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The Sierran



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News of the Sierra Club • Rio Grande Chapter • Serving New Mexico & West Texas since 1963

Big Oil loses produced water bid

Commission vacates its decision to rehear fracking wastewater discharge case on rulemaking

D. Reed Eckhardt

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After more than two hours of impassioned public comment, the Water Control Commission reversed its earlier decision to begin rulemaking aimed at nullifying a ban on the discharge of toxic oil and gas wastewater into New Mexico surface and ground water. The 7-4 vote on Nov. 13 resets a process that was launched by the oil and gas industry after the discharge of waste liquids outside of the industry was prohibited by rule for five years.

The commission in May voted to close a loophole that allowed "pilot projects" to release 84,000 a day of treated produced water to groundwater. The result of the commission's action was a complete ban on produced water discharge to ground and surface waters until the rule sunsets in five years. Produced water is a waste byproduct of oil and gas operations and contains known and unknown chemicals, many of which are toxic to human health and the environment. Then came the industry's proposed rule to reverse the ban. The governor and her cabinet had worked behind the scenes to concoct a vote on July 8 in favor of the industry's proposal, including having cabinet members be present and vote in favor of it. That now has been quashed.

"The commission did the right thing here today by wiping the slate clean and avoiding any appearance of impropriety," said Tannis Fox, senior attorney at the Western Environmental Law Center after the Nov. 13 vote. "The public takes the issue of clean water, and how dangerous oil and gas wastewater discharge is to our rivers, streams and lands, seriously."



Shown here is a produced water spill covering a site in Lea County. This property is leased by the state to Siana Operating, LLC. This location is one of many targeted by the State Land Office's Accountability and Enforcement Program. Launched in 2020, the program is a pragmatic approach that drives remediation efforts throughout New Mexico's state trust lands. By ensuring lease holders honor their contractual obligations to the state, the program's mission is to guarantee oil and gas leases follow state statutes and restore the land to its original condition. Photo provided courtesy of the New Mexico State Land Office.

"New Mexicans put their trust in the commission to base its decisions, without interference, on the technical expertise and independent science from state agencies," said Dale Doremus of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club.

"This is a critical issue that should only be considered under 100% irreproachable circumstances. Safeguarding our precious and scarce ground and surface waters from toxic contaminants that can endanger human health and the environment is too important for anything less."

"New Mexicans put their trust in the commission to base its decisions, without interference, on technical expertise and independent science."

Dale Doremus

The Sierra Club / Rio Grande Chapter

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Visit riograndesierraclub.org
for a complete list of volunteers and committees

Chapter Elections

Group leadership changes

New Rio Grande chapter and committee officers selected, ready to serve



ExCom member Alissa Keny-Guyer joins the No Kings Rally with Fernando Mejia. We often attend events such as these as a Rio Grande block in our green shirts — “Sierra Club is here! Will YOU join us next time?”

Thanks to each of these folks for Stepping Up!

Every December the Rio Grande Chapter holds elections for chapter and group executive committees.

Service on the “ExCom” includes attending short monthly calls, some email voting on club (group or committee) concerns and triennial in-person retreats.

The rest of the job is catered to your interests and time.

Options include advocacy for any of our conservation positions; finding environmentally friendly folks to run and/or actively supporting candidates the Chapter has endorsed.

Being an Outings leader is another popular position. Outing leaders help build membership, serve as kids climate action mentors and train grassroots activists.

There are so many options for you to explore!

If you’d like to “step up,” contact Diane Reese at 505-507-6416 or drop a line to DianeAbqNM@gmail.com.

Your newly elected 2026 Executive Committee Members

CHAPTER
Diane Reese
Tricia Snyder
Derrick Toledo

NORTHERN
John Buchser
Tom Gorman
Susan Martin
Shannon Romeling

CENTRAL
Susan Gorman
Robert Grant
David Ther
Kevin Bean

SOUTHERN
Cheryll Blevins
Dan Lorimier
Kurt Anderson



Tim Keller



Tammy Fiebelkorn



Steve Glass



Pat Feghali



Fred Hashimoto

New Mexico Municipal Elections

Sierra Club members eager to work with newly electeds

Did the Dem’s nationwide “blue wave” extend to New Mexico’s local races?

Richard Barish
Chapter Political Team
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Did the Dem wave extend to NM local races? Yes and no. It was a good year overall due to Democratic majorities in the state’s biggest cities.

Tim Keller won re-election as Albuquerque mayor over a MAGA Republican. Keller has a strong record to date of resisting demands of the Trump regime. With Keller as Mayor, the City should continue to welcome our immigrant neighbors and resist elimination of equity programs.

However, we also had as a goal a major upgrade in the Albuquerque City Council. We fell short. Stephanie Telles will replace Louie Sanchez in District 1, which will be a major improvement.

However, Teresa Garcia fell 69 votes short of displacing Klarissa Peña in District 3. Peña survived with the help of boatloads of money from developers and the discovery that Garcia failed to include an arrest for domestic violence in an *Albuquerque Journal* survey. A jury later concluded that Garcia did not do what she was accused of, but her choice not to disclose the arrest in the survey likely caused concern among some voters.

Our recommended Santa Fe mayoral candidate lost, but all of our council candidates won, and all of our endorsed Las Cruces candidates were elected.

How candidates endorsed by Rio Grande Sierra Club fared

ALBUQUERQUE
Tim Keller, Mayor, won

Daniel Leiva, Council Dt. 1, lost
Stephanie Telles, Council Dt. 1, won
Teresa Garcia, Council Dt. 3, lost
Tammy Fiebelkorn, Council Dt. 7, won
Colton Newman, Council Dt. 9, lost
Warigia Bowman, Albuquerque School Bd. Dt. 6, won
Kristen Wood-Hegner, Albuquerque School Bd. Dt. 7, lost
Steve Glass, Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation Board, won

SANTA FE
Oscar Rodriguez, Mayor, lost
Pat Feghali, Council Dt. 1, won
Amanda Chavez, Council Dt. 4 won

LAS CRUCES
Michael Harris, Council Dt. 3, won
Becky Corran, Council Dt. 5, won
John Muñoz, Council Dt 6, won
Patrick Nolan, Las Cruces School Board Dt. 1, won
Pamela Cort, Las Cruces School Board Dt. 2, won
Robert Wofford, Las Cruces School Board Dt. 3, won

CORRALES
Fred Hashimoto, Mayor, won



Chapter News

NMClimate Corps: newbies' first stop

Take in a virtual meeting any Thursday at noon for climate news and easy ways to get involved

Camilla Feibelman

Chapter Director

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For three weeks in November, a delegation of 50,000 people met in Belem, Brazil, at COP30, the United Nations climate summit.

The ironies were on full display to the world — the construction of an 8-mile road through protected areas to get people to the meeting as well as an actual fire putting a stop to negotiations toward the crucial end of the meeting.

But the most blatant and devastating impact to curbing global warming?

The total absence of the United States.

On the other hand, with so many countries and individuals there eager to address concerns where the Trump administration is failing future generations, there was tremendous enthusiasm to discuss the needs of the nations and people most directly impacted by climate change right now.

And the Sierra Club was there too, not just in spirit — but in action.

As this newsletter lands in your mailbox, members of the Rio Grande Chapter are already

gearing up for the last legislative session of Gov. Michelle Luján Grisham's second term.

We'll head into those urgent 30 days with all the focus and passion for our planet that the lack of action by Donald Trump demands.

Maybe you're thinking, well this is all very far from my day to day life. Summits in the Amazon rainforest? Legislative sessions in Santa Fe? What can I do?

With that very question in mind, we launched NMClimate Corps, in October of 2021. Meetings take place virtually most Thursdays at noon.

During these sessions, we provide you with easy-to-digest information about key climate and environmental issues — and what you can do to take action.

We will turn that knowledge into action this year on Feb. 5 at Environment Day at the Roundhouse.

We'll provide you with onsite training about how to lobby, help you visit with legislators, rally with young people from around the state and provide you with lunch all while advocating for comprehensive climate legislation.

Find out about all of these activities at: www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar.

Bon voyage, Miya!

Lastly, I'd like to take a moment to thank our colleague Miya King-Flaherty for her 10 years of service to the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter.

Miya began as a Wyss Public Lands Fellow and focused her decade of work on protecting Chaco Historic Park and the communities and landscape around it from devastating oil and gas extraction.

Over the years Miya has provided steady leadership, thoughtful campaigning, and support for impacted communities in the ways they define.

Miya is starting a career in real estate, so search her out if you're looking for a place to call home!



Camilla Feibelman



Miya King-Flaherty

Supporting the Sierra Club now more important than ever

Rio Grande Chapter counts on your financial support so we can keep fighting the good fight

How you can donate to the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club and why your contributions are vital to our success

You might think the Sierra Club is a 501(c)3 Charitable organization, but thanks to our 1970 advocacy against damming and filling the Grand Canyon, the rest of the NGO world can thank the Sierra Club for the 501(c)4 IRS status.

This designation means we are a not-for-profit organization that does lobbying and legislative advocacy. But we still can take charitable, tax-deductible donations.

Here are some of the different ways you can support the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter.

Become a member

Or give a membership to someone who shares our values and concerns. When you join from our chapter website, we get a larger portion of your membership dues. No matter how you join, you are a member of both the national organization and the chapter. Your member dues are a c4, non-deductible donation.

Make a c4 advocacy donation

The chapter makes a real difference at the state legislature, at county commissions and city councils, where we help pass laws to improve and protect our environment. C4 donations help us to do that work.

Make a c3 charitable donation

Much of the administrative rulemaking work and basic environmental education we do is tax deductible. You can make a donation to the Sierra Club

Foundation on our behalf. If you send a check, put the "Rio Grande Chapter" in the memo line. If you are 70½ years old and have required distributions from your IRA, you can donate directly to a c3 entity and reduce your taxable income.

Make an electoral donation

The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter has a political action committee. This allows us to make non-partisan endorsements and do work to elect pro-environment candidates.

Donate to the Global Warming Express

The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter supports kids with an after-school climate action program that teaches science, advocacy and what it means to make a difference in the world. This is a c3 charitable donation.

Clean Energy Incentives save money at tax time

If you've weatherized or gone electric at home in 2025, be sure check out these links on tax incentives eligibility and filing:

Rewiring America Calculator

<https://homes.rewiringamerica.org/calculator>

350 New Mexico Electrification Incentives

<https://350newmexico.org/electrify-incentives/>

NM Sustainable Building Tax Credit

<https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/ecmd/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/SBTC2021-ECP-10.2023.pdf>

NM Taxation & Revenue Energy, Conservation & Preservation Tax Credits

<https://www.tax.newmexico.gov/tax-professionals/tax-credits-overview-forms/conservation-preservation-tax-credits/>

Donate your car

The Sierra Club can take your car in whatever form and turn it into income for the chapter.

Remember us in your will

The Sierra Club's Rachel Carson Society is for those who are including chapters in their will. We can provide you with sample language for your will and provide you with additional resources with our national organization.

Learn more about how you can support our chapter at riograndesierraclub.org/donate/

The Sierran

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Contributions to the Sierran are welcome. Send them to riogrande.chapter@sierraclub.org

Submissions by Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter members will take precedence. All articles chosen for publication, whether from club members or guest writers, are subject to editing.

Letters to the editor may be up to 400 words. All letters are subject to editing and are printed at the discretion of the editorial board.

Read the pdf edition online at riograndesierraclub.org/the-sierran

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Support our efforts to protect and preserve water, wildlife, lands and climate in New Mexico and West Texas by contributing to our vehicle donation program.

It's easy, pick up is free and your donation could be tax deductible.



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Legislative Preview

Club priorities for 2026 Legislature

Rio Grande Chapter plans to make the most of session by focusing on climate action durability

Camilla Feibelman

Chapter Director

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The first legislative session of Gov. Michelle Luján Grisham's term began eight years of progress on addressing the climate crisis.

In 2019, the governor addressed a group of 400 attending the Climate Summit we planned with a host of other groups to launch the first legislative session of her term. She laid out a vision of reducing emissions from the oil and gas industry, the electric sector, transportation and buildings. She joined other mayors and governors in meeting the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement that President Trump had abandoned.

The next day, the governor signed this vision into reality with the third executive order of her administration, surrounded by the kid members of our after-school climate action program, the Global Warming Express.

By the end of that session we had passed the Energy Transition Act, which would lead the state's utilities and coops to dramatically increase their use of renewables to generate electricity while softening the blow of the San Juan coal-fired power plant closing PNM had announced a few years earlier.

The Administration later passed clean cars and trucks rules and updated our building codes twice to drive energy efficiency.

In 2021, Senate Leader Peter Wirth, D-Santa Fe, led the passage of a little noticed but absolutely pivotal bill that allowed the state to adopt clean air standards more stringent than federal requirements. This meant that over the next several years, the administration could adopt oil and gas, methane and smog-pollution safeguards that led the nation. Our state rules helped push the federal government to make even stronger methane rules than it otherwise might have.

The trouble was the Permian oil boom. While lagging momentarily in oil extraction at the beginning of the pandemic, the basin in southeastern NM bounced back, becoming the second most abundant extractor in the country only after Texas (with 25% fewer workers because of automation). With the sheer number of wells, even with reduced leaking, venting and flaring of methane gas throughout the oil and gas fields, we are ever further from meeting our state climate commitments.

In response to this challenge the New Mexico Environment Department, in collaboration with a host of other agencies and stakeholders, has now published a Climate Action Plan that will help the state take the action necessary to urgently meet our goals. To ensure those plans and possibilities survive a change of administration in 2027, we urgently need to put the governor's greenhouse-gas reduction goals into law and provide the Environment Department with the firm authority it needs to regulate climate pollutants.

This leads us to 2026 and its 30-day legislative session, the last for Governor Luján Grisham.

This administration, legislature and grassroots supporters have achieved so much, from decriminalizing abortion to establishing free pre-K, all while stabilizing impacts from the boom-and-bust fossil fuel economy and protecting us from global collapse. That was done by investing royalty income in interest-earning accounts to supply

the state with revenue for years to come without actually having to continue extraction.

Though we haven't agreed on everything with this administration, we've made real progress on protecting the climate together. Now is the time to ensure the durability of this climate action legacy.

Here's what to expect in the upcoming session.

Climate and energy

State Sen. Mimi Stewart, D-Albuquerque, and House Rep. Kristina Ortez, D-Taos, will introduce legislation to put the state's climate goals into law, allow the Environment Department to do greenhouse gas rulemaking and require enforcement of these rules. Last session, we passed legislation providing over \$200 million in climate solutions and just economic transition funds to be spent over three years for things like grid modernization, home weatherization and efficiency, and renewable energy and storage build-out. We'll advocate for the appropriation of further funds for these purposes.

Southern New Mexico Group

Project Jupiter raises concerns over pollution, transparency

Beware the sleight of hand. If something seems "too good to be true," it's worth investigating

**Michelle Compean,
Fernanda Theresa Compean
& David Baake** | Chair, Southern NM Group
Rio Grande Chapter, Sierra Club
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The 21st century has seen an advancement in technology like no other point in history, but due to the rapid pace of these advancements, we are often unaware of the potential downsides. State and federal governments have taken certain steps when it comes to the supervision and regulation of emerging technologies, but these steps are often insufficient to address potential risks. Worse, the public is often left unaware and uninformed.

Project Jupiter — a massive new data center planned for Doña Ana County in southern New Mexico — is an example of private companies rushing ahead with development without adequate oversight and transparency.

The developers promise to bring significant monetary investment and job opportunities. But there has been a troubling lack of transparency about the project, which is especially worrisome given how fast the project is moving.

There's no doubt that the regional economies of the El Paso-Las Cruces area are going to see massive changes if the project moves forward. But the environmental harms may be drastic as well as the developers intend to install a large natural gas plant to power the facility, but they have not been transparent about how big it will be or the pollution impact. According to notices published in November 2025, the project will emit

Water

High on the priority list is ensuring all of New Mexico's water agencies are appropriately resourced. Without this, we can't meet the challenges ahead.

Priorities for one-time funding include the River Stewardship program, critical to restoring the state's rivers and habitats; \$15 million for the Strategic Water Reserve, which completes water rights transactions to keep more water in New Mexico's rivers and streams; \$3.5 million for the state-led surface water quality permitting program authorized by SB 21 in 2025; and \$5 million for regional water planning, which provides a mechanism for communities who know their waters best to be involved in statewide water planning.

Lands

We'll support improving the way the \$350 million Legacy Permanent Fund is invested, increasing distributions to Legacy Fund programs from \$12.5 million to \$20 million annually, more than four years ahead of schedule.

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This map from projectjupiter.together.com shows the site of Project Jupiter relative to the City of El Paso and the border with Mexico.

about 500 tons of ozone-forming nitrogen oxides per year. That is a major public health concern in an area that struggles with dangerously high ozone pollution already.

The November notices also report the plant will emit a staggering 12.7 million metric tons of greenhouse gases per year — considerably more than the 8.5 million metric tons emitted annually by the entire El Paso metro area.

An October notice showed an even greater climate impact, apparently underscoring the fact that even the developers are unclear regarding the true impact of the project. And we haven't even touched the topic of the water demands of the project.

If the Project Jupiter developers truly want to partner with the community, it is imperative they not leave us in the dark about the risks involved. Better still, the developers should use solar power and battery storage instead of fossil fuels to run their power grid. This would be easily affordable, particularly since the region is one of the sunniest places in the country. It would also demonstrate a commitment to delivering positive change for our community.

Michelle Compean is a senior at Pebble Hills HS in El Paso, Texas. Fernanda Theresa Compean is a senior at UTEP, studying Art. David Baake is the Chair of the Southern New Mexico Group of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club.



A Sierra Club outing led by Hart Pierce and Terry Owen. A weekend of hiking, camping and biking at Chaco. File photo, Sierra Club - Rio Grande Chapter.

Public Lands

Feds move to revoke Chaco buffer zone

Trump's executive order "Unleashing American Energy" prioritizes fossil fuel profits over all else

D. Reed Eckhardt

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Tribal leaders and the state's congressional delegation are expressing displeasure with the federal government's plans to remove a 10-mile oil and gas development buffer around Chaco Canyon Culture Historical Park.

On Oct. 30, the Bureau of Land Management sent notification to tribal governments that it would begin the process of revoking the buffer. The buffer was announced in mid 2023 by then-Interior Secretary Deb Haaland. She cited tribal communities' worries "about the impacts that new development would have on areas of deep cultural connection."

BLM said its decision is based on President Trump's recent executive order "Unleashing American Energy."

The administration is moving forward with the Chaco plan despite Interior's estimate that it would add only a few dozen wells to the area over the next 20 years, but which represent impacts to small communities, their health, and the greater Chaco landscape.

In response to BLM's announcement, the Greater Chaco Coalition condemned the action.

In a release, it said, "Local communities have been experiencing a devastating increase in drilling activities that threatens their health and the health of the land. (We) once again call for holistic protections for the entire Greater Chaco Landscape and its communities, including an end to fracking, remediation and reclamation and meaningful investments in regenerative local economic opportunities and a just energy transition, grounded in the principles of free, prior and informed consent."

The coalition also said the decision not only threatens irreplaceable sacred cultural sites, but also endangers the health of the local Diné people.

"Again, we are back at potentially desecrating a spiritual and holy place on Mother Earth. All for greed and money," said Hazel James-Tohe with Dine Matriarch. "Do we really want to see puddles of black oil and gas waste, destruction of the landscape and continue to breathe the toxic fumes that are a threat to all life?"

The state's five-member congressional delegation also condemned the move. They said they have been in regular communication with Interior Secretary

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Doug Burgum about the importance of protecting Chaco Canyon. They also have introduced legislation to try to make the buffer zone permanent.

Camilla Feibelman with the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club said, in part, "This is a stunning failure of governance and justice. ... (T)he Trump administration is once again prioritizing fossil fuel profits over public health, climate stability and the protection of our shared public lands."

Bonding rules reforms draw strong support at hearing

Lawmakers, are you listening? Public overwhelmingly wants industries to clean up their own mess

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More than 900 written comments as well as a large number of public officials and members of the public supported reform of NM's oil and gas bonding and cleanup requirements at a state Oil Conservation Commission hearing Oct. 20-Nov. 6.

Dozens of members of the public made comments in favor of the reforms. And 25 elected officials from 24 local jurisdictions and legislative districts signed a letter in support.

The rulemaking comes as state research shows up to \$1.6 billion in well-plugging liabilities and a growing number of abandoned wells. There are nearly 700 such wells, with another 4,400 at risk.

One comment in favor of the reforms came from the Rev. Clara Sims of New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light:

"Our communities understand that it is fair and just for the industry that is causing pollution to be responsible for addressing their own impacts and remediating the harms done to our air, land, water and communities — especially those living on the frontlines. ... (A)ir, land and water are more than resources — they are more than dollar sign values. They are sacred elements that sustain all our lives and without their health and integrity, there is no future."

Goals for Stronger Bonding Rules

- Update bonding requirements to \$150,000 per well for inactive and low-producing marginal wells, more closely aligning with the Oil Conservation Division's actual plugging costs.
- Require operators with portfolios containing more than 15% inactive and/or marginal wells to post single-well bonding for all their wells, reducing risk to public funds.

- Guard against poorly funded or noncompliant operators taking on wells, a common path to well abandonment, with more stringent transfer rules.

- Tighten rules for inactive, non-producing wells to require companies to show they will return to production in the near future and cap inactive wells at 8 years to avoid wells lingering indefinitely without cleanup.

The proposed rules came from a diverse coalition, including tribal leaders, financial experts, frontline community members, faith leaders, environmental organizations and the Western Environmental Law Center.

They are supported by the state agencies that oversee oil and gas development.

Parties to the hearing will file post-hearing briefs the week of Jan. 5.

The Oil Conservation Commission will deliberate during the week of Jan. 12.

Central New Mexico Group

Check out Albuquerque's big BRAIN Feb. 6

City official, justice advocate booked as speakers in spring series at St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Susan Gorman

Central New Mexico Group Chair
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We're starting 2026 with a couple of fascinating speakers.

On Feb. 6, Saif Ismail will demonstrate the City of Albuquerque's BRAIN (Balanced Resource Acquisition and Information Network). This amazing system is transforming how the city manages and monitors every facility.

By integrating real-time data from energy, water and building systems across hundreds of city sites, the BRAIN provides a unified platform for smarter decision-making, improved efficiency and enhanced public service.

This initiative enables the city to track and optimize resource use, identify maintenance issues before they occur and reduce both operational costs and environmental impact.



Saif Ismail

The BRAIN supports the city's broader sustainability goals, including the transition to 100% renewable energy for city operations and greater building resiliency through digital innovation.



Grab a beer and a seat at our Feb. 6 event with Saif Ismail to learn all about Albuquerque's Balanced Resource Acquisition and Information Network. By integrating real-time data from energy, water and building systems across hundreds of city sites, the BRAIN, has transformed how the City of Albuquerque manages resources, while saving the city money and reducing its environmental impact. Photo courtesy of the the City of Albuquerque, Balanced Resource Acquisition and Information Network website.

Then on April 10, Ava Curtis, environmental justice coordinator for the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment, will share her experiences seeking restorative justice for communities in New Mexico impacted by uranium mining and milling. Curtis, whose organization is based in Albuquerque, will discuss the nuclear fuel chain in New Mexico and the Southwest and the impacts this has had on frontline communities, particularly on their health and traditional practices. She'll also share how communities are building powerful coalitions to resist

Sierra Club & Beer "Speaker Series"

DATE: Feb. 6 and April 10, 2026
TIME: 7:15-8:30 p.m.
PLACE: St. Mark's Episcopal Church
431 Richmond Pl NE, Albuquerque, NM 87106
RSVP at riograndesierreaclub.org/calendar

nuclear development and fight for restorative justice that protects their health and safety.

Enjoy a beverage and snacks as well as a great evening with like-minded friends.

Climate

NM deserves 21st century transportation

Chapter joins hands with Rethink 1-25 in hopes of linking state's climate goals to its transit funding

Carlos Michelen

rethinki25@gmail.com

In recent months, the contentious plan to widen I-25 through the heart of Albuquerque has hit a sudden and unexplained pause.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation, which is advancing a proposal to add lanes and raise speeds between Gibson and Lomas, has quietly removed the schedule for the project's next phase from its website.

This happened after a coalition of community and environmental advocates mobilized strong public opposition.

The department's stated purpose for the expansion is to address projected 2050 traffic volumes and improve safety.

But this approach is fundamentally flawed.

Decades of research show highway expansion not only fails to solve congestion but also fuels additional traffic and emissions through a process known as induced demand.

When driving becomes easier, people drive more and new development spreads outward. Traffic and emissions quickly rebound, leaving cities with more pavement, more pollution and the same gridlock.

This is especially troubling as transportation is already the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the Albuquerque metro area.

The 2023 Climate Pollution Inventory, an EPA-funded regional study, identified transportation as the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the Albuquerque metro area with on-road vehicles responsible for 34% of all emissions.

Additionally Bernalillo County has an F grade

New Mexico DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
MOBILITY FOR EVERYONE

WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

NMDOT Active Transportation Plan

Your voice matters! Let us know what you think.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is developing an Active Transportation Plan to guide future bicycle and pedestrian improvements on state roads. Your input will help NMDOT better understand and respond to the needs of people walking, biking, and rolling across New Mexico.

For more information on the project and to access the survey, go to: www.tinyurl.com/NMDOTATP

Scan the QR code to take the survey!

The New Mexico Department of Transportation wants to better understand the needs of drivers and others (bikers, walkers, etc.) using state roads. For details on the Active Transportation, go to www.tinyurl.com/NMDOTATP or scan the QR code above to take a survey.

for smog in the American Lung Association's latest State of the Air Report.

There's a better path forward. New Mexico should invest in a transportation system worthy of the 21st century, one that reduces emissions and re-connects communities.

This means improving transit and Rail Runner service and creating safer, more accessible ways for people to walk and bike.

Nationally established programs such as Reconnecting Communities and new state policies in places like California and Colorado that link transportation funding to climate goals show change is possible.

It's time for New Mexico to do the same.

The Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter recently

joined the Rethink I-25 Coalition to support this vision. Learn more and add your voice by signing the petition at rethinki25.org to help build a more sustainable, healthy and connected Albuquerque.

For more info, contact Susan Gorman at 602-386-7112 or send an email to susangorman1945@gmail.com.

Central New Mexico Group

Executive Committee Chair — Susan Gorman
602-386-7112, susangorman1945@gmail.com
Vice Chair — Diane Reese DianeAbqNM@gmail.com
Treasurer — David Ther
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Political/Bosque — Richard Barish richardbarish@gmail.com



The installation of Donald Trump as president in January 2025 led everyday Americans to organize protests throughout the nation. Rio Grande Sierrans took to the streets in support of public lands, clean air and water, and social injustice. While the chapter had much to celebrate on the state and local level, attacks from the federal government kept our people focused on deregulation and policy rollbacks. Sierra Club - Rio Grande Chapter file photos, Miya King-Flaherty and Richard Barish, photographers.

Year in review

Success partnered with chaos in 2025

Camilla Feibelman

Chapter Director | Rio Grande Chapter
camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org

January

Thousands attend the People's March to protest Trump's promised policies. State Sen. Mimi Stewart, D-Albuquerque, introduces climate and just-economic transition bills at the legislative session.

February

SB4, The Clear Horizons Act, which would have codified the governor's climate orders, fails in the Senate Finance Committee with all Republicans and two Democrats, Benny Shendo of Jemez Pueblo and Chair George Muñoz of Gallup, voting against it. Hundreds gather for Climate Crisis and Lands, Water and Wildlife Days at the Roundhouse delivering dozens of articles enumerating the impacts of climate change on New Mexico to the offices of Senators Shendo and Muñoz.

March

Chapter wins major legislative victories including SB48, Community Benefits Act, and SB 83, Innovation in State Government, a \$300M investment in climate solutions and a just economic transition. SB21, giving NM primacy over its surface water permitting and intermittent waterways that were left unprotected by a US Supreme Court ruling. SB5, reforms the newly named State Wildlife Department and State Wildlife Commission — formerly the State Game Commission. Governor line item vetoes provision for commissioner removal for cause only. The US Fish and Wildlife Service releases the 2024 Mexican Wolf population count at 286, an increase of 11% over 2023. There are 162 wolves in NM and 124 in AZ.

April

Thousands turn out for the annual Earth Day Festival co-organized by the Chapter. This year's we focused on energy efficiency and EV rebates available to the public. Chapter members table at and join thousands of others for Hands Off! rallies to protest the destruction wrought by the Trump regime. Rancho Viejo Solar and battery project to be located south of Santa Fe, supported by the Northern Group and the Chapter, gains county Planning Commission ap-

proval. Former Global Warming Express student, now university climate science major Magnificent Farrell gives a thoughtful and passionate speech in support of the project to great acclaim. Club opposes Trump administration's efforts threatening public lands and monuments. Catron County declares a "wolf emergency," claiming wolves are a threat to humans, which they are not. State Sen. Mimi Stewart, author of SB4, the Clear Horizons Act, and her entire staff request a visit with the students of the Global Warming Express Program at Acequia Madre Elementary School. They attend an after-school class in order to understand how the students learn and process environmental science and public policy information.

May

Sierrans join the May Day March in defense of working and immigrant families. Chapter is part of a group that successfully persuades the state Water Quality Control Commission to adopt a rule to prohibit the discharge of toxic oil and gas produced water into surface and ground waters and opposes a House bill to end a methane emission reduction program that eliminates a charge on emissions and funds a grant program to reduce pollution.

June

Members gather at Capulin Springs for our annual appreciation picnic. Chapter Director Camilla Feibelman is an invited speaker, addressing a crowd of about 20,000 people at the No Kings Rally in Albuquerque. Thousands gather in Santa Fe to protest US Interior Department head Doug Burgum's efforts to sell off public lands. The US Supreme Court allows licenses for nuclear waste facilities to stand in NM and Texas. The Chapter and State of NM both opposed this storage; the legislature passed legislation prohibiting it in 2023. The State Game Commission unanimously passes a science-based Wildlife Action Plan supported by the Chapter. State learns of Trump plans to roll back several national monuments, including Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. Letter of protest sent. Mexican wolf Asha, who roamed in the wild almost to Colorado, twice, gives birth to 5 pups in captivity.

July

The Water Quality Control Commission votes to move forward with an oil and gas industry-backed

proposal that would allow produced water to be discharged to surface and ground waters for a range of industrial, agricultural and commercial uses despite the ban on discharge outside of oil and gas operations it just approved in May. Flash flooding ravages communities in Texas and in Ruidoso. EPA proposes elimination of the "endangerment finding," which allows the agency to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. Sierra Club joins the Good Trouble Lives On Candle Light Vigil inspired by John Lewis to keep resisting Trump policies. Club opposes EPA elimination of methane release fee. New Mexico youth travel to the Sierra Club's Claire Tappan Lodge for a student activist training. They join participants from across the US in a vote to reestablish the Sierra Student Coalition, the youth-led arm of the Sierra Club.

August

Asha, her captive mate and all 5 pups are named the Quartz pack and are finally released to the wild on a private ranch in NM. But not all the wolf news is good. Ella, "the wondering wolf," was found dead near Mt. Taylor, and two other wolves were killed by US Fish and Wildlife at the urging of ranchers. The Catron County Emergency Wolf Declarations spreads to Socorro and Sierra Counties. The NM State Game Commission signals willingness for wolves to be allowed to roam north of I-40 at its meeting in Catron County, where comments supporting wolves in the wild exceeded those in opposition. Dozens of New Mexicans speak out against the roll-back of the EPA's Endangerment Finding. Trump EPA proposes a delay of the implementation of its methane rule that would have applied to Texas, which is largely unregulated, leaving New Mexico communities exposed even with our nation-leading rules. Also EPA rules would have led to certain improvements to our state rules. The Chapter and other partners win the fight against the reopening of the Copper Flat mine in southern NM.

September

Through webinars, radio stories and car shows, the Chapter helps New Mexicans take advantage of federal EV tax credits before the Trump administration's elimination of the tax credit on Sept. 31. Sierra Club cohosts the SUNday of Action along with 350NM, Third Act and other groups. Six Global Warming Express year-long programs for New

Public Health

Permian Basin residents need a lot more than thoughts, prayers

Artesia refinery explosion highlights the importance of a better emergency response and monitoring system ... asap

Teresa Seamster, Councilor
Chapter Health Impact Assessment Committee
ctc.seamster@gmail.com

On Oct. 31, the aging HF Sinclair's Navajo Refinery, located in southeast NM, experienced an explosion in the city of Artesia. That led to three injuries and widespread public exposure to hazardous airborne chemicals.

Police ordered nearby residents to shelter indoors and avoid the area. This level of minimal emergency response is both usual and hazardous to the public in small towns and rural areas surrounded by oil and gas facilities.

Members of the Permian Basin Climate Justice Coalition, which represents more than 20 organizations involved in environment, health and community advocacy, sent a letter to New Mexico Environment Department Secretary James Kenney asking for his agency to take action to better protect southeastern New Mexicans.

Recommendations

- Install a permanent air monitor in Artesia.
- Provide real-time air-quality data to the public.
- Develop health guidance for the public in cases of industrial emergencies.
- Hold a public meeting in Artesia within a month to let the public know the plans for air safety and monitoring.
- Establish a mobile air monitoring unit in the Permian Basin.

The agency stated in January 2025 that it had secured funding for such a mobile unit through a \$500,000 settlement between WildEarth Guardians and OXY USA, Inc., an oil and gas producer in the region. But the monitor has not yet been installed.

Of equal importance is the need for emergency guidelines and designated safe shelters equipped with emergency medical supplies where residents can evacuate to and be treated when dangerous conditions exist or first aid is needed.



This image of Mexican wolf M2557 was taken on a trail camera in January 2023. A serious injury to his back leg was clearly evident in the photo, indicating he may have been caught in a trap before Roxy's Law took effect a year earlier. Despite being essentially three-legged, he lived more than two years with his injury. Courtesy photo, public domain.

Wildlife

Court upholds Roxy's Law

Legal challenge to trapping on public lands fails to make its case

Mary Katherine Ray
Wildlife Chair
mkrscrim@gmail.com

Soon after Roxy's law, the bill to ban traps on New Mexico's public lands, went into effect in 2022, pro-trapping organizations challenged it in federal court. They said the exception in the law to allow registered members of a tribe or pueblo to trap on public land for religious or ceremonial purposes is unconstitutional. They asserted it violates the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution by allowing some to trap, but not others.

This past September, the court granted the state's motion to dismiss the case. It said the trappers did not have legal standing because they could not demonstrate this provision had harmed them. Further, it said if the exception were found to be unconstitutional, only that section of the law could be enjoined. The rest of the law banning trapping on public land would remain in effect. So, the court would not be able to offer any remedy, even if trappers could show they had been harmed. The trappers' case did not show that the rest of Roxy's law is unconstitutional.

But the case isn't over. The trappers have filed an appeal with the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, though it is difficult to imagine how the appeals court could find differently.

For now, Roxy's law remains in place, but the legal question may be pending for a while.

Since Roxy's law took effect, reports by the public of trapping incidents have become rare and the required annual reports submitted to NM Game and Fish by trappers stating the number of animals they have killed show their take has decreased by half.

The law has had a positive impact for conservation and the public's peace of mind while recreating on public lands in winter.

Another wolf death recorded

We were saddened to learn of the recent death of Mexican wolf M2557 of the Burnt Peaks Pack. As is usually the case, the death is under investigation by US Fish and Wildlife Service and no cause has been announced.

This photo of M2557 was captured on a trail camera in his home range and it shows a serious rear leg injury that is consistent with having been caused by a trap.

The photo was taken in January of 2023, and the injury may not have been new even then. It might have been inflicted on public land before Roxy's law took effect.

M2557 lived for more than two more years despite essentially being three-legged. He was testament to the need for Roxy's law to prevent such unnecessary suffering and cruelty.

Year in review

continued from p7

Mexico students ages 8-11 kick off the 14th year of the program and the 8th year of the program's partnership with the Rio Grande Chapter.

October

Sierra Club helps plan and lead the massive No Kings 2.0 March in Albuquerque, and members take part in protests around the state. The Chapter is among those urging tighter bonding requirements for oil and gas producers in rulemaking at the Oil Conservation Commission. Dozens speak out in public comment. AES solar and storage effort

clears Santa Fe County Commission. Opponents appeal to court. Years-long effort by Chapter comes to an end when Holtec decides not to put more waste in NM.

November

Chapter opens its new office by the Sunport Airport. Chapter sees 12 of 15 endorsed candidates win. Three others, Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller and City Council Candidates Teresa Garcia and Stephanie Telles, faced runoff elections on Dec. 9. Under pressure from the public and environmental groups including the Chapter, the Water Quality Control Commission reverses its decision to consider Big Oil's proposed produced-water rule. This reversal restored our prior win, a rule prohibiting

the discharge of treated fracking wastewater into New Mexico's waters. The Bureau of Land Management moves to eliminate the 10-mile buffer zone around Chaco Historic Park. Trump nominates former US Rep. Steve Pearce, D-NM, to lead the Bureau of Land Management. The Chapter opposes, given his record of threatening public lands protections. NM's US Senators Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan both vote to stop EPA's methane-rules delay, but the challenge to the delay fails. 2025 NM State Wildlife Action Plan approved by US Fish and Wildlife Service. Seven new avian, fish and non-game species biologists, and one coordinator for Species of Greatest Conservation Need have been hired at the soon-to-be renamed NM Department of Wildlife.

Public Health

Congress blocks vital methane protections

Trump administration gutting safeguards that protect American public from oil and gas pollution

Antoinette Reyes

Southern New Mexico Organizer

In November, Senate Republicans blocked a Congressional Review Act resolution that would have stopped the Trump administration from imposing a harmful delay on federal methane pollution standards. The vote leaves communities across New Mexico — especially in the Permian Basin — exposed to another year of unchecked oil and gas pollution. Then on November 26th, on the eve of the Thanksgiving Holiday, the Trump Administration finalized the rule delay.

The methane standards in question were finalized by EPA in late 2023 after years of scientific research, public input and advocacy. These protections were designed to reduce emissions from both new and existing oil and gas equipment, finally leveling the playing field with the strong rules New Mexico already has in place.

But instead of implementing these safeguards, the Trump administration issued a delay rule that pushes back compliance by 12 months. This will result in the emission of tons of methane, VOCs (volatile organic compounds) and other hazardous air pollutants, including carcinogens. And with Texas still refusing to regulate methane, much of this pollution will blow directly into southeastern New Mexico.

To make matters worse, the administration released this delay as an “interim final rule,” allowing the weaker standards to take effect immediately before the public had an opportunity to comment.

This is the first time such a maneuver has been used for a major public-health rule, and it set a dangerous precedent for sidelining community voices. Our organizations have sued over the improper use of this rush tool.



Safeguards against oil and gas pollution are quickly disappearing as the Trump administration prepares to “Unleash American Energy,” an initiative that values production over public health and safety. Photo provided courtesy of Mandy Sackett / Earthworks.

Sierra Club volunteers across New Mexico have stepped up en force. We submitted comments, organized speakers for the hearings and made it clear New Mexicans will not accept weakened protections — especially when our state has already demonstrated that strong methane rules are both achievable and economically sound.

We remain deeply concerned as this rule

continues prioritizing industry convenience over community health and climate stability. New Mexico has shown what responsible methane regulation looks like. Now, we need the federal government to stop delaying — and start catching up.

Together, we’ll keep pushing for clean air, climate justice and a livable future for all New Mexicans.

Public Health

Pollinators, ecosystems and people at risk

New study focused on Albuquerque reinforces the need to address pesticide use throughout NM

Teresa Seamster

and Jacqueline Buenrostro

Northern New Mexico Group

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Research from across the United States has shown that pesticide contamination is a prevalent and widespread problem — from contamination in honeybee hives to soils to rivers and streams.

Addressing the overuse of chemical pesticides has come to the fore as advocates work to protect pollinators, ecosystems, and people.

Recent research from the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation and their partners at the University of Nevada-Reno has helped shed light on the risks posed by pesticide contamination in Albuquerque:

- Researchers sampled the leaves from 155 host plants used by developing butterflies in public parks and private gardens across the city.
- Pesticide contamination was nearly ubiquitous: 92% of plants were contaminated with pesticides.



Studies indicate butterflies are especially vulnerable to pesticides. Photo by Mary Katherine Ray.

- Each contaminated plant had an average of 2.6 different pesticide compounds, and researchers found up to 11 different compounds on a single plant.
- Pesticides weren’t necessarily used where they were detected as they could have been transported off-site by wind or water.

Regardless of where the pesticides were used originally, this contamination poses risks

to butterflies and other wildlife that are using habitat around town.

For example, atrazine, the most commonly found pesticide, is an herbicide that harms diverse species protected under the Endangered Species Act. This was one of 31 different pesticides detected in the Albuquerque study.

The study’s findings were presented this fall to a large coalition of researchers and pesticide policy advocates by pesticide policy specialist Jacqueline Buenrostro from the Xerces Society.

Just as everyone can create habitat for wildlife, everyone can work to protect that habitat from pesticides. People can reduce or eliminate their pesticide use at home and help their neighbors and community to do the same.

We can also advocate for policies that protect our water, wildlife and residents from pesticides. Opportunities abound, from reducing pesticide use on state-managed lands to giving our growers the tools they need to implement safer alternatives.

Referenced research: C.M. Dittmore et al. (2025). “Pesticides detected in two urban areas have implications for local butterfly conservation,” *Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry*. This article is available online review at <https://doi.org/10.1093/etjnl/vgaf218>

News Briefs

From court cases, site cleanup, to ...

Catch up with what's happening on the local, state and federal level on the issues that matter most

D. Reed Eckhardt

Editor, Rio Grande Sierran
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NM High Court to hear pollution suit appeal

The NM Supreme Court has agreed to hear the appeal of a lawsuit that says the state failed to put in place strong pollution control measures in line with the state constitution.

The suit, filed by environmental advocates and Native American activists, cites a provision of the constitution that says protection of the state's "beautiful and healthful environment" is a key right of state residents.

The case was dismissed but the state's Court of Appeals, which ruled that section does not compel the Legislature or the governor to act. Both have urged the Supreme Court not to take the case.

<https://bit.ly/4r0mOjv>

State to see reduced wildfire mitigation work

Due to budget and staffing cuts from the Trump administration, Western states, including New Mexico, will see fewer efforts to reduce wildfire risks in their forests.

Grassroots Wildland Firefighters report that wildfire mitigation efforts are down more than one million acres nationally. Similarly in New Mexico, the state has completed just 53% of its planned projects.

Officials recommend that those who are curious about doing their own mitigation work at their home and surrounding areas should visit Firewise USA. Also, many Soil and Water Conservation Districts offer assistance.

<https://bit.ly/4qPTjkl>

Trump nominates Steve Pearce to head BLM

Former NM congressman and Republican Party head Steve Pearce has been chosen by the Trump administration to head the Bureau of Land Management.

Former Secretary of the Interior and gubernatorial candidate Debra Haaland said Pearce is a "dangerous choice."

"(He) has a record of threatening New Mexico public lands, putting profits over people and neglecting the needs of the state," she added.

The choice was applauded by the Western Energy Alliance, which is made up of independent oil and natural gas companies.

<https://bit.ly/47NKdwh>

Uranium mine cleanup underway, but more money needed

Clean-up efforts have begun at three uranium mines as well as petroleum-polluted sites in the state. But state Environment Departmental officials report more money is going to be needed to complete the work.

Representatives with the Water Protection Division of the NM Environment Department told lawmakers they will need over \$100 million as well as decades to clean up an identified 348 sites that are dangerous to humans and the environment. These sites have no current responsible party for the cleanup.

State officials earmarked \$20 million in one-time funds for the effort, but that won't be nearly enough, environment officials said.

<https://bit.ly/4nNftBg>



Students learn about climate and other environmental issues at a Global Warming Express workshop. The GWE, or Global Warming Express, was founded in 2012. It is a climate change education and activism organization created and led by kids, for kids. The project has expanded from schools in Santa Fe, statewide and across the nation. The program is for ages 9-12. The GWE is now in the process of developing a new program, the Global W.E., which stands for Global Warming Emergency, for ages 13+.

Holtec quits NM nuclear waste disposal plan

After nearly a decade of conflict, Holtec Industries has abandoned its plans to build and operate a temporary nuclear waste storage facility underground in southeast NM.

The plan was opposed by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, the Legislature and others, including the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter.

Said Lujan Grisham, "I'm glad Holtec heard our strenuous objections and decided (this) was a losing proposition. We stand firm in our resolve to protect our state from becoming a nuclear dumping ground." <https://bit.ly/4nOoQks>

Chaco Conservancy gets new director

The nonprofit that supports work at Chaco Culture National Historical Park and Aztec Ruins National Monument has chosen a new executive director. Phoebe Redfield takes the reins just as the US prepares to leave UNESCO, which has named Chaco a World Heritage Site. President Trump is pulling out of UNESCO because of its "globalist, ideological agenda."

Redfield says the president's action probably won't get in the way of the conservancy, which has raised \$120,000 since 2020 to pay for 23 projects on the site. Its funds come from donations and grants. <https://bit.ly/47QrJuS>

Navajo Nation to test uranium cleanup tools

With some 500 abandoned uranium mines on Navajo lands, tribal officials are trying a \$3 million experiment to see if newly developed tech can aid their cleanup efforts.

The tribe is testing a new procedure from Disa Technologies in Wyoming that separates uranium from the rest of the uranium mine waste, cutting the radiation from the greater part of the waste.

"That is a protective measure against future potential groundwater-contamination," said Stephen Etsitty, head of the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency.

<https://bit.ly/4oBYALk>

NM has large geothermal potential

A report shows New Mexico is the sixth-best state in the nation for its potential to create geo-

thermal energy, a statewide clean-energy advocate reports.

Tom Solomon with 350 New Mexico is head of a working group that is looking into ways geothermal can be used in the state.

He was citing a report from Project InnerSpace produced by the NM Institute of Mining and Technology and the Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources.

The report names Santa Fe, Rio Arriba, Sandoval and Taos counties as those in the state with the greatest geothermal potential.

<https://bit.ly/47O8QbV>

PFAS cleanups delayed at NM bases

Clean-ups of "forever chemicals," or PFAS, at the three Air Force bases in NM has been set back by as many as six years, Department of Defense documents reveal. According to the state environmental department, Holloman and Cannon Air Force bases contain some of the highest concentration of PFAS in New Mexico.

The cleanup timeline has been pushed from August 2026 to June 2032—and that is just for initial feasibility studies. Work then would follow.

"New Mexicans have to realize the Air Force is not there for them," NM Environment Secretary James Kenney said. "They're doing a lot for the community itself, but when it comes to public health, they're AWOL."

<https://bit.ly/47QP3c3>

First community solar project goes live

After years of waiting, the first of many planned community solar projects for NM came online at the end of September.

The solar energy plant, Cuidando Los Ninos Community Solar Project in Belen, will provide five megawatts of power to subscribers.

The Community Solar Act was passed in 2021, but it has taken four years to clear a number of hurdles. Some 30% of the power is reserved for low-income communities, whose members subscribe to get the power.

Eleven other projects broke ground this year across New Mexico, with 12 anticipated to go on line in 2026.

<https://bit.ly/43YAZMr>

Volunteers

Sierran welcomes faces behind the scenes

Introducing Reed Eckhardt, our new editor, and Elisabet de Vallée, our new publication designer

There's nothing quite like birth by fire but after doing such a great job pinch hitting on the October issue, Camilla Feibelman appointed D. Reed Eckhardt as the Sierran's new editor.

Joining him as publication designer, on the last issue as well as for this edition, is his wife, Elisabet de Vallée, better known as "Ome."

We sat down with the Santa Fe power duo to explore their backgrounds and what they hope to achieve in their new positions.

What is your volunteer role with the chapter?

Reed I am working closely with Camilla Feibelman and my partner, Elisabet de Vallée, to produce the Rio Grande Sierran. I help decide content, set the production schedule and edit the stories. I also produce the news briefs and other content as needed.

Elisabet (Ome) I help with the planning of the Sierran and produce the newspaper, putting content on pages, preparing photos and once it's built, I send it to the Santa Fe New Mexican, which prints the actual document.

How did you get involved with Sierra Club?

Reed I was casting about, trying to find an organization in Santa Fe that was working to ease climate change. I tried several groups but found none to be as effective at the state level as the Rio Grande Chapter. My first real introduction was through NMClimateCorps.

Ome Reed moved to New Mexico in 2019, I followed him about a year later, once the pandemic eased. Since then, I've been watching him become increasingly involved with climate issues and I got drawn in just from hearing about what he was reading, who he became involved with, etc. I did some graphics and promotional work for some of the folks he worked with before joining the Sierra Club, so earlier this fall, when Caroline Funk announced she was moving to the national organization, I offered to help out.

What is your background/professional background that helps in your Sierra Club work?

Reed I was in print journalism for more than 40 years, finishing my career as executive editor of the Wyoming Tribune Eagle in Cheyenne.



D. Reed Eckhardt is the new editor of the Sierran. His wife, Elisabet de Vallée, is our new publication designer.

My print journalism skills are a perfect fit with what I am now doing with the Sierran. It's satisfying to dust off my experience and use it again.

Ome My career has been in music — as a bassoonist, as an academic, and as a manager.

I was working as the first marketing director at the New Orleans Symphony when I saw a pamphlet for an MBA/Arts program based in Binghamton, NY. The program looked like what I needed to jump to the next level so I applied. I graduated with an MBA in arts management in 1987 and since then, I've worked for orchestras across the nation. I've also done a lot of graphic design and PR work not only on the job, but between music gigs. So, what I offer the Sierra Club is a lot of experience building documents as well as strong marketing and communication skills.

As for the Sierran, I hope to craft each issue in a manner that attract readers and establishes credibility with key stakeholders through publication design. I firmly believe that when not-for-profit organizations using limited funds to court public support and build political backing must have publications that establish credibility immediately because politicians and funding sources may only give it a quick skim. You need a look that says "you can trust us; this organization is serious about what it does, and it takes its responsibilities seriously, too."

I tend to build books, magazines and newspapers with that goal in mind. I also believe print publications need to visually communicate to readers that "this item is important and is full of relevant and important information for YOU," because we live in an increasingly fast-paced and sophisticated visual age. My bottom line? Creating pieces that are appealing to the eye and that connect directly with readers in a compelling, memorable manner.

Explain "Ome," what's the story there?

Ome I'm part of the second generation of my family to be born here. My parents wanted me to have a good French name, but they knew that, even in New Orleans, most people don't speak French, so, after they decided to make my middle name the same as my mother's best friend, they gave me her childhood nickname, as well. For most Americans, it's just easier to pronounce.

What would you tell someone who would like to get involved but does not know how?

Reed Just jump in. No matter your skills or interests, it seems to me there is a place here for you in the Sierra Club. Be sure to look into NMClimateCorps. It's a great introduction into the group.

Ome That pretty much sums it up. You'll make new friends and be part of a wonderful organization that's committed to making our world a better place.

Outdoor Education

From Santa Fe to Taos ... one step at a time

Local author details thru-hike adventures in her new guidebook, calling the trail a "132-mile classroom"



Pam Neely

Debbie Bryant
Chapter Outings Chair
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I heard about this new New Mexico thru-hike last summer and thought it sounded amazing. I contacted the author, Pam Neely in Santa Fe. I asked her where the idea for the thru-hike came from. (Thru-hiking is the act of hiking an established long-distance trail from end to end.)

"It grew from having a reactive dog and being an introvert, so I got very good at finding the lesser-traveled trails around SF," she said. "After a few

years of this, I just felt like there had to be a way to go to Taos."

Pam said she doesn't feel whole without the outdoors and has been conscious of that need since she was a small child. This trail looks like an outdoor recreation project but really a conservation project. "It's a 132-mile classroom. It's an opportunity to slow down and reconnect with nature and to leave the forest with a changed understanding of how you fit in with the natural world," she said. There are opportunities to see herds of elk and beavers, rivers, mountains and forests.

She recognizes that many people are scared of wild animals and the outdoors. To influence them, Pam's goals include education. Her philosophy is: "Be aware and informed, but don't be afraid."

She said she would like to see more education for

women in the woods and conservation. For women, there are good reasons to be aware of vulnerabilities, but fear shouldn't keep them out of the woods, she said. About conservation: "Carson National Forest is banged up. This offers an opportunity to change people's perspectives. ATV tracks and logging have made this forest look very different to the Pecos or the Santa Fe national forests."

Pam is working with NM Wild to adopt a wildlife area, and with the Forest Service to avoid camping damage. She also trying to move the thru-hike toward a "pilgrimage approach" like the Camino in Spain, which is seen as a contemplative effort, allowing understanding of our place in our environment.

Order the guidebook and GPX online at santafetotaos.org/. Use promo code SIERRA10 before Feb 1 to receive a discount on your purchase.

Outings

Check out events, excursions across NM

Join us on one of our upcoming outings or special events. Check our website and socials for more listings or to sign up for outings

- riograndesierraclub.org/calendar
- Santa Fe Sierra Club Outings at [meetup.com/santa-fe-sierra-club-outings/](https://www.meetup.com/santa-fe-sierra-club-outings/)
- [facebook.com/NMSierraClub/events](https://www.facebook.com/NMSierraClub/events) for Southern group events

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We look forward to seeing you outside! We have quite varied offerings. More outings will be added, so please check these links periodically. We rely on participant self-screening to ensure an outing that is safe and appropriate for all. We do our best to detail the descriptions so you can decide if your fitness level and experience are appropriate.

THU, JAN. 1: NEW YEAR'S DAY SNOWSHOE AT ELLIS TRAIL. 9:30 A.M.-1 P.M.-ISH If you can walk, you can snowshoe! If you would like to learn or just enjoy some time on your snowshoes, sign up to meet at Ellis trailhead in the Sandias. This high-altitude, three-hour-long outing is approximately 3.5 miles round trip with between 300-500 feet of elevation gain. We depart from the lower Ellis trailhead parking lot and proceed along the Ellis Trail with several stops to enjoy stunning views all the way to the Continental Divide. We cover tips for safely traversing on snowshoes. The group will stay together. Please make sure you have a decent level of fitness; snowshoeing at this altitude is roughly twice as hard as hiking. Appropriate for children over 13 with parent or legal guardian. No dogs, please. Register by Dec. 22. Recommended gear list and more information to be provided one week before. Moderate level. East of Albuquerque. Info: Debbie Bryant, 832-692-1881, bryade@gmail.com

FRI, JAN 2: CRANES AND MOONRISE IN THE SOUTH VALLEY: 4 P.M.-5:30 P.M. Easy hike in the Bosque to the Rio Grande for sunset while the cranes and geese return to roost with added bonus of the full Wolf Moon. Walk will be 2-3 miles at easy pace. We will be back at our vehicles at approximately 5:30 p.m. Terrain is flat but there are trip hazards, and we will walk in dusk/dark. Please bring walking sticks if you use them, headlight or flashlight. No dogs please. Easy, flat trail, no elevation gain, root trip hazards. Meet at Durand Open Space, 4750 Isleta Blvd SW, Albuquerque. Info: Diane Reese, 505-507-6416, DianeAbqNM@gmail.com.

THU, JAN. 8 ZERO WASTE TOUR OF BARCO RECYCLING FACILITY: 1 P.M. TO 2:30 P.M. Come see how all of our blue-bin recycling is sorted. Find out how much is actually recycled and get answers to other recycling questions. Must be able to climb stairs and not be bothered by a very noisy environment. Vests, helmets, eye protection and ear plugs will be provided. Dress warmly as buildings are not heated. Register early; space is limited to 10 adults — Jan. 7 deadline. Meet at 12:50 at 5029 Edith Blvd. NE, Albuquerque. (Street sign says 5021 Edith Blvd. NE) Contact trip leader if you need or can give a ride. Easy level. Info: Laurie Zunner, 505-440-5337, lmzunner@gmail.com.

TUES., JAN. 13: EASY MYSTERY HIKE IN SANTA FE, 10 A.M.-1 P.M. This hike will have some steady ups and downs and should end up being about four miles. The mystery will be revealed when we meet at the Albertson's at Zia Road and St. Francis Drive in Santa Fe. We can likely carpool if all are interested and comfortable. Despite this being a relatively easy hike, please wear appropriate footwear and bring adequate water, snacks and layers. The elevation will be between 6,000-7,000 feet with approximately 350 feet of elevation change. Hike is tentative, weather dependent. Sign up at: www.meetup.com/santa-fe-sierra-club-outings/. Info: Nancy Haverkos, adobegirl@msn.com

SAT., JAN. 31: CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TOUR NEAR VALLES CALDERA NATIONAL PRESERVE, 9 A.M.-2 P.M. Four-mile cross-country ski tour on trails in the Jemez area near the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Exact location depends on snow conditions. Options include the mellow terrain along the Guaje Canyon Trail along Canada Bonita out to a viewpoint into the preserve, following the roads within the preserve, the Upper Frijoles Overlook trail and the Los Griegos area. You will need minimal skill on your skis so you can control your speed on the downhill sections. Also, skis with a climbing or grip pattern or climbing wax. The drive to the start of our skiing is between 40 and 50 miles. Moderate level. Sign up at: www.meetup.com/santa-fe-sierra-club-outings/events/312218327. Info: Alan Shapiro, 505-469-2131, nm5s@yahoo.com.

SUN., FEB. 1: SNOWSHOE AT VALLES CALDERA HIDDEN VALLEY OR COYOTE CALL TRAIL, 8 A.M. - 2:30 P.M. Both are beautiful, choice by leader, based on conditions. Experience needed. If you have snowshoed before, sign up to meet at the Sandia Casino parking lot off of Tramway to arrange carpooling to Valles Caldera. We will meet at 8:30 a.m. Drivers must have experience driving in snow and in high-clearance, all-wheel or four-wheel drive vehicles. It will take us about 1.5 hours drivetime each way. This high-altitude, about three-hour long snowshoe is approximately 3.5 miles with 500 feet elevation gain. The group will stay together. Make sure you are physically fit; snowshoeing at this altitude is roughly twice as hard as hiking. No kids, no dogs, please. Register no later than Jan. 25. Recommended gear list and additional info will be provided beforehand. Free, but driver reimbursement for carpooling expected, \$20/person. Register no later than Jan. 25. Moderate/Strenuous. Valles Caldera/NM Hwy 4. Info: Debbie Bryant, 832-692-1881, bryade@gmail.com.

SAT., FEB. 7: CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TOUR NEAR VALLES CALDERA NATIONAL PRESERVE, 9 A.M.-2 P.M. Four-mile cross-country ski tour on trails in the Jemez area near the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Exact location depends on snow conditions. Options include the mellow terrain along the Guaje Canyon trail along Canada Bonita out to a viewpoint into the Valles Caldera National Preserve, following the roads within the preserve, the Upper Frijoles Overlook trail and the Los Griegos area. You will need minimal skill on your skis so you can control your speed on the downhill sections. Also skis with a climbing or grip pattern or climbing wax. The drive to the start of our skiing is between 40 and 50 miles. Moderate/Strenuous. Sign up at: www.meetup.com/santa-fe-sierra-club-outings/events/312218397. Info: Alan Shapiro 505-469-2131, nm5s@yahoo.com.

SAT., FEB 28: CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TOUR NEAR VALLES CALDERA NATIONAL PRESERVE 9 A.M.-2 P.M. Four-mile cross-country ski tour on trails in the Jemez area near the Valles Caldera National Preserve. Exact location will depend on snow conditions. Options



Carol Thompson, Stephanie Smith and Kathy Knudsen found the perfect way to spend day — hiking Oso Pass on the 3 Gun Hike.

include the mellow terrain along the Guaje Canyon trail along Canada Bonita out to a viewpoint into the preserve, following the roads within the preserve, the Upper Frijoles Overlook trail and the Los Griegos area. You will need minimal skill on your skis so you can control your speed on the downhill sections. Also skis with a climbing or grip pattern or climbing wax. The drive to the start of our skiing is between 40-50 miles. Moderate/Strenuous. Sign up at: www.meetup.com/santa-fe-sierra-club-outings/events/312218491. Info: Alan Shapiro 505-469-2131, nm5s@yahoo.com.

SUN. MARCH 1: SNOWSHOE AT ELLIS TRAIL IN THE SANDIAS, 9 A.M.-1 P.M.-ISH. For those who have been snowshoeing before. Sign up to meet at Ellis trailhead in the Sandias. This high-altitude, three-hour-long outing is about 3.5 miles with between 300-500 feet of elevation gain. We will depart from the lower Ellis trailhead parking lot and proceed along the Ellis Trail with several stops to enjoy stunning views as we approach the Continental Divide. We will cover tips for safely traversing on snowshoes. The group will stay together. Please make sure you have a decent level of fitness; snowshoeing at this altitude is roughly twice as hard as hiking. Appropriate for children over 13 with parent or legal guardian. No dogs, please. Limited number of participants. Bring: appropriate winter attire for weather down into the 20s, snowshoes, trekking poles, water, snacks, lunch and any other health and comfort items necessary. Register no later than Feb 25. Recommended gear, additional info to be provided one week before. Moderate. East of Albuquerque. Info: Debbie Bryant, 832-692-1881, bryade@gmail.com.

Looking for outings in southern NM?

We would like to set up regular outings, prioritizing areas four or more participants want to explore. Email for details about outings near Las Cruces or Ruidoso.

Las Cruces — Antoinette Reyes
Antoinette.Reyes@sierraclub.org
Ruidoso — John Pijawka
jastro@windstream.net

205
426

Save these date on your 2026 calendar!

Environment Day 8 AM-2 PM
ROUNDHOUSE
Earth Day 10 AM-3 PM
BALLOON FIESTA PARK

details soon > riograndesierraclub.org