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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



The 2026 session kept Sierra Club members and coalition partners busy, especially here in New Mexico. Shown above are some of the advocates who worked to promote the Clear Horizons Act this year.

Legislative Roundup

Big Oil & Gas defeats Clear Horizons Act

We've got our work cut out, but thanks to your efforts, New Mexico residents won key protections

Camilla Feibelman

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

In February, as President Trump took an ax to federal climate protections, Big Oil and Gas financed a million-dollar misinformation campaign in New Mexico. That convinced seven Democratic state senators to help kill the Clear Horizons Act (SB18). The act would have made permanent statewide climate targets from Gov. Lujan Grisham's Climate Executive Order of 2019. It was defeated 23-19 on the Senate floor in the last week of the legislative session.

The 30-day session ended on Feb. 19 without major needed climate action but it wasn't because we didn't work hard enough.

Hundreds of you spoke out. You contacted your legislators, wrote to your local papers and shared your stories.

It's heartbreaking to lose to Big Oil money and lies, but please know the truth is making its way to decision-makers' ears, and we will forge new strategies to build on the significant climate progress we have already achieved.

For more legislative updates, see stories starting on p2

You can help set things right. Step Up!

Call Gov. Lujan Grisham's office, 505-476-2200

Ask for action to require that data centers in New Mexico run on renewable energy. Encourage her to take final actions on climate and environmental issues before she leaves office.


Register to vote & elect Climate Champions

Sign up to help us elect Climate Champions in 2026 by texting the words "nm action" to the 69866

Support the Sierra Club | Rio Grande Chapter

Join our chapter and invite like-minded friends to do so. Get involved! Volunteer! Special events & training sessions are free and available year-round at locations across NM. Donate to our PAC at www.riograndesierraclub.org/donate/

EXPLORE, ENJOY AND PROTECT THE PLANET

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Visit riograndesierraclub.org for a list of volunteers & committees

Legislative Roundup | Opinion

Key lawmakers ignore climate change

Session reinforces volunteers' rallying cry — We can do this, Si se puede!

Diane Reese
Rio Grande Chapter Chair
DianeAbqNM@gmail.com

Hello, my friends. How are you doing?

Oh my, this legislative session had some real disappointments, but as you will read elsewhere in this edition, there were also many good bills passed. In the weeks after the session ended however, I was heartbroken to read summaries of the session and see absolutely nothing concerning our climate.

Our biggest bill — the Clear Horizons Act — failed with seven Democrats voting no.

I am struggling to understand where was the support for putting our governor's vision for protecting our climate (and as a result protecting our air, water and lands) into law.

To me, the benefits are clear, but not so for those who voted no.

We will now take time to evaluate our strategy. We are against a well-connected and well-resourced industry. But our grassroots coalition has resources too — people power!

I call on you for strength and energy to keep going. How do we do that? Together. We partner with our ally organizations.

We show up.

We speak out.

And we vote!

I want to thank our brave and strong staff, led by our truly excellent executive director, Camilla Feibelman.

With hard work, patience and inexhaustible energy, the staff showed up again and again. To keep us engaged, they provided impactful work of all types.

Staff, you set the example, provided encouragement and showed us the way forward — always reinforcing “We can do this / Si se puede!”

Thank you, thank you, Camilla, Melissa, Genie and Antoinette.

And welcome to Nina and Bill.

And a special thank you and fond farewell and see you at the next rally to Miya.

Finally, I want to acknowledge all the volunteers and members who gave your time, talent and treasure. You were ready to make calls to your legislators, to attend those committee hearings, to share that extra room at your place to house a volunteer or staff member. Thank you.

We must stand fast and continue to push against false narratives.

There are record profits being made, and it is our right — our responsibility — to require our leaders to protect our planet.

I'll end as I always do: by telling you there's a place for you on our team.

I would love to talk to you and find the right job — so give me a call and let's get to work!

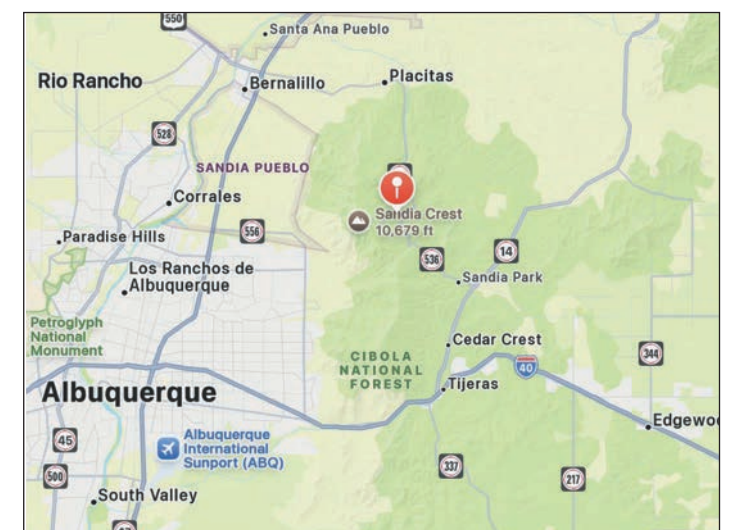
You can reach me at 505-507-6416 or by writing DianeAbqNM@gmail.com.

Events

Member Appreciation Picnic

Save the date! July 25, Capulin Spring Picnic Site, Cibola National Forest — 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Bring your family, a friend or neighbor and introduce them to your fellow chapter members! We'd love to meet some of the other important people in your life.



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Social media campaigns throughout the legislative sessions are but one way the Rio Grande Chapter keeps members up-to-date on the latest news. As these items from our socials indicate, the Chapter advocates not only on climate change issues, but on items related to the environment as a whole. Some members even have shirts specially made to help get the word out.

Legislative Roundup

Wins, losses in 2026 state legislative session

We couldn't outpace Big Oil & Gas' multi-million dollar misinformation, but that didn't stop us

Camilla Feibelman

Chapter Director | Rio Grande Chapter
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Gov. Lujan Grisham's final legislative session ended Feb. 19 without passing major or even needed climate action — but that won't keep Rio Grande Chapter members from staying in the fight. Our team of dedicated analysts, advocates, and volunteers joined hands with thousands of people and organizations to rally support on behalf of New Mexico's residents and the natural environment that we, and millions to visitors, enjoy in our state every year. Here are the major issues the Chapter was involved with:

DATA CENTERS: MICROGRID OVERSIGHT ACT STALLED IN HOUSE

Your calls to the governor helped a critical data-center bill, the Microgrid Oversight Act, get a hearing in this short session, and your emails and calls to legislators helped it pass the Senate 22-20.

But the bill, which would have made Project Jupiter and other AI data centers subject to the same Energy Transition Act renewable requirements as utilities, wasn't heard in the House before the session ended.

The huge methane-gas electric plant planned for Project Jupiter alone would erase New Mexico's significant climate progress (the state has reduced its

greenhouse gas emissions by 29% below 2005 levels). And the data center's "microgrid" would burn and consume far more energy than PNM's entire output.

There's still a chance to stop this disastrous project that has broken ground near Santa Teresa in the far southeastern part of the state.

The company developing it has applied for an air permit as two separate projects — applications that wildly underestimates its potential emissions in order to cheat its way to a permit. Over 7,500 New Mexicans wrote to the New Mexico Environment Department, calling on officials to deny the permit and seeking a hearing with opportunity for public comment.

Now a company called Energy Transfer is building a gas pipeline from the Waha Hub in Texas to Phoenix, Ariz., with a spur line to Project Jupiter.

That application has been submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Many of you have also commented against this methane feeder we simply don't need or want and we thank you for your efforts.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Numerous bills to protect air, water, wildlife and humans did pass this session, and regressive bills were blocked.

This session made important fixes for our Conservation Legacy Fund (HB184) and the removal process for Wildlife commissioners (SB104).

The Legislature updated fines for water theft (HB111) and allocated more money to clean up orphaned oil and gas wells (HB80).

The budget had key investments in water resources (HB2). HB153 passed, helping to build both a supply and demand of low-carbon materials.

Thanks to Western Resource Advocates, NMWild, NRDC and other groups that aided in these victories.

Many organizations joined to defeat legislation that would have erased evidence-based rulemaking used to ban the use of oil and gas liquid waste outside industry operations for five years (HB270, HM 45).

Thanks to the Western Environmental Law Center, Amigos Bravos and others for your role in protecting this important rule.

We defeated a proposal to include nuclear in the definition of "renewable energy" in the Energy Transition Act. The Legislature added \$25 million in funding for uranium cleanup and neglected contaminated sites, like dry cleaning liquid spills.

On democracy, the women of the Legislature led on passing HJR5, which allows voters to choose salaries for our volunteer legislators. SB264 passed, which bans the military and ICE at our polling places.

Thank you to Somos Acción, El Centro, the ACLU et al for leading legislation that stops ICE contracts with the state (HB9), welcomes new Americans (HB124) and keeps traffic data safe from ICE (SB40).

Legislative Roundup | Water

Water investments a bright spot in session

Tricia Snyder

Water Chair
pjsnyder1029@gmail.com

It's no secret New Mexico is facing a water crisis. This legislative session, we saw a recognition of that fact with the state's investment in critical water priorities.

From investing in better understanding of ground- water resources to meeting the state's obligations related to Indian water rights settlements to downstream users through interstate compacts, we made significant advancements towards securing a resilient water future for the Land of Enchantment.

Our work isn't done, and we'll need to see continued investments in future years as well as a focus on ensuring our water agencies have the recurring budgets needed.

But we offer thanks to the 2026 Legislature, particularly to Chair Nathan Small (D-Las Cruces) and Vice-Chair Meredith Dixon (D-Albuquerque) in the House Appropriations and Finance Committee and Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham for these important steps forward.

Highlights of water budget include:

- \$22 million to the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources for aquifer mapping, monitoring and the Water Data Act. This number went down in Senate Finance but was returned to its original amount with a line item veto by the governor.
- \$15 million to complete Indian water rights settlements.
- \$22.5 million to complete New Mexico's obligations under the Lower Rio Grande settlement related to the Rio Grande Compact disputes.
- \$10 million for the River Stewardship Program, which funds water quality and habitat restoration projects throughout the state.
- \$13 million for the Strategic Water Reserve, one of our best tools to keep water in New Mexico's rivers and streams.
- \$1.5 million for the state Environment Department's State Surface Water Quality Permitting Program, by which New Mexico is leading the nation in filling federal gaps in clean water protections.
- \$2.5 million for regional water planning, reworked under the 2023 Water Security Planning Act.
- \$5 million for the Neglected and Contaminated Site Fund, supporting cleanup of abandoned contaminated groundwater sites.
- \$2 million for the Interstate Stream Commission's Acequia Bureau for acequia infrastructure projects and disaster recovery statewide.

The Sierran

The Rio Grande Sierran Publication Info

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The opinions expressed in signed articles in The Sierran are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club. Products and services advertised in the Sierran are not necessarily endorsed by the Sierra Club.

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

Donate your vehicle today!

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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RIO GRANDE CHAPTER

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JOIN US FOR THE EARTH DAY FESTIVAL



Sunday April 26th • 10 am–3 pm
Balloon Fiesta Park

The Third Annual Earth Day Festival promises to provide information that will save people between \$500 and \$20,000 by incorporating green practices into your day-to-day lives. Tickets \$5. FREE if reserved in March.

- Kids activities
- Kids Entrepreneurs section
- Clean energy vendors
- Clean Car Concourse—test drive EVS
- Experts on rebates (PNM, state, federal)
- Food Court
- Workshops

WINE • PUPPIES • ENTERTAINMENT

EarthDayFestivalNM.org



Earth Day

3rd Annual festival set for Sun. April 26

This year, we're all about affordability — sharing info about incentives, rebates, weatherizing and how easy it is to go all electric.

Melissa Bernardin

Chapter Climate Organizer
 melissa.bernardin@sierraclub.org

At the Third Annual Earth Day Festival on Sunday, April 26, the Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter and 350NM will focus our attention on how New Mexico's families can access rebates and incentives to make their homes and transportation clean, comfortable, convenient and cost-effective.

The event is set for 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Balloon Fiesta Park in Albuquerque.

Volunteer "Energy Guides" will greet festival goers and guide them to an "Energy Experts" booth and exhibitors with product demonstrations and information on rebates and other financial incentives.

The "Energy Experts" booth, hosted by 350NM, is where you can talk to other New Mexicans who have experience with residential insulation and weatherization, solar panels, switching to electric appliances or buying an electric vehicle.

Join us and help your neighbors learn more about saving money while they weatherize and go electric!

Volunteer! We need help with meet & greet, guiding folks to "Energy Experts," product demos or sharing info about rebates. We also need Zero Waste Volunteers. Sign up at www.riograndesierraclub.org/calendar.

Legislative Roundup

Wildlife Policy Reform (SB104)

Mary Katherine Ray

Wildlife Chair | mkrscrim@gmail.com

Last year, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham vetoed a provision in a bill that would have modernized wildlife governance: preventing future governors from removing game commissioners without cause.

That loophole has now been repaired with the passage of the Removal of Wildlife Commission Members Bill (SB104) and governor's signature. The State Supreme Court will now have the final say on whether a commissioner's conduct is worthy of removal.

In other news: The State Game Commission has been renamed officially as the State Wildlife Commission, and the Department of Game and Fish is now the Department of Wildlife.

We will be vigilant to ensure both live up to their new and broader mission.



Students enrolled in our Global Warming Express program visited with state legislators Feb 6, 2026. During their time in the Capitol, these young climate activists explained to legislators how decisions they make during the session impact both kids and wildlife, two groups who don't have the right to vote and yet whose lives depend on lawmakers' ability to make informed choices.

Legislative Roundup | Global Warming Express

NM youngsters “go wild” at Roundhouse

“Out of the mouths of babes,” area children school lawmakers on protecting wildlife and kids

Genie Stevens

Climate Education Director

genie.stevens@sierraclub.org

When the New Mexico Global Warming Express students returned to their program after winter break, they were tasked with researching and roleplaying as a wild species. They chose a favorite winged, four-legged or swimming being and crafted masks that covered their faces and heads.

On Feb. 5, Climate Solutions Day, a migration of species-students from some of our Global Warming Express Programs arrived on foot and by bus at the New Mexico Roundhouse, taking part, as the students have for the past 14 years, in the legislative proceedings. Introduced by Global Warming Express graduate Elodie, who took part in the last two years of Climate Days, the species migration, led by African drum performer and

instructor Fred Simpson, marched into the noon-time Climate Rally.

With the species-students chanting “Remember us,” Elodie gave a speech, reminding legislators that before they placed their vote, they should take a breath and remember the small ones — the wild beings and the children — who do not have a voice or a vote and yet whose lives depend on legislators’ decisions.

Each spring, following the Roundhouse visit, Sierra Club members-turned-Global W.E. mentors lead their students in becoming the solutions to the climate issues they learned about in their science, art and mindfulness lessons the previous term.

This is a time for the students to understand just how many solutions to our disconnection with nature exist and how they can become invaluable advocates, not just for their school term but for their lives. It’s an uplifting time for kids and mentors and one that makes a difference

to them, their schools, and communities.

We want to offer you the chance to jump aboard the Global Warming Express. In the 2026/2027 school year, we will have openings for volunteer mentor-trainees and for volunteers who can contribute in other ways. We are also offering a new opportunity to become a volunteer mentor for one term only instead of the entire school year.

We urge you, as we did the legislators, to think of the impact one-and-a-half hours per week, for several weeks, could make on the futures of the small ones — the wild beings and the children — and consider joining us. We need educators, past educators, writers, poets, naturalists, hikers, bikers, birders, actors, musicians and any other folks, of any age, who want to feel engaged and uplifted with and by children in the coming school year.

For more info about Global Warming Express or to volunteer as a mentor in the program, contact Genie Stevens at genie.stevens@sierraclub.org.

Legislative Roundup

Oil, gas won’t give up on produced water

Another hearing on industry appeal to water quality commission’s rule was expected April 14

Dale Doremus

Water Committee

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Thanks to public dissent and our courageous legislative allies, the fossil fuel industry’s bill, HB 207, which would have allowed the discharge of “treated” oil and gas wastewater into ground and surface water, was defeated during the recent legislative session. But that hasn’t stopped the energy industry from continuing to try.

In May 2025, the Water Quality Control Commission adopted a new rule prohibiting the discharge of oil and gas wastewater, also known as “produced water,” to our rivers, streams and lands. The rule, which sunsets after five years, allows non-discharging pilot projects to study treatment technologies.

The commission then voted in November 2025 to reject an industry-led proposal that would have gutted the May rule and allowed the discharge of produced water into New Mexico’s waters. Now the same industry group is again asking commissioners to reverse their November vote and resurrect the industry’s dirty water proposal.

The latest proposal would undermine the state’s water quality program, which has been successfully protecting water quality since the 1970s.

If it is approved for the oil and gas industry, other industries will soon be clamoring for similar treatment. For example, the proposal shifts responsibility for adopting water quality standards for produced water discharges from the commission’s rigorous, science-based public hearing process that applies to all other industries, to a behind-the-scenes internal department procedure.

New Mexico Environment Department scientists made clear in their testimony in the rulemaking hearing that “insufficient evidence exists at this time to ensure the discharges of produced water (treated or otherwise) are protective of human health or the environment.” According to the best science, examined thoroughly by the commission in its rulemaking, treatment technologies do not exist that allow for the safe discharge of produced water to our rivers, acequias and groundwater.

Produced water “treatment” doesn’t remove all toxins, and protective water quality standards are not in place to shield the public and environment from many of those toxins.

Commissioners agreed to hear the industry’s appeal of their initial ruling on April 14.

For more news and information regarding an updated ruling, visit our website — riograndesierraclub.org

2026 Midterm Primaries, June 2

It's critical we all vote in the upcoming midterms. Make your voice heard. Vote ... and help others do so

Here are the endorsements our Chapter is making for the leading offices in New Mexico

The following are the state and local candidates who have been endorsed by the Chapter and who have opponents in the June primary. Endorsements of candidates who have no primary opponent will be disclosed at a later date. Be sure to vote on June 2.

Visit www.riograndesierraclub.org/elections for additional endorsements that may be made prior to the primary.

Governor Deb Haaland

The Chapter is proud to endorse Deb Haaland for governor.

After representing New Mexico's First Congressional District in the US Congress, Haaland served as Secretary of the Interior during the Biden administration.



Former Interior Secretary
Deb Haaland

She was one of the first two native women to be elected to serve in Congress, and she was the first native cabinet secretary. If elected, she would be New Mexico's first native governor.

Haaland pairs the deep-rooted values of her heritage with a clear, actionable climate agenda.

As secretary of the Interior, she reduced methane waste on federal and tribal lands, accelerated permitting for clean energy projects and launched large-scale orphaned well remediation — cutting emissions while creating jobs.

Haaland embodies the values the Chapter looks for in a governor — respect for the land, responsibility to future generations and courage in the face of injustice.

Her life and career reflect a deep belief that our environment is not a commodity, but a sacred trust. She understands environmental stewardship is inseparable from protecting families, water and livelihoods. She is committed to ensuring that no community is left behind.

As governor, Haaland will commit New Mexico to net-zero emissions by 2050, fully implement the Clean Cars and Trucks Standards, modernize building codes for energy efficiency, use the state's purchasing power to expand renewable energy markets and place New Mexico on a path to a sustainable water future. She is our clear choice for governor.

Secretary of State Amanda López Askin

Doña Ana County Clerk Amanda López Askin was raised in Las Cruces by a mother who had “the Spanish spanked out of her.” As a result, she became an advocate for voting rights in order to get “a seat at the table of democracy.”

She inherited that passion, and after earning her doctorate and a building a successful career as a therapist and teacher, she was appointed

Doña Ana County clerk when a vacancy arose in 2018. She was later elected to the position in 2022.

López Askin was appointed as clerk five days before the 2018 election and was immediately confronted by falsehoods and election-denial in the close Torres Small-Herrell congressional election that year. Her experience with election-denial, disruption, personal attacks and threats throughout her tenure as Doña Ana County clerk has prepared her to be a steady hand to guide the state through the polarized elections we will be facing in the future.

She understands the fear and intimidation communities experience when federal law enforcement officers are present on Election Day. She has seen it play out firsthand in southern New Mexico and will do everything she can to ensure that it does not occur with the current federal administration.

Public Lands Commissioner Rep. Matthew McQueen

The Chapter endorses Rep. Matthew McQueen, D-Gallisteo, for Commissioner of Public Lands.

The land commissioner leads a department that oversees our 9 million surface acres of state lands, including special places for outdoor recreation and wildlife habitat, as well as lands that earn billions of dollars to support our public schools, universities and hospitals.

McQueen has served 12 years in the House of Representatives, 10 of those as chair of the House Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee.



Rep. Matthew McQueen

He has been one of our go-to legislators to sponsor environmental legislation, and he has successfully shepherded many of our priority bills into law.

McQueen has held oil and gas companies accountable by restoring the state's ability to levy fines and penalties on bad actors and by raising royalty rates.

He has also fought to protect the state's natural resources, such as the Gila River, and he led efforts to prevent the storage of high-level nuclear waste in New Mexico.

Last year he worked with a broad coalition of stakeholders to successfully reform our Department of Game and Fish into a modern Department of Wildlife, and he was instrumental in enacting a ban on cruel trapping on state lands.

McQueen will work to expand leases for wind, solar and battery storage projects on state trust lands as part of the Land Office's mission of ensuring fair returns for New Mexico schools and beneficiaries.

McQueen will bring deep policy expertise and a lifelong commitment to conservation as our next land commissioner.



Amanda López Askin

HD 4—San Juan Rep. Joseph Hernandez

Joseph Hernandez was an ally of the Chapter long before he ran for his House seat.

In his first term, he sponsored the Green Amendment; a bill that created the Solar Access Fund within the NM Finance Authority to provide money to local governments for solar projects; and a bill to fund the cleanup of contaminated sites, including uranium mining sites.



Rep. Joseph Hernandez

HD 13—Bernalillo Rep. Patricia Roybal Cabellero



Rep. Patricia R. Cabellero

Rep. Patricia Roybal Cabellero has sponsored a long list of important environmental bills, including the Community Solar Act, the Energy Transition Act, the Green Amendment, various geothermal and solar tax credit bills, as well as legislation that prevents New Mexico from becoming a nuclear dumping ground. She is especially interested in bills addressing environmental justice.

HD 14—Bernalillo Rep. Miguel P. García

Rep. Miguel García has a 97% lifetime environmental voting record on the most recent Conservation Voters NM scorecard.

While being laser-focused on bills to help his community, he is a legislator we can count on to vote to protect the environment.



Rep. Miguel P. García

HD 16—Bernalillo Yanira Gurrola Valenzuela

During her time in office, Rep. Yanira Gurrola Valenzuela has advocated for environmental sustainability, clean energy and other climate solutions to protect our natural resources and combat climate change.



Yanira Gurrola Valenzuela

She has sponsored legislation promoting electric school buses, clean car tax credits, and water reuse requirements.

She has a 100% lifetime score in Conservation Voters NM most recent scorecard.

Polls open May 5 for early voting

New to the state? Or a first-time voter? Our guide to voting in New Mexico will get you started asap!

HD 24—Bernalillo

Rep. Liz Thomson

During her 14 years in the House, Rep. Liz Thomson has been a rock-solid supporter of environmental and progressive legislation.

As a pediatric physical therapist and the mother of an autistic son, she has focused her legislative work largely on healthcare and opportunities for children, especially those with disabilities.



Rep. Liz Thomson

HD 30—Bernalillo

E. Diane Torres-Velásquez



Rep. Diane Torres-Velásquez

Rep. E. Diane Torres-Velásquez has a PhD in education and has worked with grassroots groups to establish public education as a fundamental right in New Mexico and to make sure there is an equitable distribution of education resources.

While the focus of her legislative work has been on education, she has been a steadfast supporter of the Chapter's environmental priorities.

HD 34—Doña Ana

Rep. Raymundo "Ray" Lara

Rep. Ray Lara is the chair of the House Democratic Caucus.

He has sponsored bills addressing critical matters such as voting rights and clean fuels.



Rep. Ray Lara

HD 37—Doña Ana

Lori Martinez

Lori Martinez is the Executive Director of Ngage New Mexico, an education nonprofit.

If elected, she will bring a high level of expertise in education and mental health to the House as she works to fill gaps in services by creating new state programs and opportunities, advocating for healthcare initiatives, including Paid Family Leave, and drafting legislature to restrict private-equity control of hospitals, energy and data centers.



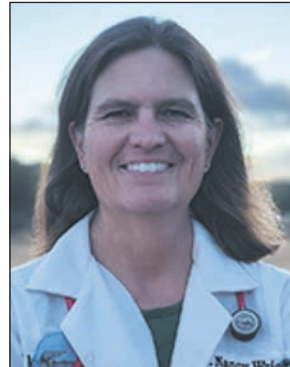
Lori Martinez

HD 40— Multiple NE Counties

Dr. Nancy Wright

Dr. Nancy Wright is a pediatrician with a master's degree in public health who very clearly understands the intersection of the environment and health.

As a legislator, she wants to address global warming, environmental toxins, and green space, which she rightly emphasizes are issues especially important to children and young adults.



Dr. Nancy Wright

HD 41—Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, Taos

Yolanda "Pancha" Jaramillo

Yolanda "Pancha" Jaramillo is a retired educator and behavioral health advocate who is an acequia leader and an regional advocate for acequias.

She serves on the board of the NM Acequia Association and as an appointed member of the NM Acequia Commission. Yolanda says she is "all about clean water."



Yolanda "Pancha" Jaramillo

HD 69—6 NW, Central Counties

Rep. Michelle Paulene Abeyta

Rep. Paulene Abeyta's indigenous culture has nurtured in her a deep understanding of our connection to the natural world and the importance of protecting it.

In her first legislative term, she focused on children, healthcare, and tribal issues while also supporting environmental issues, including sponsoring a bill to clean up uranium and other contaminated sites.



Rep. Paulene Abeyta

HD 70—San Miguel & Torrance

Rep. Anita Gonzales

Rep. Anita Gonzales has been a leader on healthcare, education and the environment. She represents her District by advancing rural development and public education and continuing the fight for remediation of the impacts of the 2022 Calf Canyon/Hermit's Peak fire.



Rep. Anita Gonzales

She is committed to protecting the state's environment and culture, she champions water rights, land stewardship, and community traditions.

Bernalillo County Commission, District 5

Eric Olivas

Commissioner Eric Olivas has been an environmental champion on the County Commission.

He recently sponsored a bill that imposes renewable energy, water-use offset, and labor requirements on any data centers built in the county.



Eric Olivas

Santa Fe County Commission, District 1

Henry Roybal

We are proud to once again endorse Henry Roybal as our choice for Santa Fe County Commissioner, Dist. 1.

A life-long resident of the Pojoaque Valley, Commissioner Roybal was first elected to the Santa Fe County



Henry Roybal

Commissioner in 2015. He won a second term in January 2019. He has proven himself a true friend on the issues that matter most to Sierra Club members, in particular, balancing stewardship of the land and its natural resources with economic development.

For more Chapter endorsements and other helpful voting info, visit us online at riograndesierraclub.org

Voter Info

Election How-tos

To register to vote, find out what district you are in, view a sample ballot, and to find any other voting information, go to nmvote.org. Early voting begins at your County Clerk's office (or in Albuquerque, at the Clerk's Annex, 1500 Lomas NW) on May 5 and at additional locations on May 16. Check your County Clerk's website for hours and locations. You can request an absentee ballot online nmvote.org, or you can contact your county clerk. Absentee ballot applications must be received by May 19.

COUNTY CLERK OFFICES

Albuquerque	cabq.org/vote	505-924-3650
Santa Fe	santafecountynm.gov/clerk/elections	505-955-6521
Las Cruces	lascruces.gov/government/city-clerks-office/municipal-elections	575-541-2115

Authorized and paid for by the
Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club
Political Action Committee



Environmental Justice Advocate Ava Curtis (left) and author/trail designer Pam Neely (right) will headline our upcoming Beer & Speaker Series events. Curtis joins us April 10, Neely's talk is set for June 5.

Central New Mexico Group

Great speakers, beer on tap at St. Mark's

Sierra Club & Beer Speaker Series brings environmental advocate, trail designer to Albuquerque

Susan Gorman

Central New Mexico Group Chair
susangorman1945@gmail.com

Central New Mexico Group Sierra Club and Beer Sierra Club and Beer is off to a great start for 2026 ... and there's so much more to come!

Saif Ismail, division manager for Energy and Sustainability for the city of Albuquerque, demonstrated the City's B.R.A.I.N. (Balanced Resource Acquisition and Information Network) for us on Feb. 6.

We had good attendance, excellent audience engagement and plenty of Q&A. Many thanks to the Assistance Team.

Saif was amazing with plenty of information and energy. We hope the rest of the year goes as well.

APRIL 10 — AVA CURTIS

For our April 10 event, Ava Curtis, an environmental justice coordinator for the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment will speak to us.

She will share her experiences seeking restorative justice for communities in New Mexico that have been impacted by uranium mining and milling.

Curtis also will discuss the nuclear fuel chain in New Mexico and in the Southwest as well as the impacts these had on frontline communities, particularly on their health and traditional practices. She will share how communities are building powerful coalitions to resist nuclear development and fight for restorative justice that protects health and safety.

JUNE 5 — PAM NEELY

Join us June 5 and find out what it's like to hike New Mexico's newest long-distance trail.

Pam Neely, the trail's developer, will share her adventure creating the Santa Fe to Taos Thru-Hike that starts at Santa Fe Plaza and meanders to Taos Plaza through some of the most spectacular scenery in New Mexico.

Neely will speak about the many conservation opportunities she found during her treks across this land.

Sierra Club & Beer "Speaker Series"

DATE: April 10 — Ava Curtis
Environmental Justice Coordinator
Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment
June 5 — Pam Neely
"Thru-Hiking Trail Designer & Author
From Santa Fe to Taos ... One Step at a Time"

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

The trail is beautiful and has ample water. You'll meet wildlife, hug old-growth trees and trek across lovely green meadows.

But there are challenges ahead.

Hikers will encounter diminishing snowpack, bark beetles, fire scars, cattle and logging roads, all evident along the trail. Each of these sightings provide opportunities to expand your conservation awareness. It's a 132-mile, multiday adventure just waiting to be explored.

Join us in April, June — or at both events — for an evening with friends, snacks and free beer!

Legislative Roundup | Public Health

Lawmakers approve insect memorials

Teresa Seamster

Wildlife Committee
ctc.seamster@gmail.com

Two memorials about the importance of insect identification, ecology, monitoring and management passed the 2026 NM Legislature.

Senate Memorial 3, sponsored by Sens. Heather Berghmans (D-Albuquerque) and Kristina Ortez (D-Taos), along with House Memorial 26, sponsored by Ortez and Rep. Harlan Vincent, (R-Ruidoso Downs), were prepared by students in the Wild Friends program, a civics and science program for youth housed at the University of New Mexico School of Law.

Susan George, senior attorney at the School of Law, has helped students in Wild Friends draft wildlife conservation legislation since 2006.

"Each year it's a delight to bring students from across New Mexico to the Roundhouse to advocate for legislation they have helped to draft on wildlife topics ranging from wildlife crossings to increased poaching fees," she said. "This year the topic of insect education resonated with the stu-



Wild Friends students from Ruidoso High School speaking with Rep. Harlan Vincent (R-Ruidoso Downs) about their memorial. (Photo: Wild Friends)

dents as a way to help state agencies and the public become more knowledgeable about the important role that insects play in our world."

Ginny Seamster, assistant chief for technical guidance at the state Department of Wildlife, has been taking part in conversations on the memorial with Wild Friends, the UNM Museum of Southwest Biology and the Xerces Society, a non-profit dedicated to the conservation of invertebrates. There is a special relevance to the state wildlife agency as the 2025-approved State Wildlife Action Plan includes 94 pollinator insects as Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

"I was honored to be asked to participate in planning an insect-focused workshop for state agency personnel," Seamster said. "Such a workshop is especially timely for agencies, given the recent addition of insects to the definition of wildlife in New Mexico statute and the newly added (special need species). I look forward to learning from Xerces, and staff at other state agencies."

Kaitlin Haase, pollinator specialist from The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, will help conduct the insect workshops alongside the museum's Arthropod Division staff.

"The interest and need for insect conservation outreach were reflected in the enthusiastic legislative support for the memorials in Wild Friends classroom visits," Haase said.

"I was privileged to see the wonder insects inspire in young people and hope to preserve this overlooked wildlife group by educating state agency staff on ways to incorporate insect conservation in their work."

The insect workshop is scheduled for April 23. For more info, email Teresa Seamster at ctc.seamster@gmail.com

Legislative Roundup | Wildlife

Catron ranchers get clear shot at wolves

Lobo population rises in NM and AZ, but threats to our beloved wild New Mexican wolves persist

Mary Katherine RayWildlife Committee
mkrscri@gmail.com

Attempts to delist the wild Mexican wolf in the US — with no scientific basis for doing so legally — are ongoing, so far unsuccessfully, in the current Republican Congress.

The end-of-year count of the wild Mexican wolf population tallied 319 wolves across the recovery area in Arizona and New Mexico. This represents an increase of 33 wolves from the 286 counted at the end of 2024.

The current politically-based Mexican wolf recovery plan will allow de-listing from endangered species protection after eight years of the population averaging 320 in the US and 200 in Mexico.

The population in Mexico is around 45. And that number does not address the crisis of shrinking genetic diversity in the wild wolf population.

All lobos alive today descend from just 7 wolves,



Mexican wolf #1296 looks across a snowy field in New Mexico.

so the gene pool to begin recovery was minuscule.

And yet, wolf killing continues to be problematic.

Last year the federal government, charged with protecting and recovering lobos, killed three genetically valuable wolves.

Now, in a shocking bow to pressure from livestock interests, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has issued permits to two livestock operations in Catron County,

allowing them to kill one Mexican wolf each.

The permit does not specify which wolf is to be shot — it can be a random wolf with absolutely no consideration of genetic value or whether it has even preyed on livestock.

Killing wolves at random has not been shown to effectively address livestock loss.

Wolves are very social animals. When a pack member is killed, the entire pack may disintegrate. What was a functioning unit can descend into chaos, making conflict with humans even more likely.

These two kill permits are flagrant examples of politics, not science “managing” the wolf population. Rather than using documented and effective conflict prevention strategies, the agency charged with protecting wolves is bowing to the vindictive desire for retribution on the part of ranchers.

But, just when we needed good news, we learned that the wandering Asha, along with her mate and all of her pups who are now living in the wild, have survived the winter. Family life clearly agrees with her.

Legislative Roundup | Clean Air

Results of clean air fees hearing awaited

Antoinette ReyesSouthern NM Organizer
antoinette.reyes@sierraclub.org

Sierra Club and our partners reached out to community members across New Mexico in March to submit comments and attend the Environmental Improvement Board hearing March 23-25 on updating the fees that fund the state’s Air Quality Bureau.

The results of the hearing, which went off as planned, are expected to have a big impact on how well New Mexico is able to monitor pollution and enforce clean air protections in the years ahead. We won’t hear the decision until mid-April.

The Air Quality Bureau is New Mexico’s official program responsible for keeping track

of air pollution across the state. Its staff reviews permits for industrial facilities, operates air monitoring networks, investigates pollution complaints and makes sure companies follow state and federal clean air rules. The program plays a key role in protecting public health and responding to concerns from communities.

But the fees that support this work have not been updated in more than 20 years. During that time, oil and gas production in New Mexico has grown to record levels. As development expands, the amount of work required to monitor emissions, review permits and oversee pollution increases as well. Ensuring the state has the resources to keep pace with that growth is critical for maintaining strong oversight.

That’s why Sierra Club and other organizations

encouraged community members to get involved in support of the fee increases. Public hearings give residents a chance to share their perspectives and highlight why clean air protections matter.

Strong clean air protections depend not only on good rules, but also on the ability to put those rules into action. Making sure the state’s air quality program is properly funded helps protect public health, strengthen accountability and safeguard the air New Mexicans breathe every day.

We’re optimistic that updating these long-outdated fees will help ensure New Mexico’s air quality program has the staffing, monitoring capacity and resources needed to protect our air.

For the latest news on this issue, check our socials and our website — riograndesierraclub.org.

In Remembrance

Eric Patterson

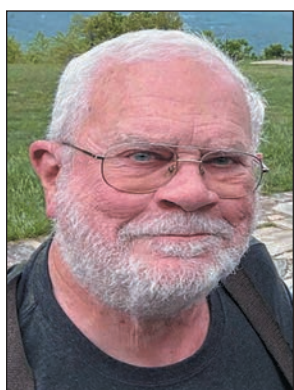
Ramona Blaber

ramona.blaber@sierraclub.org

I met Eric Patterson at a Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge cabin where Rio Grande Chapter volunteers and staff stay for chapter meetings.

Within minutes of walking through the door, Eric had somehow determined that I had gone to high school with his son thousands of miles away.

It became part of Eric’s go-to introduction at chapter

**Eric Patterson**

meetings: “Hi, I’m Eric Patterson. I live in beautiful downtown Valdez, NM. I run our Water Sentinels Rio de Taos program, and I’m the only one here who cared enough to attend Mona’s high school graduation.”

That intro concisely described Eric: Always

with the jokes; loving his life with his wife and garden in his tiny rural Northern New Mexico town; leading truly impactful work by teaching students to protect our waterways; and always seeking out new people and making them feel comfortable, special and seen.

Eric passed away in December at the far-too-young age of 82, leaving behind his wife, Nora, sons Jason, Tad and Eric, four grandchildren and a newborn great-grandchild he met in November. His life of education, friendship, water-monitoring and joy was celebrated by many friends and family in January in Taos.

Eleanor Eisenmenger

Ken Hughes

Political Chair, Northern Group

On February 23rd we lost Eleanor Eisenmenger, a transplant from New York City, a music booster and connoisseur, animal lover and environmental champion. Her loss is deeply felt.

I could always rely on Eleanor, who died Feb. 23, to canvass precincts, especially in Santa Fe.

Chauffeured by Tom Gorman, Eleanor struck an elegant style knocking on doors and delivering the pitch. I doubt many could resist her ask.

Two years ago, we divvied up a precinct for Alma Castro in her bid for a Santa Fe City Council seat. Eleanor finished her turf in a way that left her stranded. Seeing a car she believed part of the campaign, she successfully hitchhiked her way to the starting spot. In her 90s!

Last year I visited Eleanor in the hospital as she recovered from a spill. As I was leaving she said, “Be sure to save some doors for me to knock on.”

I will always oblige that request.

For more memories, visit www.riograndesierraclub.org

Eric’s obituary is available online at legacy.com/us/obituaries/taosnews/name/eric-patterson. You can read Eleanor’s obituary at riverfamilyfuneralhome.com/obituaries/eleanor-eisenmenger.

**Eleanor Eisenmenger**

News Briefs

Major event coverage and breaking news

From critter concerns to Blackstone, NM Gas, and Questa ... here's what people are talking about

D. Reed Eckhardt

Editor, The Rio Grande Sierran
dreed1969@msn.com

PNM SALE TO BLACKSTONE DRAWS OPPOSITION FROM ACROSS THE STATE

Hundreds of New Mexico residents turned out in early February to oppose the proposed sale of the Public Service Company of NM to private equity firm Blackstone Infrastructure.

Most of the people who attended the hearing said they did not see any benefit from the planned sale, set at \$11.5 billion. The firms have promised a \$25 million investment in clean energy and a \$105 million rate credit over four years that would lower average bills 3.5 percent, about \$3.45.

That credit would “hardly be enough to buy a fast-food meal, which is an insulting supposed benefit,” said Victoria Judy with Youth United for Climate Action.

The acquisition faces approvals not only from the Public Regulation Commission, which held the February hearing, but also from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. It has been approved by the Public Utility Commission of Texas and the Federal Communications Commission.

NEW MEXICO GAS SALE OPPOSED

A plan to sell New Mexico Gas Co. to private equity firm Bernhard Capital Partners has drawn pushback from state officials as well as consumer and climate advocacy groups. They say the sale is not in the public interest and would hang customers with rising rates.

NM Attorney General Raúl Torrez wrote in a brief against the sale that it carries “significant risks” and would not provide benefits to the gas company’s customers. Torrez said his concerns include Bernhard’s focus on short-term profits and adding debt to the gas company’s books.

The \$1.25 billion sale also is opposed by New Mexico Affordable Reliable Energy Alliance, Coalition for Clean and Affordable Energy and Western Resource Advocates.

Hearing examiners will make recommendations to regulators at a later date, which has not been set. The Utility Division under the Public Regulation Commission has urged approval of the sale with modifications.

SNOW DROUGHT, HIGHER TEMPS SPUR WILDFIRE WORRIES ACROSS NM

New Mexico faces an active wildfire season through June, according to the National Weather Service. The state already has seen blazes as well as red flag warnings, but forecasters see a dire situation, especially if there is no spring moisture.

“We have all the conditions in place,” said fire ecologist Matt Hurteau at the University of New Mexico. “It’s been really warm ... (and) we’ve got a severe snow drought, so all the fuels are going to be ... basically cured and ready to burn.”

Media reports in early March indicated the state’s snowpack level is just 41 percent of the average, which beats the previous record of 44 percent in 1987. No significant precipitation was expected to bring relief. Snowpack levels peak in March.

PLANNED FED CHANGES THREATEN STATE TOXIC CHEMICAL RULES

Congressional Republicans are pushing changes to federal regulations of toxic “forever” chemicals which, if passed, would threaten New Mexico’s efforts to control them, state officials say.

The New Mexico Environment Department is drafting rules to prohibit hundreds of synthetic chemicals currently in everyday items, including PFAS (per- and -polyfluoroalkyl substances), with some concerning exceptions. The federal proposals would cause a “cataclysmic hole in the fabric of what states can do to protect the people,” said Environment Secretary James Kenney.

Gretchen Salter with the nonprofit Safer States, said the federal proposals contained in the draft legislation would, at a minimum, make it easier for companies to put toxic products on the market and make it harder to remove from the environment.

PRAIRIE CHICKEN LOSES ITS FEDERAL PROTECTIONS

Arguments from Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas, as well as the oil and gas and beef industries, have won out with the Trump administration. It has decided to pull federal protection from the lesser prairie chicken.

The delisting by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service comes in the wake of a federal court decision in Midland, Texas, which terminated Endangered Species Act protections for the bird. The industries said they were forced to take actions to dodge the birds’ habitat, especially mating areas.

The prairie chicken once numbered in the millions. But agriculture and energy development have reduced those numbers to about 30,000.

LONG-NOSED BAT EXTENDS RANGE NORTHWARD

Rising global temperatures may have contributed to helping an endangered bat species extend its range deeper into New Mexico.

Climate change is causing agave plants to do better further north in the state so “these bats are moving into those areas looking for food to sustain their migration,” said Kristen Lear with the Agave Restoration Initiative.

The Mexican long-nosed bat, which also is known as the greater long-nosed bat, migrates based on its source of food — nectar from the agave plant. The bat has for years thrived in the bootheel of NM, but it now has been found 100 miles north in Hidalgo County.

CLEAN FUELS MARKETPLACE NOW OPEN

Environmental officials have voted to launch a program aimed at reducing carbon in New Mexico’s vehicle fuels. The Sierra Club intervened with other environmental groups in this rulemaking, prioritizing public transportation and electrification.

A clean fuels marketplace, the first in the Southwest, opened April 1. The program offers various fuel types, including gasoline, diesel, electricity and biomethane. A standard for allowable carbon intensity will determine whether a fuel is a debtor or creditor to the marketplace.

Those producers with fuels below the benchmark will be given credits, which can be sold to

manufacturers of more carbon-intensive fuels. Below benchmark firms can choose whether to take part while those above will be required to participate. Over time the benchmark will be lowered, encouraging firms to produce lower-carbon fuels. Transportation is the state’s second-leading sector for producing greenhouse emissions.

QUESTA HYDROGEN, SOLAR PROJECT SET TO BREAK GROUND

The Kit Carson Electric Cooperative in Taos is set to break ground on a combined green energy and solar project 30 miles north of Taos near Questa.

Residents in Questa lost a molybdenum mine in 2014, which was an economic driver there. But that property, currently a superfund site, now will be turned into a \$231 million facility that will create 41 hours of energy storage. The co-op said their members will have more reliable power for use in, among other things, severe winter conditions and emergency events.

The effort will include a 50-megawatt solar array as well as a plant to split water molecules into hydrogen, to use in fuel cells, which do not emit carbon or air pollution.

Kit Carson services Taos, Colfax and Rio Arriba counties.

GROUP SUES TO PROTECT LOCAL TURTLE

The Rio Grande cooter, a turtle that lives in the Rio Grande and Pecos watersheds, deserves federal protections from extinction, the Center for Biological Diversity argued in a January lawsuit. The suit, filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, said the turtle is threatened with extinction because of a 2022 decision by federal wildlife officials not to protect it. The suit argues that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service turned a blind eye to “mounting evidence” that the cooter was threatened. The center says the reptile is threatened by climate change and potential pollution from the extraction of gas and oil.

PUEBLO PLANS WASTE-TO-ENERGY PLANT

The Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo is partnering with a Texas firm as well as the North Central Solid Waste Authority to build a 10-megawatt waste-to-energy plant on Pueblo land north of Española. The plant, run by Mozart DevCo of north Texas, is expected to process 300 tons of waste per day, diverting it from a nearby landfill. The project will create 30 fulltime jobs. The process will heat solid waste and turn it into syn-gas, which in turn can be converted to electricity. It could reduce landfill waste by 80 to 90 percent.

GROUP SEEKS PROTECTION FOR NM PLANT

Federal protections are being sought for an orange-flowered perennial that grows in an oil-rich part of New Mexico. The Center for Biological Diversity petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list Allred’s flax as an endangered species. The flower is threatened by oil and gas development. It can be found in the Yeso Hills of Eddy County in southeastern New Mexico.

In 2020, Allred’s flax was listed by the state as endangered. That means it cannot be collected.

Staff News

Bill Rodgers, Nina Freer join Chapter staff

Rio Grande Chapter welcomes new experts in communications and coordination to regional office

There's been a lot of changes in the office these past few months. Meet the new kids on the job.

Bill Rodgers

Communications Associate

Bill Rodgers has a 10-year background in local journalism, which includes "505 O-Matic," a DIY outlet he and his friends founded in 2024. He also worked at Meow Wolf Studios in Santa Fe as a narrative artist, writing immersive sci-fi stories and overseeing media for six of interactive museum's exhibitions throughout the West.



Bill Rodgers

Calling himself "the last writer to draw a steady paycheck," Bill says that over the course of his career, he's learned that strong storytelling principles work just as well in organizing as they do in art. For example, he's employed his narrative and media skills to create the Meow Wolf Workers Collective in 2020, used himself as a subject for a video series on PFAS contamination in his La Cieneguilla neighborhood and even co-hosted live events in Santa Fe to keep people engaged with local news and politics.

Bill tells us his goal with the Sierra Club is to not only guide communications to and from the chapter, but to tell stories of everyday people struggling with the present and urgent threat of climate disaster. "I believe personal narratives are the best way to circumvent the noise the powers-that-be use to mystify this crisis, and I look forward to working with you so we can build a better future for everyone."

Bill is based in Santa Fe, working remotely to keep chapter members and the media up to date with the latest news on Sierra Club activities and issues that concern our membership.

Nina Freer

Chapter Coordinator

Nina Freer is our new Chapter Coordinator. Located in Albuquerque, Nina serves chapter members wherever in New Mexico they might reside. She also supports her fellow staff members as well as key volunteers with their needs, assists with Wednesday volunteer hours, and oversees our fundraising efforts and youth engagement initiatives.

As Nina put it, "I have committed myself to community service and the nonprofit field as a community organizer, advocate and artist. My passions are arts and environment. I have assisted families with resources, mentored youth and fostered community partnerships. I enjoy capturing portraits

and documenting community outreach events and capturing campaign themes for local nonprofits."

Nina holds a BA in international development with an emphasis in community development and environmental sustainability. She also has a BFA in studio art photography.

Nina's emphasis on environmental stewardship and conservation was exemplified while leading nature hikes and outdoor educational games for youth while interning at the National Hispanic Cultural Center as an AmeriCorps public ally and as a Service Day volunteer for the Recuerda Cesar Chavez Committee. She was a master naturalist volunteer with Bernalillo County's Open Space program and was enrolled in the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Teacher Education Program for outdoor education along the Bosque.

Recent jobs include positions at Job Corps connecting youth interns to trades and nonprofits and advocating for unhoused individuals with the NM Coalition to End Homelessness. At the United Way of North Central NM, she supported philanthropic fundraising and served as the community outreach and partnership manager.



Nina Freer

Water

Trump's "Polluted Water Rule" wipes out 50 years of safeguards

Rollbacks underscore need for state actions

Tricia Snyder

Water Chair

Late in 2025, the Trump administration released a new proposed rule, which advocates are referring to as the "Polluted Water Rule," outlining which waters are protected under the Clean Water Act, and emphasizing the vulnerability of New Mexico's waters.

This bedrock federal water quality protection law has safeguarded the nation's waters for more than 50 years and was initially passed with bipartisan support in 1972. But we've seen a chipping away at these protections, most notably by the US Supreme Court decision in Sackett v. EPA that limited federal jurisdiction over wetlands and some streams.

The Polluted Water Rule establishes even more regulations.

New Mexico is the most vulnerable state in the nation following this decision. It removed up to 95 percent of our waterways and 88 percent of wetlands from federal protection. The Polluted Water Rule takes this further by putting in place "wet season" requirements for protected waters that disregard Southwestern hydrology. It solidifies the waterways and wetlands that no longer have federal protection.

Luckily, the state Environment Department responded to this threat. Led by Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth (D-Santa Fe) and Rep. Kristina Ortez (D-Taos), the legislature last year passed The Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Act (SB 21), led by a coalition of groups and supported by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club. It established the framework for a state-led surface water quality permitting program that re-establishes state-level protections for those waters no longer protected under the Clean Water Act.

The 2026 legislative session saw additional investment in this program, which the department plans to get up and running by 2027. A rulemaking to establish fine-grain details of the day-to-day operations of the program will take place in June 2026.

The Polluted Water Rule underscores the need for the state program. Rollbacks enjoyed for decades will not stop so states must step up to fill the gaps. We are proud to advocate for the implementation of this effort.

Outdoors

Popular park areas closing

140 acres of Sandia Crest trails are scheduled for improvements over the coming two years

Popular areas on Sandia Crest to be closed by Forest Service until the end of 2027. Planned projects will block trails on Sandia Crest as well as along the upper section of NM Hwy. 536 for approximately two years, the Forest Service reports. Projects include Sandia Crest "Switchback" Hazard Tree & Fuel Reduction Project and The Sandia Crest Recreation Area Renovation Project.

According to a US Forest Service press release, the Ellis, Sandia Crest and Kiwanis Cabin trails will be closed as will other trails in the area. Work is expected to be completed in the winter of 2027-28.

For a map showing the areas closing, visit riograndesierraclub.org

Wilderness First Aid Course scheduled for Oct. 24-25

Registration open, slots available this fall

The Rio Grande Chapter of Sierra Club is sponsoring a Wilderness First Aid course, specially geared toward our members. This course is in high demand and typically fills up months in advance. Our instructor has many years experience teaching this class.

Why attend? People get hurt, sick, or lost. The temperature drops, the wind picks up and it starts to rain. Would you know what to do? If you're ever more than an hour away from a hospital or one mile from any road, you need this class. Many backcountry emergencies are preventable, and even when bad things happen, sometimes the wrong care can make things worse. By learning a few basic skills, you can make the difference between a good outcome and a bad one — and maybe even save a life.

The SOLO Wilderness First Aid Course is a two-day first aid course that provides training for anyone who spends time hiking, skiing, engaged in other outdoor pursuits or just wants to know what to do when things go south. The course is a blend of lectures, demonstrations and scenarios. Students will have ample opportunity to practice skills in life-like situations, both as patients and caregivers. At the successful completion of the two-day course, you will be certified or re-certified in Wilderness First Aid. Attendees must participate in all portions and hours of the course and demonstrate understanding to obtain certification.

Classes will be held 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Albuquerque; \$200 per person. For more info, contact Debbie Bryant at bryade@gmail.com

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

Debbie Bryant

Chapter Outings Chair

bryade@gmail.com

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.

SAT, APRIL 18 - SUN, APRIL 19 — JOINT EVENT:**INTRO TO BACKPACKING OVERNIGHTER IN SAN YSIDORO**

This is the perfect outing for those who have never backpacked before and would like to give it a try in a low-risk environment. We will be accompanied by several experienced mentors. We'll meet at the trailhead at 10 a.m. and backpack about three miles before setting up a base camp and exploring petroglyphs, slot canyons and puebloan ruins. Saturday evening we'll enjoy camping under the stars and learn more about the area's history as well as backcountry safety. On Sunday we'll continue our adventure until mid-morning, after which we'll break camp and depart. Participants should be in good physical condition, be able to hike at least six miles while carrying up to 20% of their body weight, and climb 500 vertical feet over uneven terrain. This outing is appropriate for children 14 years of age and up when accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. The event is limited to 6 participants. Register no later than April 10 at the link below. Gear and driving directions will be provided to registered participants by April 11. This moderate to strenuous outing is offered in association with the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program and the Latino Outdoors Organization. Leader/Info: Terry Owen, teowen@comcast.net.

SATURDAY, APRIL 18 — MIGRATING BIRDS ON THE ANIMAS RIVER, FARMINGTON, 9-11 A.M.

Come and see the beautiful river walk and experience the changing variety of birds during spring migration along the Animas River. We will meet at the Riverside Nature Center in Farmington at 9 a.m., 18 year-olds and up. No dogs, please. Easy hike, leisurely pace. Trip will be 2.5 miles on level dirt trails. Dress for the weather. Bring binoculars, snacks and water. Sunscreen and bug juice recommended. Sign up by April 16. Leader/Info: Mike Foster, mike4ffoster@gmail.com

SATURDAY, APRIL 25 — A DECADE OF FOREST FIRES & FLOODING IN RUIDOSO, 9 A.M.-1 P.M.

Let's hike and discuss the past number of fires that have occurred in Lincoln County. Topics will include the effects of fire, drought and monsoon flash floods that have impacted recreational trails within the forest and how fire shaped the ecology within the area of our hike. We'll hike one of the Cedar Creek trails and walk through some heavily burn-scarred areas. This hike is a 3.5-4 mile round trip with a moderate and gradual 425 feet of elevation gain that will include several stops. Good footwear, water and sunscreen and dress for the weather is essential. If we're lucky, we'll catch some glimpses of elk and wild horses. No dogs, please. Appropriate for children 14+ with a parent or legal guardian. Registration limited to 10. RSVP no later than April 23. Loca-

tion: Smokey Bear Ranger Station parking lot, 901 Mechem Drive in Ruidoso. (Hwy. 48 and Mechem Drive are the same road once in town.) Leader/Info: John Pijawka, jastro@windstream.net

SATURDAY, APRIL 25 — HIKE AT DOE RUN-GUTIERREZ OPEN SPACE, 9 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

We'll do the Sandia Vista, Doe Run, Canyon and Sierra Vista Loop. This moderate hike is about 6 miles long and a 1,000 feet elevation change, but the ups and downs are relatively smooth and very pleasant. We'll start at Gutierrez Canyon Open Space in Cedar Crest, and the parking lot is next to Rumors Brewing & Pizza. Bring at least a liter of water per person, good boots, hat, snacks and lunch. No dogs, please. Children 13+ welcome. Leader: Debbie Bryant, bryade@gmail.com

SUNDAY, APRIL 26 — EARTH DAY FESTIVAL, BALLOON FIESTA PARK, ALBUQUERQUE, 10 A.M. - 3 P.M.

Wine, puppies, entertainment and lots of fun activities for kids. Exhibits focus attention on how New Mexico's families can access rebates and incentives to make their homes and transportation clean, comfortable, convenient and cost-effective. For more info, see the story on p.4 of this issue.

SUNDAY, APRIL 26 — CABEZON LOOP BIKE RIDE, SANTA FE, 9 A.M.-3 P.M.

Enjoy this beautiful moderate to strenuous loop ride on bring the bike of your choice: mountain, gravel or E-bike. Fat tires are a plus! We'll meet at the intersection of San Luis and Pipeline Road at 9 a.m. and ride a 22-mile loop route on backcountry roads around the iconic Cabezon Peak. Expect a large variation of steepness and surfaces (sand, rock, mud, etc). Total elevation gain is about 1,000 feet. We will cancel in the event of rain. This is a ride for folks who are fit and have experience riding on complex surfaces. Sign up on Santa Fe Sierra Club Meetup page. Leader/Info: Sandra Corso sandracorso@yahoo.com

FRIDAY, MAY 1 — GUTIERREZ HUBBELL HOUSE TOUR, WALK AND LUNCH, ALBUQUERQUE, 10 A.M.-2 P.M.

Easy hike with a bit of South Valley culture. Visit the Gutierrez Hubbell House Open Space in the South Valley. A fine example of adobe architecture dating back to the 1860s. The property spans 10 acres. Fed by an historic acequia, much of the land is farmed. We'll walk the perimeter trail, an easy one-mile loop, then tour the museum. Afterwards, we'll go to Cocina Familia, formerly Abuelita's, New Mexican kitchen and enjoy lunch at this family-owned eatery. Lunch is pay your own way. We will meet at 9:45 a.m. at the Hubbell House parking lot, 6029 Isleta Blvd. SW. No dogs, please. Leader: Diane Reese, dianeabqnm@gmail.com

SATURDAY, MAY 9 — SPRING BIRDS ALONG THE ANIMAS RIVER IN FARMINGTON, 9-11:30 A.M.

Come and see the beautiful river walk and experience the changing variety of birds along the Animas River. We will meet at the Riverside Nature Center in Farmington at 9 a.m. Leisurely pace. The trip is 2.5 miles on level dirt trails. Dress for the weather and bring binoculars, snacks and water. Sunscreen and bug juice are always good. Sign up by May 7. 18+ and up. No dogs, please. Leader: Mike Foster, mike4ffoster@gmail.com

SUNDAY, MAY 10 — LAKE PEAK BIKE AND HIKE, SANTA FE, 8 A.M.-3 P.M.

Enjoy this amazing adventure biking and hiking on the summit of Lake Peak (12,836 feet). This is a ride for folks that are fit and have experience riding on challenging, uneven rocky surfaces. More information about this event and what to bring is on the Meetup page. We will meet at Aspen Vista Picnic Area at 8 a.m. Expect a large variation of steepness and surfaces (sand, rock, mud). Total mileage is 13 miles one-way (last three-fourths of a mile on foot). Total elevation gain approximately 2,450 feet. We will cancel if there is any rain 1-2 days before, due to muddy or impassable conditions. Fat tire Mountain/

E-bike/gravel bike recommended. Sign up on the Santa Fe Sierra Club Meetup page. Please note this event is considered strenuous. Leader/Info: Sandra Corso, sandracorso@yahoo.com

TUESDAY, MAY 12 — ZERO WASTE TOUR OF THE SOUTHWEST WASTEWATER RECLAMATION PLANT, ALBUQUERQUE, 9:30 A.M.- NOON.

We will meet at the water Ed building at 9:20 a.m. to sign in. We will hear an orientation followed by a tour of the extensive facility, showing the stages of wastewater reclamation. This will be mostly outside and includes walking, standing and climbing stairs. Comfortable shoes are recommended. Long pants and closed-toed shoes are required. Hard hats will be provided. Register by May 9. Limit 16; children ages 10 and up accompanied by parent or legal guardian may participate. We'll meet at 4201 2nd St. SW, Albuquerque. Leader/Info: Laurie Zunner, 505-440-5337, lmzunne@gmail.com

SATURDAY, JUNE 6 — EARLY SUMMER BIRDS ON THE ANIMAS RIVER, FARMINGTON, 9-11:30 A.M.

You'll be surprised to see how many varieties of birds you can spot along the Animas River. Plus, it's a beautiful place to be in the summer. Let's meet at the Riverside Nature Center for this leisurely walk. The trip will be 2.5 miles on level dirt trails. Dress for the weather and bring binoculars, snacks and water, sunscreen and bug juice. Ages 18+ No dogs, please. Sign up by June 4. Leader/Info: Mike Foster, mike4ffoster@gmail.com

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10 — ZERO WASTE TOUR OF THE RIO GRANDE SOIL AMENDMENT FACILITY, ALBUQUERQUE, 9-10:30 A.M.

Come see how biosolids from the Southwest Wastewater Reclamation Plant are mixed with brown and green plant waste, wood and horse manure to make compost available for sale to the public. We hope to see the SCARAB machine turn a window of developing compost inside out. Limit 16 people. Register by June 8. Location: 7400 Jim McDowell Rd., Albuquerque. Leader/Info: Laurie Zunner, 505-440-5337, lmzunne@gmail.com

SATURDAY, JUNE 20 — SUMMER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION YOGA-HIKE, EAST MOUNTAINS / ALBUQUERQUE.

Celebrate the coming summer solstice with an easy, short hike and outdoor yoga in the shadow of the Sandia Mountains. We'll meet at the trailhead at 9 a.m. and then embark on an easy one-mile hike followed by a one-hour outdoor yoga and mindfulness break. Includes 100 feet of elevation gain with amazing views of the mountains. Sponsored by the Sierra Club Military Outdoors Program, and everyone is welcome. Bring your yoga mat, water and snacks. Wear hiking boots, tennis shoes or other shoes that cover the entire foot. No sandals, please. Limited to 15, children 12+ are welcome when accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. A \$10 per person love offering for the yoga instructor is humbly requested and can be made via cash or Venmo. To preserve the solitude of the occasion, only certified service dogs meeting ADA guidance will be permitted. Register no later than June 17. Directions to the location will be provided after close of registration. Leader/Info: Terry Owen, 505-301-4349, teowen@comcast.net

Looking for outings in southern NM?

Email us for details about outings near Las Cruces or Ruidoso. 4 participants minimum.

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

**In a hurry? Use this QR code**

Scan this code and your smartphone will take you to our outings webpage. Use "click here" buttons for event info, sign up.