

The Rio Grande SIERRA



THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

Winter, 1988

EL MALPAIS, AL FIN

by Jim Fish, Placitas

On the last day of 1987, President Reagan signed legislation establishing El Malpais National Monument and Conservation Area and designating Cebolla and West Malpais as wilderness. The legislation also designated the Masau Trail, a vehicular route linking El Malpais with El Morro, Chaco Canyon, Canyon de Chelly, Aztec Ruins, Pecos, and Gila Cliff Dwellings.

The 114,000-acre National Monument lies south of Grants and west of State Road 117. It encompasses the bulk of the main lava flows, the Sandstone Bluff Overlook, and Las Ventanas Chacoan Archeological Site. The Monument will be managed by the National Park Service.

The Monument is surrounded by the 262,690-acre National Conservation Area, which is to be managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The

showpiece of the Conservation Area is La Ventana Arch, the largest natural arch in New Mexico. Within the Conservation Area are two designated wilderness areas. The 60,450-acre Cebolla Wilderness consists of the four former Wilderness Study Areas east of SR 117: Rimrock, Little Rimrock, Sand Canyon, and Pinyon. West Malpais expands the former Instant Study Area by the same name to include Hole-in-the-Wall for a total area of 22,426 acres. Chain of Craters was left as a 17,468-acre Wilderness Study Area.

El Malpais was first proposed for Congressional Protection by the Grants Community Development Committee in 1966. In 1986, Representative Bill Richardson sponsored a bill to create a 373,000-acre National Monument managed by the BLM. The bill passed the House, but an agreement with the Senate could not be reached before

Congress adjourned in October, 1986. Even after Richardson and Senators Domenici and Bingaman hammered out a compromise early the following year, the legislation was held up for several months, first by the issue of water rights, and then by the Acoma Pueblo.

The water issue was resolved (for this legislation only) by language expressly reserving the minimum amount of water required to carry out the purposes of the act.

The Acomas' opposition to the bill focused on their 13,000-acre grazing allotment in the northern portion of Cebolla Wilderness. The Acomas wanted this land transferred to their ownership instead of being designated wilderness. Although this area lies within the region the Acomas call their traditional homelands, they relinquished their claim to it as part of a 1972 settlement in
see El Malpais, page 7

LETTERS NEEDED FOR PETROGLYPHS NAT'L MONUMENT

by Ike Eastvold, Albuquerque

Just an hour of your time writing four short letters can make a major difference as the New Mexico Congressional delegation drafts national monument legislation. After nearly two years of meetings, compromises, hearings, more compromises, and 23 weakening amendments to the City's NW Mesa Escarpment Plan, we have a bare-bones National Monument proposal with strong intergovernmental and community support. During this attenuating phase of multiple dilutions, developers have been well-represented and prominent in affecting the process.

Are they satisfied? Never! On an advisory group that Senator Domenici and Rep. Manuel Lujan have formed to review legislation as it is drafted, developers outnumber environmentalists by more than two-to-one. In addition to threatening lawsuits and major trouble at Congressional hearings if their demands for further concessions are not met, the developers are holding out a carrot to the delegation:

donation of some of the escarpment rocky face in exchange for as-yet unspecified higher density development closer to the petroglyphs, etc. The result of their thrust, unless checked by your letters, would be a smaller, lower quality National Monument. In five years, the delegation would probably regret not having spent a little extra to assure a good job.

The time is critical for your letters. Being brief and in your own words, make some of the following points to Senators Domenici and Bingaman, and Representatives Lujan and Richardson.

* The National Monument boundary and the development controls agreed upon by the National Park Service and City of Albuquerque are already inadequate, mostly as a result of political pressure on the City by developers. If anything, the controls should be strengthened and boundary expanded, not further whittled away.

* This will be the first unit of the National Park System to feature our country's vast heritage of prehistoric Indian and colonial Hispanic rock art. With over 15,000 petroglyphs, it is the largest concentration of this art near any major city

in the world. People from all over the country and the world will come here to see this great outdoor gallery. We must maintain quality for these visitors.

* The developers' proposals for donations must be evaluated with a critical eye. If the savings are at the expense of an exceptional National Monument, the Federal government's ultimate investment of approximately \$50 million is eroded. Our representatives must bear the public interest primarily in mind and not fall into "penny-wise, pound-foolish" decisions.

* Tell the delegation to hold firm with the boundaries of the NPS Alternative #2 final recommendations and to avoid gutting further the flimsy development controls left in the City's NW Mesa Escarpment Plan.

After you have fired off your letters to the delegation, please tap off a similar short note to Mayor Ken Schultz and Council President Pat Baca, City of Albuquerque, PO Box 1293, Albuquerque, NM 87103. These folks also need to be reminded that they must bear the long-term public interest primarily in mind instead of further degrading the National

see Petroglyphs, page 7

**UPDATE:
BLM WILDERNESS**
by Jim Fish, Placitas

SUMMARY

* The concept of BLM wilderness is becoming more acceptable.

* This article is dedicated to the troops down south.

STATEWIDE

Bill Gast (202-224-2522) has taken over for Steve Fitch who had to return to the Forest Service. We need to give Bill the same kind of help that we gave Steve. The Congressional staffers are coming down to the hard final stretch in the attempt to draft a consensus bill: the last 10% of the areas; water language; the grazing debate; management prescriptions; a budget. The more we make ourselves useful by feeding the staffers, all of them, detailed information backed up by photographs and maps, the better we will like the results.

Bill tells me that they are aiming at a draft for public review toward the latter part of March. I'll wager a case that we don't see it until April or May.

LAS CRUCES-LORDSBURG

The Commissioners of Dona Ana County, in a complete reversal of their position last summer, voted 5 to 0 to support the concept of wilderness for all six WSAs in the county. A special thanks to Commissioner Everado Chavez for sponsoring the resolution.

In its editorial the following day, the Las Cruces Bulletin applauded, "The commission's responsiveness is a victory for conservation efforts and a recognition that precious wilderness resources, if not protected, will vanish forever." The opinion of the Las Cruces Sun-News the next day was that the "commissioners deserve credit for having reconsidered the matter."

Larry Foster, manager of the Corralitos Ranch south of Las Uvas WSA, is quoted in the Bulletin, "I think it's a reasonable decision. As ranchers, we're no longer the sole management agency--we have to give and take."

Meanwhile, the BLM has agreed to reconsider a proposal to increase substantially grazing in the Aden Lava Flow WSA; Representative Skeen has indicated that even he might support some wilderness; and the BLM has invited Bob Tafanelli to participate in the development of a Coordinated Resource Management Plan for the Las Cruces-Lordsburg Resource Area.

The successes down south are not accidents; they are the product of the relentless effort of a growing group of local activists.

On the other side of the coin: one of the ways leading to a stock tank in West Potrillo Mountains WSA was bladed by the allottee the week after the Commissioners vote, supposedly by accident; and the Hooker Dam Association, with help from James Watt's Mountain States Legal Foundation, has reared its ugly head.

According to various bits and pieces of information, areas in need of special and immediate attention if they are to fare well in the draft statewide legislation include Cedar Mountains WSA, Robledo Mountains WSA, the roadless area between Robledo Mountains and Las Uvas Mountains, Blue Creek WSA, Lower Gila Box WSA, Granite Gap Inventory Unit, Culp Canyon WSA, the Military portion of the Organ Mountains, and Brokeoff Mountains WSA.

Overall, a big cheer for the southern troops. Much work remains, but momentum is on our side.

SOCORRO

Activity in the Socorro area has been quieter than down south, but Paul Krehbiel keeps chipping away at the opposition with his bag of photographs and detailed data from the field.

He could use some help on Antelope, the eastern portion of Continental Divide, the northern portion of Devil's Backbone, and Presilla. Reasonable compromises on Stallion, Cerro Pomo, and Red Hill appear possible if we are willing to fight for them effectively.

TAOS

In January, Roger Peterson led a trip to San Antonio and to Rio Grande for the benefit of Sean Bersell (of Sen. Domenici's staff) and Mitch Fouchee (of Sen. Bingaman's staff). Both staffers were visibly impressed by the areas in real life. Both were very good sports about having to trudge through waist-deep snow to reach the canyon rims. In the words of Roger Peterson, "You can't see a roadless area from the road."

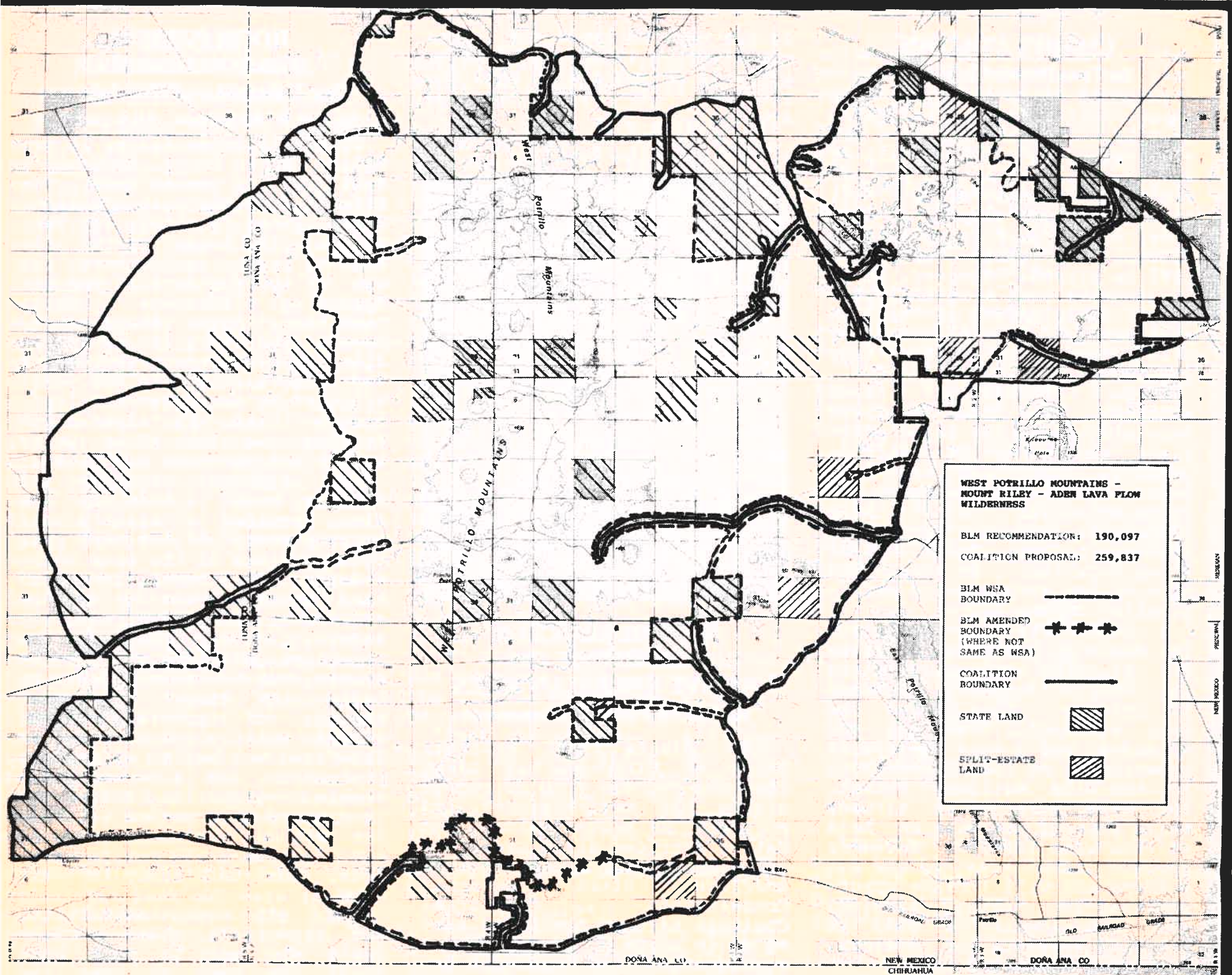
Sabinoso WSA still suffers from the issues of convoluted boundary and lack of public access. Anyone who would like to debate Sean Bersell on whether an inaccessible area offers outstanding opportunities for solitude should give him a call (202-224-6621).

RIO PUERCO

In an effort to head off a disruptive debate on paleontological research in wilderness, the BLM has proposed language for the statewide legislation authorizing "the use of motorized and mechanical equipment for the identification, excavation, and removal of fossils in those cases where such equipment represents the minimum necessary tool and where it does not degrade the area's overall wilderness character." A few calls or letters to the delegation in support of wilderness designation for Ojito would help counter Dr. Gillette's pressure to make it a Research Natural Area instead of wilderness.

The emergency closure of the road between Ignacio Chavez and Chamiza WSAs is still in effect. Opposition from hunters has been less than expected. Several bow hunters and muzzle loaders told me that in the interest of improving the elk, turkey, and deer herds they did not mind walking a couple of extra miles. The road closure has been quite effective in reducing illegal wood cutting, wildlife poaching, and off-road-vehicle damage to the area.

Thanks to the Cabezon Coyotes who rode shotgun with BLM patrols during Operation Respect last fall. This kind of volunteer involvement is crucial to the long term protection of our public lands. A number of projects for the spring are being planned. They include tree planting, two-track closures and rehabilitation, signing of the WSA boundaries, erosion control projects, and a study of raptor nesting. Let me know (867-3062) if you would like to invest a day or two in the land you love to enjoy. Those with personal gain in mind certainly put in their time.



WEST POTRILLOS UNDER ATTACK

Although it appears that the West Potrillos-Mt. Riley-Aden Lava Flow Complex is in no danger of being dropped completely, its integrity and its size are under attack. The opposition claims that it is too big to be manageable as wilderness.

One option that is being entertained is to move the southern boundary as much as seven miles to the north. The excuse is to provide a buffer for law enforcement. This red herring ignores the fact that wilderness will actually enhance law enforcement. Anyone in the wilderness area with a vehicle and without a permit would be violating the law. Law enforcement agents would not have to wait until the person committed some other crime before investigating.

Another attempt to reduce the size involves moving the northern boundary south several miles to eliminate the various cherry stems that provide access to range improvements. It should be noted that this area was a wilderness study

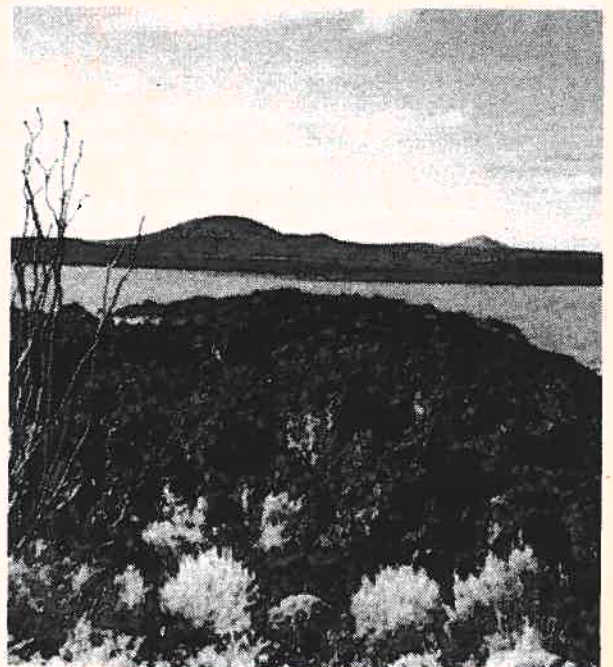
area at the time that the current allottee bought the private property on which the lease of the BLM land is based.

The Coalition's proposal to expand the area to the west has been vehemently opposed by the grazing community. We should not give in on this area. It meets all of the wilderness criteria on its own. It should be included in the complex as a separate unit, at least. The Coalition maintains its position that the vehicular routes separating it from the WSA are two-tracks and that the western extension should have been part of the WSA in the first place.

While the opposition is whittling away at the West Potrillos, the BLM is considering a proposal to increase the number of cows on the Aden Lava Flow. The Research Natural Area, which was never fenced as planned, is within the area of the proposed increase. The BLM's final decision on this matter is not known yet.

The new allottees in the southern part of the West Potrillos have indicated that they do not like visitors on "their" public land. Some

saturation use of this area may be appropriate. It is time we pointed out to the grazing community that not only are they no longer the "sole management agency" of public lands, but they never have been.



View west from Aden Crater to West Potrillos Mountains

CHAIR'S COLUMN

by Tom Brasfield, El Paso

I would like to thank the three retiring Chapter ExCom members, Jack Kenney, Hal Reynolds, and Jim Owen, all of whom decided not to run for reelection to the ExCom. All have served the Chapter in many areas over their terms on the ExCom, and their experience will be missed. However, it is anticipated that they will continue to be active in various conservation issues, and we will continue to benefit from their many talents.

Norma McCallan, Gwen Wardwell, and Tom Brasfield were elected to the three positions vacated by the retiring members. Gwen and Tom have been serving on the ExCom as representatives of their respective groups. A special welcome to new ExCom member Norma McCallan. We look forward to her enthusiastic participation on the ExCom.

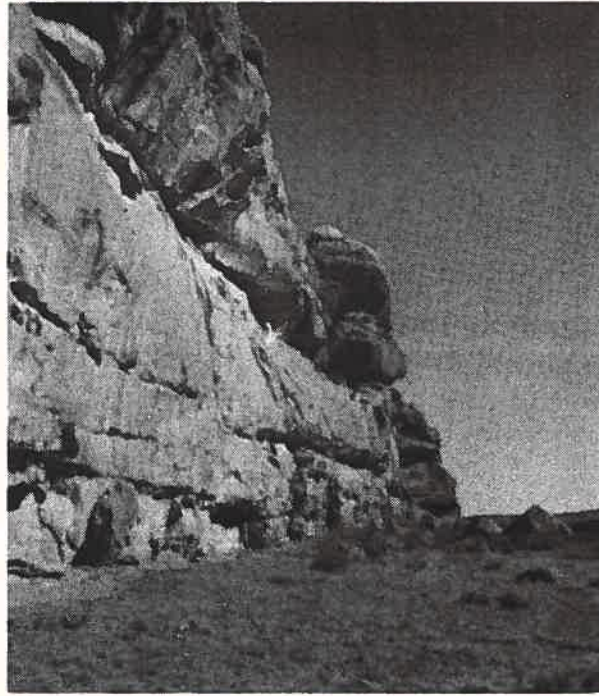
I would like to congratulate Ike Eastvold and Gary Williams for planning and coordinating the Chapter Training Workshop in October. This event was very successful, and all who attended had a very enjoyable experience at Camp Thunderbird in the Gila National Forest. The 1988 Workshop is already being planned and will be held at the same location November 11-13. This event is for all members and will include opportunities for hiking, singing, and camaraderie as well as training sessions for novices. Mark your calendars now!

As you know, 1988 is an election year. In New Mexico, we will be electing a U.S. Senator and three Congressmen. In West Texas, we will be electing a Congressman. There are also state legislator races and election of other local officials in both New Mexico and West Texas. Although no decisions have been made at this time, the Sierra Club will most likely be involved in some of these races. These efforts will be coordinated through your local group. If you are interested in working on the political campaign for an environmentally sensitive candidate contact your group SCCOPE chair who is listed in your group newsletter or the Chapter SCCOPE chair listed in the directory in this newsletter.

By now, you should have received the Chapter's Annual Fund Raising Appeal letter. The contributions made to the Chapter by YOU are a significant part of our budget. It is YOUR time and monetary contributions that make our involvement in many conservation issues possible. These include such issues as Wilderness, Public Lands Management, Park acquisition, Clean Air, and Clean Water, just to name a few. Help us be more effective

in our work on these and other conservation issues by being as generous as you can be when you receive our fund raising appeal.

Don't forget to enjoy a hike in your favorite spot! ●



**NEW SIERRA CLUB
COMMITTEE ON
NATIVE AMERICAN SITES**

by Ike Eastvold, Albuquerque

The Sierra Club National Board of Directors has taken the long-overdue step of recognizing the environmental importance of archeological and Native American sites preservation by forming a new Native American Sites National Conservation Committee. Chairman Harvard Ayers has asked me to serve on the Committee representing the Southwest region and, in particular, our efforts to create a Petroglyphs National Monument. The petroglyphs issue was identified as a major campaign of the new Committee, and I was appointed Issue Chair at our first meeting in Washington DC on January 21. Shirley Taylor is our BOD liaison.

The Committee is comprised of professional archeologists, Native American traditionalists, and archeo-environmental activists like myself. We will make ourselves available to work with Groups, Chapters, RCC's, other National Committees, and Club staff on an advisory basis. For example, the Committee is interested in helping the Grand Canyon Chapter and Phoenix Group save their South Mountains Park from proposed freeway construction through the heart of a rich archeological park area.

For further information, contact me at 255-7679 or 5501 Mountain Road, NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110. The Committee will have its next meeting in Albuquerque in December and will have tours of both the West Mesa Petroglyph area and El Malpais National Monument. Some will stay to attend the marvelous Zuni Shalako ceremony, as well. ●

**BOOK REVIEW:
Corry McDonald's
The Dilemma of Wilderness**

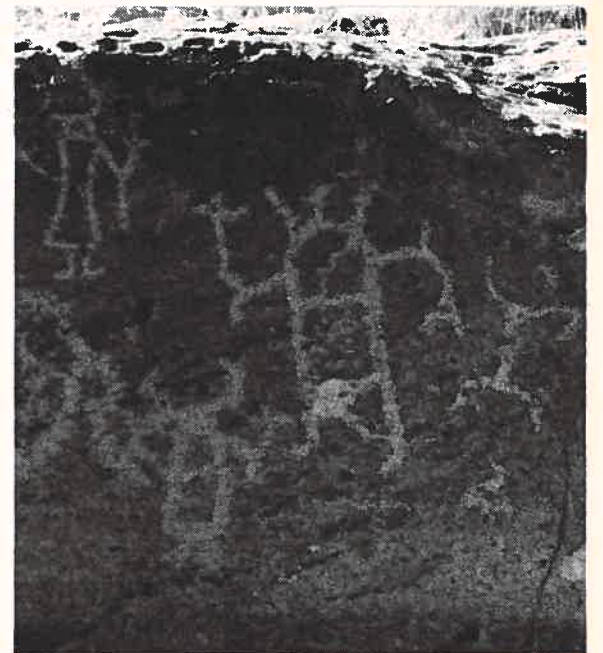
by Jay B. Sorenson, Albuquerque

Every environmentalist in New Mexico is in Corry McDonald's debt for his recent book, *The Dilemma of Wilderness* (Sunstone Press: Santa Fe, 1987; \$10.95). A long time leader in the effort to protect wilderness and one of the founders of the New Mexico Wilderness Study Committee, Corry thoughtfully probes the story of how conflict between preservationists and timber interests has contributed to our present wilderness policies. He raises penetrating questions about where we are and where we are going.

The pleasant surprise of Corry's book is that he has also provided a history - a written record of the very real contributions of the many individuals who labored long and hard to secure the wilderness additions this state presently enjoys. He not only raises important questions about wilderness, but he names names. He tells the story of human beings, of individuals, who worked quietly and with little fan-fare to build wilderness protection. It is no inconsiderable contribution. Indeed, it is a story that needed telling, for without his book many of our friends would remain nameless, lost to history for all time.

For all environmentalists, and especially those individuals who want to know more about the past so they can better understand the future, this is an invaluable book.

Matched with his earlier book, *Wilderness: A New Mexico Legacy* (Sunstone Press, 1985), which was selected as one of the best current books reflecting national life, history and culture by the English-Speaking Union, Corry McDonald has made another invaluable contribution to his 30-year effort to understand and to protect wilderness. He certainly deserves our thanks and our recognition. ●



BLACKIE AND THE BUZZ-TAIL

by Jim Fish, Placitas

The raven beat a steady flight across the open valley. He had a mission. First week in May and he had not seen his friend over on the southeast side of Cabezon since the previous fall. Mid-morning, middle of the week, not a two legged animal in sight.

Blackie crossed the Rio Puerco west of Cerro Cuate. He honked a couple of lazy calls as he rode a thermal over the top of the twin-peaked volcanic plug. He dived to the deck. Chamisa and snakeweed. Grass struggling to make a comeback against the poor odds of too many years of overgrazing. Moving close to the ground, Blackie buzzed a recently born calf, cackling at the startled bovine.

Buzz-tail, out for his morning sun, heard the ruckus and knew that his friend was on the way. He slid back under the boulder. Blackie, having seen the move, landed on the boulder without a sound. Buzz-tail flicked his tongue to verify the identification. He waited as long as he could stand before breaking the silence, "Hey, Blackie, your breath smells like you've been eating something dead."

Blackie hopped down to his friend's level, "Buzz-tail, Ol' Buddy, get back out here in the sun before your cold blood coagulates on you."



"Bienvenida, Amigo."

"Gracias."

Side by side in the sunshine, the two of them listened to a mockingbird terrorizing a scrub jay who was probably asking for it by snooping around the mockingbird's nest. A red-tail's screech high over head moved Buzz-tail closer to the safety of the boulder's shade. Blackie chuckled, "Forget it, you're too skinny after that long winter. He's looking for a cottontail, I'd venture."

"Matter a fact, I wouldn't mind a cottontail, myself. One about half grown would do just right."

"Hey, I got into a fresh one yesterday over on 44 just north of San Ysidro." He hopped up on a twisted juniper trunk, "Had to share it with two of my brothers, but I'm still stuffed. Boy, was it good."

"Change the subject. You're making my fangs itch." Buzz-tail snuggled into a tight coil, "What's happening in the world these days?"

Blackie shook his head, "The cowboys are still in control from what I hear. The increase in the grazing fee was token, at best. Our friends are having to argue to keep the BLM from increasing the number of cows on land that the BLM itself admits is not improving from a condition that is far from excellent. The Mexican Wolf recovery program has been terminated by the Fish and Wildlife Service."

"You're kidding me?"

"I wish I were." He ruffled his feathers, "The commander of the missile range just said no. No bad-drug wolf on my land."

"That is amazing. All the jocks in this state and the mascot of the university is not even welcome. Maybe they should change their mascot to the cow. The University of New Mexico Stupid Cows." He paused, "You know what really bothers me?"

"What's that?"

"Those two-leggers are making a conscious decision to eliminate, to extirpate a fellow creature. What bothers me is that I might be next. My grandfather told me that one time he nailed a lamb that was trying to dance on his head."

Blackie stared out into the heat waves starting to dance above the desert floor. Below him, two collared lizards played chase in and out of a rock pile. Blackie hopped back to the ground, "Yeah, it's crazy. But I'm convinced that the cowboys' days are numbered and this area of ours is faring well."

"Wilderness?"

"A rather nice chunk of it, I believe."

"Wonderful."

"Of course, the legislation is a long way from in the bag. Either or both of two issues may derail the process: water rights and grazing."

"Yep. I'm not surprised, but tell me, are the environmentalists falling for the cowboys' ploy to make grazing a wilderness issue?"

"No. Most of them realize that it's bigger than that. They realize that if ten percent, ten measly percent of the BLM land in New Mexico is designated wilderness it will be a miracle. They understand that taking care of the grazing problem in wilderness only

scratches the surface. The other ninety percent of the public land cannot be ignored."

"Great." Buzz-tail wiggled over to the shade of the juniper. "We may have a chance yet."

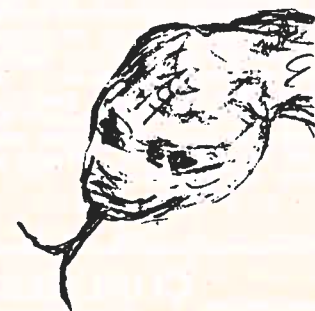
Blackie bobbed his head, "We might. Some of the more astute politician are starting to realize that they can no longer simply dismiss the wilderfreaks."

A chipmunk darting from juniper to boulder did not make it. Blackie cheered, "Nice shot."

"Thanks. I hated to do it, but I'm famished and I could have sworn he was wearing boots."

"Get out of here."

Blackie decided that it was time he got out of there himself. He bid adieu to his buddy and headed east. Buzzards were circling over by the highway.



Buzz-tail savored his monthly meal in silence. High overhead the sun seemed to have paused. Down by the tank, cows were swatting flies.

OJITO OUTING

Only an hour from Albuquerque and little more than an hour from Santa Fe, Ojito Wilderness Study Area (WSA) offers a variety of treats for the day hiker: alien-looking rock structures, multicolored badlands, steep-sided mesas, remote box canyons, deep arroyos, petroglyphs, raptor nests, rare stands of relic ponderosa pines, and spectacular views of Cabezon Peak, the Jemez Mountains, and the Sandia Mountains. The area also contains a high density of prehistoric and Hispanic sites. One frequent visitor says of Ojito, "The ghosts here are three deep, at least."

Weather permitting, Jim Fish plans to lead a hike into Ojito WSA, Sunday, March 13. Wear sturdy hiking boots and clothing appropriate for the time of year -- layers are recommended given the large temperature swings we have been experiencing. Bring water and lunch. Meet at the Pizza Hut in Bernalillo (State Road 44) between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. Please call Fish at 867-3062 if you plan to go on the trip or have any questions.

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TRIP TO THE HIMALAYAS

The Sierra Club is offering a 24-day trek to the spectacular Garhwal Himal, India. This region of the Himalayan mountains is located near the borders of India, Nepal, and Tibet. The Garhwal is often referred to as "the Abode of the Gods", because of its overwhelming magnificence. The region is also one of the major pilgrimage areas for peoples of the Hindu faith.

The trip starts in Delhi, and includes visits to the cities of Srinigar, Rishikesh, and Hardwar. The trek will visit the famous "Valley of Flowers" and Hemkind Sahib. Then we continue our journey by crossing over Kuari Pass and enjoying inspiring views into the "Nanda Devi Sanctuary" which is filled with glaciated mountains, including India's highest peak "Nanda Devi", before returning to Delhi.

The trip dates are May 16 - June 8. For more information contact:

The Sierra Club Outings Dept.
730 Polk Street
San Francisco, CA 94109

A CHINA ADVENTURE

The Sierra Club offers many exciting foreign adventures. One such trip is #88615, a China Bicycle Tour through Guilin and Yunnan Province led by Sy Gelman starting June 12, 1988 and ending on July 1, 1988.

After so many years of just trying to feed her massive population, China is now rushing headlong into the twentieth century. Things are changing rapidly with new hotels being built, old guest houses transformed to a western flavor, and new areas opening up with historic and cultural sites renovated and built especially for the tourist trade. All too soon, the new will overshadow the old.

The Guilin-Yunnan Bicycle Tour was especially planned to show both the new and the old China. Travelling by bicycle will give the freedom to wander and to see truly the various lifestyles and cultures. Not only will the tour participants see the sights most tourists see, but they will also be going to areas few have visited, stay in guest houses normally patronized by Chinese, and bathe in Chinese Bath Houses (an experience in itself). They will be cycling through some of the most beautiful and spectacular parts of China.

Travel will be by plane, bus, boat, and, of course, bicycle. One does not, however, need to be in the greatest condition to sign up for this trip. A bus and a truck will follow the group each day to pick up tired riders and bikes, respectively. Although one could ride the bus throughout the trip, those who cycle will be able to get closer to the people. The Chinese are great sports enthusiasts and will greet the participants warmly as they ride through town. It is also not unusual to have someone ride along side just to practice his or her English.

This trip promises to provide an exciting and unusual experinece. To get more information on this and other foreign trips, contact:

The Sierra Club Outings Dept.
730 Polk Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
(415) 776-2211.

**COMMENTS NEEDED
ON
GRAY RANCH ACQUISITION**
by Susan Larsen, Albuquerque

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) is currently accepting public comment on acquisition of Gray Ranch as an addition to the National Wildlife Refuge System. Gray Ranch is a 311,000-acre parcel of land in southwestern New Mexico located along the Animas River. The ranch is well-known for its abundant wildlife and its biological diversity. Nineteen percent (718 species) of New Mexico's flora and forty percent of the State's animal species are found on the ranch. It is important habitat for 21 state-listed and 4 federally-listed endangered species including the ridge-nosed rattlesnake. In addition, there are over one hundred known archaeological sites on the ranch. These sites are associated with the extremely important Casas Grandes culture.

In general, the environmental community supports the USFWS proposal to acquire Gray Ranch as the Animas National Wildlife Refuge. The ranch is for sale. New private owners could mean subdividing of the ranch and ultimate development of the land. New private owners could also result in overgrazing of land that has been well-managed in the past.

There are, however, some concerns with the USFWS proposal:

- 1) domestic livestock grazing would be continued;
- 2) hunting and trapping would be increased from their present levels on the ranch; and
- 3) increased public access to the area could result in the disruption of the fragile ecosystem the refuge is to protect.

Public hearings have been held in Hidalgo County (where Gray Ranch is located), Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces. Testimony was overwhelmingly in favor of the refuge in all but Hidalgo County. The most vocal opposition has been the grazing community, the same people who oppose wilderness, the lobo, the mountain lion, the spike-nose minnow, and market-value grazing fees.

Public comment via letters will be accepted for the next month. Write to:

USFWS
500 Gold SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102.

Copies of your letters should be sent to the Congressional delegation (see directory), Governor Carruthers, and the State Game and Fish Department. For more information, contact Susan Larsen at (505) 299-3496.

**NETWORK FORMING
ON
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES**

The nation's Wildlife Refuges represent one of our largest public land systems and the only land preservation system devoted primarily to wildlife. Yet the environmental community has a poor understanding of the management, the funding, and the problems of this system. Even Congress pays little attention to the national system as a whole. In fact, no codified Organic Act exists to legislate the dominant purposes of the refuge system. Similar Organic Acts do exist for the Park Service, the Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management.

Unknown and unimaginable to many is the fact that grazing of livestock, timber harvesting, farming, and oil and gas production occur on many refuges. Furthermore, the toxic wastes of industry and agriculture have contaminated many of our refuges to crisis proportions.

The Public Lands Committee of the Sierra Club is now forming a network of refuge advocates to foster awareness of our refuges. Any Sierran interested in further pursuit of this matter should contact:

Public Lands Committee
National Wildlife Refuge
Michael J. Caire, Co-Chair
117 Parkwest Drive
West Monroe, LA 71291

Please include your Group and Chapter names and the particular refuges, if any, in which you are interested.

El Malpais (from page 1)

which they received \$6.1 million.

The legislation reaffirms the purpose and the intent of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act and mandates that the appropriate Indian tribes and their traditional cultural and religious authorities be consulted by the agencies as the management plans for the Monument and the Conservation Area are prepared. In spite of these assurances and the fact that only 800 acres of their grazing allotment was included in the Monument (where grazing will be phased out), the Acomas opposed the legislation to the end.

Of the many people who worked long and hard for protection of El Malpais, three deserve special mention: Chuck Wiggins, John Somers, and Jan Cummings. Without their vigilant attention to details and their sincere efforts to resolve potential conflicts with grace, we never would have seen such a good piece of legislation.

Petroglyphs (from page 3)

Monument proposal while lining the developers' pockets with public money from the 1/4 cent tax.

Don't be afraid of a little righteous anger!

[Note: See page 6 for the addresses of our Congressional delegation.]

Arctic (from back page)

Senator Domenici supports the bill and voted for the McClure amendment. Senator Bingaman has stated that he is not convinced that wildlife would suffer from human intrusion and oil related activity. He has also said that the U.S. needs all available domestic sources of oil. He did vote against the McClure amendment.

We need to call Senator Bingaman's office. Tell him you support wilderness designation for the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, thank him for his vote against the McClure amendment, and ask him to vote against the bill. Senator Bingaman needs to know that the environmental lobby is watching his performance in this election year and that we are as vigorously concerned about national and international issues as we are about local matters. Telephone numbers for Senator Bingaman's offices are (202) 224-5521 in D.C., (505) 988-6647 in Santa Fe, and (505) 766-3636 in Albuquerque.

Calls to the offices of the rest of the delegation (see directory) would also be useful. So far, Congressman Richardson has taken a neutral position.

For the latest information on this issue, call David Bates at 758-0143 (Taos), Chuck Wiggins at 266-3622 (Albuquerque), or Chris Rilling at 242-2861 (Albuquerque).

The wild citizens of Alaska thank you for the help.

**1988
Rio Grande Sierran
Publication Schedule**

The following dates are scheduled deadlines for future 1988 issues of the Rio Grande Sierran.

March/April	April 9
May/June	June 11
July/August	August 13
September/October	October 8
November/December	December 3

Please submit articles for publication to:

Dave Glowka
Star Rt. Box 282B
Tijeras, NM 87059

ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE NEEDS YOUR HELP

by David Bates, Taos

On the far north coast of Alaska, our nation's finest wildlife refuge is threatened by oil exploration. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, originally protected by President Eisenhower and later expanded to 19 million acres, is home to a treasure of species including polar bears, grizzlies, snow geese, brants (once on the verge of extinction, but now gaining in numbers), tundra swans, peregrine falcons, Dall sheep, muskoxen, wolves, wolverines, and the 180,000 strong Porcupine caribou herd.

The critical part of the Refuge for the wildlife is the broad coastal plain, and it is here that the Department of Interior and the oil companies want to begin drilling.

According to the Interior Department's own report, oil and gas development would have major adverse impacts on the area's wildlife. Biologists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service go further, claiming that at least half of all the wild

residents of the coastal plain would perish as man moves in.

Politically, this issue can be influenced by New Mexicans. Both Senators Domenici and Bingaman are members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. As we go to press, this committee is considering a bill that would open the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration. The vote will be close. The best hope for environmentalists, an amendment requiring a study to demonstrate that the nation needs the small amount of oil that may be found here and that development of the resource is consistent with a national energy policy, was derailed on February 17 by a 10 to 9 vote in favor of a bogus amendment offered by Senator McClure. The McClure amendment also calls for a study but allows preparations for oil development to proceed on a fast track at the same time.

see Arctic, page 7

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The Rio Grande Sierran

Winter, 1988

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THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

Winter, 1988



La Ventana Arch, El Malpais

See story, page 1

Photo by Jim Fish

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