

YATES PLANS TO DRILL THE DE-NA-ZIN WILDERNESS

Yates Petroleum, the infamous company that brought us drilling in the Salt Creek Wilderness of southeastern New Mexico, is now planning to drill for petroleum in the De-Na-Zin Wilderness in the northwestern part of the state.

The De-Na-Zin Wilderness is a 22,000-acre jewel in the high desert south of Farmington. Like the smaller but more well-known Bisti Wilderness, the De-Na-Zin contains spectacular rock formations and significant fossil resources. It is known as one of the best sites in the world for fossils that mark the end of the Cretaceous Period, 65 million years ago, when the region was covered with swamps and teemed with land and marine lifeforms. The De-Na-Zin and Bisti were designated Wilderness Areas in 1984 to protect these resources from destructive coal mining and oil and gas drilling activities.

It is doubtful that Yates is actually looking to increase its oil reserves by drilling in the De-Na-Zin.

Since the 1950s, eight oil and gas wells have been drilled in the vicinity, and all were dry holes. Instead, Yates is undoubtedly trying to get a permit to drill for a different reason -- to set precedent for drilling in BLM Wilderness Areas.

Yates is in the position of holding oil leases in the De-Na-Zin, and the 10-year time period for developing those leases will soon expire. At the time of leasing, the De-Na-Zin was already a Wilderness Study Area. Thus Yates took a chance when it leased the area, knowing that it may someday become a Wilderness and therefore be unsuitable for drilling. Now Yates apparently insists on drilling, despite the area's current status.

If the Bureau of Land Management handles this matter correctly, it will write an Environmental Impact Statement, conclude that the proposed actions would significantly degrade the Wilderness, and deny the application for permits to drill. •

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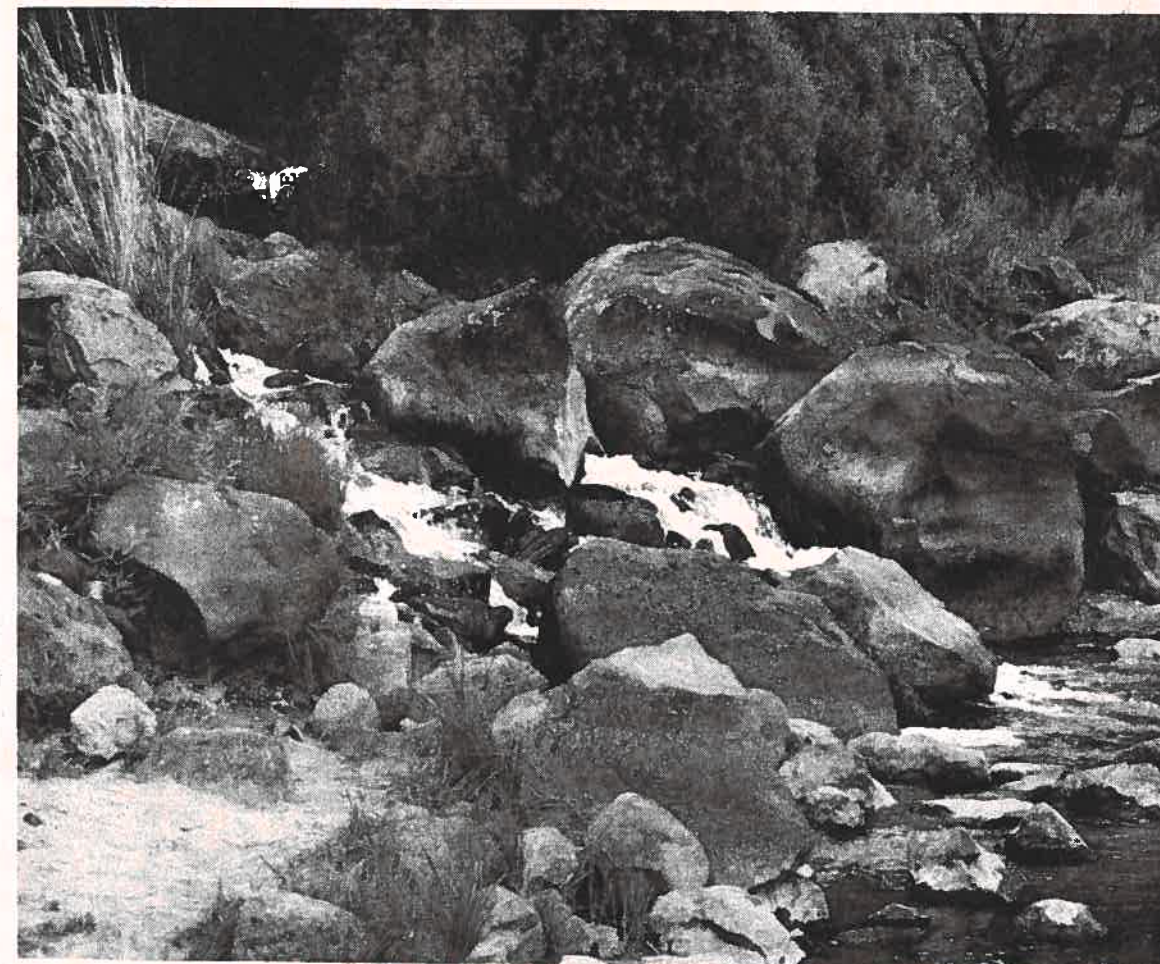
SUMMER, 1989

The Rio Grande SIERRAN



THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

SUMMER, 1989



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The Rio Grande SIERRAN



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SUMMER, 1989

GOVERNOR'S ORDER WON'T STOP THE GARBAGE

Senate Bill 2, the Resource Recovery and Waste Management Bill, introduced by Roman Maes (D-Santa Fe) made the environment a central issue, if not the central issue, of the 39th New Mexico State Legislature. By his veto of the bill, Governor Carruthers has kept the issue in the limelight, educating the citizenry about the solid waste problem... albeit at a potentially high price.

The threats posed by the roughly 20 proposed new landfills, some of them massive receptacles for out-of-state waste (such as the proposed 23,000-acre site near Lordburg's aquifer), and the focus of an excellent legislative vehicle in the form of SB 2 energized the environmental community to an extent rarely seen for a legislative session. The result was an overwhelming victory in both houses, 36-2 in the Senate and 56-6 in the

House. Specifically, this was due to the following factors:

- Literally hundreds of environmentalists, in every corner of the state, organizing themselves into phone trees and bombarding their senators and representatives with calls in support of the bill.

- A masterful effort by Sierra Club and NM Conservation Voters Alliance lobbyist, Mary Fledblum.

- The good counsel of Doug Meikeljohn, Eddie Pierpoint, Paul Robinson, Kevin Bean, and many others in the crafting of the bill.

- Calls by US Senator Jeff Bingaman to all the Democratic Senators on behalf of the bill.

- An aroused public and media.

- Most importantly, the total commitment of the bill's sponsor, Senator Roman Maes.

In spite of this overwhelming support, Governor Carruthers vetoed the bill for what he

said were technical and legal flaws. This action was "mysterious" in light of the 18 hours of hearings on the bill and input by top EID appointees, as well as the fact that other states have found similarly-structured laws workable. An effort was made to override the veto, but only 25 of the 28 votes required were obtained. With the exception of Senator Tom Benevides (D-Bernalillo), the vote was along party lines. All Republicans (except Senator James Martin of Socorro, who was absent) voted to uphold the veto. In rallying support for the veto, Bernalillo County Republican Bill Davis admonished his colleagues to "remember Carla", referring to Carla Muth, the Governor's choice for Secretary of Health and Environment who was rejected by Senate Democrats. Representative Gary King (D-Torrance) then brought

see Garbage, page 2

DARK CANYON LOOKOUT ROAD "IMPROVED"

by Kelly Cranston,
Guadalupe Mt. Institute

The Guadalupe Mountains of southeastern New Mexico, rising high above the surrounding Chihuahuan Desert, comprise the largest remaining roadless area in the southeastern portion of the state. The "Escarpment" portion of the Guadalupe harbors some of the most magnificent and rugged canyons in New Mexico, sheer cliffs of several hundred feet cascade to the canyon floors. Sheltered in the canyons are numerous unusual species of plants and animals, some endemic to the Guadalupe, some more widespread but rare and endangered throughout their range. Perhaps the most unnoticed, but yet most important aspect of these mountains are the limestone caves that are located here. Varying in size from 50 ft long to Carlsbad Caverns, these caves are recognized as some of the most beautiful and challenging to cavers throughout the world.

A portion of the Guadalupe escarpment has been protected as Guadalupe Mountains and Carlsbad Caverns National Parks, which contain a fair portion of Wilderness. The

see Dark Canyon, page 2

WANTED: RIO GRANDE SIERRAN EDITOR

Due to other commitments that leave little time for this publication, this issue of the Sierran is my last. After nearly five years at this volunteer job, I think it's time for someone else to have the opportunity to bring you the environmental news of New Mexico and the Trans-Pecos region of Texas.

The editor's job that is now vacant is not an easy one. When done properly, the job takes 25-75 hours of effort per issue, that is, every 2 months. It is mostly a mechanical job involving typing, editing, layout work, and labeling the finished product; but badgering articles from chapter activists and others also consumes a lot of time.

The reward, of course, is the satisfaction of knowing that you've helped communicate the environmental news to chapter members. In that respect, I've thoroughly enjoyed the job and thank you, the members, for your indulgence.

If you or someone you know might be willing to take on this job, please contact me at (505) 281-1488 or Chuck Wiggins at (505) 266-3622.

-- Dave Glowka

MOLYCORP PUSHES ITS TAILINGS POND

by Julie Anderson,
Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund

MolyCorp, a subsidiary of Unocol) is planning to build a 560-acre tailings pond to hold 200 million tons of tailings in the saddle of the Guadalupe Mountains in northern New Mexico. MolyCorp would like to have a new tailings pond because it wants to redesign its facility in such a way as to produce 18,000 tons of tailings per day. Eventually, if all goes well, it hopes to be able to store 250 million tons of assorted toxic sludge at what formerly was just another boring scenic mountain area inhabited by people and wildlife. (Let me orient you. The toxic sludge would be 3 miles northwest of the village of Questa, just east of the Wild River Recreation Area, also by Questa High School, and adjacent to the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River and Rio Grande Recreation Area.)

Mind you, MolyCorp isn't actually mining at the moment because there isn't much of a world-wide market for molybdenum right now. And, it already has enough storage for the next several years. But who knows? The molybdenum mar-

see MolyCorp, page 2

Garbage (from page 1)

a somewhat weaker, amended version to the Senate floor with forty minutes left to go in the session. Senator Aragon refused to allow the bill on the floor, and it died.

The Governor then issued an executive order banning any new landfills (with certain exceptions) until the legislature has a chance to deal with the issue in 1990. According to Doug Meikeljohn of the New Mexico Environmental Law Center, the order has no real authority, and according to the March 29, 1989 edition of the Santa Fe New Mexican, Innovative Environmental Systems of New Mexico (a subsidiary of The Driggs Corporation) is proceeding with its 23,000-acre landfill near Lordsburg!

Even if the executive order does have adequate authority to prevent the opening of new landfills, it does nothing to address the problems of existing landfills in the state which have been contaminated or are endangering water supplies. Senate Bill 2 would have authorized municipalities to charge user fees for dumping to fund various operating and rehabilitation costs and to fund a program to provide technical assistance to operators. The New Mexico Association of Counties has threatened to sue the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board for recently issuing new, more stringent landfill regulations without providing a funding source to meet the added costs, as SB 2 and Rep. King's bill would have done. So, it looks as though New Mexico will again be left virtually defenseless against poorly planned, unsafe, and abusive operating practices by in-state as well as out-of-state operators. Another year in which steps toward rational management are delayed means another year of endangerment of soil and water resources and additional costs to clean up the year's worth of aftermath.

Molycorp (from page 1)

ket might take off, and heck, why wait? And Molycorp claims it is perfectly legal to walk away with public lands for a toxic tailings pond because under the friendly 1872 mining law, mining companies can apply for public lands and obtain a patent with very little expense apart from legal costs and studies. (Such a deal! No wonder public lands are so popular!) Understandably, locals are a little concerned.

One big issue is whether the toxic tailings will seep into local groundwater. BLM's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) says that there will be "no predicted exceedances of water quality standards." Meanwhile, the New Mexico

Health and Environment Dept. wrote a letter to Molycorp a few days after the DEIS was released to the public, stating that "It is the Ground Water Bureau's (GWB's) position that recent field studies...have failed to provide conclusive data to support Molycorp's contention that ground-water quality will not be impacted as a result of tailings disposal activities at Guadalupe Mountain."

No doubt there is good reason for this difference of opinion. We do know, however, that there will be "seepage" from the tailings impoundment because Molycorp provided a chart for the DEIS detailing how much seeping it intends to do.

And where is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in all of this? According to NEPA, any project that will significantly affect the environment requires studies that detail the project and its less damaging alternatives. Right? Well, apparently the BLM liked NEPA enough to write a Draft EIS but then changed its mind about complying with the law when it got to the Alternatives part. Instead of the usual section detailing alternatives, the BLM tells us that since the mining laws govern the project, and these laws don't say anything about alternatives, BLM is (alas) prevented from studying them. In fact, says BLM, under these same mining laws, all BLM can do about NEPA is look at impacts.

Which means BLM is once again breaking new ground and we have a BRAND NEW NEPA. Here is how the old NEPA works: a) the agency takes a close look at projects that would significantly affect the environment; and b) the agency explores less damaging alternatives. Here is how the new and improved BLM NEPA works: Take a close look at projects that would significantly affect the environment. Period. If you analyze the two closely, you can see the BLM has saved a whole step here and eliminated a lot of extra work.

We feel compelled to assist the Amigos Bravos, the local conservation group opposing the project, and deal with the BLM's Great Thought on NEPA.

Dark Canyon (from page 1)

remaining part of the escarpment is located within the Lincoln National Forest, the most rugged of which has been designated as a Wilderness Study Area. The Forest Service, bowing to local pressure, has changed their recommendation from Wilderness to non-wilderness for the 21,000 acre WSA. The Forest Service has also recently designated several jeep tracks in the area as roads.

The Forest Service portion of the escarpment at the northwestern boundary of the WSA is reached by a notorious road, Forest Service 69A, or known fondly by cavers as "Three Mile Hill." This particular jeep track runs from the bottom of Dark Canyon at Forest Service Road 69 to the Dark Canyon Lookout on Trail 201, allowing access to one of the most fragile areas, both ecologically and geologically, in the country.

Three Mile Hill was once the roughest road known to man, adding a certain amount of adventure to reaching the escarpment, thus minimizing use. Despite frequent claims from District Ranger Larry Sansom in Carlsbad and Ed Wood in Alamogordo that the road would be left in an unimproved condition, the Forest Service recently decided to improve it. In late March or early April, 1989, Forest Service bulldozers smoothed and widened the road. Numerous pinyon pines were cut down or trimmed for the project, and a large (and very expensive) cattle guard was installed to replace the gate at the intersection of Trail 201 on Guadalupe Ridge. What once was a challenging road and an effective "filter" for persons entering the area is now a thoroughfare for increased use of an area which is already receiving too much use. The road may also be construed as reducing the "Wilderness value" of the area in an attempt to prevent the designation as such.

The road had previously been improved in about 1979, an incident that the Forest Service determined was an "accident." Only the first 1/2 mile of the road was to be slightly improved, however, the bulldozer operator saw fit that all three miles of it were improved. The increased access to the area was a precursor to more cave vandalism and abuse of the surface ecology, until the quality of the road degraded to previous conditions. The current widening of the road and the installation of the cattle guard may only be a start of the Forest Service's "plans" for this fragile and unique area.

Unless the road is left in a permanently unimproved condition, or unless much of the Guadalupe Escarpment receives Wilderness designation, degradation of the caves, unusual surface ecology, and inherent wilderness values of the area will be permanently impaired. Let the Forest Service know that you would like to see Road 69A remain an "unimproved" road and the Guadalupe Escarpment be protected:

- Larry Sansom, Carlsbad 885-4181
- Jim Abbott, Alamogordo 437-6030
- David F. Jolly, Albuquerque 842-3292

OUTINGS IN THE CHAPTER AREA

by Norma McCallan, Santa Fe

The following list of outings has been compiled from the Group outings schedules so that any Sierra Club member living anywhere in the Chapter can take advantage of our many and varied Group outings. In some cases, as noted, prior reservations are required. Hikers should bring lunch, sturdy hiking boots or shoes, and clothing appropriate for the weather. Radios are never allowed; dogs are allowed only if noted. Leaders reserve the right to turn away anyone whose equipment, experience, or health condition appear unsuitable for the particular outing.

- | | | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------------|--|
| Sat Jul 29 | Dan Mitchem 982-2082 (Santa Fe).
Moderate/strenuous loop hike, Lake Peak-Penitente Peak-Windsor Trail. Leave from PERA parking lot, 8 AM. | Sun Aug 20 | Myles Brown 471-5075 (Santa Fe)
Moderate hike to Vigil Meadows-Ski Basin-Rio en Medio loop. Leave PERA lot 8 AM. |
| Sat Jul 29 | Ike Eastvold 255-7679 (Albuq.)
Easy hike to Rinconada Canyon in proposed Petroglyphs N.M. to view rock art. Meet at Dunkin Donuts, Coors & Sequoia, 9 AM. Bring sturdy hiking shoes and canteen. Trip over by noon. | Sat Aug 26 | John Jasper 988-2871/982-8572
Moderate/strenuous hike to Shaggy Peak. Some rock scrambling and bushwhacking. PERA lot 7:30 AM. |
| Sat/Sun Jul 29-30 | Katy Butcher 255-3319 (Albuq.)
Sandia Mountain Discovery Days. Hikes and other activities. | Sat Aug 26 | Ike Eastvold 255-7679 (Albuq.)
Easy hike to view rock art in the Geologic Windows area of proposed Petroglyphs National Monument. Same details as July 29 hike. |
| Sat Aug 5 | John Buchser 281-2015 (Albuq.)
Hike northern half of Crest Trail from Sandia Crest-Tunnel Springs. 12 miles, 4300 ft descent. Meet Triangle Grocery Store in Sandia Park, 8 AM. | Sun Aug 27 | Alan Karp 982-1960 (Santa Fe)
Easy hike in Canada de los Alamos. Leave PERA lot 9 AM. |
| Sun Aug 6 | Gretchen Coles 471-5442 (Santa Fe)
Strenuous hike to Trampas Lakes. Meet PERA lot, 7:30 AM. | Sat/Sun | Merrill Goodwin 471-5442 (S. F.)
Car camp in Red River area and climb Wheeler Pk. Leave Sat AM. |
| Sat/Sun Aug 5-6 | Norma McCallan 471-0005 (Santa Fe)
Car camp at Crestone C.G. near Moffit, CO, and day hike to Venable Pass and North Crestone Lake. Dogs allowed. | Sat Sep 2 | Louise Leopold 988-4592 (Santa Fe)
Moderate hike. Dogs allowed. Leave PERA lot 8 AM. |
| Sat Aug 12 | J. P. Flynn 986-1226 (Santa Fe)
Strenuous hike, Lake Peak-Penitente Peak-Puerto Nambe loop. Leave PERA lot 8 AM. | Sun Sep 3 | Norbert Sperlich 983-1962 (S.F.)
Moderate/strenuous hike to Leonardo Lake, near Trampas Lakes. Leave PERA lot 7 AM. |
| Sun Aug 13 | Alan Karp 982-1960 (Santa Fe)
Easy "Splash & Dash" hike to Santa Cruz Canyon, near Cundiyo. Leave PERA lot 9 AM. | Sat-Mon Sep 2-4 | Norma McCallan 471-0005 (Santa Fe)
Labor Day weekend backpack. Trip will be in Black Range, Manzano Crest, or San Juan Mts. Dogs allowed. Call for details. |
| Fri-Sun Aug 11-13 | Roger Hathaway 982-6685 (Santa Fe)
3-Day backpack in the Pecos, area of Horsethief Meadow, Spirit & Stewart Lakes. Leave Thurs. PM. | Sat Sep 9 | Ike Eastvold 255-7679 (Albuq.)
Easy hike to view rock art in Piedras Marcadas area of proposed Petroglyphs National Monument. Same details as July 29 hike. |
| Sat/Sun Aug 11-12 | David Brown 662-2185
Strenuous hike to top of Mt. Sneffels, one of Colorado's 14ers. Leave Sat. AM. Call for details. | Sat Sep 9 | John McClure 988-1751 (Santa Fe)
Moderate/strenuous hike to Stewart Lake from Holy Ghost C.G. Leave PERA lot 8 AM. |
| Sat Aug 19 | John McClure 988-1751 (Santa Fe)
Moderate/strenuous hike to Hamilton Mesa and Mora Flats in the Pecos. Leave PERA lot 8 AM. | Sun Sep 10 | Alan Karp 982-1960 (Santa Fe)
Easy hike on Chamisa Trail. Leave PERA lot 9 AM. |
| Sat Aug 19 | Victor Atyas 471-7545 (Santa Fe)
Easy hike to Ghost Hotel, near Glorietta. Leave PERA lot 9 AM. | Sat Sep 16 | Joe Whelan 984-0746 (Santa Fe)
Strenuous hike in Pecos Wilderness. Leave PERA lot 8 AM. |
| | | Sun Sep 17 | John Buchser 281-2015 (Albuq.)
Strenuous hike on south half of Sandia Crest Trail, Cienega Springs to Canyon Estates. Meet Triangle Grocery, Sandia Park 8AM. |
| | | Sat Sep 23 | Ike Eastvold 255-7679 (Albuq.)
Easy hike to view rock art in area of Indian Petroglyphs State Park. Same details as July 29. |
| | | Sun Sep 24 | Alan Karp 982-1960 (Santa Fe)
Moderate hike to Tent Rocks. Leave PERA 9 AM. |
| | | Sun Sep 24 | Norbert Sperlich 983-1962 (S. F.)
Moderate/strenuous hike to Deer Creek. Leave PERA 8 AM. |
| | | Sat Sep 30 | Stuart Bernstein 988-4853 (S. F.)
Strenuous hike to Pecos Baldy Lake. Leave PERA 7:30 AM. |

ROOM SERVICE AT THE GRAND CANYON

by Julie Anderson,
Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund

According to the National Park Service, only 341,427 people visited the North Rim of the Grand Canyon last year. A miniscule number, considering that 2,763,405 visited the South Rim. But the National Park Service hopes to change all that by getting rid of its old, rusticated cabins that accomodate only a few campers and building a new, 100-room hotel on the North Rim. The Park Service apparently believes that adding a hotel for 300 people would alleviate the "now unsatisfied demand" for accommodations.

Oddly enough, the Park's own Master Plan advises that the Park Service will "determine the maximum capacity and not expand beyond it" and "encourage a slower pace and more intimate involvement with the environment of the North Rim." Anyone who has tried to enjoy the South Rim at the peak of the tourist season and remained coherent can understand the need for those guidelines.

But instead of doing any of the above, the Park Service wrote an Environmental Assessment (EA) that failed to give any alternatives to building a hotel inside the Park, aside from letting the existing cabins fall apart. They then released a Finding of No Significant Impact.

The "lack of significant impact" finding came as a surprise to us. All of the water used by the 3,858,708 tourists and the nearby town of Tusayan comes from the Canyon itself. (Which is why the Park Service stated in its Master Plan that "impairment in water quality or availability will have far-reaching effects on the entire spectrum of Grand Canyon ecosystems.") Yet the Service apparently feels that water demands of a new, 100-hotel rooms will not cause a problem.

Why did the Park Service ignore their own Master Plan guidelines and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)? It remains a mystery. Lori Potter commented on the EA for SCLDF and pointed out to them that they were required under NEPA to consider alternatives to building the hotel. The Park Service replied that it had considered alternatives --but quietly, in-house, away from the noise and confusion of the EA process. (Public involvement is so messy, you know.) This may also explain why we couldn't obtain any record of it.

Accordingly, SCLDF attorney Mark Hughes filed a Freedom of Information Act request to try to find out what the Park Service has been up to. To our dismay, we were told that although the Sierra Club is a

public interest organization, it would not be granted the customary fee waiver for document copying and mailing costs. Instead, the Service announced that it will not give us the documents unless we pay them over \$600, because it is supposedly unsure that the Sierra Club will a) disseminate the information to the public, and that b) the information would contribute "significantly" to the public's understanding of the issue.

Since the Sierra Club has been existence longer than the Park Service and has half a million members nationwide that read newsletters (much like this one) that publish information (like this), we feel it is pretty likely that our clients will manage to get the word out about the Park Service's plan to transform the North Rim.

As to the "significance" of the information, the Park Service says that the information must be new to the public and related to the agency or its work. Well, it's certainly "new to the public," since the Park Service decided to skip the alternatives without seeking public input, and the agency does seem to have been involved (to some extent).

The interesting thing about denying fee waivers to non-profits is that most groups don't have the resources to pursue their inquiries. So no matter how interesting that information is to the public at large, there is usually little chance that it will ever see the light of day. You can see how this might have a chilling effect on protecting the environment, can't you? We were less chilled than irritated, of course. And even more curious to find out what those documents say (or don't) say than we were before they denied the waiver.

We'll keep you informed of the cliffhanger. Who knows what the Park Service will do next!



ROCKY FLATS DOCUMENTARY TO AIR AUGUST 11

by Laura Williams, Intern
Sierra Club, Southwest Office

"Dark Circle" is a riveting documentary about the effects of nuclear weapons and power on the American people during times of war as well as peace. The documentary will be aired in Albuquerque on KNME (Ch 5) on Friday, August 11 at 10:30 PM. Be sure to check your local listings in case of changes.

The film centers around the operations of the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant in Golden, CO, but more specifically around the lives, fears, and deaths of the workers and nearby residents. The film also reveals the "dark circle" of trade between many nuclear power plants, such as the one in Diablo Canyon, CA, and Rocky Flats. The power plant creates energy through the fission of nuclear fuel, creating a radioactive waste product known as plutonium. Plutonium is the raw material needed at Rocky Flats to make triggers for hydrogen bombs.

It took six long years for producers Judy Irving and Chris Beaver to uncover enough information and footage to show the American people the subtle problems with putting so much faith in nuclear, the "perfect protector and provider." The controversial documentary was released in 1982, only to be banned from American television due to the Public Broadcasting Service's supposed lack of funds to produce material to balance the extremely anti-nuclear viewpoint. Now, seven years later, the film has been re-released in time for a dawning of awareness about Rocky Flats.

For those of you who were surprised by the FBI's sudden investigation of the Flats in June, you would not have been had the film been allowed to air in 1982. Irving narrates the film, describing human encounters with plutonium. Most of these encounters were by workers or nearby residents, many of whose lives were cut short by brain tumors or leukemia.

One case study was about Don Gable, who worked at Rocky Flats for nine and a half years. With gloved hands stuck into a shielded container, each day he handled enough plutonium to kill the entire human race. He was worried about a pipe that ran alongside his head. When he questioned his supervisor about it, he was told to worry about his body, not his head. Shortly thereafter, at age 30, Don died of a brain tumor.

The movie also illustrates the concerns, as well as the ignorance, of families who live less than four miles from the plant. Marlene Batley moved to

Broomfield with her husband and two children, completely unaware that her backyard had been contaminated with plutonium. When she went door to door to ask her neighbors about it, none seemed concerned, and many had no idea of the nature of the plant's operations. Yet, in this area, the cancer rate is 16% higher than in the surrounding areas. Once a minute particle of plutonium enters the human body, it immediately bombards cells, but it can take up to 20 years to be detected. In animals, however, the effects can be seen almost immediately.

Many farmers raise livestock near the plant; one herd of cattle grazes right next to the security fence. One farmer tells of the mutant babies he has seen born to his pigs and hatched to his chickens: pigs with mouths so deformed they could not nurse, some with extra toes, chicks born with their beaks crossed, or their insides out. When he approached the subject with the government, their tests attributed the problems to poor feed or inbreeding.

"Dark Circle" also tells of the more than 1,000 nuclear tests in Nevada and the Pacific. Atomic bombs and unshielded nuclear reactors are only two of the many radioactive objects that have been exploded in the atmosphere. Experimentally exposed to the radiation of these tests were hundreds of pigs and thousands of soldiers, who were promised early leave if they participated.

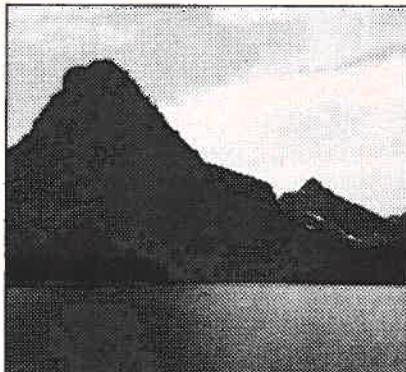
At age 18, Richard McHugh was told to fly his plane through an atomic cloud in the South Pacific; "no big deal," he thought. Decades later, it became a big deal when he discovered he was dying of leukemia. Richard McHugh was only one of many US veterans who were denied disability compensation by the government due to insufficient evidence linking the illness and exposure to radiation. Of 2,000 veterans who applied, only 24 received compensation from the US government.

Meanwhile, at Rocky Flats, the production goes on; 3 triggers a day, 15 a week, 720 a year. Thousands of nuclear weapons are stockpiled in US arsenals alone.

We need to pull together to close down Rocky Flats along with the hundreds of other contaminated plants across the country before it's too late. There are many alternatives to nuclear energy that have not even been explored because we are wasting billions of dollars (and more importantly human lives) on the nuclear industry. "Dark Circle" is a must-see film! If you are unable to catch it on television, the 90-minute documentary is available

for rental or purchase from New Yorker films, 16 West 61st St., New York, NY 10023; (212) 247-6110. Also available on home videocassette from Educational Film and Video, 5332 College Ave., S. 101, Oakland, CA 94618; (415) 655-9050. •

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NEWS FROM THE PUBLIC LANDS COMMITTEE

by Ben Zerbey, Mesilla

The Sierra Club Public Lands Committee held its annual meeting in San Francisco on May 5 & 6. I would like to share some news items and impressions of where public lands activity stands as an overall objective of the of the Sierra Club and specifically on issues facing the Southwest and the Rio Grande Chapter.

First is the changing emphasis on environmental campaigns and issues. Worldwide environmental degradation has moved into the forefront both in Sierra Club campaigns and in attracting new members. Global warming, acid rain, and environmental disasters are examples of issues that compete with public lands for attention. The result is that public lands advocates must work hard to make sure that our agenda does not get pushed off the plate.

Reading the list of featured events for the 3rd International Assembly in Ann Arbor, MI, revealed an astonishing void of subjects pertaining to parks, refuges, wilderness, grazing, mining, etc. On the plus side, it is good to know that the September-October issue of Sierra magazine will be completely devoted to public lands articles and issues.

Second, the adversaries are still with us and are supported by an administration which was mistakenly believed by many to lean toward environmentalism. Witness some of the appointments: Ridenour to Director of the National Park Service - a fund raiser for Dan Quayle and "resort developer" of Indiana State Parks while heading that agency. Jamison to BLM Director - a staffer to Congressman Ron Marlanee of Montana, who fought the Montana Wilderness Bill. Cason to Ass't Secretary of Agriculture in charge of the Forest Service - from Interior, where he had a poor environmental record. Further, all appointees to positions related to public lands must apparently be OK'd by Senators McClure and Wallop, gurus of western special interests.

The Wilderness Impact Research Foundation was organized very recently by ranching interests to fight wilderness designations. This group has proposed legislation called the National Rangeland Grazing System Act of 1989, which would establish property values, protect water rights, and grant private property possessory interests for ranchers using public lands. The need for concerted action to battle these forces is more important than ever.

Third, the Public Lands Committee, after reviewing many important issues, decided to make mining law reform its top priority in 1989. Two important forces in Congress, Senator Dale Bumpers and Representative Nick Rahall have decided to hold hearings on legislation which would revise the objectionable aspects of the General Mining Law of 1872. Some signals indicate that a watered-down bill may come out of this. The American Mining Congress has let it be known that it will fight any reference to leasing in the bill. The Sierra Club has traditionally advocated a leasing system.

Finally, the National Parks will be needing all the help they can get. Rio Grande Chapter members are needed to become National Park area "adopters." Those who live near National Parks and Monuments in New Mexico and West Texas should become acquainted with park personnel, especially the superintendents, discuss problems with park officials, review General Management Plans, and offer help where needed. (The El Paso Group does a good job in working with Carlsbad and Guadalupe Mountains National Parks.) It is important to assure that new developments are authorized in the parks' management plans. If anyone is presently serving in the capacity of a park adopter, please drop me a line. (See address, page 4.) •

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Dave Glowka

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WITHOUT YOUR HELP, THE CALL OF THE WILD WILL REMAIN SILENT.



The Sierra Club needs your help. We need to let President Bush know that the fight to save Alaska from the Exxon Valdez oil spill is not a dead issue.

In fact, as you read this, prevailing winds and currents are sending millions of gallons of oil on an ecological crash course with some of America's most spectacular wilderness areas. Kenai Fjords National Park. Katmai National Park. And Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge.

At stake are not just these unprotected areas. And not just the lives of hundreds of thousands of helpless seabirds, seals, sea otters, and other wildlife. At stake is the judgment and the character of our President and his administration toward the environment.

Call A Disaster A Disaster.

It's time to declare the Valdez Exxon spill a National Disaster. It's time to mobilize all relevant federal resources.

It's time to enact the EPA's Superfund. It's time to furnish the State of Alaska with more skimmers. More booms. More boats. And more of the manpower and materials needed to fight this black death.

Who Should Pay For This Mess?

Exxon. And not just for the short term clean up. And not just through advertisements and PR.

Can we really depend on Exxon? After watching their clean up effort, the Sierra Club doubts it. That's why we've set up our Alaska Clean Up Fund to assist in the clean up effort, and to help make sure Exxon pays.

Oil On The Brain.

President Bush's energy policy is a threat to the environment. It continues to allow for the roll back of energy conservation requirements, including auto fuel efficiency standards. And

to meet our dependence on oil, the President is willing to grant the oil industry a free hand in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

But Exxon's mismanaged and inadequate clean up effort of the Valdez spill should serve as a warning to what lies in store for the Far North of Alaska.

For this reason alone the Sierra Club finds oil development in these areas unacceptable. Period.

Mr. President, the Valdez spill has already left a black mark on Exxon. Now the question is, will it also leave one on you?

Richard Cellarius, President, Sierra Club

A Call For Help

You can help right now by mailing the two coupons below. The Sierra Club will immediately put your donation to work, and you'll receive our Alaska Clean Up Kit. Join the campaign to save Alaska's wilderness.

Dear Sierra Club:

- I can arrange transportation and want to register to volunteer my time in the clean up. Please send me more information.
- I can't go to Alaska to help with the clean up. I want to help the volunteer monitoring effort. Here is my tax-deductible donation to the Foundation to help the efforts. \$ _____
- I want to sign up to join the campaign to save Alaska's wilderness. Send me Sierra Club membership information.

Name _____

Address _____

Make check out to Sierra Club Foundation Alaska Clean Up Fund. Send coupon to 730 Polk St., S.F., CA 94109.

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Mr. President: Go to Alaska yourself. Declare it a National Disaster and a Superfund site. Mobilize all federal resources, including the military. And please don't lease the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other environmentally sensitive areas. What we need is a kinder, gentler energy policy that puts efficiency and the environment first.

Name _____

Address _____

Clip and send to President George Bush, The White House, Washington, D.C. 20500.