years. This would disrupt the continuity of the department.

Many also feel the professionalism of the department would suffer if politics rather than sound management procedures were motivating the projects.

The five-member State Game and Fish Commission would probably remain but have its scope limited to setting hunting season lengths. It currently provides a forum for public input and guides the department in policy decisions.

Also, the Game and Fish Department receives a substantial portion of its budget from user fees. A portion of federal taxes on hunting and fishing equipment sales and state license fees goes to the department. The autonomy the department enjoys because of its unique funding system could be jeopardized under reorganization. ★

NEWS (from page 1)**NEW MEXICO'S NATIONAL FORESTS**

The Carson Final plan has been published. So many good, substantive changes have been made to the poor Draft that the Club and other environmental groups decided NOT to appeal. This is a first, and shows the power of concerted public comments.

The Cibola National Forest Plan is still under debate. Meetings of appellants and the forest planners continue on the major unresolved issues.

The Gila Final Plan has been appealed by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club and other environmental groups, based on the lack of major changes to the Draft. Concerned citizens' comments and concerns were not reflected in substantive changes to the Draft.

The Lincoln Final Plan also has been appealed by the Chapter, similarly based upon a lack of responsiveness of the US Forest Service to citizen comments on major issues.

The Santa Fe Final Plan is

being drafted, with almost constant input from members of the Santa Fe National Forest Coalition. It remains to be seen whether major changes on the big four issues (Wilderness, Roads, Timber, and Archeological Site Protection) will be responsive to the outpouring of citizen comments.

NATIONAL ISSUES

Clean Water AGAIN -- Have you thanked Senators Domenici and Bingaman and Representative Richardson for their outstanding roles in getting this bill to the White House again? And for their roles in seeing that the President's veto was overridden?

Clean Air -- We need letters and phone calls to our congressional delegation on this issue right away. Tell your national representative that we need to control acid rain; we need to stop erosion of the ozone layer by stopping chloroflourcarbon production; we need to reduce harmful auto exhaust; we need to clean up toxic air pollution sites; and we certainly want to keep visibility in our parks and wilderness areas high by keeping our air clean. **ACT NOW!** (See page 5 for Congressional Directory.)

NM STATE LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

At the last Chapter Executive Committee meeting, we established initial priorities for the 1987 State Legislature for action by our lobbyist (Susan Tixier) and members. Priority action issues are: wildlife; instream flow; and the state's support of the West Mesa Park proposal. Issues which we should support include reauthorization of the Air/Water Quality Commission; action on underground storage site standards and leakage; the Budget of EID; and the Bottle Bill. (See article starting on back page; and please contact your legislator!)

OTHER ISSUES

Your Chapter ExCom voted unanimously to designate proposed portions of the Rio Chama as a Wild and Scenic River.

Your ExCom voted unanimously to support the West Mesa Park proposal. Here again, thanks to Senator Domenici for his leadership on this project.

The Chapter-supported and -funded appeal of the Ojo Line Extension 345 kV Overhead Transmission Line through the pristine lands of the Santa Fe National Forest west of Los Alamos has been submitted on behalf of the Club and a number of Indian and environmental groups.

And finally, Group Conservation Chairs are requested to send me information for this column. (Please!) ★

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES FOR THE 1987 NM STATE LEGISLATURE

by Susan Larsen, Albuquerque

Several bills have been introduced in the New Mexico State Legislature this year which could affect the state's environmental quality. Our legislative lobbyist, Susan Tixier, has been working very hard, taking our concerns to the legislators and keeping us informed on the progress of the session. We, in turn, present below a summary of these bills in an effort to keep you informed and to solicit your support on these important issues. Please read on to find out how you can help.

HOUSE BILL 64 INSTREAM FLOW SPONSOR: REP. MAX COLL

Historically, water rights in New Mexico were acquired by persons who diverted the water and put it to a "beneficial use", such as agriculture, mining, or drinking. Keeping the water in its natural channel so as to maintain game, fish, and wildlife populations was not considered a beneficial use (a sort of use-it-or-lose-it

philosophy).

The Instream Flow Bill would allow water to be kept in its natural channel and still be considered a beneficial use. This bill would help protect our riparian habitats and thus help protect many species, both game and non-game. All other western states have instream flow legislation in place-- New Mexico is long overdue.

The bill is being heard by the House Judiciary Committee and the Agricultural Committee.

HOUSE BILL 111 QUALITY CONTROL COMMISSION REORGANIZATION

SPONSOR: REP. KELLY MORA

This bill is being opposed by the Sierra Club. It would add three industry-related positions to the Water Quality Control Commission, the state's water pollution control agency.

These industries--mining, agriculture, and manufacturing--already have representation on the Commission. Since these positions would

see Legislature, page 6

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January/February 1987



Robledos Mountains WSA

(See story and additional photos, pages 2-3)

IN THIS ISSUE

- El Malpais Bill Back in Hopper
- Bottle Bill and Other Legislative Issues
- Focus on Robledos and Uvas Mountains Wilderness Study Areas