

Rio Grande Sierran



NEWS OF THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2008

Club Celebrates Clean Cars Victory for New Mexico

Just after midnight on November 28, 2007, both the Environmental Improvement Board (EIB) and the Albuquerque Bernalillo Air Quality Control Board responded to public support and technical testimony by adopting California's Low Emission Vehicle LEV II auto emission standards for cars, SUVs, and light trucks. New Mexico is the 13th state to adopt these tougher new-car emission standards.

Representing the auto industry was the Automobile Manufacturers Alliance, which, as in the other

by Dan Lorimier

Clean Car states, argued that the standard was too difficult to meet. The fact that they were already complying successfully in the other LEV II states tended to weaken many of their arguments. Others who opposed the new standards included the NM Automobile Dealers Association, NM Farm and Livestock Bureau, and the NM Cattle Growers Association. These groups contended the regulations could hurt their respective industries.

Supporting these tougher but very doable tailpipe emissions standards was the Rio Grande Chapter,

in partnership with a coalition of public health, faith-based, and conservation groups. National Sierra Club Attorney David Bookbinder led a panel of coalition witnesses and cross-examined auto industry witnesses. We were also represented with supporting testimony from Chapter Vice Chair Norma McCallan, Dexter Coolidge of the Northern Group, and Eva Thaddeus of the Central Group. Additionally, other Sierra Club members, Chapter staff, students, health professionals, and religious leaders all went on record supporting adoption of the new rule.

The hearings were in response to the recommendations of the Climate Change Advisory Group (CCAG). Governor Richardson directed the Air Quality Bureau of the Environment Department to implement the process of public notice and hearings before the two boards with the authority to choose the California tailpipe emission standards over the weaker federal standards that we have been using. The Clean Air Act gives every state that choice.

Only new cars that meet the LEV II standards will be sold in New Mexico starting with model year 2011. These regulations will not affect any vehicles on the road today. The 12 other Clean Cars states are California, Connecticut, Maine,

Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington. Other states considering adoption include Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, New Hampshire, and North Carolina.

The Automobile Manufacturers Alliance has threatened to file suit against New Mexico in federal court (as they have in four other states). Additionally, in an effort to wrest control of this Administrative prerogative and place that control with the Legislature, four legislators (George Hanosh, John Arthur Smith, Timothy Jennings, and Jim Trujillo) have filed suit in a Las Cruces District Court, seeking injunctive action against the EIB and challenging its authority to adopt the standards. The State is confident that it does have the required authority.

Our 7,000 members can celebrate both a healthier, less smoggy future and a significant reduction in New Mexico's CO₂ contribution to global climate change. This is a big step towards responsible reaction to climate change by New Mexicans. Thank you, Rio Grande Chapter activists!

To find out more information, please contact Dan Lorimier, Chapter Conservation Coordinator (575/740-2927, daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org).

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Take Action

Please contact the four legislators who have filed suit to block the Clean Cars Program. Ask them to withdraw their lawsuit and state that the EIB does have the power to implement the program.

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A Note from the Chair

Welcome to a New Year and thank you for “staying in the fray” and protecting the environment of the Land of Enchantment and El Paso. While one can't escape messages exhorting you to vote for a presidential candidate, other, less publicized campaigns are in the making: campaigns for offices that can have a much greater impact on your community.

The Sierra Club has a rigorous procedure that must be followed in making endorsements. Each endorsement requires at least a two-thirds vote by two entities of the Club, and is the product of candidate questionnaires and interviews. Your fellow activists at the Group and Chapter levels take the endorsement process seriously and volunteer many hours to ensure the integrity of their selections for public office. I ask you to pay attention to the choices your Group makes for local political offices, from city council and county commission to your representatives in the state legislature. The Chapter Executive Committee may also be making endorsements for the primary and general elections for the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representative.

January 2008 heralds not just another election year for a new Commander-in-Chief, but it is also the



beginning of a 30-day legislative session in Santa Fe. In 2008, the New Mexico Legislature is constrained to considering fiscal matters, bills that were vetoed the previous session, and bills directly requested by the Governor (often referred to as being on his “call”). Dan Lorimier, our experienced and able lobbyist, needs your help in contacting your state representatives and senators when they consider environmental issues. Dan can be reached at 575/740-2927 or daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org.

He can assist you in reaching your legislator. Contacts by constituents (and voters) from a politician's district have strong impacts on legislators, often moreso than lobbyists representing industry, since the politicians recognize they hold their office only by virtue of winning an election, and lobbyists don't vote in their districts.

This year is a key time for you to make your position on protection of our air, land, and water resources known through your vote and your voice. I urge you to take action, starting with contacting Dan to see how you can help during the legislative session, from January 15 to February 14. Thank you in advance for amplifying our influence and protecting our environment.

—Susan Martin

Confessions of a Reluctant Activist

Six days after the birth of my son, recovering from a cesarean section and barely getting by on three hours of sleep a night, I received a frantic call: “It looks like they're going to drill next to your land!”

Five months earlier, in March 2007, I learned that a Texas-based oil and gas exploration company was preparing to reenter a 20-year-old oil well on the banks of the Galisteo River near Cerrillos, about 20 miles south of Santa Fe. And there were rumors that the company planned on drilling elsewhere in the Galisteo Basin. The news took the community by surprise. The rural residential area is populated by a Wild West mix of retired cowboy types and growing families of all socioeconomic classes, bed-and-breakfast inns and small businesses, and lots of friendly dogs and horses, with the random chicken, goat, and llama. Gold had been mined in the nearby Ortiz Mountains many years ago, but oil and gas drilling? A handful of wells had been drilled in the 1980s but were quickly abandoned because of the near impossibility of extracting the oil and gas from the tight rock.

Stunned and in a bit of denial, the community wasn't sure how to respond. As the editor of this newsletter, I thought the topic might make a good story, so I emailed some people I knew, asking if they were interested in writing an article. But that's as far as I wanted to get involved. I was pregnant and busy running my freelance editorial business, and I didn't live there anymore. My husband and I had recently moved to Dixon, about 50 miles north of Santa Fe, to try our hand at farming. But we still owned our small house and 10 acres in the Ortiz foothills and rented it out to a wonderful woman with two dogs, a horse, and a goat – a perfect fit.



Benjamin joined his parents at a march in Santa Fe in early December. (Photo by Garret Vreeland)

We could have sold our place, but we couldn't bear to cut our ties to the area or the people.

Over the course of the next four months, I ran a couple of articles on the drilling threat but stayed on the periphery of the growing movement. I felt I had done my part by publicizing the problem and connecting key activists in the area. And I thought

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Dooda Desert Rock Holds Prayer Gathering to Stop Power Plant

There are many tools required to stop a massive coal-fired power plant, like effective lobbying, strong legal arguments, and solid grassroots organizing.

Prayer is also a strong tool that Navajo organizers used as they called upon higher powers to inspire the struggle to stop the proposed 1500-megawatt coal-fired Desert Rock Power Plant. From November 8 to 11, Dooda Desert Rock organizers set up a powerful prayer gathering at their camp in Burnham, New Mexico, for traditional Navajo prayers aimed at stopping the plant and bringing a clean energy future to the Navajo Nations and the Four Corners region. Over 100 people attended along with several Navajo Nation officials and traditional local leaders.

Within sight and sound of a churning coal dragline in its dusty shroud at the nearby Navajo Mine, the camp was complete with a kitchen, camping area, sweat lodges, and sacred fire that burned during the gathering. Prayers were shared by Navajo medicine men as well as nearby residents concerned about the proposed coal fired-plant and expansions of nearby coal mining. For two nights straight, prayers were sung. Donations of sheep and goats and other foods came to the camp from all directions. As the photo of Sonny Weahkee of Sage Council shows, butchering takes some help. I think the photo, although graphic, shows that like fighting a power plant, you need each other to help get the job done! Elouise Brown and her family fed the attendees with the help of volunteers to cook and

keep the camp clean for all. Several sweat lodges helped attendees clear the minds and bodies of the nearby coal mining. A huge Ahe'hee to Dooda Desert Rock and Elouise Brown for their leadership and strong prayers!

During one night of the event, Shonto Begay, a Navajo artist from Arizona, held up a bright flashlight to point to some stars, and we realized what we were breathing. Like someone had just dusted off a giant couch pillow, the beam of light showed the air filled with a high density of particulates most likely from the nearby coal mine. While the grit on my teeth was bad for a few days, folks nearby live with this daily and report many relatives fighting cancer battles of their own. Local residents live with a huge struggle to avoid more air pollution from the Desert Rock coal-fired power plant.

Finally, a huge thanks to everyone from the Northern New Mexico Group and Rio Grande Chapter who helped in the effort. Several Sierra Club folks came from Arizona and Colorado as well. The Sierra Club's Tribal Partnership Program helped out with food and prayers that a clean



Elouise Brown shows Sonny Weahkee how to do it! We just wished it was as easy to kill a power plant as it was this goat! (Photo by Andy Bessler)

energy future is on the way. Thanks to all in their efforts to stop the Desert Rock Power Plant and find a clean energy path for all of us!

For more information on Desert Rock, visit the Rio Grande Chapter's website at http://riogrande.sierraclub.org/campaigns/desertrock_powerplant.htm, or visit www.dooda-desert-rock.net. Or contact Andy Bessler of Sierra Club's Environmental Partnership Program (928/774-6103, andy.bessler@sierraclub.org).

—Andy Bessler

Help Create El Rio Grande del Norte National Conservation Area

The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (NMWA) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have been working with Senator Jeff Bingaman's office to craft a National Conservation Area (NCA) bill for North-Central New Mexico for more than a year. The proposal, encompassing more than 235,878 acres of Taos and Rio Arriba Counties, also includes two new Wilderness Areas totaling about 24,000 acres: Ute Mountain and Rio San Antonio Gorge. All of this is on public, federally managed land.

These are some of the most spectacular lands in all of New Mexico. The Rio Grande first cuts into the Servilleta lava flow that makes up the Taos Plateau just north of the Colorado border. Eight miles later, at the New Mexico state line, the river is 200 feet down, and the gorge is 150 feet across. West of Questa, where Big Arsenic Spring bubbles from the rock, the river is a glinting green ribbon 800 feet down. The opposite rim is over half a mile away, where, on summer mornings, bald eagles soar south-

ward in pairs. At John Dunn Bridge the river enters The Box, an 18-mile stretch of 900-foot cliffs, where whitewater rapids are famous among boaters.

The legislation is currently in its third draft and has yet to be introduced. NMWA, the BLM, and Senator Bingaman's staff have spent over a year gaining input from hundreds of stakeholders in an effort to craft this legislation and are working towards a fourth and final draft. This legislation, when passed by Congress, would do the following:

- Create El Rio Grande del Norte National Conservation Area (NCA);
- Create the Ute Mountain Wilderness Area;
- Create the Rio San Antonio Wilderness Area;
- Specifically protect existing ranching within the boundary of the NCA;
- Protect hunting, fishing, firewood gathering, piñon nut gathering, bird watching, hiking, biking, camping, etc. within the boundaries of the NCA;
- Prohibit the sale or disposal of federal public land;
- Prohibit mining or mineral development on public lands within the boundary of the NCA;
- Protect two wilderness areas under the 1964 Wilderness Act, which means road building, use of motorized and mechanized equipment, and commercial extraction would be prohibited while primitive recreational uses such as hunting, hiking, and fishing as well as traditional uses such as grazing of livestock and gathering of herbs, etc. would be protected; and
- Contribute to Taos County's economic development portfolio.

For more information, contact Jim O'Donnell, Northern Director of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (575/751-7309, jim@nmwild.org), or visit www.nmwild.org.

—Jim O'Donnell

Take Action

Ask Senator Bingaman to swiftly introduce the El Rio Grande del Norte National Conservation Area legislation. Ask Senator Domenici to immediately co-sponsor Senator Bingaman's legislation. (See contact info, page 3.) Some talking points:

- The Senator's staff has spent a great deal of time interacting with interests groups on the ground.
- There is widespread support for this proposal in Taos County.
- Existing uses, such as ranching, hunting, fishing, and rafting, would not be impacted by the creation of the NCA. In fact, those uses would be protected and encouraged.
- The establishment of the proposed NCA and associated Wilderness will allow future generations of New Mexicans to enjoy the recreational opportunities to hunt, fish, observe wildlife, and experience solitude.
- Creation of the NCA and Wilderness Areas would give local communities a natural attraction and resource to use as part of a long-term sustainable economic development plan.
- The natural beauty and recreational opportunities here bring thousands of visitors, who pour money into the local economy at restaurants, motels, stores, and other businesses.
- The rights of private landowners within the NCA boundaries will be respected.

Rio Grande Chapter Quarterly Meetings

The Chapter's Conservation and Executive Committee meetings will be held January 5-6, at Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge. The following meetings will be held in March; location to be determined. Contact Conservation Chair Ken Hughes or Chapter Chair Susan Martin (see masthead page 2) for more information. Carpooling is encouraged.

Moratorium Issued in Santa Fe County, but Drilling Still Looms

On November 27, 2007, the Santa Fe County Commissioners declared a three-month moratorium on the issuance of drilling permits for oil and gas exploration. Due to the protests from citizens, the exploration company from Houston had failed to grandfather old abandoned and plugged wells in order to circumvent the rigorous protections of the 1993 ordinance governing oil and gas development in the county. Now the oil and gas industry has a chance to develop a highly speculative play in a very fragile aquifer in the Galisteo Basin if the County Commissioners pass a weaker ordinance. The New Mexico Oil and Gas Association has already threatened to sue individuals or organizations that “vilify” the industry as thousands of citizens have organized to protest the destruction of the Galisteo watershed.

On December 12, Tecton Energy LLC, from Houston, applied to the Oil Conservation Division (OCD) for three drilling permits. The besieged director of OCD, Mark Fesmire, has called for a public hearing before these controversial permits will be approved by the State. Tecton has agreed to adhere to Rule 21, the special rule that increased protections for the aquifer under the Otero Mesa in southeast New Mexico. However, two of the permits would involve drilling very close to the floodplain, the alluvial aquifer, and homes and water wells along the Galisteo creekbed. Tecton has agreed to use closed-loop systems for the hazardous drilling waste. But they still propose to drill in rural

residential areas near a very shallow alluvial aquifer. Several of the wells drilled in this area in the 1980s were potential gas wells, but prices plummeted before the infrastructure could be built to transport natural gas. It would be a disaster for this watershed to become a maze of collection lines, roads, and pipelines, regardless of any promises to adhere to tighter protections.

This battle could impact other areas of New Mexico. The easy money has been made in oil and gas development in New Mexico, and it is now time for citizens to demand a shift in how this state finances public schools as New Mexico transitions to the inevitable change to solar, biomass, wind, and other renewable resources. The State could make money from our wind and our sunshine, and that is our future.

If there were vast fortunes to be made by out-of-state oil and gas companies plundering the Galisteo Basin or other areas along the vast Albuquerque Rift, then some of those wells drilled 25 years ago would have been left in production. The exploration companies are leasing thousands of acres from Valencia County up through Sandoval County and on to Rio Arriba. Even if only a small percentage of their exploratory wells are ever placed into production, the devastation from this risky endeavor would last for decades.

The one well in the Galisteo creekbed that has produced sporadically over the years is a dismal failure. In spite of all of the chemicals and water that

were forced into that hard, impermeable formation, the old well is not producing. The sad fact is that the oil and gas industry is rushing to plunder the most difficult and potentially hazardous marginal plays left to them. They are moving into areas where even more high-pressure chemicals and water would be blasted into formations to release the last vestiges of oil and gas.

Citizens must demand the strictest of environmental protections as Industry fights back against every county or state initiative to protect the health of the air, water, wildlife, and neighborhoods of our state. It is time to write your legislators. The oil and gas industry is lobbying them relentlessly, and we must lobby just as hard. It is the twilight of oil and gas exploitation in New Mexico. Do you want clean air and water or the noxious pollution of a coalbed methane field or a tight-sand gas field? It is time to organize with your neighbors and speak up. The stakes are too high. Take back the power that every resident has to demand that their county officials zone polluting industries away from residential areas, cultural resources, surface water, and aquifers. Don't allow the oil and gas lobby to intimidate the legislature into overriding county authority, as they are now threatening to do.

For more information, contact Nancy Seewald (nancyseewald@earthlink.net) or visit Drilling Santa Fe's website (<http://drillingsantafe.org>).

—Nancy Seewald

Confessions of a Reluctant Activist *(continued from page 3)*

someone – the County or the State or some well-established group – would step in and protect the residents, the land, and importantly, the aquifer from certain devastation. I pay my taxes, contribute to causes. Wasn't that enough? I wanted to focus on becoming a mom, a big enough job on its own.

But then came that phone call in early August. It was Cindy, our tenant. She had just come from a community breakfast meeting where Nancy, a neighbor whose ranch in Texas had been destroyed by gas drilling just a year earlier, displayed maps of proposed exploratory wells. The maps were terrible, but Cindy was able to decipher where our place was located, and right next to it was the mark of doom: a dot indicating a planned well.

The exploration company was preparing to apply for drilling permits. And word was, the Galisteo Basin was the beginning. If recoverable oil or gas were found, more companies would jump into the fray, drilling as far south as Socorro and as far north as Nambe. This wasn't an isolated situation. The maps made it clear that the exploration company expected to be granted variances from the County's existing mining ordinance, which specifically applied to oil and gas. Given how powerful the oil and gas industry is in New Mexico – about a quarter of the state's revenues come from oil and gas extraction, and what's more, the president of the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association is a close ally of Governor Richardson – it seemed that those variances would be granted. If drilling were allowed to commence, nearly all of Santa Fe County would become a sacrifice zone.

I couldn't bury my head in the sand any longer. Clearly no one was going to rescue us.

Oil and gas drilling is nasty business. It wastes unfathomable amounts of clean drinking water – typically hundreds of thousands of gallons per well. The toxic chemicals used during the drilling and extraction processes leach into aquifers and

nearby water wells. Open waste pits allow even more contaminants to soak into the soil and water table. Gas flaring emits dangerous pollutants into the air. Trucks and rigs tear up and erode the soil and destroy vegetation. Wildlife and livestock die from drinking poisonous water and antifreeze puddles at well sites. Gas pipelines riddle the landscape. Generators roar to torturous noise levels. Property values and real estate sales plummet. Local businesses and tourism dry up. Lives and livelihoods are ruined forever. (And there is no guarantee exploratory wells will deliver results. The Texas company destroyed five acres and part of a road near the Galisteo River for an exploratory well that did not go into production.)

Other oil- and gas-producing areas of New Mexico, particularly the San Juan and Permian Basins, are nearly played out, yet oil and gas are selling at all-time high prices. The industry is desperately searching for marginal, messy, “unconventional” sources. And that's why its sights are set on the fragile Galisteo Basin and surrounding Santa Fe Embayment.

And that's why I became an activist, albeit reluctantly. I joined a local grassroots organization, Drilling Santa Fe. I'm not a public speaker – there's a reason why I'm an editor, working behind the scenes. But I've found ways to push beyond my comfort zone. I educate myself on the many adverse impacts of oil and gas activities. I sign petitions. I write letters – lots and lots of letters – to the county commissioners and state representatives, urging them to protect our environment and way of life. I cajole my friends to write letters and attend events as well. I participate in strategy meetings and help coordinate our group's efforts. I go to every public meeting, with my husband and infant son in tow. I send letters to local papers. I help others write their own. My husband Scott and I write, design, and distribute flyers, educational materials, and ads. We march in protest. We're working on practical ways to make the County and State models of sustain-

ability and renewable energy. My son Benjamin has attended more activist events in his first five months of life than I had in my first 35 years. This fight has become a routine part of our lives, much like grocery shopping, paycheck work, diaper changing. And along the way, I've had the sincere honor of working with and learning from the smartest, most inspiring people I've ever known.

Sometimes I feel overwhelmed and exhausted. Fighting the most powerful industry in the world while juggling freelance work and full-time baby care is tricky, to say the least. But I refuse to give in to the paralyzing power of despair, or the temptation to leave the fight up to someone else. If I think I'm stressed and inconvenienced now, imagine the stress and inconvenience of living among thousands of oil and gas wells. The consequences of doing nothing would be far worse than the nuisances that go in hand with activism. The urgency to get involved couldn't be greater. In fact, I feel that inaction is tantamount to complicity. Whatever happens, I'll know that I did everything within my power to save Santa Fe County.

Sometimes I look back at my pre-baby/pre-activist days. The Old Me certainly got more sleep (something the New Me sorely misses), but she didn't have my newfound sense of purpose. When I found my voice, I found my power, and I wouldn't go back. Inasmuch as motherhood has changed my life forever, so too has activism.

If you're looking for a New Year's resolution, take my advice: Find a cause that speaks to your heart and get involved. You'll make a difference. And you'll love the New You.

To learn more about the urgent drilling issue in Santa Fe County, visit Drilling Santa Fe's website (<http://drillingsantafe.org>), or contact me – I never thought I'd say that! – at 505/579-0016 or ellen@fireballindustries.com.

—Ellen Cavalli

BLM Pursues Drilling on Otero Mesa Despite Public Outcry

It has now been more than 10 years since the Bureau of Land Management has proposed opening the Serengeti of the Southwest Otero Mesa to oil and gas development. Likewise, it has been more than 10 years since a strong coalition of conservationists, sportsmen, ranchers, businesses and religious leaders have joined forces in calling upon the White House and Congress to protect the wildlife, water, and wildlands of Otero Mesa.

The public support for preserving Otero Mesa as a wild Chihuahuan Desert grassland and conserving its large, freshwater aquifer is tremendous. County commissions in Southern New Mexico are passing resolutions in support of a moratorium on drilling in the area. Citizens from across the state and nation are lending their voices to the cause in urging our representatives to protect this vast grassland.

Editorials in New Mexico newspapers are calling for a common-sense approach in dealing with how oil and gas operations impact our most sensitive landscapes.

Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici, Representative Tom Udall, and Governor Bill Richardson have all asked for a halt to oil and gas leasing and drilling in Otero Mesa. Furthermore, many state representatives, senators, city councilors, and mayors have sent letters to our congressional delegation in support of preserving Otero Mesa. In spite of this tremendous local support, the BLM continues to actively pursue and issue oil and gas leases in the grasslands of Otero Mesa, even though the agency has issued statements to our congressional delegation to the contrary.

Yet, this is nothing surprising, and is certainly nothing new. The BLM and oil and gas industry have mandates from the Bush Administration to make drilling the number-one priority on our

wildest public lands, over the values of archaeology, wilderness, water, and wildlife.

Sadly, this is just yet another example of the Bush Administration's failed attempts at curbing our fossil fuel dependency, while allowing a few well-connected companies to reap profits at the expense of our water and wildest lands.

Over the past several years, the oil and gas industry has been quick to pat itself on the back for all the great work they do in protecting our water, wildlife, and wilderness lands. The industry uses well-tuned rhetoric like "working to be a good neighbor" and that "compliance with applicable laws and regulations is an important component of being a good neighbor."

What is so disingenuous about these statements is that industry has a proven track record of ignoring property owners' rights, degrading the environmental landscape, polluting water resources, and constantly fighting regulations that seek to protect our most valuable treasures.

Take, for instance, the Oil Conservation Division's rules that ban waste pits in places like Otero Mesa. These rules were adopted by the OCD back in 2006 due to a report that documented more than 1,400 cases of groundwater contamination caused specifically by industry operations. During the public hearings portion of the waste pit rules, industry packed the rooms with representatives crying foul over the new regulations, while ranchers, hunters, and conservationists could only stand aghast at the audacity of industry.

In November and December 2007, OCD held more public hearings in Santa Fe to discuss additional changes to the waste pit rules. Much like the previous rules that govern Otero Mesa, the new changes would prohibit unlined waste pits from

being near groundwater, wetlands, rivers, floodplains, domestic and municipal water wells, homes, hospitals, schools, and even churches. What would seem like common sense turns out to be yet more disdain from industry.

At the same time this is occurring, Harvey E. Yates Company (HEYCO), the sole remaining company vying to drill in Otero Mesa, went to the OCD trying to get a waiver from the waste pit rules. HEYCO seemed to have missed the memorandum that these new waste pit rules are not subject to negotiation. Thus, after having their request for a waiver denied, HEYCO took their case to the New Mexico State Supreme Court, arguing that they have to have a waste pit in order to drill. As of the published date of this article, the outcome of the appeal to the State Supreme Court has not been resolved.

However, in early November 2007, the BLM notified the public that the Harvey E. Yates Company was seeking an application for permit to drill in Otero Mesa, even though the agency knows that HEYCO must comply with the new waste pits rules.

So we're faced with a situation where the oil and gas industry continues to fight laws and regulations that seek to protect our valuable water, wildlife, and wilderness resources while the federal agencies in charge of our wildest public lands continue to ignore public sentiment and move forward with a process that caters irresponsible drilling practices and condones the disregard for state laws.

This is entirely unacceptable and New Mexicans, along with our congressional delegation, must demand that we preserve Otero Mesa's water, wildlife, and grasslands.

For more information, contact Nathan Newcomer of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (505/250-4225, nathan@nmwild.org).

—Nathan Newcomer

Making Tracks: Travel Management Planning Continues on New Mexico's National Forests

The Center for Biological Diversity continues its campaign to ensure that members of the conservation community, quiet users, wildlife, and plants have a voice in determining what routes will remain open to off-road vehicle (ORV) use on National Forests in New Mexico.

While many forests are in different stages of this process, the need for community involvement is important in all forests. Early 2008 will see the release of proposed actions on the Lincoln, Santa Fe, and Gila National Forests. This will be a critical time to provide input. To get involved, contact the Forest Service staff named below for each forest and let them know you plan to be involved, want to attend meetings, and to get on mailing lists for the Travel Management Rule.

Lincoln National Forest

Stage: Proposed action is expected to be released the first week of January 2008. A 30-day comment period will follow, with public meetings taking place between January 10-22. The meeting locations include Las Cruces, El Paso, Alamogordo, Ruidoso, Cloudcroft, and Carlsbad. The meeting dates and exact locations will be announced by the Lincoln when they are set.

Action: Because the 30-day comment period is very short, occurs during the winter months, and the Lincoln has not published their Travel Analysis for the public, preparing for comments is critical. If you have specific areas or routes you are concerned about, plan to attend the public meetings to make the

Lincoln aware of your concerns and/or contact the Center for Biological Diversity. Write letters to the editor of your local papers discussing the negative impacts ORVs are having on your forest experience and quiet enjoyment.

Forest Service contact: Connie Zipperer, Project Team Leader (505/434-7200, LNFtravel@fs.fed.us).

Santa Fe National Forest

Stage: Travel Analysis Report is expected in early December 2007; the Proposed Action is also expected in early 2008. As the Santa Fe enters the official National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, the Forest Service Contact for the NEPA portion of the Travel Management process will be a NEPA coordinator, Julie Bain. The number for Rob Potts will become a hotline for Travel Management. You will be able to leave messages that should be acted upon in a timely fashion.

Action: Plan to attend public meetings after the release of the proposed action. Be prepared to comment on specific roads and areas of concern. If you need assistance with comment letters, please contact the Center for Biological Diversity.

Forest Service contact: Rob Potts, Forest Planner (505/438-7829, robertpotts@fs.fed.us, or sfttravelmgt@fs.fed.us).

Gila National Forest

Stage: Proposed action is scheduled for release in Spring 2008.

Action: Plan to attend and make comments at the public meetings that will follow the release of the proposed action.

Forest Service contact: Lisa Mizuno, NEPA Coordinator (505/388-8257, lmizuno@fs.fed.us).

Cibola National Forest

Stage: Environmental Assessments are expected in early 2008.

Action and Forest Service contact: Contact Mary Bean, Recreation Staff (505/281-3304 or mebean@fs.fed.us) to express interest in participating. When the Environmental Assessment is released, the forest will be accepting public comments.

Carson National Forest

Stage: The process on this forest has been on "hold" until January 2008.

Action: Take pictures and GPS points of areas of concern and share them with the Center for Biological Diversity.

Forest Service contact: Steve Okomato, Forest Engineer (575/758-6370, sokomato@fs.fed.us).

If you would like to support our overall campaign by representing conservation interests as an Off-road Vehicle Reform Advocate, please call or email Cyndi Tuell, Public Lands Advocate (520/623-5252 ext. 308, ctuell@biologicaldiversity.org). More information is available at www.endangeredearth.org/orv.

—Cyndi Tuell

An Open Letter to Senator Bingaman About Valles Caldera

Dear Senator Bingaman:

Caldera Action is a new membership organization that has grown out of the former Valles Caldera Coalition that advocated for the acquisition of the former Baca Ranch and has been interested in the management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP) since it became public. Caldera Action advocates for the restoration, protection, and appreciation of the VCNP for the long-term benefit of the public and the ecosystem. We promote extensive public participation in decision-making on the Preserve as an essential means to this end. We incorporated as a nonprofit in New Mexico and recently received notice that we are considered a nonprofit by the Internal Revenue Service under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Relying on expertise about the VCNP developed by the Valles Caldera Coalition and the experience of many years of interactions with the VCNP staff and trustees, we have submitted comments on the recently released "Draft State of the Preserve: 2002-2007." We believe that our comments provide a substantive and significant commentary on the state of the Preserve and would like to share a synopsis of those comments with you. We would be happy to send along our complete comments if you like.

Three major issues stand out:

Lack of adequate recreational access to the Preserve:

The 89,000-acre Preserve was purchased with \$101 million of Land and Water Conservation Fund monies, which the L&WCF Act specified go towards acquiring lands for public recreation. The VCNP enabling act specifies that "reasonable" recreation access be provided within two years of passage of the act.

Currently, recreational access is highly structured and does not permit the visitor to experience the sense of wonder that comes from individual discovery in this ecologically and culturally significant landscape. As a result, hiking use, for example, actually declined for the years 2004-2006 (1,069 visitors for 2004, 565 for 2005, and 446 for 2006, respectively). In contrast, adjacent 32,700-acre Bandelier National Monument admits over 250,000 visitors

annually. The public is clearly frustrated by the lack of access to the Preserve.

We believe that the Trust should immediately prepare a plan to establish the recreational carrying capacity of the Preserve, taking into account the enabling act's requirements to protect the Preserve's natural systems, and open the Preserve for an appropriate level of use and enjoyment by the public whose money purchased this land.

Failure to develop a realistic comprehensive management plan:

The report states in Section 5.4.2, "The comprehensive management program will be largely accomplished with the completion and implementation of forage use, public access and use, and forest and fire management plans." We believe strongly that three piecemeal management plans do not comprise a comprehensive management program as required by the enabling legislation and as described in the Framework and Strategic Guidance for Comprehensive Management published by the VCNP in 2003.

The idea of having three artificially divided separate plans rather than a comprehensive plan invites conflict and ignores the cumulative effects of VCNP activities. For example, livestock grazing has strong negative effects on water quality and fishing, one of the most popular activities on the Preserve. Yet grazing and fishing will be in separate plans and the interaction between these two uses may thus be difficult to address.

The failure of the VCNP to address its future in a single, comprehensive management plan strikes us as arbitrary, contrary to the long experience of public land managers elsewhere, and not cost-effective.

Lack of financial disclosure, transparency, and planning with respect to the enabling act's mandate for financial self-sufficiency:

After eight years of operation, and more than half of the original fifteen-year charter already gone, the Trust has yet to provide Congress or the general public with either an accurate accounting of the Preserve's financial condition or a long-term

strategic business management plan that would enable Congress, the public, or even the Trust itself to assess whether or not the goals and objectives set out in the Act are likely to be achieved.

For 2006, according to the most recent financial results available, the VCNP brought in revenue of approximately \$800,000, 17.8% of the total budget of \$4,400,000. In the three year period from 2004-2006, Congressional appropriations to the Preserve increased by 61%. In that same period, income increased only 54% at a time when visitation should be increasing as programs are developed. Yet a lack of recreation planning has hindered both public access and income for the Preserve and it is difficult to imagine that appropriate levels of access at reasonable fees will remedy this vast budget shortfall in the next seven years. Recreation, including hunting, is the only positive income producing program for the VCNP.

Further, we note that the VCNP is an orphan in the federal budget process and those critical Congressional appropriations have been uncertain and inadequate to insure basic operations such as law enforcement, legal compliance, and basic facility maintenance and development.

We believe that the statutory requirement to achieve "financial self-sustainability" is probably unrealistic and unachievable given the long experience of public land management in America. Even so, the VCNP Trustees must develop a realistic financial plan even as the public and Congress consider the long-term management of the Preserve beyond the current enabling legislation.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our extended comments on the state of the Preserve with you further and request the opportunity to do so at your convenience.

Sincerely,
Tom Ribe, President
Caldera Action
P.O. Box 32373
Santa Fe, NM 87594
tribe@swadventures.com

Opposition Grows for Proposed Dairy

The ParaSol Dairy is planned to be sited less than two miles from the shores of Caballo Reservoir on the Rio Grande, both proximal to and within the Perch Creek floodplain. (See "ParaSol Dairy: A Bad Idea for Sierra County," *Sierran*, Nov/Dec 2007.) Allowing the project to move forward in this extremely vulnerable location would ultimately threaten essential water resources across the state with ground and surface water contamination from this aggressive and environmentally costly industry.

November was an active month for opponents of the proposed 2,000-head dairy concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO). Requiring a permit from the Groundwater Quality Bureau of the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), the applicant held a "welcome me to your community" meeting in TorC where he was greeted with disdain and mistrust by most of the more than 75 meeting participants.

Two weeks later, the Groundwater Quality Bureau held a public hearing on the permit application, and received testimony against the proposal from the grassroots and opinion leaders from the local community of Caballo. Unless Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry refuses to sign the permit, it is likely to be approved by the Groundwater Quality Bureau. A decision is expected this winter.

Meanwhile, the Sierra County Commission is studying ways to control the spread of expected CAFOs into other environmentally valuable areas of the county. As is so often the case, local government ends up holding the line against poorly sited development. We are working with the commission as they review options developed in other counties in New Mexico and across the country that protect citizens and the environment from careless proposals such as ParaSol Dairy. The Rio Grande Chapter and the Southern Group are partnering with the local opponents, Caballo Concerned Citizens, to protest and offer alternatives to both state-permitting agencies and the county commission. We are also benefiting in this campaign from the help of the Western Environmental Law Center, the New Mexico Environmental Law Center, Amigos Bravos, Grace Factory Farms, and others. Additionally, the Bureau of Reclamation, the New Mexico State Parks, the Interstate Stream Commission, the Elephant Butte Irrigation District, and other state and federal agencies are concerned by the permit application. These agencies may offer support in our fight against this extreme proposal.

Contact Dan Lorimier (575/740-2927, daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org) to find out how you can help block this environmentally compromised plan.

—Dan Lorimier

The Quivira Coalition's 7th Annual Conference

"Building Resilience:

Creating Hope in an Age of Consequences"

Marriott Pyramid, Albuquerque, NM, January 17-19, 2008

Keynote Speaker: David Jonah Western

Kenyan Conservationist and

author of *In the Dust of Kilimanjaro*

Michel Meuret, National Institute for Agricultural Research, Avignon, France

Dr. Lance Gunderson, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia

Wes Jackson, The Land Institute, Salina, Kansas

Darryl Birkenfeld, Ogallala Commons, Nazareth, Texas

For agenda and to register:
www.quiviracoalition.org or
505-820-2544 ext. 5#.



Please Join
Us in
Conversations of
Global Proportions!



PAJARITO GROUP NEWS

Pajarito Group Directory

<http://riogrande.sierraclub.org/pajarito/>

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 Webmeister: Jennifer Macke
 jpmacke@comcast.net 505/695-9275

Meetings

There will be no general meeting in January. Instead, we will hold the annual reorganizational meeting to elect officers and committee chairs. If you would like to be a part of this planning process, please contact Ilse Bleck (505/662-2368 or ibleck@yahoo.com).

Wednesday, February 6, 7:00 p.m. Joint meeting with the Pajarito Environmental Education Center (PEEC), to be held at PEEC headquarters, 3540 Orange St.

Chick Keller: "Mostly Settled Science of Human Influence on Earth's Climate"

With the recent publication of the Fourth Assessment Report of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, there has been renewed interest and controversy about how certain the scientific community is of its conclusions: that humans are influencing the climate and that global temperatures will continue to rise rapidly in this century. This review attempts to update what is known and in particular what advances have been made in the past five years or so. It does not attempt to be comprehensive. Rather, it focuses on the most controversial issues, which are actually few in number:

- Is the surface temperature record accurate, or is it biased by heat from cities, etc?
- Is that record significantly different from past

warmings, such as the Medieval Warming Period?

- Is not the sun's increasing activity the cause of most of the warming?
- Can we model climate and predict its future, or is it just too complex and chaotic?
- Are there any other changes in climate other than warming, and can they be attributed to the warming?

Finally, there is a very brief discussion of the societal policy response to the scientific message.

Outings

Saturday, January 19 • Strenuous snowshoe in Cerro Grande area – 8 miles, 2500' gain. Valle Grande views, hike if poor snow. Michael Di Rosa (505/667-0095 or 505/663-0648).

Saturday, February 9 • Strenuous hike in Caja Del Rio, down to Rio Grande and up to Montoso Peak – About 10 miles RT, 2000' gain. Mostly off-trail, rough terrain. Michael Di Rosa (505/667-0095 or 505/663-0648).

Please check the Northern Group and the Outings pages for additional activities.

Remember the Powwow?

Last February, the Pajarito Group hosted Northern New Mexico environmental groups at the Posse Shack to meet one another and share ideas for ensuring a sustainable Los Alamos. The Pajarito Group took those ideas to the County Council, and from there, we worked to encourage more "Green Standards" for both County and private development on County land. (Good news: the Airport Basin County/School construction will be a high "Green" standard, and the private development proposed for the Trinity Schools/County Site is required to be basic "Green.")

The goal for this year's Powwow is to have Los Alamos join the Sierra Club's Cool Cities/Cool

Counties initiative. Cool Cities and Cool Counties are programs developed to combat global warming by encouraging government action at the local level. The initiative urges governments to adopt policies for smart energy solutions to save money and reduce CO₂ emissions. Los Alamos already has allies in County Government – the Pajarito Group's goal is to support these elected officials and County employees in their efforts, and build off this work to create a certifiable Cool community. We will be calling on you to volunteer. If you have ideas, let us know. (Check out the Cool Cities outline at <http://coolcities.us>.) Email Ilse Bleck (ibleck@yahoo.com) with ideas or to volunteer.

What Citizens Do: Witnessing to Rules Committees Is an Expedient Route to Change

John Bartlit and Don Neeper have been working for years to effect positive changes in regulations regarding water, energy, and oil and gas development. These men go out to the trouble spots to investigate water quality and sample emissions. They take oil-and-gas people to oil pits to show them first-hand the dangers of drilling oil and gas wells with salty brine – the practice that will suck all the moisture out of the soil, permanently killing all vegetation, rendering the land useless. They act as liaisons between citizens and industry. In addition to being watchdogs, they collaborate with industry to help industry develop better environmental methods. Even if a company is meeting all the laws, it can still reduce emissions.

Bartlit and Neeper are environmental heroes. We might wonder, who has time and expertise for that kind of impact? But at our November meeting, they defined how ordinary people can effect positive change. All it takes is just enough commitment, homework, and time to attend and comment at a public rule-making hearing.

For many of us, political action has become an infinite time sink with few results. As Neeper said, "If you want to make a change in the political arena, you have to work for years. You march, you write letters. You go to meetings, lobby your representative, show up at the sessions and try to get a minute to testify in the very short time that the legislative session has allocated to the topic." You hope you get

a legislator who is awake and cares.

In the regulatory arena, however, when we testify at a public rule-making hearing, we can "make a difference with just a few facts." Every individual, Bartlit reminded us, can find these facts on the web. All we need to do is to present them coherently, either verbally at the hearing, or in writing prior to or during the hearing.

The law states that when the State holds a public rule-making hearing, "all interested persons will be given reasonable opportunity at the hearing to submit comment, orally or in writing, and to introduce exhibits." Also and importantly, these hearings offer the opportunity to hold conversations with those who

(continued on page 9)



TAOS BRANCH NEWS

Upcoming Meetings

The Taos Branch is alive! Well, a couple of meetings are in the horizon, at least. In the third week of January, we will hold a Steering Committee planning meeting to set up action groups and outing opportunities. The Taos effort will strive for a networking of all of the many focused local environmental/educational groups in the Taos area, and to lend the hand of the national organization, as it may. Additionally, the prospect of a youth-oriented outings program happening in Taos is great news for some local children who may not get the opportunity to experience the great outdoors and the awesome beauty of the Taos region – but will with the outings that the Taos Sierra Club hopes to offer for them.

Our general meeting for area members and interested folks will be in the third week of February, at a location yet to be determined. We hope to offer Taos' premiere showing of "Pollination," which was shown at the recent Santa Fe Film Festival. It's a film about global warming and the effect on the bee population. Local composer Michael Shorr, who wrote the music for "Pollination," will introduce the film and speak regarding this and other exciting projects. Also, local water sentinel Eric Patterson will keep us up to date on water testing in the area. Jim O'Donnell will address the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and legislative efforts in conservation. And Scott Estep will address renewable energy and the potential for citizens' initiatives to advance Taos and New Mexico in the new economy of renewables.

We need people to work on focus groups in local planning, elections, outings, energy, wilderness, etc. If interested, please contact Scott Estep (575/770-7969 or wetmtn@rmi.net).

—Scott Estep

What Citizens Do *(continued from page 8)*

make the regulations, and who often hear only from industry. With a little homework, each of us can obtain data to present that is counter to that of industry.

Bartlit notes that an important technique is to ask the right questions. Rather than being confrontational and accusatory, a citizen witness can ask, "What would happen if..."

"What would happen if you used a different drilling lubricant? How expensive would that be?" "What would happen if rather than dumping all the oil-well waste into a pit, you collected it and disposed of it in a single designated waste site?" Often the witness from industry never thought of any options or never assessed the actual cost of a more environmentally sustainable alternative. Often a government agent would like to take the opportunity to speak about options, but in testimony, only gives the current regulations.

Neeper said that often regulators want to apply stricter regulations but have no public input to back them up. They hear from industry, but not from the public. He said our participation gives regulators the opportunity to say, "People want stricter regulations."

And finally – there are scientific facts, and there are values. Testifying to a commission gives us the opportunity to relay both. Citizens care. We care enough to work for what we love.

For more information on the projects of John Bartlit and Don Neeper, and on how to get involved, see the web page for NM Citizens for Clean Air and Water at <http://members.aol.com/nmcit>.

—Jody Benson

Sentinels Keep Tabs on Water Quality



The Sentinels – Rios de Taos volunteers continued their water monitoring activities on December 3, meeting with Abe Franklin from the New Mexico Environment Department's Surface Water Quality Bureau and Rachel Conn from Amigos Bravos. Mr. Franklin demonstrated the proper technique for collecting water samples for E. coli analysis. The Sentinels then collected over 20 samples, which were analyzed by Mr. Franklin.

In addition to obtaining background levels near two proposed development sites, we found that the Village of Taos Ski Valley sewage treatment plant is doing a very good job, and that there appears to be a pollution source on the Rio Pueblo de Taos. We anticipate continuing to work with Mr. Franklin this winter to further identify pollution problems.

For more information, contact Eric Patterson (575/776-2833, eeppatt@gmail.com).

—Eric Patterson

Left: Sentinels – Rios de Taos volunteer Dorothy Wells collects a water sample from the Rio Fernando near a proposed development site. (Photo by Gary Grief)

Outings

These Taos-area outings scheduled by local leader Hal Davis (575/758-3949).

Saturday, January 27 • Very strenuous snowshoe to Frazier Mountain near Taos Ski Valley – 9 miles RT, 2700' gain. Great winter views of high peaks.

Saturday, February 10 • Very strenuous snowshoe trip up Gavilan Trail (from Taos Ski Valley Road) to ridgetop and along ridge to 11,792' peak – Up to 8 miles RT, 2000-2800' gain. Spectacular winter views of high peaks.

Saturday, February 24 • Very Strenuous snowshoe outing from Taos Ski Valley to Bull-of-the-Woods Pasture and up towards Gold Hill – Up to 10 miles RT, 2500-3300' gain. Amazing winter views of high peaks.

Contact List

Eric Patterson, Taos contact and Director of Rios de Taos Water Sentinels • 575/776-2833, eeppatt@gmail.com

Anna Walters, email alert list • annaainsworth@kitcarson.net

Norma McCallan, Northern Group contact • 505/471-0005, nmccallan@mindspring.com

William Brown, The Climate Project • 575/758-8008, nmglobalwarming@yahoo.com, www.nmglobalwarming.org

Scott Estep • 575/770-7969, wetmtn@rmi.com

FOUR CORNERS BRANCH NEWS

Legislative Meeting To Be Held in January

The Rio Grande Chapter's Northern Group and our allies, the San Juan Citizens Alliance, are co-hosting a state legislative session preview and local issues update meeting. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 8, at 7:00 p.m. The location is TBA. This meeting will preview expected legislation that will affect residents of San Juan County and the rest of New Mexico and bring local activists up to speed on these issues. The goal of the meeting will be to coordinate our legislative activism from the region around expected legislation in the New Mexico Legislative Session from January 15 until February 14. Call Dan Lorimier (575/740-2927) or Mike Eisenfeld (505/360-8994) for more information.

To get involved with the Four Corners Branch, please contact one of our Steering Committee members. We will need you to help with the critical issue

of air pollution. This is certain to get much worse if the proposed Desert Rock power plant is built and the continuing desecration of our public lands and ranches from overzealous drilling for oil and gas continues. For upcoming events, alerts, and interesting commentary from local members, add your name to the Four Corners list-serve (sjcsierraclub@groups.yahoo.com).

Steering Committee

Art Jaquez, Co-Chair
505/360-0176 • artjaquez2@yahoo.com

Nick Cullander, Co-Chair
505/334-0935 • ncullander@hotmail.com

Gordon Glass, Air Quality, Outings
505/564-4460 • agglass@earthlink.net



NORTHERN GROUP NEWS

LECTURE SERIES

3 PM, Saturday, February 9

The Sierra Club and the Council on International Relations (CIR) will cosponsor a lecture by **Elizabeth Economy, author of *The River Runs Black***, on environmental challenges that threaten China's and the world's future. Economy argues that China's approach to environmental protection mirrors its economic development program: devolving authority to local officials, opening the door to private individuals, and inviting participation from the international community, while retaining only weak central control.

The result has been a patchwork of environmental protection in which a few wealthy regions with strong leaders and international ties improve their local conditions, while most of the country continues to deteriorate, and some regions suffer irrevocable damage. Economy examines the growing role of nongovernmental groups in protecting the environment and expanding the boundaries of political action, and she sketches out several environmental scenarios for the country.

We will be asking a \$10 optional contribution of Club members to cover the expenses of the speaker. For reservations to the event in the Forum at the College of Santa Fe, call the CIR office at 982 4931.

THERE WILL BE NO GROUP PROGRAM MEETINGS IN JANUARY OR FEBRUARY 2008

All meetings, outings, and activities are FREE and open to the public unless otherwise indicated.

GROUP COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Sierra Club Office, 1807 Second Street, Unit #45

Group Executive Committee: Wednesday, January 9, 7 PM
Tuesday, February 5, 7 PM Tuesday, March 4, 7 PM

Group Conservation Committee: Tuesday, January 22, 7 PM

Northern New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club
1807 Second Street, Unit #45, Santa Fe, NM 87505
505 · 983 · 2703

GROUP CHAIR

John Buchser

I am amazed by some of the letters to the editor in the New Mexico newspapers stating that there is disagreement on the impact of carbon dioxide on our climate. Geochemists report we are currently at a 650,000-year high for CO₂ levels. It makes me proud that the Club here in New Mexico is taking this threat seriously. I encourage everyone to get personally engaged. Replace those light bulbs, turn down your heater, and share your ride to work. Write or call your legislator – legis.state.nm.us will help you figure it out, as will your county clerk. Join one of our campaigns – CoolBiz is really humming – contact Mark Walztoni, Anne Stauffer, or Carol Raymond (see masthead) to find out how you can help.

We have some interesting things coming up in 2008. Keep an eye on our and the chapter's websites (above). And stay on top of the legislature – send me an email and ask to get on our Alerts email notification if you aren't one of the 900 members already staying abreast of the latest happenings.

THANK YOU

A big *Thank You* to Carolyn Stephenson for hosting December's Northern Group holiday winter potluck celebration at her business, the Mission Café and Sweet Shop, 239 East De Vargas Street, off Old Santa Fe Trail behind the San Miguel Mission, the oldest church in the United States. Carolyn serves locally raised beef and chicken in a beautifully restored old adobe home with modern amenities like wireless (not to mention great coffee!). The Café is open Monday-Friday, 7 AM to 2:30 PM and Saturday, 8 AM to 2:30 PM, Telephone 505.983.3033

◆ ◆ NORTHERN NEW MEXICO GROUP OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS ◆ ◆

Chair – John Buchser * ‡ jbuchser@comcast.net 820-0201
Vice-Chair – Norma McCallan * ‡ nmccallan@mindspring.com 471-0005
Secretary – Jean Watts * jeanwatts@comcast.net 989-5010
Treasurer – Anne Stauffer arsinm@comcast.net 986-1412
Office – Joann Lucas joannlucas@comcast.net 466-6691
Chapter Rep – Dexter Coolidge * dextercoolidge@yahoo.com 988-1197
Membership – Alice Cox auntialice@pecosplaza.com 757-2145
Newsletter – Kay Carlson kcarlsonwp@earthlink.net 982-3926
Outings – Norbert Sperlich bsperlich@cybermesa.com 474-4354
Tobin Oruch oruch@lanl.gov 820-2844
Political Committee – Susan Martin smartin31@comcast.net 988-5206
Tom Robey trobey@cybermesa.com 955-9578
Phone Answerer – Bebs Taylor 983-9129
Publicity – Richard Kristin * rkristin@csf.edu 982-1671
Social Cohesion – Jean Watts * jeanwatts@comcast.net 989-5010
Las Vegas Branch – Betty Quick betty@mathllc.com 505-454-9123
Taos Branch – Eric Patterson eepatt@gmail.com 776-2883
Farmington Branch – Art Jaquez artjaquez@yahoo.com 505-326-5229
Nick Cullander ncullander@hotmail.com 505-334-0935
Web Master – Monika Bittman 505-466-0130
Dan Rusthoi rusthoi@earthlink.net 474-3965

UPCOMING IN MARCH OR APRIL

The Sierra Club, the League of Women Voters and AARP will sponsor a panel discussion on growth management issues. Panelists will include experts on growth management and those responsible for making growth management decisions in Santa Fe and Santa Fe County. Topics for discussion will include: Why is growth management especially relevant at the current time? What are the benefits and negative impacts of growth? Should growth be encouraged or discouraged and how? How can growth be managed to minimize negative impacts? What is the role of water with respect to growth management? Are the developers causing growth or merely responding to it?

Be prepared for some surprises as this critical issue is presented. The timing and location have not been finalized but most likely will be in March or April – so check your next edition of the *Sierran* and the Northern Group website.

WILDERNESS FIRST AID

We are offering an 8-hour Wilderness First Aid course February 23. This training is recommended for all hikers and outdoors people and mandatory for outings leaders. Past courses have been lively and very valuable.

Cost will be \$45. Please express interest to Tobin Oruch (820-2844).

WEBSITE and CONTACT INFORMATION

Northern Group: <http://riogrande.sierraclub.org.santafe>
Chapter: <http://riogrande.sierraclub.org>
Outings: <http://riogrande.sierraclub.org/santafe/outings.asp>
To unsubscribe from the Alerts list, send any message to: rio-north-alerts-signoff-request@lists.sierraclub.org
Check out our Listserv Lists support site: <http://www.sierraclub.org/lists/faq.asp>

CONSERVATION CHAIR

Dexter Coolidge

A crucial step in our fight to address climate change is a Federal requirement for higher gas mileage and lower emissions in cars. Until the Federal government acts – and as a spur to that action – the adoption of stronger tailpipe emissions standards by the states is our only remedy. Last winter Governor Richardson moved to adopt the California Clean Cars standards and in November the State Environmental Improvement Board (EIB) held hearings on them. We put out a call to our members to testify at the hearings and the response was heartwarming. In Santa Fe there were about 40 people who came to testify, many of them lobbyists for the auto industry. But the best part was, 10 were from the Sierra Club, and 9 of those from the Northern Group! The EIB went on to hearings in Albuquerque and has since approved the Clean Car standards for New Mexico, though a lawsuit has been filed by a few legislators who claim that approving these standards should have been the prerogative of the legislature.

On other fronts, Cool Cities continues to charge ahead. The CFL bulb exchange will start the week of December 10 in one of the Santa Fe schools, and the brochures for CoolBiz have been printed. Sig Silber and Tom Gorman have been active in the campaign to address drilling in the Galisteo Basin. And Robb Thomson has put enormous intelligence and energy into making sure the multi-state Western Climate Initiative is headed in the right direction.

We have an exciting year to look forward to, with much reason for optimism. A Very Happy New Year to All!

Conservation – Chair – Dexter Coolidge * dextercoolidge@yahoo.com 988-1197
Activist Outings – Norma McCallan * ‡ nmccallan@mindspring.com 471-0005
4 Corners' Power Plants – Robb Thomson * robbm@toast.net 988-8958
Santa Fe Nat'l Forest – Tom Gorman 438-3932
Carson Nat'l Forest – Eric Peterson emozart@cybermesa.com 505-747-2422
Genetically Engineered Food – Jim Hannan jhannan505@aol.com 988-5760
Mining – Cliff Larsen clarsen1@ix.netcom.com 466-2128
Cool Cities Campaign
Coordinator – Mark Walztoni * mark@leadershipchanges.com 603-5810
Eco Footprints – Brian Skeele brianvida@nm.net 984-1739
Resources – Ken Hughes ‡ blfamily@comcast.net 474-0550
Norma McCallan * nmccallan@mindspring.com 471-0005
Water – Sig Silber ‡ ssilber1@juno.com 473-7006
Paul Paryski ‡ pparyski@aol.com 992-1984
Wildlife/Nat'l Parks/Rangelands - Roger Peterson ‡ rogpete@aol.com 983-7559

Carol Raymond * Carol@SFSR.com 989-8600, ext 27 (w)
* Member of the Northern Group Executive Committee
‡ Member of the Core Conservation Committee



NORTHERN GROUP NEWS

NORTHERN GROUP OUTINGS

Sat Sun January

NEW YEAR'S DAY – January 1

- Impromptu Strenuous Snowshoe or Hike** depending on interest and availability, dogs okay. **Tobin Oruch** (820-2844 before 8 PM)
- 5 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** Blowhole, Tor, and Cerro Rito (Caja del Rio). Volcanoes in our backyard. Dikes, plugs, craters, cinder cones, a gaping steam vent (extinct, of course). All off-trail, rough terrain. 9 miles RT, 1100' gain. Dogs okay. **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354)
- 6 **Easy/Moderate Hike** in La Cieneguilla to see petroglyphs with Chip Conway. Some rough sections. Max of 10. Dan Rusthoi (690-8967)
- 12 **Easy/Moderate Hike** dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 12 **Moderate Hike** to Alamo Canyon in Bandelier. Enjoy views and varied topography. 6+ miles and 1000' gain. **Les Drapela** (438-3306)
- 13 **Moderate Hike** to eagle traps on Bandelier mesa, or Ojito Wilderness (dogs okay) near San Ysidro if too snowy. About 7-8 miles and not steep but off-trail. **Stephen Markowitz** (983-2779 before 8 PM)
- 19 **Easy/Moderate Hike** to spectacular Tent Rocks, including Cave Loop and Canyon Trail. Hike among unique geologic formations and within slot canyons. 4-5 miles, 900' gain, some loose and rough footing, dogs okay on leash. **Dan Rusthoi** (690-8967)
- 19 **Strenuous snowshoe** Cerro Grande area, 8 miles, 2500', Valle Grande views; hike if poor snow. **Michael Di Rosa** (667-0095, 663-0648)
- 19 **Santa Fe River Clean Up** 9 to 11 AM. Beautify our adopted stretch! See inset article. **Kathleen Davis** (438-0357 or kdav40@aol.com)
- 19 **Easy Birdwatch Walk** bring binoculars. **Ron Duffy** (466-6398)
PLEASE NOTE - CORRECTION OF DATE
- 20 **Strenuous Snowshoe** to Santa Fe Baldy or Puerto Nambe. Experience the familiar Winsor Trail in winter. 10-14 miles, 2000-3600' gain, dogs okay. **Patrick O'Keefe** (820-2359)
- 26 **Easy/Moderate Hike** south of town (different from the 12th), very nice, dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 26 **Strenuous XC Ski** in Jemez or moderate/strenuous hike if poor snow. **Page Press** (946-0169)
- 27 **Easy Hike** in Cerrillos Hills Historic Park with guest historian Bill Baxter providing delightful commentary on various mines & artifacts. Dogs with leash okay. Meet at SC office at 9:15 or the CHHP parking lot at 10 AM. **Norma McCallan** (471-0005)
- 27 **Strenuous Snowshoe** to Frazier Mountain near Taos Ski Valley. 9 miles RT, 2700' gain. Great winter views of high peaks. **Hal Davis** (505-758-3949 in Taos)

Sat Sun February

- 2 **Moderate Hike** **Stephen Markowitz** (983-2779 before 8 PM)
- 3 **Easy/Moderate Hike** Dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 3 **Strenuous Hike** into Bandelier backcountry. **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354)
- 9 **Santa Fe River Cleanup** Join in the Santa Fe Watershed Association's "Love Your River Day"! See inset article. **Paige Grant** (982-5180 or paigeanna@comcast.net)
- 9 **Moderate Snowshoe Trip** on Apache Canyon Loop. 6.5 miles RT, 800' gain. Dogs okay. Hike if not enough snow. **Patrick O'Keefe** (820-2359)
- 9 **Strenuous Hike** in Caja del Rio, down to Rio Grande and up on Montoso Peak. About 10 miles RT, 2000' gain. Mostly off-trail, some rough sections. **Michael Di Rosa** (663-0648)
- 10 **Beginners Snowshoe Clinic** Rent shoes and poles, come out and play in the snow for a couple of hours. Gear and technique tips will be shared. Dogs okay. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)
- 10 **Very Strenuous Snowshoe Trip** up Gavilan Trail (from Taos Ski Valley Road) to ridge top and along ridge to 11,792' peak. Up to 8 miles RT, 2000-2800' gain. Spectacular winter views of high peaks. **Hal Davis** (575-758-3949 in Taos)
- 16 **Easy Birdwatch Walk** in local area, bring binoculars. **Ron Duffy** (466-6398)
- 16 **Moderate X-Country Ski Trip** Dogs okay. **Page Press** (946-0169)
- 16 **Moderate Hike** in Bandelier. **Les Drapela** (438-3306)
- 17 **Easy/Moderate Hike** Dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 17 **Strenuous Snowshoe Outing** Dogs ok. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)
- 23 **Moderate Snowshoe Outing** in Sangre de Cristos. Dogs okay. **David Van Winkle** (820-1006)
- 23 **Wilderness First Aid Course** Recommended for all hikers and outdoors people. Mandatory for outings leaders. *Cost \$45.* **Tobin Oruch** (820-2844 before 8 PM)
- 24 **Very Strenuous Snowshoe Outing** from Taos Ski Valley to Bull-of-the-Woods Pasture and up towards Gold Hill. Up to 10 miles RT, 2500-3300' gain. Amazing winter views of high peaks. **Hal Davis** (575-758-3949 in Taos)
- 24 **Easy Hike** on Nun's Corner Loop. A pleasant walk in the woods close to town. One steep hill. Dogs okay. Wear sturdy boots. **Norma McCallan** (471-0005)

Sat Sun March

- 1 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** to Red Rocks near Abiquiu. Georgia O'Keefe country! 6-9 miles RT, 900' gain, all off-trail. Dogs okay. **Tobin Oruch** (820-2844 before 8 PM)
- 2 **Easy/Moderate Hike** Dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 2 **Strenuous Snowshoe Outing** Dogs okay. Call for details. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)
- 8 **Moderate Hike** in Caja del Rio. Nice vistas. 7 miles RT. Dogs okay. **Bob McKee** (471-0005)
- 9 **Strenuous Snowshoe Trip** in Pecos (Serpent Lake). 8 miles RT, 1500' gain. Dogs okay. **Patrick O'Keefe** (820-2359)
- 15 **Easy Birdwatch Walk** bring binoculars. **Ron Duffy** (466-6398)
- 15 **Santa Fe River Cleanup.** See inset article. **Anne Stauffer** (986-1412 or scsftreasurer@comcast.net)
- 15 **Strenuous Hike** with car shuttle. Down to Ancho Rapids, along Rio Grande to Frijoles Canyon, up on Falls Trail to Bandelier Visitor Center. About 10 miles, 1000' gain. Some rough off-trail. **Michael Di Rosa** (663-0648)
- 16 **Easy/Moderate Hike** Dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 16 **Strenuous Snowshoe Outing** Dogs okay. Call for details. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)
- 22 **Strenuous Hike** into Bandelier backcountry. **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354)
- 23 **Moderate Hike** to Window Rock. 6-9 miles RT, 1000' gain. Dogs okay. **Tobin Oruch** (820-2844 before 8 PM)
- 29 **Strenuous Hike** into Tapia Canyon (Cabezon Area). Rugged country with unique petroglyphs, ruins, desert vistas. Dogs okay. Early start, long drive, long day. Call leader by Wednesday, March 26. Needs to know if there is enough interest in this hike. **Stephen Markowitz** (983-2779 before 8 PM)
- 30 **Moderate Hike** on Red Dot, Blue Dot, and River Trail (near White Rock). Dramatic views of White Rock Canyon, petroglyphs, lovely creek. Some steep sections. Dogs okay. **Dan Rusthoi** (690-8967)

PLEASE ALWAYS CALL THE OUTINGS LEADER PRIOR TO A HIKE FOR CONFIRMATION AND DETAILS.

All outings are open to the public and free unless otherwise noted.

SANTA FE RIVER CLEANUP AND VEGETATION MAINTENANCE

Saturday – 9 to 11 AM – January 19, February 9, March 15

Help keep our river looking great! Park at Lower Alto Street north end of Closson. Bring work boots, gloves and drinking water. **Call listed outing leader on each date.**

Outings Notes – Unless otherwise noted, outings leave from Sierra office, 1807 Second Street, Unit #45. Turn into the driveway at the entrance of Cloud Cliff Bakery, go past the bakery to the next building on the left. It has trees, benches and sculptures in the front yard. Parking is beyond the building on the left. Meet near the benches. Although the signs in back say that parking is restricted, that doesn't apply at night and on weekends. Carpooling is encouraged. It is routine that each rider pays the driver 10 cents/mile, rounded down to nearest dollar (7.5 cents/mile when 100+ miles and 3+ riders). Bring lunch, water, sturdy hiking boots or shoes and clothing suitable for the weather. Leader reserves the right to turn away anyone whose equipment or experience appears unsuitable. Leader may alter destination of hike or cancel trip due to weather, other unfavorable conditions, or insufficient number of participants. Unaccompanied minors need written permission from parents or guardians to participate—ask leader for form. Dogs permitted only if so noted in write up. To participate you will need to sign a liability waiver at meeting site.

NEW NNM GROUP OFFICE

Second Street Lofts, 1807 Second Street, Unit #45

Cloud Cliff opens at 7:30 AM on weekends, so hikers assembling at the office can take advantage of their food. Backroad Pizza (in Unit #1 by the tracks) and Second Street Brewery across the street are options for social time after hikes.

The outer door is open 8-5 weekdays. Our newsletters and other giveaways are in a rack in the hallway in front of the office door, which is on the 2nd floor. We are sharing again with CCAE (Coalition for Clean and Affordable Energy) and two individual researchers. It is a bright, airy space, and we are pleased to be a part of the Second Street Lofts complex.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteer Coordinator – Dexter Coolidge (988-1197) Recruit members

Publicity – Richard Kristin (982-1671 or rkristin@csf.edu)

Help get out announcements of our meetings and other events

Grants Writer – Richard Kristin (982-1671 or rkristin@csf.edu) Creative person to explore possibility of getting grant money for projects such as curriculum units on global warming for elementary and middle school.

Forest issues – Norma McCallan (471-0005) Need a second person for the Carson and for the Santa Fe N.F. oversight teams, which includes working on the critical Travel Management Plan.

Social & environmental events – Jean Watts (989-5010) Organize events

Cool Cities Campaign – Mark Walztoni (mark@leadershipchanges.com or 603-5810) This campaign seeks to lessen our carbon footprint. Needed – volunteers in various capacities.

Our City's Carbon Footprint

It's ready! "It" is the Bernalillo County Green House Gas Emissions Inventory, and you can read it at <http://albuquerquegreen.com>.

Or, you can read this article instead. I have tried to explain the inventory as clearly and simply as possible. If, after you read this, you want more, I recommend you read the inventory itself. It's about 60 pages, and nicely presented with graphs to make the information accessible.

Why Is the Inventory Important?

The City of Albuquerque is a signatory to the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement. Cities signing this agreement pledge to reduce their global warming emissions 7% below 1990 levels by the year 2012. This reduction goal is the same as the goal of the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement that our country has not yet adopted. It is also the goal of the Sierra Club's Cool Cities campaign. Basically, we want our cities to undertake what our federal government has avoided doing – committing to a significant reduction in global warming pollution.

In order to reduce 7% below 1990 levels, we must first know what the 1990 levels were and what the current levels are. This is why the City needed to produce a baseline emissions inventory. The inventory quantifies all the carbon dioxide, methane, and other global warming gases produced within city limits. It offers a snapshot of the City's carbon footprint in 1990, 2000, and 2005. It also projects how emissions will change (read: "grow") in the future if the city continues its current practices.

Conducting an Inventory

Conducting an inventory is no small feat. Emissions from different sources must be measured differently. Vehicle fuel use, for example, is not easy to measure. While buildings are "stationary sources"

that sit still, vehicles are "non-stationary sources" that make capturing data on them difficult. The Mid-Region Council of Governments has a whole system for counting traffic on Albuquerque's major roads. According to their website, "Most traffic counts are performed using portable traffic monitoring devices with rubber tubes that stretch across the roadway." The data is then captured and compiled on a regular basis to get a picture of traffic patterns and vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) in the city.

To get a snapshot of on-road transportation emissions, one estimates the amount of fuel that must be burned in order to produce Albuquerque's VMT.

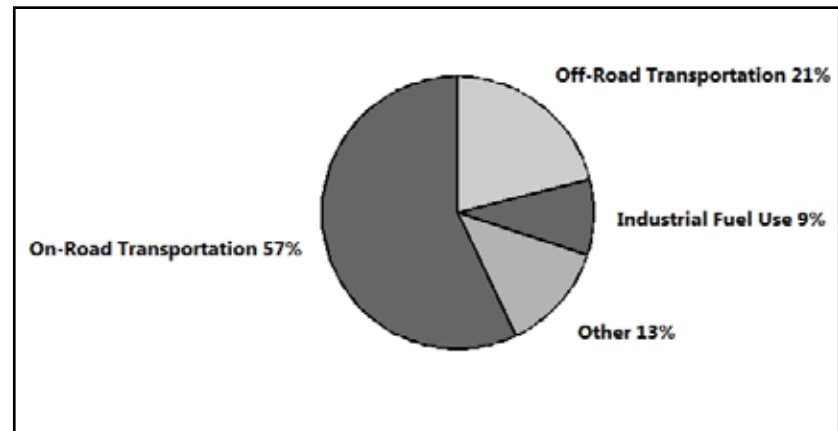
Meanwhile, natural gas consumption can be simply measured by getting PNM's data on usage in homes and businesses. However, the city was not able to obtain PNM's data prior to 2005. Anything earlier had to be estimated by other means, and there was no adequate way to do that. Consequently, the city's 1990 and 2000 data on natural gas consumption is almost certainly inaccurate. Unfortunately, this makes the 1990 baseline highly speculative.

However, we have to work from something, and this is the best we are going to have.

Our City's Inventory Results

Albuquerque's inventory was done for three entities: Bernalillo County (biggest), City of Albuquerque (slightly smaller), and City Government (smallest.) I will summarize the 2005 findings for the City of Albuquerque – which is the entity our Sierra Club Cool Cities campaign is interested in. This data gives us a snapshot of our city's current carbon footprint:

- Total Albuquerque footprint for 2005 was 4.6 million tons of CO₂-equivalent emissions.¹



A breakdown of the factors contributing to Albuquerque's carbon footprint according to the city's recent emissions inventory.

- On-road transportation was responsible for 57% of the total.
- Off-road transportation (primarily airplanes taking off and landing) was next with 21% of the total.
- Industrial fuel use (primarily oil and natural gas) was next with 9% of the total.
- The remaining 13% was attributed primarily to residential and commercial heating (4%), electricity generation in power plants (2%), and decomposition from landfills (3%).

Important Points

- If you think something big is missing from the carbon footprint above, you're right. Our electricity consumption is not there. This city inventory only counted emissions that were produced within city limits. So you will see that "electricity generation in power plants" accounts for 2% of the total above. There are two small, natural-gas fired power plants within city limits, and that's what's being counted here. What is NOT being counted are the two huge, coal-burning power plants in Four Corners which produce most of the electricity used in Albuquerque.

(continued on page 15)

Central Group Directory

Executive Committee

P.O. Box 25342
Albuquerque, NM 87125-0342

Michal Mudd, Chair

mudd_pi@mac.com 505/884-3315

Eva Thaddeus, Co-Chair, Secretary, Global

Warming Issue Chair

evathad@nmia.com 505/266-9646

David Ther, Treasurer, Outings Chair

grelbik@att.net 505/260-1553

Patrick Redmond, Political Chair, Water Chair

redmonpa@law.unm.edu 505/298-1298

Rick Preston, Newsletter Editor

pepreston@gmail.com

Lori Healy, Membership Chair

suasti_o@yahoo.com 505/249-6695

Howard Karnes

einstructionhk@aol.com 505/379-1294

The Executive Committee meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m., at the Sierra Club office, 142 Truman NE, Albuquerque.

Outings

Saturday, January 19 • Bosque del Apache

The birds are back and it's a good time to go see them at Bosque del Apache. We got rained out on this outing last year, but it's worth another try. We'll make a full day of it, so plan for a short (4 miles or so) hike, a late afternoon stop at the Bosque for the sunset return of the birds, followed by dinner in Socorro. Bring lunch, liquids, and layers, and plan for an evening return to Albuquerque. We'll meet at Smith's parking lot, corner of Carlisle and Menaul, 8:30 a.m. for carpooling. Driving distance 90 miles one way. Need more info? Call Carol Chamberland at 505/341-1027.

Sunday, February 17 • Ojito Wilderness

Ojito Wilderness is a fun place to explore and this should be a good time of year to check it out. Mostly off-trail hiking, 6 miles or so, moderate pace, some elevation gain, great views guaranteed. Bring lunch, liquids, and layers, and meet at Smith's parking lot, Carlisle and Menaul, 8:30 for carpooling. Driving distance 50 miles one way. For more information, call Carol Chamberland at 505/341-1027.

Saturdays, January 26, February 9, and February 23 • Desert Exploratory Hikes

Come and visit some of New Mexico's most

incredible and beautiful landscapes hidden in its desert places. These hikes are not difficult but will require a sense of adventure on the part of participants. There will rarely be a trail and the route will be very rocky and uneven at times. We may encounter dense growth and downed logs in canyon bottoms, though we will try to minimize this. Sometimes we scramble (easy climbing) over rock surfaces and walk narrow ledges, if this can be done safely. Typical hike length is between 6 and 10 miles and we may gain 500 to 1500 feet of elevation. Leader determines outing details and meeting time by previous Wednesday, so you may call for details at that time.

Please contact the leader no later than Thursday preceding the hike.

You may also request to be included on an email list for receiving the same information, so you won't have to call. Meeting time will vary from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. Meeting place will always be at Smith's, at Carlisle and Menaul. Both Sierra Club and Outdoor Adventures For Singles are invited for these outings.

Contact Tom Petencin at 505/271-9928 or tompeten@juno.com.

There Is Still Time to Help Mexican Wolves

Thank you to everyone who attended one of the several scoping meetings held around the state by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The agency is still gathering comments on how to make the reintroduction of the Mexican Wolf successful. Nevertheless, at the end of November, yet another pack was captured and removed from the wild for depredating cattle. A second pack has gone missing and is feared dead. There are fewer than 20 wolves in the wild in New Mexico today. You can be sure that the wolf-hating contingent is raising their voice loudly. Don't let it drown out wolf recovery.

If you haven't yet submitted comments, you have until December 31, 2007. This may be the last opportunity for years to help Mexican Wolves survive in the wild. Biologically, Mexican Wolves have shown they can be successful in their historic range and that it is political and cultural roadblocks that are preventing this. Here are some of the issues to include in your comments:

- Currently, the Mexican Wolves are considered to be an "experimental, non-essential" population. This designation under the Endangered Species Act is not sufficient. There are no Mexican Wolves alive in the wild anywhere any more. It has been said that they are the most endangered mammal in North America. If ever there were an argument for full endangered species status, it would be for the Mexican Wolf. Ask for a "Conservation Alternative" that will change their classification from experimental, non-essential to fully endangered.
- Now, if wolves roam outside the invisible political boundary of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA) which straddles the southern boundary between Arizona and New Mexico, they are captured and relocated. This results in stress, disruption and even injuries and death.

Ask that wolves be allowed to roam outside the BRWRA boundaries because suitable habitat does exist beyond them.

- Under current rules, captive wolves can only be released in Arizona. This limits the flexibility of managers and it also limits the gene pool for the New Mexico population. Ask that wolves be allowed to be released directly into New Mexico too.
- The biggest single factor thwarting wolf recovery is the conflict with livestock operators. Permitters who graze cattle on public land should be required to proactively engage in practices that mitigate the opportunities wolves have to prey on their livestock. This predation often begins when wolves scavenge a cow carcass and get a taste for beef. Carcasses should be removed or limed to make them unpalatable. Range riders, guard dogs, fencing, and fladry all can reduce the likelihood of predation.
- The agency simply has to stop killing and removing wolves. At the current level, those charged with recovering wolves are taking them out of the wild at a greater rate than they can be reproduced. And again, this impediment to recovery is at the behest of ranchers.
- The number of wolves in the wild needs to reach a minimum of 100 animals with 18 breeding pairs. There should be no maximum. Wolves, like all predators, can regulate their own numbers due to the availability of prey and habitat.
- The Recovery Plan is 25 years out of date and needs to be revised so that the rules can reflect the definition of Recovery. Moreover, any rule changes need to include a provision that does not limit future recovery options.

Mexican Wolves weigh on average about 60 pounds and have never killed a human in the entire

recorded history of the United States. In the northern Rocky Mountains, Gray Wolves have been shown to greatly benefit the biotic community at every level. Their presence causes herbivores to move frequently, improving forage and providing more nesting opportunity for songbirds. Wolves limit the number of coyotes and this can benefit species from smaller carnivores to ground nesting birds to mule deer. It is right that they be allowed to return home to the wilds of New Mexico. Don't let them be exterminated a second time.

For more information, contact Mary Katherine Ray (575/772-5655, mkscri@kitcarson.net).

—Mary Katherine Ray

Take Action

Send your comments by December 31 via any of the following ways:

MAIL:

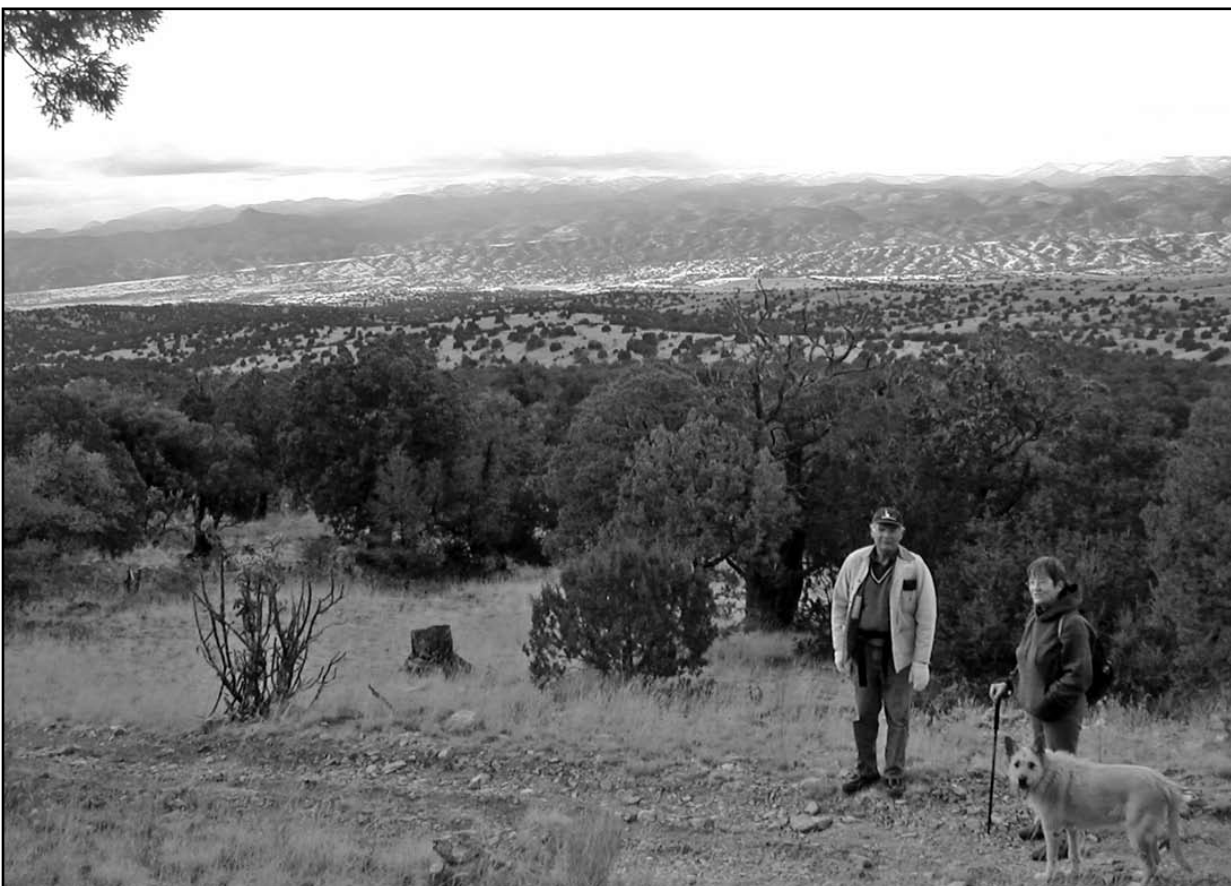
Brian Millsap, State Administrator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office

2105 Osuna NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

FAX: 505/346-2542

EMAIL: r2fwe_al@fws.gov

ONLINE: www.mexicanwolfeis.org



With the Black Range in the background and despite the threat of a blustery day in the Cuchillos, members of the Southern Group embarked upon an outing in early December. We got snowed on for a short time, but then the sun came out and it was a glorious outing. We saw a great-horned owl and learned how to make our mental maps fit the real one. (Photo by Mary Katherine Ray)

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Texas State Senator Shapleigh Writes on the ASARCO Bankruptcy

The Great ASARCO Heist of 2007: How ASARCO Filed Bankruptcy to Pick Your Pocket for \$11 Billion

Quietly, ASARCO just picked your pocket—and not many in El Paso know. By filing bankruptcy in Corpus Christi, ASARCO has delivered a tab for nearly \$11 billion to US taxpayers all across the West. Here's how. For over 100 years, ASARCO operated the dirtiest smelters in the West. From lead smelters in El Paso, Omaha, and Tacoma to copper smelters in Arizona, ASARCO's smokestacks belched out tons of pollutants over the decades. In El Paso alone, ASARCO dumped over 1000 tons of lead over a three year period from 1969 to 1971. Lead is one of the most toxic and dangerous contaminants around. If young children ingest lead, they can suffer catastrophic and irreversible brain damage for life. Now, ASARCO's tab has come due—and ASARCO wants it paid by you. Down in Corpus Christi, ASARCO filed Chapter 11 Bankruptcy on August 9, 2005. Under bankruptcy rules, debt is divided into two piles: secured and unsecured. Secured creditors get paid or take their collateral. Unsecured creditors usually get pennies on the dollar—or in some cases, nothing. After 100 years of polluting the West, ASARCO left a big pile of polluted cities. Nearly \$11 billion of environmental claims have been filed by 16 states, two Indian tribes, the federal government, over ninety communities and thousands of private parties. Of the 75 sites nationwide, El Paso is one of the most affected. Most of these cities and states will be unsecured creditors.

For example, after smelting lead on the Missouri River near downtown Omaha, ASARCO left toxic levels of lead throughout the city, forcing the EPA to clean up more than 3,000 child care centers, residential homes, and other properties. In Tacoma, experts estimate that the 100 year old smoke plume from the ASARCO smelter contaminated a swath that covers more than 1,000 miles in three counties.

Right now, experts in Corpus Christi are totaling all the ASARCO pollution debt—the heist to date is \$11 billion. In Washington State, the Attorney General filed a claim for \$600 million to protect the citizens of his state.

What will happen with most of this debt? You the taxpayer will pay to clean it up. ASARCO has one of the nation's most powerful law firms, Baker Botts, fighting every day to shift the cost to you. Why Baker Botts? Because the ASARCO fight foreshadows other environmental cleanups to come.

So what's best case scenario? If the Superfund is made solvent, EPA will clean it slowly over many years. In Omaha, the clean up has lasted eight years. And if Superfund is not solvent, then individual property owning taxpayers will be strapped directly with clean up costs—\$11 billion in contamination delivered straight to the taxpayer, either way.

And there may be more contamination. How, you ask? The answer is: ASARCO and fertilizer.

For years, an El Paso-based fertilizer company, Ionate, sold a fertilizer that was used on the lawns all across our community. This fertilizer, it turns out, was laden with lead, arsenic, and other hazardous heavy metals. The now out-of-business company used slag from the Oglebay Norton slag-crushing company in west El Paso as part of the fertilizer. Oglebay Norton obtained the slag, a byproduct of the smelting process, from ASARCO. The fact is the EPA never established the eastern boundary of lead contamination in El Paso. We don't know the full extent of lead on yards in El Paso, but it is significantly more than what ASARCO reports in the Corpus Christi bankruptcy court.

To date, 3,661 El Paso residential properties have been tested and 868 cleaned up—but in Omaha, the number of properties tested was 32,000 and the number cleaned was almost 3,000, under nearly identical scenarios. So, it's fair to say that ASARCO has left a surprise for homeowners in our region for many years to come.

What about the ASARCO site itself? When EPA first came to town, the Region 6 director told me, "Cleaning up onsite will cost \$250 million in 2004 dollars." Since ASARCO has kept a few employees on site since they closed in 1999, ASARCO has technically avoided the federal law that requires it to clean up the 585 acre site. So when, ASARCO finally closes down, expect the taxpayers to foot that bill too.

What happens, then, to the thousands of homeowners and small

businesses who have lead on their property and don't know it? When a home property seller goes to sell, any prudent buyer (and title company) will want to know about lead. Texas law requires sellers to disclose any lead as a defect. Prudent home buyers will ask for an EPA certificate that the property is lead-free. So, sellers will have to go get a test, and if the property has lead, pay to clean it up. The average cost of a consumer cleanup is \$20,000 - \$30,000. In other words, ASARCO lead will be cleaned up by El Paso homeowners at their expense since ASARCO is asking that all liabilities be discharged once the bankruptcy is done. One environmental expert, Dr. Devra Davis, calls the ASARCO bankruptcy "a test-case for world-wide industrial interests to show how environmental liabilities can be shed—passed onto the people who actually suffered the damages in the first place."

Out here in the West we've seen our share of heists over the years—but "The Great ASARCO Heist of 2007" has to be one of the biggest ever!

Selected Outing

Jan 19-21: Reavis Ranch Backpack

Place: Superstition Mountains near Phoenix AZ

Difficulty: Moderate with some strenuous sections

Length: 21 miles round trip plus side trips

Elevation gain: 1000 ft.

Contact: (Harry Newman915) 588-0093 swtraveller@aol.com

Friday night (Jan 18) we will drive into Arizona to prepare for driving to Reavis Ranch trailhead on Sat. morning (the official start of the trip).?

The Reavis Ranch trail gradually ascends (with some up and downs) though the Sonoran Desert using an old wagon road that has been converted to a trail.? If the weather is clear we will have outstanding views of various peaks as our hike turns from desert to forest. Our first night's camp will be in the old Reavis Ranch meadow with a perennial creek (the original ranch house burnt down).? The next day (Sunday) we plan to explore the surrounding area and perhaps move our camp.? ? Monday we will descend the trail and return to Phoenix for a meal before driving back.? The higher elevations of the Superstitions?could be?subject to well below freezing temperatures with rain.? Participants should have adequate gear including puffy jackets and winter sleeping bags.? We will need to carry all our hiking water.?

Call trip leader for more details.

El Paso Group Directory

<http://texas.sierraclub.org/el Paso>

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Treasurer: Kathy Sunday	sundayt@zianet.com	915/584-9301
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Albuquerque's Carbon Footprint *(continued from page 12)*

Whenever we flip on a light, a TV, or a computer, a little coal is burned in northwestern New Mexico for our sake. But because it isn't burned within city limits, it doesn't count in Albuquerque's inventory. It does count in the statewide inventory, though, and looking at that inventory, I quickly estimated Albuquerque's 2005 electricity use to produce about 5 million tons of CO₂ equivalent, which is larger than all the rest of our emission sources combined (4.6 million tons).²

- Transportation, specifically Vehicle Miles Traveled, is the source of most of the emissions produced within city limits. You probably could have guessed that without an inventory, but it's useful to have the numbers to prove it. If we want to reduce our city-based emissions, VMT is where we have to focus. What might help with that? More walkable neighborhoods, mixed-use zoning, better public transit systems. . . smarter development!

- Air travel is significant. What might help reduce that? Maybe a revival of a good national network of railroads? Could it still be done, or is it too late? Trains are a much more energy-efficient form of travel than cars or planes.

- Natural gas usage, although it may be the biggest part of your energy bill, is probably not the biggest piece of your personal carbon footprint. Look to your transportation and electricity use for that.

- City government's carbon footprint is only 3% of Albuquerque's total footprint. City government has halved its footprint since 2000 by putting a sys-

tem in place to capture and burn the methane that comes off its landfills. In terms of global warming pollution, it is much cleaner to burn methane than to allow it to escape into the air. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas.

Business as Usual – Not an Option!

The projections for business as usual assume continued population growth in Albuquerque (growth projections are made by the Department of Energy). We know how much our city has grown and have no reason to think the growth will stop by 2012. So, if we are to reduce our emissions, we have to do so IN SPITE OF higher population. This means that our per-capita emissions must drop meaningfully. And 2012 is just the near-term. As we get closer to that date, it will be time to start thinking about the next set of reductions, which must be even bigger.

Does it sound difficult? Sure. But think of the bad news we've gotten about the climate just this year. The Northern Passage is ice-free for the first time in recorded history. The alarming report just released from the International Energy Agency warns that business as usual could result in 6 degrees of temperature rise by the end of this century, with up to 70% of the world's species extinct. So which is the better choice? Changing our patterns of energy use, or allowing this devastating future for our children, grandchildren, and fellow species to unfold?

This is why the Sierra Club has made a clean energy future its top priority. Business as usual is not

an option – we have to create a sustainable world. Here in Albuquerque, it's time for us all do our part.

—Eva Thaddeus

Footnotes

1. Emissions are reported in terms of "carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions," meaning that some are weighed more heavily than others. Methane, for example, is a stronger greenhouse gas than CO₂ by 23 times. So each ton of methane is worth 23 tons of "CO₂ equivalent." That is why methane leakage from landfills is a significant source of emissions.

2. The statewide emissions inventory can be found at www.nmclimatechange.us. It is Appendix D of the NM Climate Change Initiative's Final Report. I used the table on p. 35 (NM Greenhouse Gas Emissions - Consumption Based) and divided the 2000 electricity use by 4, because according to the 2000 census, Albuquerque had one-quarter of the state's population. Because this was 2000 data, not 2005 data, it is a rough estimate.

Preserve the Future

Not everyone can make a large gift to protect the environment during their lifetime, but you can preserve the environment for generations to come by remembering the Sierra Club in your will.

There are many gift options available. We can even help you plan a gift for your local Chapter.

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 e-mail: planned.giving@sierraclub.org



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To Contribute to the Rio Grande Sierran

The *Rio Grande Sierran* is published six times a year – early January, March, May, July, September, and November – by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club as a benefit for members living in New Mexico and West Texas. The opinions expressed in signed articles in the *Rio Grande Sierran* are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Sierra Club. Articles may be freely reprinted for nonprofit purposes, provided that credit is given to the author and the *Rio Grande Sierran*. (Please let us know if you reprint.) Products and services advertised in the *Rio Grande Sierran* are not necessarily endorsed by the Sierra Club.

Contributions – articles, photos, artwork, poems, letters to the editor, paid advertisements – are welcome. Send to the editor (see masthead page 2). Submissions by Rio Grande Chapter members will take precedence over others. Articles are subject to abridgement. Letters to the editor may be up to 500 words. The contributor's name and email address will be printed as a source of more information, unless the contributor specifies otherwise.

Submissions must be received by the 10th of the month prior to publication. Editorial practices as developed and adopted by the Rio Grande Chapter will be used in production of the *Rio Grande Sierran*. Contents of the Group pages are the responsibility of the editor for that Group and any policies that are in place from that Group.

Nonmember subscriptions are \$10 per year. Send checks to Cliff Larsen, 824 Los Lovatos Road, Santa Fe, NM 87501. Please allow eight weeks for processing.

Extra copies are often available. Please contact the editor (see masthead page 2) or the Group Chair in your area (see Group pages).

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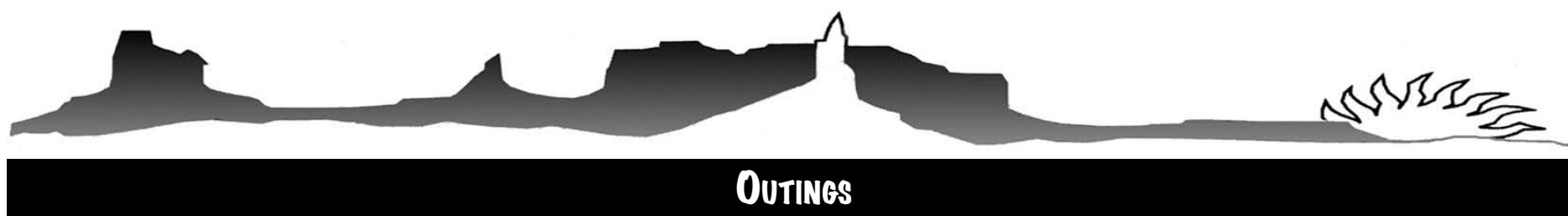
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Contributions, gifts, and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletter.



OUTINGS

Selected Sierra Club Outings for January, February, March 2008

Tuesday, January 1 • Impromptu strenuous hike or snowshoe, depending on interests and conditions – Tobin Oruch (505/820-2844 – Northern Group).

Saturday, January 5 • Hike to the Blowhole, Tor, and Cerro Rito in the Caja del Rio – 9 miles. Moderate/strenuous. Dikes, plugs, craters, cinder cones, and a gaping steam vent, long extinct. Off-trail, rough terrain. Norbert Sperlich (505/474-4354 – Northern Group).

Sunday, January 6 • Hike in La Cieneguilla to see petroglyphs – Easy/moderate. With guide Chip Conway. Dan Rusthoi (505/690-8967 – Northern Group).

Saturday, January 12 • Hike to Alamo Canyon in Bandelier – 6-plus miles, 1000' gain. Moderate. Great views, varied topography. Les Drapela (505/438-3306 – Northern Group).

Sunday, January 13 • Hike to Eagle Traps on Bandelier Mesa, or Ojito Wilderness if too snowy – 7-8 miles. Moderate. Off-trail. Stephen Markowitz (505/983-2779 – Northern Group).

Saturday, January 19 • Short hike and tour of the Bosque del Apache – The birds are back! Dinner afterwards in Socorro. Carol Chamberland (505/341-1027 – Central Group).

Saturday-Monday, January 19-21 • Reavis Ranch backpack, Superstition Mountains – 21 miles. Moderate with strenuous sections. Drive to Arizona Friday night. Hike Saturday morning through the Sonoran Desert, using an old wagon road; camp at the old Reavis Ranch meadow. Explore the surrounding area on Sunday and descend the trail back on Monday, with supper in Phoenix. Harry Newman (915/588-0093, swtraveller@aol.com – El Paso Group).

Saturday, January 19 • Snowshoe trek, Cerro Grande area – 8 miles, 2500' gain. Strenuous. Views of Valle Grande. Hike if poor snow. Michael di Rosa (505/667-0095 – Pajarito Group).

Saturday, January 19 • Hike to spectacular Tent Rocks – 4-5 miles, 900' gain. Easy/moderate. Hike among unique geologic formations and within slot canyons. Dan Rusthoi (505/690-8967 – Northern Group).

Sunday, January 20 • Snowshoe to Santa Fe Baldy or Puerto Nambe – 10-14 miles, 2000-3600' gain. Strenuous. Patrick O'Keefe (505/820-2359 – Northern Group).

Saturday, January 26 • Desert exploratory hike – 6-10 miles. Explore some of our most beautiful, incredible, and hidden landscapes; rarely trails, route rocky and uneven at times, some scrambling. Tom Petencin (505/271-9928, tompeten@juno.com – Central Group).

Sunday, January 27 • Hike in Cerrillos Hills Historic Park – Easy with guest historian Bill Baxter providing delightful commentary on the old mines and artifacts seen as we tour the park. Norma McCallan (505/471-0005 – Northern Group).

Sunday, January 27 • Snowshoe to Frazier Mountain, near Taos Ski Valley – 9 miles, 2700' gain. Strenuous. Great winter view of high peaks. Hal Davis (575/758-3949 – Taos Branch).

Sunday, February 3 • Strenuous hike into Bandelier backcountry – Norbert Sperlich (505/474-4354 – Northern Group).

Saturday, February 9 • Desert exploratory hike – 6-10 miles. Explore some of our most beautiful, incredible, and hidden landscapes; rarely trails, route rocky and uneven at times, some scrambling. Tom Petencin (505/271-9928, tompeten@juno.com – Central Group).

Saturday, February 9 • Snowshoe trip on Apache Canyon loop – 6.5 miles, 800' gain. Moderate. Patrick O'Keefe (505/820-2359 – Northern Group).

Saturday, February 9 • Hike in Caja del Rio – 10 miles, 2000' gain. Strenuous. Off-trail, rough sections. Down to Rio Grande, up on Montoso peak. Michael di Rosa (505/663-0648 – Pajarito Group).

Sunday, February 10 • Beginners' snowshoe clinic – Rent shoes and poles; come out and play in the snow for a couple of hours. Gear and technique tips will be shared. Marcia Skillman (505/699-3008 – Northern Group).

Sunday, February 10 • Snowshoe trek up Gavilan Trail – Up to 8 miles, 2000-2800' gain. Very strenuous. From Taos Ski Valley to ridgetop and along ridge to 11,792' peak. Hal Davis (575/758-3949 – Taos Branch).

Saturday, February 16 • Moderate hike in Bandelier – Les Drapela (505/438-3306 – Northern Group).

Sunday, February 17 • Hike in Ojito Wilderness – 6 miles. Moderate. Mostly off-trail. Great views guaranteed. Carol Chamberland (505/341-1027 – Central Group).

Saturday, February 23 • Moderate snowshoe outing in the Sangre de Cristo – David Van Winkle (505/820-1006 – Northern Group).

Saturday, February 23 • Desert exploratory hike – 6-10 miles. Explore some of our most beautiful, incredible, and hidden landscapes; rarely trails, route rocky and uneven at times, some scrambling. Tom Petencin (505/271-9928, tompeten@juno.com – Central Group).

Sunday, February 24 • Hike on Nun's Corner Loop – Easy. Pleasant walk in the woods close to town. Norma McCallan (505/471-0005 – Northern Group).

Sunday, February 24 • Snowshoe outings from Taos Ski Valley – Up to 10 miles, 2500-3300' gain. Very strenuous. To Bull of the Woods Pasture and up towards Gold Hill. Hal Davis (575/758-3949 – Taos Branch).

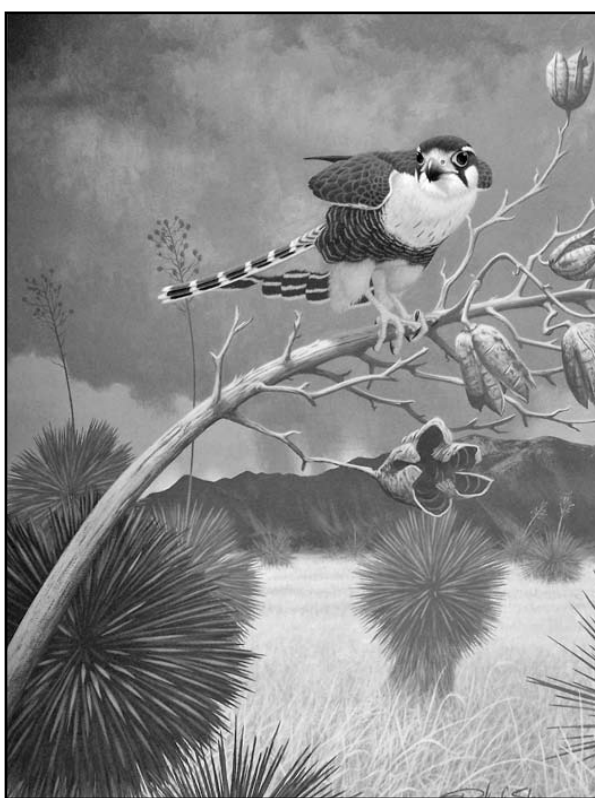
Saturday, March 1 • Hike to Red Rocks, near Abiquiu – 6-9 miles. Moderate/strenuous. Off-trail in Georgia O'Keefe country. Tobin Oruch (505/820-2844 – Northern Group).

Please check the five Groups' pages for more information on these trips and additional activities. All mileages are round trips. Participants must sign a liability waiver.

Bring Nature Indoors with This Beautiful Richard Sloan Print

Support your Rio Grande Chapter's important conservation and global climate change initiatives and enrich your home's ambiance by ordering this or another of the seven striking Richard Sloan prints offered only by the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club. These stunning 17-by-22-inch representations of some of our high desert's endangered raptors are numbered and signed by the artist, Richard Sloan, the world-renowned master wildlife painter. To see full-screen color pictures of the seven Sloan prints (Spotted Owl, Aplomado Falcon, American Kestrel, Burrowing Owl, Swainson's Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, and Golden Eagle) reserved exclusively as a thank-you for contributors to the Rio Grande Chapter, visit our website (<http://riogrande.sierraclub.org>). A contribution of \$140 will be recognized with the delivery of your choice of a signed and numbered Sloan print, shipped flat and ready for framing. These prints make great gifts! Contact Dan Lorimier (575/740-2927, daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org) to make your donation and get a Richard Sloan print.

—Dan Lorimier



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