

# The Rio Grande SIERRA



THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

July/August 1987

## EL MALPAIS NATIONAL MONUMENT A STEP CLOSER TO REALITY

Slowly but surely, progress continues with efforts to preserve and protect El Malpais lava flow and some of the surrounding wilderness near Grants, New Mexico. This past spring, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 403, which would establish a National Monument, five BLM Wilderness Areas, and the Masau Trail auto tour of archeological sites.

In late June, the Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands, National Parks, and Forests unanimously passed a marked-up version of H.R. 403. The bill now awaits action on the floor of the Senate. If it passes, minor differences with the House would be resolved in conference committee. Opti-

mistic forecasts indicate that a bill could be ready for the President's signature by fall.

And now, the rub. Although passage of a public lands bill supported by a state's entire delegation would normally be virtually assured, it may not be so easy for El Malpais. Senators Malcolm Wallop (R-WY) and James McClure (R-ID) have joined with Senator Bob Armstrong (R-CO) to promise at least a squirmish on the Senate floor. They apparently intend to use the El Malpais bill to promote their views on water rights.

Those views include the notion that water rights should not be recognized and reserved for federal Wilderness Areas, even if those water rights are

needed to maintain wilderness values. This has been a controversial issue in other areas of the country where developers have promoted diverting surface water from streams in National Forest Wilderness Areas. Although not relevant to El Malpais, water rights issues have blocked agreement and passage of preservation legislation for El Malpais for nearly a year.

At press time, it was not clear what the fate of the legislation would be on the Senate floor. Cautious optimism may be appropriate, but surprises are always possible. Contact Chuck Wiggins at (505) 266-3622 for more information and current status. ●

### COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

by Tom Brasfield, El Paso

THANKS! to everyone who made a contribution to the Chapter fund appeal. Give yourselves a pat on the back. To date you have contributed \$7,000, which is the most ever collected from the annual appeal. Without your generous contributions, we would not be able to carry out the important conservation work to which we are all committed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Be sure to mark your calendar for the Training Workshop on October 17 and 18 at Camp Thunderbird in the Gila National Forest. If you want to get more involved in protecting the environment or want to exchange ideas with other members, this workshop is for you. It is not all work either: there will be ample opportunity for hiking and socializing. I encourage you to join us for fun and learning. See you in the Gila.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have just returned from the Sierra Club International Assembly in Vail. This was a very uplifting experience for me. I wish that all of you could have been there. The theme for the Assembly, "Shaping the Environmental Future," was set in the opening

remarks of David Brower. He gave us his "Blueprint for the Green Century."

Michael Fischer, our new Executive Director, told us "What's Special About the Sierra Club." Michael is a proven administrator but, foremost, an environmentalist. He has deep-rooted feelings for wild places and environmental protection. I believe we have the right person to lead us in shaping the environmental future.

There were many concurrent workshops presented throughout the Assembly. These short sessions covered many subjects in the broad categories of conservation, outings, politics, environmental history, and Sierra Club operations. It was always difficult to choose which sessions to attend, and I heard only good comments about most of these workshops.

The Assembly wasn't all business. Fun events included entertainment by Bill Oliver and Glen Wardeck, a BBQ, Square Dancing, a film festival, and the Paul Winter Consort. For me, Paul Winter was the highlight of the Assembly. His music is outstanding, and no one can put the spirit of wild places into music like he does. If you get the chance to hear him in person, don't miss it.

Another highlight of the Assembly was guest speaker Dr. Norman Myers from Great Britain. Dr. Myers spoke on

"Global Mass Extinction: The U.S. Stake and What We Can Do About It." It is horrifying to learn that half of all species currently on our small planet will be extinct by the middle of the next century if something is not done. Most of this loss is and will continue to occur in the developing nations. The policies of the developed nations toward these countries contribute to this unacceptable development.

Along the international theme, Mike McCloskey, Sierra Club Chairman, spoke on "The Emergence of Grassroots Movement Around the World." Environmental organizations are springing up in most nations. It was surprising to learn that India has over 3,000 environmental organizations. Environmental protection is very difficult in most developing countries, but conservationists are winning battles in Mexico, South America, and Africa. This was indeed encouraging.

Brock Evans closed the Assembly with remarks on "We Can Win and We're Going To Win." He reminisced about our many victories. He left us with his motto which, if followed, will guarantee our victories in the future:

"Endless Pressure,  
Endlessly Applied." ●

## WILDERNESS: THE BLM OPTION

by Jim Fish, Placitas

We face now the opportunity to add to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) a collection of areas far different from what many people consider as typical wilderness. These forgotten wildlands, managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), have few trees, little water, and almost no towering mountains. They are, however, magical--prime examples of the Southwest.

The 1964 Wilderness Act established a NWPS "in order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition." A wilderness was defined as an area which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

It is no accident that the typical image of a wilderness is a mountain range with jagged peaks reaching for the sky and with thundering water falls plummeting into the dark, forested canyons below. The Wilderness Act applied only to National Forests, National Parks, and National Wildlife Refuges. Lands managed by the BLM did not become eligible for wilderness designation until the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) in 1976. The review process mandated by FLPMA is almost complete, and the time has come to consummate the common intent of the Wilderness Act and of Section 603(a) of FLPMA.

Look back at the criteria of wilderness: substantially natural; having outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation; and encompassing at least five thousand acres. Supplemental values (e.g., scenic) may also exist. As the final decisions are made with respect to which BLM wildlands are designated wilderness, we must keep in mind these criteria and the purpose of wilderness, and not the typical image of wilderness.

Over the years, I have hiked

along the Appalachian Trail, climbed the four highest mountains in Mexico, bagged 14,000-foot peaks in Colorado, and taken several week-long backpacking trips in the High Sierras. Last weekend, I visited the San Antonio Wilderness Study Area. This area, located on the Colorado border northwest of Taos, is not recommended by BLM for wilderness designation. In fact, at a recent meeting, the BLM State Director referred to it as "trash". In contrast, I found there a wilderness in every sense of the concept. In the 200-foot deep canyon running through the heart of the area, I looked up from watching a trout to see less than 10 feet away a mule deer fawn, spotted and not much bigger than a jackrabbit, drinking from the stream. In the mud, I found a set of bobcat tracks.

I clambered in and out of the narrow canyon three times, and in the process, felt the rush of adrenalin as I searched for hand and foot holds on steep sections of the canyon walls, experienced the delight of a dancer as I leaped across talus fields, and imagined myself in another world as I pushed through dense underbush along the stream.

Hiking across the rolling grasslands on either side of the canyon, I saw rorty antelope in five herds, counted 22 species of birds, and came upon three archaeological sites.

At one point, I sat down on a rock a couple of miles west of the canyon. Beyond the proposed wilderness area, the Sangre de Cristo Range shimmered in shades of blue on the eastern horizon. San Antonio Mountain loomed to the southeast. A few hundred yards to the west of me, the forest began. I could hear the wind and the occasional "peek" of a red-shafted flicker and the "buzz" of a rock wren and nothing else. The sense of solitude was profound and marvelous.

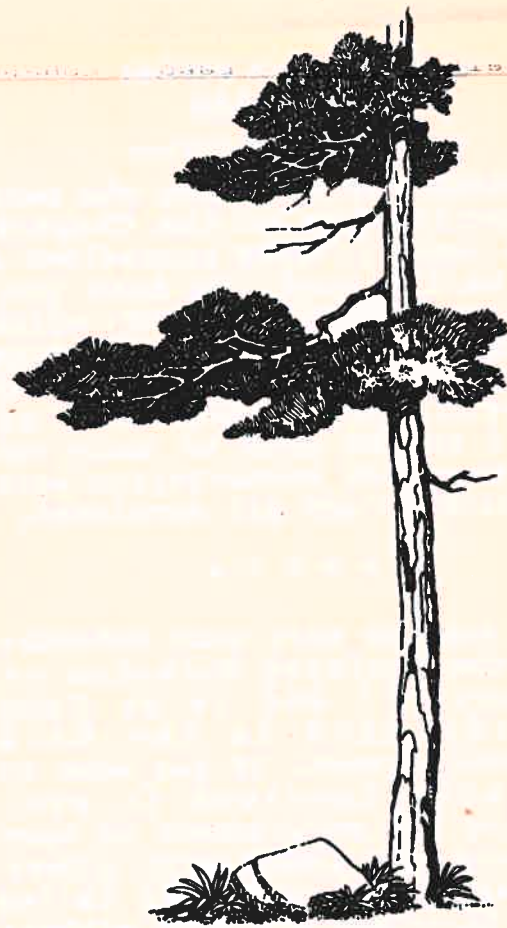
Back at the truck, I encountered two couples preparing to fish the stream. They were surprised to hear that the area was under consideration as wilderness. It did not "look" like wilderness. I smiled and told them to look again.

San Antonio is one of over fifty BLM areas (scattered throughout New Mexico) deserving designation as wilderness. Although they represent some of the finest examples of the remaining unspoiled corners of the Land of Enchantment and encompass only two and a half percent of the state, the BLM has recommended portions of less than half of them. Even worse, some opponents of wilderness

claim that the two percent of New Mexico already designated wilderness is too much and that none of the BLM areas should be added to the NWPS.

The New Mexico BLM Wilderness Coalition is leading an effort to educate the public, the BLM, and our Congressional Delegation as to what constitutes wilderness. We are waving, like a banner, the BLM option--our opportunity to double the wilderness resource in New Mexico, to complement the existing areas in the NWPS with the unique habitats of the BLM wildlands.

A statewide bill is expected to be introduced in Congress this fall. We need help to assure that the bill is well-conceived. If you have not responded to the NM Congressional Delegation's request for inputs (see the July special issue of the *Sierran*), please do so as soon as possible. It does not matter that the July 15 deadline has passed. Write! Anyone wishing to get more deeply involved, contact me at P.O. Box 712, Placitas, NM 87043. Phone (505) 867-3062.



Note: Copies of **WILDLANDS**, the Coalition's statewide proposal, are still available for \$11.50 (postage paid) at the above address. In addition, all of the local Sierra Club groups are selling copies. The document is an invaluable resource for those involved in the process and doubles as a guide to some of the best kept secrets in New Mexico.

# The Escarpment REPORT

August 1987



## PROGRESS ON NEW MEXICO'S PETROGLYPHS NATIONAL MONUMENT

### CITY AND PARK SERVICE STUDIES OUT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW



After more than a year of work, both the National Park Service and the City of Albuquerque have produced plans for protection of the Northwest Mesa Volcanic Escarpment with its magnificent array of prehistoric Indian and colonial Hispanic rock art.

The good news is that both studies identify an alternative for cooperative planning, acquisition, and management of a new Petroglyphs National Monument, and this approach is publicly favored by City officials and U.S. Legislators.

The bad news is that land acquisition costs for the new National Monument may range between \$44 million to \$61 million, and assembling that kind of money will take time, no matter how the costs are parcelled out. Land owners don't want to wait in limbo, and preservationists fear delays will mean piecemeal losses to vandalism and the intense development pressures which already have pushed subdivisions, highways, and public works projects in some

areas right up to the base of the escarpment.

The NPS study will be finalized in early September, and then referred to Office of Management, Department of Interior, and Congress. Even under the most optimistic scenario, legislation wouldn't be introduced until early 1988. Passage by the end of the 100th Congress would require a minor legislative miracle on the part of Senator Pete Domenici and Representative Manuel Lujan. Funding would doubtless be incremental over a 5-10 year term, and come from existing NPS funds for land acquisition.

Conservationists are pinning their hopes on a faster track for funding from the City. Imposition of a 1/4% gross receipts tax would raise \$12-\$15 million per year. The City Council and Mayor presently are considering three bills with different formulas to parcel out revenues from the 1/4%. Although all three bills contain some monies earmarked for City-wide open space acquisition and management, competition with other City needs is keen. Without strong grassroots lobbying pressure,

open space funding may be inadequate in whatever taxation package is finally approved in early September, 1987.

Revenues from the 1/4% gross receipts tax would start quickly in January, 1988. The City would then issue revenue anticipation bonds to produce immediate, up-front capital in the amounts necessary to begin acquisition of escarpment lands. Options could be held on southern escarpment lands targeted for NPS acquisition, giving Congress time to act. City commitment of a substantial portion of 1/4% revenues to escarpment preservation would prove a powerful lobbying tool in persuading Congress to match City efforts.

In the horserace between development and preservation, funding issues tend to eclipse resource values for the West Mesa petroglyph area. While the City study places more emphasis on local development controls within their zoning authority, the NPS study takes a close look at the resources and their significance from a national perspective. Some exciting information has emerged.

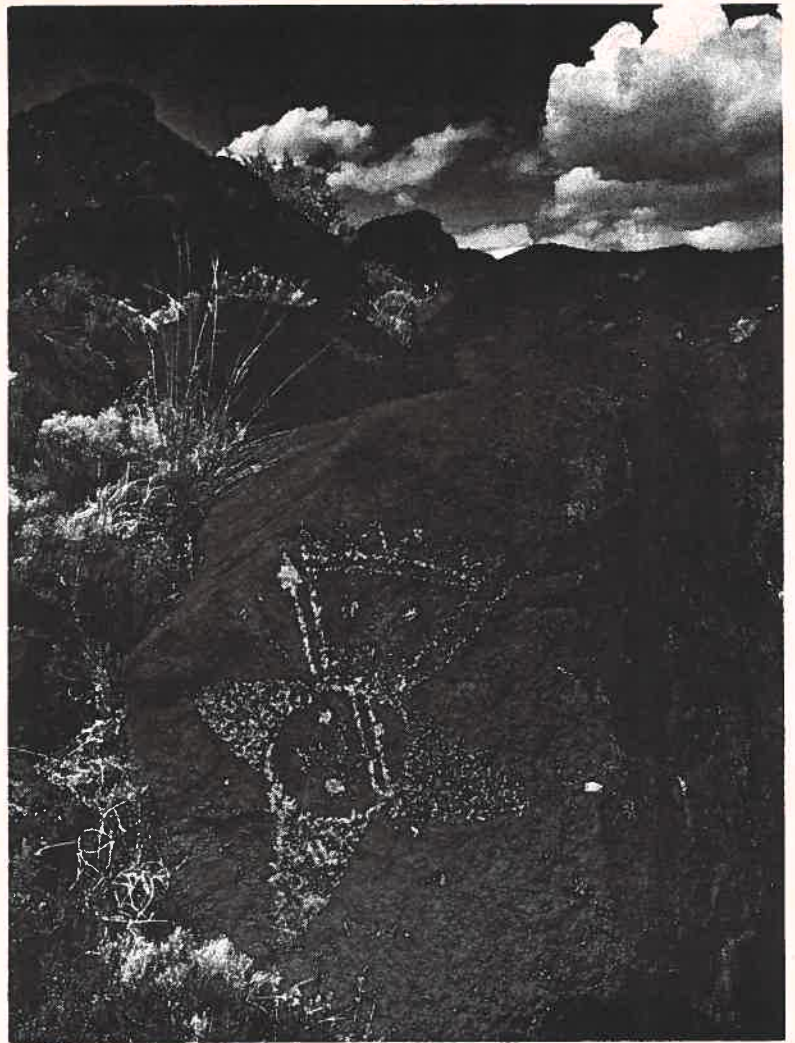


View of Rinconada Canyon looking west toward the volcanoes: from left to right are JA, Black, and Vulcan. The serenity and relative isolation of the Rinconada makes it perhaps the most pristine area remaining along the escarpment. Good wildlife and

plant community values remain. The northern half is in public ownership as part of the La Boca Negra Park purchases, and the southern half is in single ownership under management of Westland Development Corporation.



A bullet-damaged petroglyph concentration in inner Rinconada Canyon. A shield anthropomorph has evidently been used for target practice, resulting in a spray of bullet scars. Notice the plain, three-hole circular mask on the rock's very edge, possibly a Koyemshi mask. Putting masks on the edges of rocks in this fashion is common to the Rio Grande and Jornada styles of rock art, and may indicate something to do with the spirit-being's "all-seeing" or "seeing in both ways" powers. The mask with a bird perched on top is a common association all along the escarpment.



A beautiful star being mask with feathered headdress and two marks obliquely across the face. Note also the projectile point as part of the feathered crown, underscoring the star beings connections with various Pueblo Ceremonial Warrior Societies. This petroglyph is on one of many lots along the base of the escarpment which may be very close to receiving utilities. This particular star being is on a lot which could not be developed without cutting into the rocks where the petroglyphs are located.

**ROCK ART:** The NPS estimates that between 15,000 to 17,000 petroglyphs adorn the 17-mile long escarpment edge, making this the largest concentration of prehistoric rock art near a major city in the entire world. Although a small number may be in excess of 3000 years old, and the early Pueblo Periods I-III (AD 600-1300) are also represented, the NPS estimates that 70-95% of the petroglyphs belong to the richly dramatic Rio Grande Style, which dates from the recent Pueblo IV Period (AD 1300-1680). Unlike other more obscure styles of rock art, the Rio Grande Style can be interpreted. Visitors will see kachina masks, horned water serpent beings, fluteplayers, starbeings, clan symbols, and other petroglyphs directly reflecting contemporary ceremonial arts of the Pueblo peoples. The rock art of the West Mesa is a dramatic display of the religious roots of Pueblo culture.

Over 250 examples of colonial Hispanic rock art also are found along the escarpment, mostly beautiful cruciforms reflecting different ritual aspects of the Catholic mass.

**Archeology:** Together with over 50 archeological sites and shrines along the escarpment edge, the petroglyphs are included in the Las Imagines Archeological District listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Zuris-Mann

1100-room Pueblo site just a mile east of Piedras Marcadas has been determined eligible for Register listing. And the Boca Negra Cave site in Volcano Park has been recognized by listing on the National Register. Numerous water control features, field houses, and bedrock grinding surfaces called metates attest to the agricultural importance of the escarpment to the Anasazi farmers. Modern Pueblo groups still use certain areas for religious purposes, as well.

**Education and Research:** Located adjacent to two major interstate highways and the largest metropolitan area in New Mexico, a Petroglyphs National Monument offers an unparalleled opportunity to showcase the two principal cultural traditions of New Mexico on their own home ground. The NPS also recommends consideration of a rock art research center in addition to a visitor center. Not one of the 338 National Park System units presently features America's vast heritage of rock art as a principal interpretive theme. Establishment of the new Monument would fill this conspicuous void in the thematic framework of our National Parks.

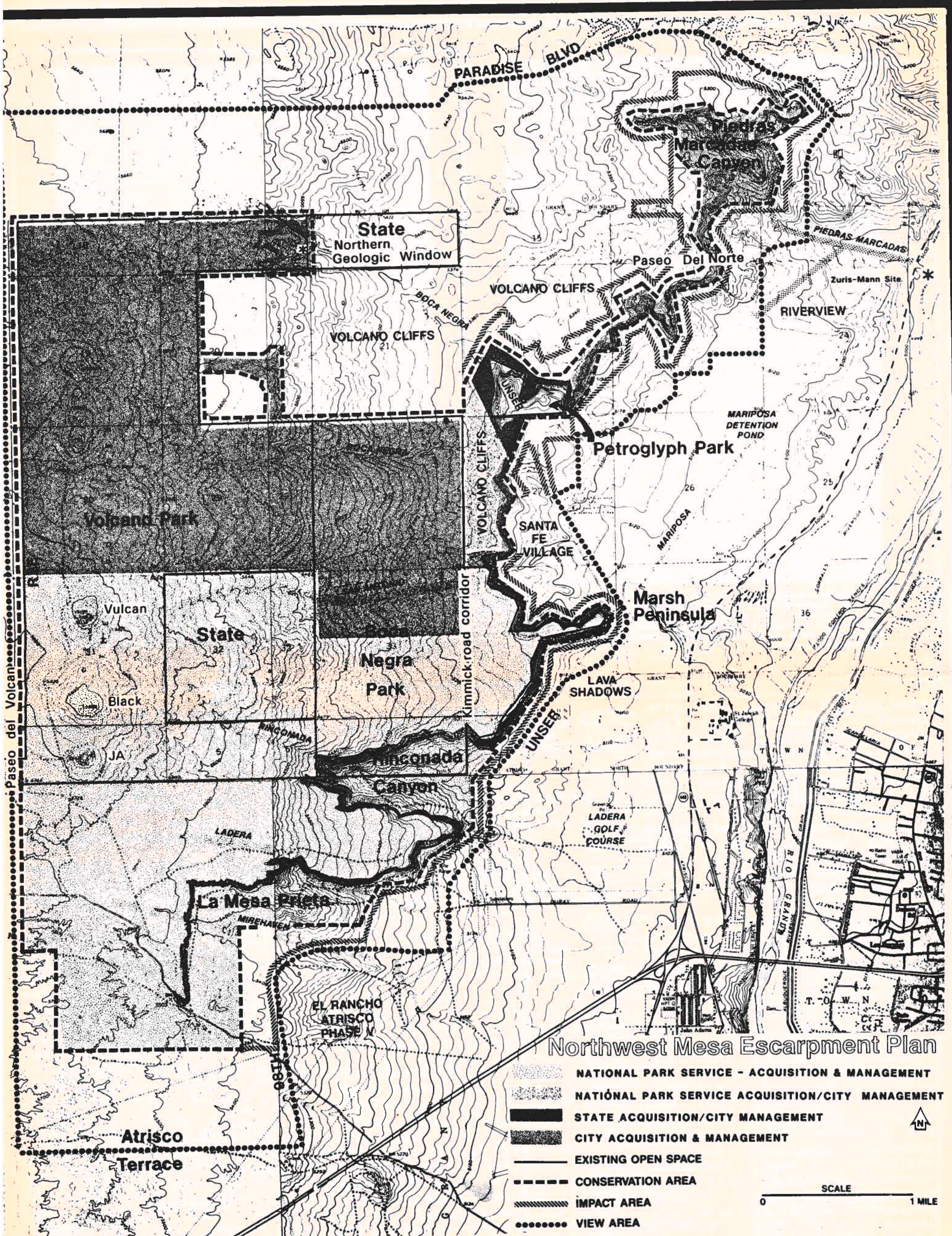
**Tourism:** Linked with other sites on the Congressionally-proposed Masau Trail Automobile Tour of ancient Anasazi and contemporary Pueblo areas, a

Petroglyphs National Monument would become an integral part of a regional tourist system designed to educate visitors to the Southwest's cultural history, and keep them in New Mexico a few days longer.

**Geology:** A series of six volcanic eruptions 190,000 years ago created the West Mesa's unique landscape. Geologists have recently discovered that the earth's magnetic field at that time was recorded by crystals of iron-bearing minerals in the basalt, and was radically different from its present orientation. The West Mesa's paleomagnetic record has global significance.

Two other features of the Albuquerque volcanoes are nationally significant: 1) Three erosional windows located on the branches of Boca Negra Arroyo expose all lava flows. These windows or "kipukas" help geologists map the extent of each flow, and present a dramatic cross-section of flow types to the visitor; 2) The five volcanic cones, particularly JA and Vulcan to the south, are uniquely composed of a mixed variety of lava flows, cinder cones, and spatter or dribble features.

**Vegetation and Wildlife:** The escarpment has special ecological significance as an ecotone with more richly varied plant life than surrounding areas. Many animals find shelter, nesting sites, and



**Northwest Mesa Escarpment Plan**

- NATIONAL PARK SERVICE - ACQUISITION & MANAGEMENT
- NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ACQUISITION/CITY MANAGEMENT
- STATE ACQUISITION/CITY MANAGEMENT
- CITY ACQUISITION & MANAGEMENT
- EXISTING OPEN SPACE
- CONSERVATION AREA
- IMPACT AREA
- VIEW AREA

SCALE 0 1 MILE

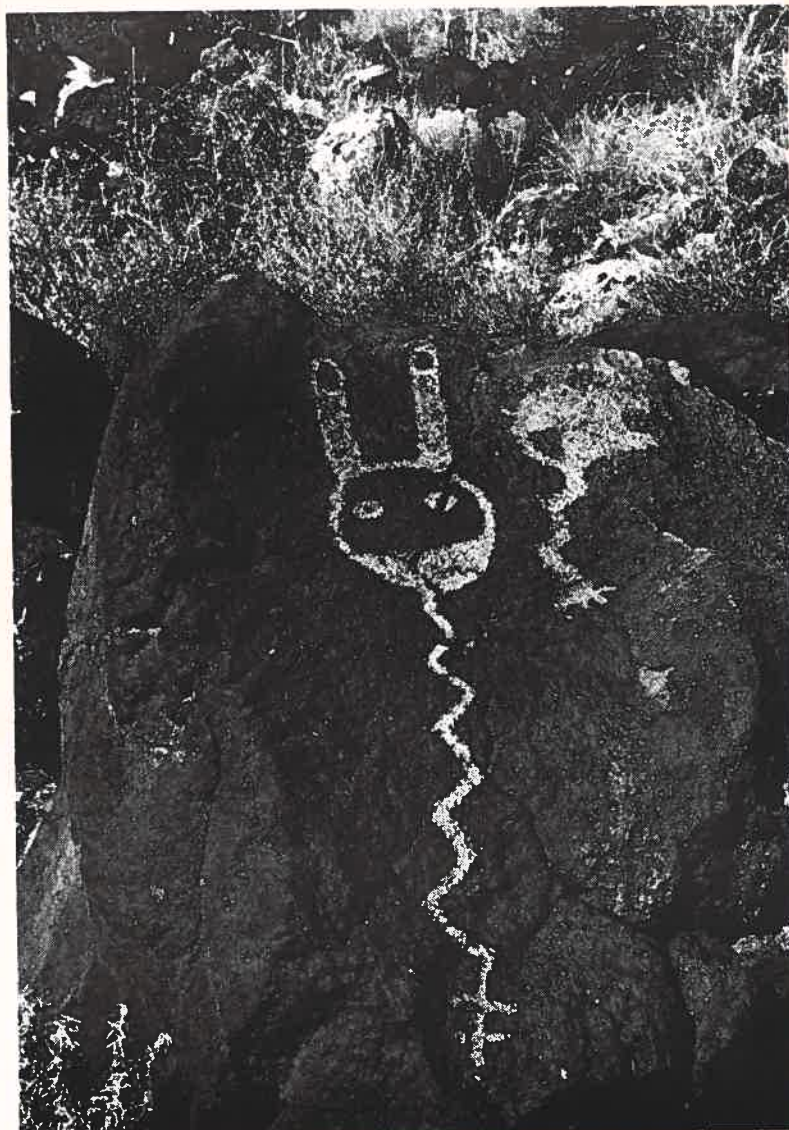
The City of Albuquerque's West Mesa Escarpment Plan recommends adding 2906 acres within the Conservation Area to the existing 4454 acres already publicly owned mostly in Volcano and Boca Negra Parks. Impact and View Areas would set design guidelines to harmoniously transition surrounding development into the resulting 7360-acre public area.

Both the National Park Service Alternative #2 and the City Plan recommend creation of a new National Monument to be jointly acquired by City, State, and Federal governments. The Park Service would manage 4195 acres centered around La Mesa Prieta, Rinconada Canyon, and the three southern volcanoes. The City would manage the remaining 3165-acres in the northern portions of Volcano and Boca Negra Parks, an expanded Indian Petroglyph State

Park, the northern geologic window, and the great Piedras Marcadas Arroyo area. Major visitor centers would be located just north of I-40 at the escarpment's southern tip for the NPS and just north of Paseo del Norte road to access the Piedras Marcadas Arroyo area at the escarpment's northern end for the City. Interpretive facilities may also be located at Vulcan volcano, the Rinconada Canyon entrance, and Indian Petroglyph State Park. Legislation authorizing the monument would include a strong statement of purpose, and require the preparation of a general management plan jointly done by City, State, and Park Service.



A humpbacked fluteplayer figure of Kokopelli, Pueblo god of the earth's reproductive mysteries. Kokopelli goes back perhaps 2000 years in Anasazi rock art, and is also found in pottery, kiva murals, and kiva earth figures. The antennae-like horns on Kokopelli's head may signify his animal form as a cicada. The diminutive figure on the end of his phallus may be a kokopelli mana, or female consort of the god. The very large feet are unusual.



One of Rinconada Canyon's spectacular serpent beings, this one masked with cloud-column horns or feathers, and rattles on the tail. The shorter masked serpent also has a lightning body, and a projection on the right side of the mask which may be an open bird's beak.

good hunting there, including coyote, bobcat, gray fox, desert kit fox, long-tailed weasel, and a variety of rodents and reptiles. A species of millipede found nowhere else in North America has been discovered recently in Petroglyph Park. Resident birds include scaled quail, road runner, great horned owl, marsh hawk, red-tailed hawks, and burrowing owls.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Since both City and Federal governments will be involved in creating the new Petroglyphs National Monument, there is something for everyone to do, whether or not you live in Albuquerque.

Everyone can write and/or call their Congressional leaders and support the Park Service Alternative Plan #2 for a National Monument or National Historic Park. Urge that the northern volcanoes be added to the Monument in order to protect Native American religious uses. Since Alternative Plan #3 would bring development so close to the escarpment as to preclude any chance of Park Service involvement, you should specifically oppose that alternative. Finally, urge that Congress act with all possible haste to approve legislation with funding for immediate acquisition and protection of the petroglyph area.

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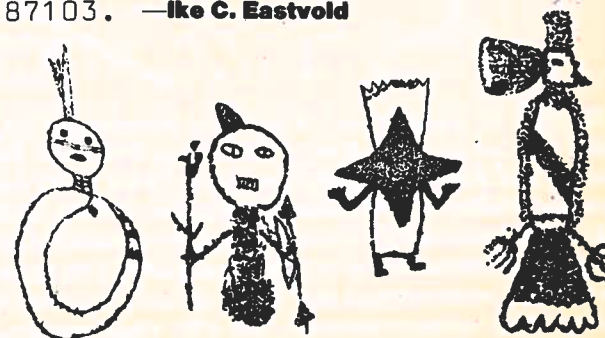
If you live in or around Albuquerque, phone your City Councilor (768-3100) and leave a message in support of the 1/4% for Open Space, specifically mentioning the West Mesa. If you don't know your Councilor's name, leave the message for Council President Pat Baca whose Bill O-141 is currently the best one for open space. Also call the Mayor's Office (768-3000) and leave the same message.

Then check your calendar for August 10, 18, 19, 20, and September 1: the City Council will hold public hearings on the 1/4% tax increase on each of those dates at 7pm, except for September 1st at 4pm. August 10 and September 1 will be in Council Chambers at City

Hall; August 18 at Del Norte High, August 19 at Highland High, and August 20 at West Mesa High. Try to attend one or more of these hearings and speak out in support of the 1/4% for Open Space. The final Council action on the tax package will come on September 9th.

You can also help circulate 1/4% for Open Space petitions, flyers, and bumper stickers. Call (505) 255-7679 for the materials.

Finally, letters to the Editors of the Albuquerque Tribune and Journal are needed in support of a 1/4% tax limited to no more than five years to purchase the Volcanic Escarpment, the proposed botanic garden site, the Zuris-Mann Pueblo site, and the Rounds Estate in the Sandia Foothills. All these lands are threatened with imminent development, and will be lost without immediate acquisition. Write to P.O. Drawer J (for Journal) or P.O. Drawer T (for Tribune), Albuquerque, NM 87103. —Ike C. Eastvold



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

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**OUR EDITORIAL POLICY**

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*Awards (from back page)*

drafted the perfecting amendments for the original park legislation of 1979.

During 1986 and continuing currently LeBron has been Chairman of the Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition. Under LeBron's leadership, the Coalition was instrumental in getting the BLM to protect the parts of the Franklin Mountains in New Mexico and to create a wildlife corridor between the Franklin and Organ Mountains.

Without LeBron's dedicated service the Franklin Mountains State Park would not be a reality today.

The **Santa Fe Group** also received a Special Achievement Award for their work on the Carson National Forest Plan. The Group met with the Forest Service many, many times while negotiating improvements to the plan.

These meetings and the necessary preparation work took countless hours of work by many Group members. The Group also involved several other organizations in the process. As a result of this time and effort, the Carson National Forest Plan was improved immensely. In addition, Group members have been appointed to implementation and monitoring teams, and they continue to devote substantial effort to the improvement of forest management.

Congratulations to Jack Kenney, LeBron Hardie, and the Santa Fe Group in receiving these well-deserved awards.

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## KENNEY, HARDIE, SANTA FE GROUP RECEIVE SIERRA CLUB AWARDS

by Tom Brasfield, El Paso

We are pleased to report that two members of the Rio Grande Chapter and one of our local groups have recently received national Sierra Club awards. Jack Kenney, LeBron Hardie, and the Santa Fe Group were all recognized for their outstanding contributions to the environment.

**John J. (Jack) Kenney** of Santa Fe is recipient of the Susan E. Miller Award for 1986. This Sierra Club award honors exceptional contributions in the field of Chapter organization or management.

Jack served as Rio Grande Chapter Chair during 1985 and 1986. He also was the Chapter SCCOPE chair during 1983 and 1984. The Santa Fe Group has benefited from Jack's service as Group Chair and several other positions.

The Rio Grande Sierran has benefited from the many articles and news items contributed by Jack. He has been particularly effective in organizing and nurturing working committees devoted

to forest plans, BLM wilderness studies, and SCCOPE (Sierra Club Committee on Political Education). He has accomplished exceptional results in forming coalitions with other environmental and civic groups.

Jack is a dynamic leader who delegates responsibility. Yet, he both inspires and shames others into doing more by his own example of hard work, dedication, and participation at every level of activity.

**LeBron Hardie** of El Paso is the recipient of a Sierra Club Special Achievement Award. LeBron has had a long-standing involvement in the creation of the Franklin Mountains State Park, an urban wilderness park in the heart of El Paso. LeBron's involvement goes back to the early 1970's when he was fighting encroachment of development on the mountain. He has done much of the boundary work for the park. At the request of then State Rep. Ronald Coleman, LeBron

*see Awards, page 7*

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# The Rio Grande SIERRAN



THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

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