

Rio Grande Sierran



NEWS OF THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

MARCH/APRIL 2008

Is NM Prepared for Climate Change-Related Water Problems?

It is getting warmer in New Mexico. But is New Mexico adequately addressing this temperature trend? It may be changing our water situation. It may have significant impacts on agriculture in New Mexico. Records show an increase in temperature statewide of 0.08° F per decade or about 1° F per century. For Albuquerque there are less years of data but the trend is greater, i.e. 0.23° F per decade; that translates into 2.3° F per century, which is a lot, and some predict that the rate of temperature increase will be on the rise.

by Sigmund Silber

One has to be careful about drawing conclusions with data. We know there are multi-decadal cycles related to Pacific and also amazingly Atlantic sea surface temperatures. Nevertheless, it appears as if the state is getting warmer. For December through February, the trend in Albuquerque is 0.33° F per decade.

Warming is important because most of our precipitation comes from frozen moisture that either falls as snow or melts and falls as rain. Although water in our refrigerator freezes at 32° F, it takes much lower temperatures – often as low as -20° F – for the fine, pure particles of water in our clouds to freeze.

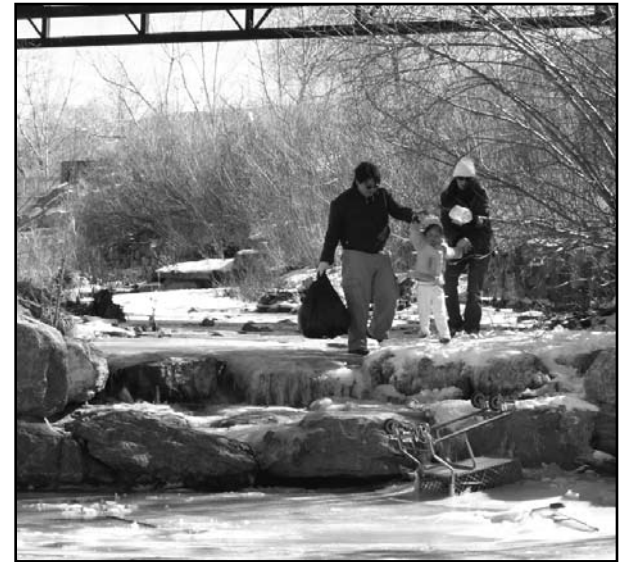
Summer clouds rise when they are warmed, and

eventually at higher altitudes the temperature is cold enough for the moisture to freeze and fall as melted snow, i.e. rain. So Southern New Mexico may not have a reduction in precipitation unless the monsoon is negatively impacted. But of course much of Southern New Mexico depends on Rio Grande and Pecos River water. And rates of evapotranspiration (evaporation from surfaces and transpiration by plants, which include trees) will increase as the temperature rises.

The clouds that stay close to our mountains and produce snow in the winter need very cold temperatures near the ground in order to make snow, and a warming trend raises the question of whether glaciation will take place as often as it has in the past. Will more moisture simply pass over the mountains rather than falling as snow or rain where it can feed the Rio Grande and Pecos River? Right now perhaps 30% of the moisture in our clouds passing over our northern mountains precipitates. That percentage may decline due to warmer temperatures as well as interference by small particles from coal-based power plants.

Not everyone agrees that the total winter precipitation (snow plus rain) in our northern mountains will decline, but all agree that the snowmelt pattern will be different, with stream flow starting earlier and ending earlier. How will that impact us? Will farmers be able to adjust to an earlier planting pattern? Probably yes. Will they attempt to have multiple plantings and harvesting in a longer summer? Probably yes, thus increasing the water use by the agricultural sector.

But stream flow from snowmelt will not be available later in the summer, creating conflict among surface water users. That suggests different methods of irrigation to minimize water losses and perhaps different crops for farming in late summer. One wonders if the NM Department of Agriculture and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts have begun to address these likely changes. They need to, and we need to have our laws and regulations such that farmers benefit when they apply water-efficient practices. Right now the farmer generally attempts to maximize revenue per acre farmed. We need to have them also maximizing revenue per acre-foot of water utilized. That is difficult when the water used is essentially free to the farmer, the only cost being the opportunity cost of not selling their water rights – a different conversation for another issue of the *Sierran*.



A Dragonfly School student and her parents pick up trash in the Santa Fe River corridor. Mayor David Coss and the Santa Fe Watershed Association advocate restoring flow to the river, which is dammed to provide municipal water – a scenario likely to become more common as NM water supplies are impacted by climate change. (Photo by Julie Doolittle)

Will the consumptive irrigation requirements (CIR) change? CIR is defined as the crop requirement for water less normal precipitation. If normal precipitation changes and if the crop requirement increases due to warmer temperatures, will the CIRs need to be redefined? If so, will this create an entirely new administrative problem for the State Engineer? Not only is that a big task, it will raise the amount of water that will need to be allocated to agriculture, and that is not currently figured into the State Water Plan. Will farmers depend more on groundwater for late summer irrigation? That could be very problematic for those depending on residential wells. Will the rate of decline of the Ogallala Aquifer accelerate and impact New Mexico in the 40-year planning period, particularly in Northeast NM? If so, what is the fallback plan?

Will summer precipitation become more important? What are the implications of having more water in the tributaries of the Rio Grande and Pecos? Should we be concerned about floods, lightning, hail, and tornadoes? Are we prepared for the water quality issues that storm water creates? Should we be looking for ways to slow the flow of water down arroyos and streams to

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Bequests and a Kindly Spirit

Last year the Rio Grande Chapter received the timely and surprising news that we had received a bequest from the estate of Patricia Van Ingen. It was timely in that the bequest entirely made up our budget shortfall in 2007, which had been of much concern. It was surprising in that Ms. Van Ingen was entirely unknown to us.

For the next several months we worked to find out more about her – not an easy task as she had died in February 1999 and her estate had been in adjudication since. But what we learned told us about a very surprising individual and one we would have liked to have known.

Patricia Van Ingen was part Anglo and part Cherokee. How much of either is unknown to even her closest friends. But it was from her Cherokee mother that she received her native heritage and created within her the themes that dominated her work and her art.

She studied art first in New York and then in Paris. While in Paris developing her art, she became a part of the expatriate American artist community. Ms. Van Ingen was then – and remained – a very striking individual: so much so that Man Ray, already a renowned photographer, used her as a model in his work. Returning to New York in the 1960s and following a suggestion from Andy Warhol, she opened the PVI Gallery on East 73rd Street. She showed superb ethnic art as well as works by such artists as Warhol, John Chamberlain, Samaras, and Christo.

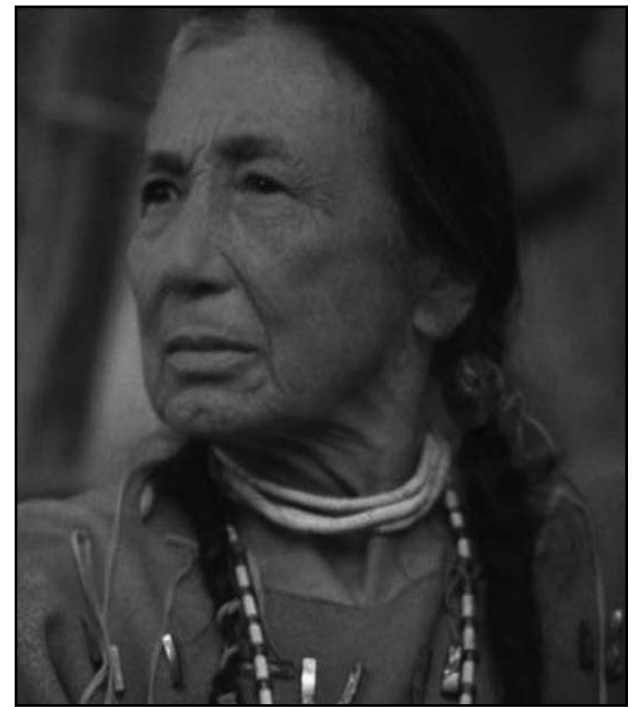
It was natural then that Ms. Van Ingen ultimately came to live and work in Santa Fe. Those who knew her then referred to her as “exotic” and “mysterious.” She seemed to have lived a modest life in New Mexico. It was a place that seemed to fit her. In 1989, however, she found a new expression for her art – motion pictures. In that year she appeared as “Pueblo Woman” in the feature film *Powwow Highway*. Small parts followed and in 1994 she moved to Los Angeles, registered with the Native American Indian Talent and Casting Agency, and got more serious about her acting career.

Her friend and agent Marjorie Tanin referred to her in this period as the oldest female Native American in the talent pool. Character roles naturally followed in television (roles in *Dr. Quinn – Medicine Woman*, *Harts of the West*, *Promised Land*, and even *Roseanne*) and in independent features. Her last role (1998) was as Anuba in the feature *Wind River*, opposite Russell Means, Wes Studi, and Karen Allen. The photo accompanying this article is from that movie – her last.

We at the Sierra Club thank Patricia Van Ingen for her love of the land and her concern for New Mexico. We would have liked to have known her in life. Our research continues.

For more information or to learn how you can leave a bequest to the Sierra Club, contact Chapter Treasurer Cliff Larsen (505/466-2128, clarsen1@ix.netcom.com).

—Cliff Larsen



Patricia Van Ingen as Anuba in *Wind River* (1998). (Photo courtesy of Lion's Gate Films)

Club Election Coming This Spring

The annual election for the Club's Board of Directors is now underway. Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) your national Sierra Club ballot. This will include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club's website.

The Board of Directors sets Club policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the Executive Director and staff to operate the Club. Voting for candidates who express your views on how the Club should grow and change is both a privilege and responsibility of membership. Members frequently state that they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. You can learn more by asking questions of your group and chapter leadership and other experienced members you know. Visit the Club's election website: www.sierraclub.org/bod/2008election. This site provides links to additional information about candidates, and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment.

Thanks and Farewell, Geoff Brown!

With this issue we bid farewell to our indefatigable Chapter webmaster Geoff Brown. Geoff and his wife, Paige, are moving to Denver in April to be closer to family.

Geoff has spent countless hours designing, organizing, updating, and continually improving the website. (Visit <http://riogrande.sierraclub.org> to admire his work while you still can.) He has also served as webmaster for the Southern and Central groups. Thanks to his dedication, insight, and creativity, the website has become a major tool in furthering the Chapter's efforts to protect and preserve New Mexico's environment.

Thanks for your wonderful contributions, Geoff. We wish you much happiness in your next adventure!

Legislative Session Yields Victories and New Understandings

In New Mexico each Legislature meets for two years with a 60-day session the first year and a 30-day session the second year, which focuses on state budget issues plus some non-budget bills from the Governor. The 48th Legislature adjourned on February 14 after a contentious 30 days. This year the tensions between Republicans and Democrats, progressives and conservatives, as well as pro-environment and pro-big business interests, were all heightened and complicated by an elevated mistrust and aggravation between the Legislative and Executive branches.

The Chapter fought to pass our priority legislation with mixed results but an overall sense of success in this year's difficult legislative process. Of the four proactive bills we vigorously lobbied to get passed, two major efforts were successful while two provided lessons in legislative attitudes and processes that will assist us in their passage next year.

HB305 Utility Customer Load Management

After months of work and negotiations between clean-energy advocates including the Rio Grande Chapter, utilities, and the administration, New Mexico now has an energy efficiency policy with goals and standards. Similar to the Renewable Energy Portfolio that the State strengthened last year, our efficiency portfolio goal is an energy consumption reduction through efficiency programs of 15% below 2005 energy consumption levels by 2015 and 20% by 2020. This bill allows utilities to make a profit on creating energy efficiency opportunities that will save consumers money by forestalling the need to build and pay for new power plants. The benefits of this legislation include lower bills for consumers and very significant reductions in CO₂ generation (compared to building a new coal-fired power plant) to help New Mexico better respond to global climate change.

reductions in New Mexico's greenhouse gas emissions, we are likely to push this legislation again next session.

The Leave No Child Inside Act, HB583 TV & Video Game Excise Tax

This bill was tabled in the House Business & Industry Committee (HBIC). While we were disappointed in the final outcome, we knew from the beginning that the bill faced a difficult uphill battle. While Democrats and Republicans alike supported the concept of outdoor education and recreation, they did not support a new tax to fund it, especially in an election year. They felt that paying an additional \$0.50 on a \$50 video game was too much to ask (of retailers) to provide tens of thousands of underserved NM children an outdoor education experience that would improve their health and academic performance. Of course, we disagreed. We are exploring different funding mechanisms for the next session.

Funding in HB43 Severance Tax Bond Projects for the River Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (RERI) and Land & Wildlife Projects

The funding levels provided by the Legislature were not matched by the Governor, but stand at \$1,500,000 for Land & Wildlife projects and \$2,800,000 for River Ecosystem Restoration Initiative projects. In HB2 General Appropriation Act of 2008, funding for low-income weatherization – which lowers energy costs to low-income consumers and lowers the overall demand for energy, again by increasing energy efficiency – is identified at \$800,000, plus a special appropriation by the Governor that will include another \$300,000-\$500,000, for a total of between \$1,100,000 and \$1,300,000.

SJM40 Study Off Road Motorized Vehicle Use

The Chapter also worked for the passage of SJM40. This memorial sets up a panel of stakeholders to study the impacts and uses of off-road vehicles (ORVs) in New Mexico. This study cannot fail to highlight the destructive impacts of ORVs on our public lands, and will broaden the debate from storytelling to statistics with much-needed baseline information. This should also have positive impacts on our ability to influence the Forest Service's Travel Management Plan.

Other Bills

Several bills designed to logjam administrative rulemaking and avenge the Legislature for the administrative agencies' promulgation of new "pit rules" for oil and gas exploration and Clean Cars tailpipe emissions standards were stopped in committee because of their obviously destructive intent. These included HJR12 Legislative Review Of Regulatory Rules, CA, sponsored by Representative Dan Foley, and SJR5 Legislative Review Of Regulatory Rules, CA, sponsored by Senator Stuart Ingle. These joint resolutions called for a constitutional amendment that would give legislative authority over agency rulemaking.

To join in our ongoing legislative efforts during and between sessions, contact Chapter Conservation Coordinator and Lobbyist Dan Lorimier (575/740-2927, daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org).

—Dan Lorimier

Dia de Los Lobos on March 14


On Friday, March 14, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the KiMo Theater in downtown Albuquerque, a coalition of hunters, conservationists, and elected officials will host Dia de Los Lobos, a public rally for ensuring the preservation of our Mexican Gray Wolves. Rick Bass, well-known nature writer and environmental activist, will also be featured. This event is free and open to the public. Come join the howl to action and be the difference in saving our lobos in New Mexico. For more information, please call the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (505/843-8696).

Rio Grande Chapter Quarterly Meetings

The Chapter's Conservation and Executive Committee meetings will be held March 29-30, at Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge. The following meetings will be held in the summer; location to be determined. Contact Conservation Chair Ken Hughes or Chapter Chair Susan Martin (see masthead, page 2) for more information. Carpooling is encouraged.

SB403 Resource & Energy Efficient Buildings

This groundbreaking legislation would have required the use of green building principles, resulting in a 50% energy savings (over conventional design) for all public buildings (libraries, municipal and county administration buildings, senior centers, fire stations, etc.) receiving funding from legislators through the Severance Tax Bonding Act. The Senate Committees Committee, which decides if a Senate bill is "germane" (in the short session, bills must impact the state budget to be sent through the legislative process), didn't release SB403 into that process despite our efforts to convince them the impact on New Mexico's budget was real. Since communities wouldn't be saddled with higher energy costs to operate the building over its 30- to 40-year life and energy efficiency could again contribute to long-term




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An Emergency Interim Drilling Ordinance for Santa Fe County

In late January Governor Richardson issued an official executive order calling for a moratorium on State drilling permits in the Galisteo Basin and Santa Fe County. The Governor called for studies of the impacts of oil and gas exploration and production in the fragile basin.

Three weeks later the Santa Fe Board of County Commissioners surprised the citizens who have been demanding an extension of the three-month County moratorium and a comprehensive planning process. The Commissioners proposed a moratorium for at least 12 months, hired a land use expert, and called for a comprehensive land use planning process.

Citizens have argued for many months that the County must complete studies of the complex geology and hydrology of the area and address the threats of oil and gas exploration in the larger context of the County growth plan. Archaeological surveys and adverse economic impact studies must also be conducted. Now Dr. Bob Freilich has been retained by the County to assist in the drafting of comprehensive land use plans.

Dr. Freilich has promised that citizens will be part of the process, and that he is not overly concerned with the threats of lawsuits by the oil and gas industry.

Hundreds of residents who have devoted thousands of hours to attending public meetings, calling their elected officials, and writing articulate letters and articles can now breathe a little easier. But Industry has promised that they will fight this encroachment on their unrestrained pursuit of



those last marginal and difficult-to-recover hydrocarbons. Industry will continue to lobby state and federal officials to circumvent and preempt county zoning authority.

The lively public debate about the rights of citizens to take back their power on the local level and demand that their local officials zone polluting industries out of their yards and away from limited water resources will continue. Thousands of citizens of Santa Fe County insist that there is no preemption of county authority to protect rural residential areas and save our aquifers and cultural resources.

For more information, contact Johnny Micou of Drilling Santa Fe (505/474-3061, drillingsantafe@earthlink.net), or visit Drilling Santa Fe's website (www.drillingsantafe.org).

—Nancy Seewald



Dozens of citizens rallied for clean energy at the Roundhouse on a snowy February day. The event was sponsored by WildEarth Guardians, which commissioned renowned artist Bob Haozous to create 20-foot-high steel sculptures depicting the visual representation of the threat of oil and gas. Anyone interested in "hosting" one of these rigs on their property as a public protest against oil and gas drilling should contact Rebecca Sobel, WildEarth Guardians Conservation Organizer (505/988-9126 ext. 1152, rsobel@wildearthguardians.org). (Photos by Ellen Cavalli)

Recommended Reading for Earth Day

Thrillcraft: The Environmental Consequences of Motorized Recreation

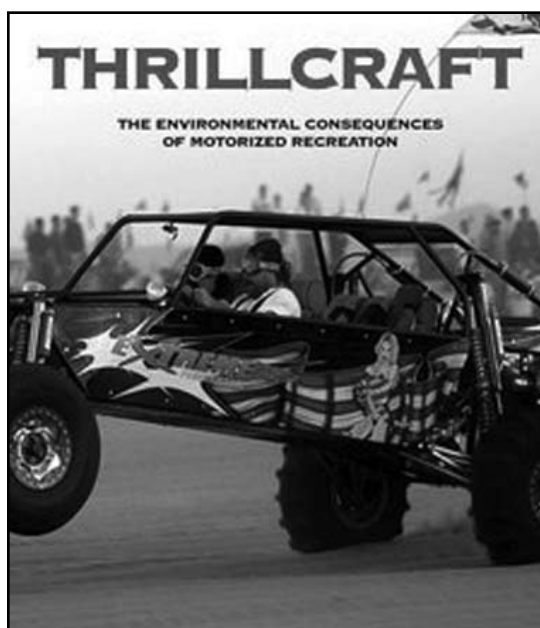
Renowned activist and author George Wuerthner's newest book, *Thrillcraft*, is a stunning indictment of the destruction of landscapes across the United States by motorized recreational vehicles. The photographs and essays in this beautifully produced, large-format volume expose a startling array of devastating effects to public lands and waters from four-wheelers, dirt bikes, jet skis, and other motorized recreational craft that are penetrating the last bastions of wild America.

Thrillcraft, a project of the Foundation for Deep Ecology, asks the reader to look at how American society has come to a place of – in the words of James Howard Kunstler – "mechanized lumpenleisure" and to think about how to stop the rampant degradation as leisure machines run amok on America's public lands. Essays by more than 25 policy experts, activists, and others, running the gamut from writers like Rick Bass to scientists like Barrie Gilbert, report on the harm done by thrillcraft, examine the origins of the craze, and propose solutions that value conservation over access and abuse.

Growing thrillcraft use is increasingly responsible for habitat fragmentation, harm to sensitive wildlife, soil erosion, the spread of invasive weeds, and the loss of wilderness tranquility, as well as water and air pollution. *Thrillcraft* brings together many of the environmental movement's finest thinkers and advocates to explore how past and current land management has allowed for the widespread abuse of public lands. From the Algodones Dunes in Southern California to the White River National Forest in Vermont, Wuerthner's tour de force examines the wide range of lands under assault by motorized pleasurecraft and the swiftly growing crowds of users that are addicted to them.

The first book to fully expose the extent of the threat to our natural heritage from motorized recreation, *Thrillcraft* offers a vision for a future when the howl of the wind or a wolf might be heard again over the roar of machines.

—Chris Kassar, Center for Biological Diversity



New Novel Takes on Endangered Species and Extinction

How the Dead Dream, a new novel by Center for Biological Diversity staffer Lydia Millet, tells the story of an ambitious young real estate developer in L.A. who, after a personal crisis, becomes obsessed with rare and vanishing animals and starts breaking into zoos at night to be close to them. Millet, an award-winning novelist who also happens to be married to Center for Biological Diversity founder Kieran

Suckling, has written one of the very first American novels to approach the emotional and aesthetic implications of the extinction tragedy. *How the Dead Dream* is notable for its thoughtful engagement with the social and personal effects of massive species loss:

He soon learned to recognize the signs of an animal's imminent disappearance. Some were tagged or collared or photographed, some monitored by bureaucrats. Sometimes a group or individual took up the cause of an animal or a plant and could muster the rationale for a lawsuit, and often the courts favored the victim; but the victim remained a victim and for each victim whose passing was noted thousands more slid away in the dark.

As the story's protagonist struggles by night with ideas of human aloneness and what it might mean to be a "last" animal, he's building sprawling subdivisions by day, grappling with his suicidal mother, whose husband has left her to find himself working in a gay bar in Key West, and fending off attacks by his brutal and jealous business partner Fulton.

How the Dead Dream is Millet's sixth novel, and not the first to explore environmental issues; her fifth, *Oh Pure and Radiant Heart*, dealt with the moral, cultural and philosophical legacy of nuclear weapons. Available from publisher Counterpoint in January 2008, *How the Dead Dream* has already been voted one of the top books of the year by both the National Book Critics' Circle and the American Library Association's Booklist.

Reading Group Guides to help spur discussion in book clubs and classes are available for both conservation-focused (www.softskull.com/files/HtDDguideB.pdf) and general (www.softskull.com/files/HtDDguideA.pdf) audiences.

—Kieran Suckling, Center for Biological Diversity

Santa Fe Elementary School Goes Sustainable

Alvord Elementary School has been designated by the Santa Fe School Board to become the district's first-ever magnet school and its first school with a theme of ecological science and sustainability! Located next to the Railyard on Paseo de Peralta, Alvord will open as a magnet in August of 2009. And you're invited to help bring this forward.

The 2010 Turnaround team – Brian and Rebecca Skeele and John Goekler – has been assisting the Alvord Parent Teacher Committee and neighborhood supporters in this process. We envision this historic neighborhood school as a center for community and as a demonstration site for social, economic, and ecological sustainability. Expanding programs and facility access to the wider community will give Santa Fe a location where students of all ages can learn about transforming our suburban lifestyle into one that's "good for people, good for the planet and good for the polar bears."

First Steps

A kickoff meeting, facilitated by the 2010 Team, was held at the school on January 26. Some 75 people participated over the course of the day. They self-organized into work groups to start on curriculum, after-school programs, outreach, fund development, facility redesign and more. Each crew created its own agenda and process, which the 2010 Team will help coordinate and facilitate as we go forward.

The energy and sheer genius in the room were incredible. It was a swarm of brilliant educators, architects, landscape designers, farmers, community organizers, curriculum developers, tech monsters, outdoor leaders, environmentalists, toddlers, and three-year-olds. New connections were made, alliances formed, directions indicated, cookies devoured. It was wonderful.

We'll soon post the contact info for each work group, and summaries of each group's notes from the January 26 meeting on the 2010 website (www.2010turnaround.com).

Next Steps

On January 30, Brian and John met with Santa Fe Public Schools Assistant Superintendent Bobbie Gutierrez and the architects of the district's master planning team to talk about how we can transform all SFPS sites into community facilities. (Imagine that instead of "monoculture" sites used only a few hours a day for just 180 days a year, our schools were green-built, mixed-use profit centers that serve the needs not only of our kids and families, but also of surrounding neighborhoods and jurisdictions – while serving as demonstration sites for sustainable practices and education!)

Right now, the school district is entering a facilities master planning process with its consulting architect firm, Facilities Planning and Associates (FP&A). This effort will ultimately result in a capital bond to improve district facilities being presented to voters in 2009.

The district and FP&A need to know by May 1 what sort of facilities improvements will be needed at Alvord to support the new curriculum and programs. The FP&A will then help with facility design, including green additions and renovations, traffic flow improvement for student drop-off/pick-up, and . . . what else? Greenhouses, water recycling, renewable energy, gardens, composting . . .

If you would like to be involved in this process – which we fully expect will spread to other schools, in the district and beyond – please let us know. If you're interested but not sure exactly where you might want to play, get on the 2010 mailing list, come to a gathering, and find out. (Maybe it's an area that hasn't yet been recognized, and your involvement will be the catalyst!) We communicate primarily by email/listserv, so send your contact info and areas of interest to PolarSam@2010turnaround.com. (All electrons are, of course, 100% recycled.)

Schools have traditionally been the Hearts of Communities, and they can become so again. They



Mary Ann Clough, an Albuquerque resident who came to Santa Fe to shop at the winter farmers market, was the happy recipient of four compact fluorescent bulbs, among the 200 distributed that day by Club volunteers at the market and at Sustainability Day in January at Alvord Elementary School. (Photo by Ken Hughes)

can not only demonstrate ecological, social, and economic sustainability, but also anchor neighborhoods as centers of lifelong learning, profit sharing, mixed use, mixed income, and community connection.

For more information or to participate in this effort, email PolarSam@2010turnaround.com, or call John Goekler (505/992-1486) or Brian Skeele (505/310-1797).

—John Goekler

EPA Approves New Tool for Water Management

It is rare to receive new tools for the environmental toolbox. Thanks to many years of persistence from activist Elaine Cimino and hydrologist Zane Spiegel, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has granted the Espanola Basin designation as a "sole source aquifer" (SSA). The EPA grants this protection to aquifers which can be shown to provide over 50% of drinking water to residents within the aquifer, with no other feasible sources available if the aquifer were to become contaminated. Zane was able to define a such a hydrologically connected area stretching north to south from

Tres Piedras to Cochiti, and east to west from Sangre de Cristo to the Jemez, which provides water to 170,000 water users.

The designation places under EPA scrutiny any projects that are partially federally funded. This would include projects for the protection of our aquifer, such as sewage treatment plants, and also includes projects that might further put our aquifer at risk, like housing projects. Los Alamos National Laboratory, which is entirely federally funded, does not fall under the scrutiny of the EPA under the sole-source designation.

"This does not offer the level of protection our aquifer deserves, but it is a huge step towards recognition of how important our water supply is to us," states artist/activist Elaine Cimino. Elaine's career in teaching drawing, painting, and art history has been complemented by her efforts to protect our water. She views the risks to our water supply by the weapons research and production at Los Alamos as one of the biggest risks that downstream users face.

Hydrologist Zane Spiegel has been expressing concern for our management, or lack thereof, of water for over four decades. Zane did seminal work on the hydrology of various New Mexico aquifers back in the '60s and '70s; his work continues to be quoted in professional papers. His career included extensive periods working for the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer and the U.S. Geological Survey.

The Sierra Club backed the EPA designation, spanning two applications, the first of which failed for lack of adequate boundary designation of the aquifer. Ultimately, Zane was able to define eight hydrologically connected aquifers that were accepted as fulfilling the requirements of the SSA designation. The City of Santa Fe and the County of Santa Fe both objected to the second application. Overall about a dozen comments were received by the EPA, with half in support.

The Edwards Aquifer in Texas, underlying San Antonio, has been one of the most active SSAs, with recognition that the aquifer is being depleted faster than recharge, and local governmental entities subsequently placing much greater scrutiny on projects affecting recharge areas, including granting monies to study endangered and rare species. Overall, about 100 SSA designations have been granted by the EPA, from Hawaii to the East Coast. This is New Mexico's first such designation.

Protecting the health of our citizens, by providing safe drinking water, is the ultimate goal of the EPA sole-source designation. Even after new projects that are slated to be built or are being planned are brought on-line, like the Buckman Direct-Diversion project, over 50% of our drinking water will come from our aquifer.

For more information, contact John Buchser (505/820-0201, jbuchser@comcast.net).

—John Buchser

WANTED: Chapter Webmaster

Wanted: Webmaster for the Rio Grande Chapter website! This is a great opportunity for a volunteer to exercise creativity and environmental passion, while working under Club guidelines. Previous web experience highly desirable, as is working with volunteers. If you're interested, contact Editorial Committee Chair Norma McCallan (nmccallan@mindspring.com).

In the Face of the Inevitable: Working to Preserve Ecosystems

This Earth Day, let's ask ourselves, "What can we do about the climate crisis?" "How are our lifestyle choices going to make a difference?" Surely every choice, from using compact fluorescent lightbulbs to riding our bikes, is important. Each slows or decreases greenhouse gas emissions and their effects on the environment.

Which then begs the question – given that climate change is happening, what can be done to increase resiliency to those changes? In particular, how does the diversity of wildlife species in the arid West survive?

It stands to reason that healthy, fully functional ecosystems are the most resilient to change. In a system with nothing missing, the sum is greater than the parts and can withstand changes that would be a fatal blow to an unhealthy or compromised ecosystem. Species are less likely to be pushed toward the brink of extinction in healthy ecosystems.

For 10 years, WildEarth Guardians (formerly Forest Guardians and Sinapu) has concentrated on restoring once-degraded streamside ecosystems to health as a step towards resiliency in the face of inevitable climate change. In this land of little rain, green river corridors are literally our arteries of life. Eighty percent of all vertebrate species in the Southwest depend on wetland areas, and over half of these species cannot survive without regular access to riparian zones. By removing invasive trees such as salt cedar and planting thousands of native cottonwoods and willows, WildEarth Guardians' river preserves continue to grow as safe-havens for beavers, migrating songbirds, cutthroat trout, and numerous other wildlife. An added bonus is that these trees absorb some of the harmful greenhouse gas emissions from the air. Restoring streamside habitat makes wildlife less vulnerable to climate change while simultaneously offsetting our carbon footprint.

You've probably already replaced your lightbulbs and started riding your bike more, so why not restore an ecosystem this Earth Day! You've got the power in your hands. Join WildEarth Guardians this spring at any of our Earth Day volunteer restoration events; be a part of a wonderful day of tree planting that culminates weeks of preparation, and see another section of stream return to its fully functional beauty.

- **March 8:** Las Huertas Creek in Placitas, NM
- **April 5:** Santa Fe River in Santa Fe, NM
- **April 18 and 19:** Rio Puerco, eight miles south of Cuba, NM
- **April 26:** Bluewater Creek near Grants, NM

For more information, contact Carol Norton at WildEarth Guardians (505/988-9126 ext. 1150, cnorton@wildearthguardians.org).

—Carol Norton

Is NM Prepared for Climate Change-Related Water Problems? *(continued from page 1)*

achieve greater aquifer recharge? Should we attempt to capture more rainwater prior to having it be lost to evapotranspiration, and if so, will the State Engineer allow it?

Keeping water in our rivers of course will be an issue that is important to the environmental community, since riparian wildlife needs water in the river to survive, especially during certain periods of time that vary by species. I personally believe that we need to move forward with plans for an environmental water bank where the rights to a certain amount of water belong to an organization that allows this water to remain in the river or in wetlands rather than being used for other purposes.

Many New Mexico rivers start outside of New Mexico. The allocation to each state of the water available from these rivers is governed by agreements among the states along the flow of these rivers, and these agreements, called "compacts," were ratified by Congress. New Mexico is a party to many river compacts, with the two most important covering the Rio Grande and Pecos River. In recent years, we have not had two serious drought years in a row, but some predict increased variability due to warmer conditions, especially conditions in our oceans. If we have even two drought years in a row, we very well might have Rio Grande Compact delivery problems in one case, to Texas along the Pecos, and in the other case, to a group consisting of Texas and Southern New Mexico users along the Rio Grande. Failure to meet our river compact (and endangered species protection) obligations to have sufficient water flowing downstream could easily lead to a federal takeover of the management of our own water resources. Few want the federal government enforcing water allocations in our own State.

What if we had the biblical seven wet years followed by seven dry years? That is where storage becomes desirable. Perhaps the most recognizable form of storage is reservoirs. Should we have more reservoirs or expand the ones we have? In the past there have been mixed reviews for reservoirs as they interfere with the natural flow of water and can result in much water being lost to evaporation, especially in the warmer parts of our state.

The river compacts present limitations on increasing our reservoir capacity. Certainly the loss of reservoir capacity due to sediment filling in our reservoirs can be corrected (at a cost), but often we are not even sure how to prevent reoccurrence of the silting-in. Another form of storage is in our soil. Healthier, more absorbent soil and vegetation can help with year-to-year variations in precipitation. Some believe that excess water in wet years should be injected into our aquifers.

Drought does not necessarily occur everywhere at the same time. Perhaps there are ways to adjust stream flow and the allocation among states and even Mexico if there is the right spirit of cooperation.

Right now the municipal, domestic, commercial, and industrial sectors appear to be growing most rapidly. With correction of the current overpumping of aquifers, the projected requirement for additional water, before factoring in conservation, is about 500,000 acre-feet per year by 2040 which is a doubling of current usage. Conservation will reduce but not eliminate this need for more water. The prevailing wisdom is that agriculture will be able to adjust and use more water in wet years and less in drier years. That makes sense unless the consumptive irrigation requirements increase due to warming, in which case all bets are off.

There are many variables that have not yet been factored into the State Water Plan. Will we need more water for food security reasons and to deal with the potential for increasing costs of transportation, i.e. more water for local agriculture? And what if the population projections are too conservative? Will oil and gas activity in New Mexico require more water or provide a source of water? This is a highly technical question that is just beginning to be addressed. Will we build our housing so as to become more water (and energy) efficient? Will the need for more residential cooling impact water and also energy requirements? We need to both build more sensibly and find a way to retrofit existing residential, commercial, industrial, and governmental structures.

If the pattern of the availability of water is changing around the state, might we want to consider a changing pattern of population growth? Should growth be discouraged where water may become less available? Should growth be encouraged where water may become more available? Difficult questions. Perhaps a location-dependent state income-tax rate would be a way to encourage/discourage development based on water and energy availability.

If we have better water availability in the southern part of our state, will we attempt to move that water northward? Moving water north is certainly feasible when you have river systems that are flowing north to south. You simply allow less water to flow south; you do not actually have to physically move the water north. But is that equitable to regions experiencing relatively more abundant precipitation or slower growth? We may already have enough regional tensions in New Mexico without adding new reasons not to get along.

Should we be developing additional water sources

or should we be focused exclusively on water conservation and managing population growth to fit with the currently projected water resources? There are many options for increasing water supplies in New Mexico, including more extensive capture of precipitation beyond roof capture but from any surface, exploitation of deep brackish water that is very plentiful along the Rio Grande rift where we have most of our population, or even attempts to capture more of the moisture that passes over our state, i.e. weather modification. Every option for more water, including the traditional method of drilling more shallow wells, comes with a set of negative implications requiring careful analysis and regulation to avoid the worst of the potential negative impacts. But if we are not able to control population growth or make drastic reductions in our water use per capita and per dollar of agricultural product, we will be forced to address the question of how to increase water supplies.

There seem to be a myriad of very difficult questions but also a variety of potential solutions that can keep us viable as a state even with relatively extreme changes in our climate. Is there anyone in a position to influence policy in New Mexico who is asking and attempting to develop the answers to these questions? Or are we waiting to see if the dire projections come about and expect to be able to deal with the problems at that time? It probably would make sense to start planning now rather than wait until there is little time to adjust. And of course we need to reduce humans' contribution to the warming trend.

It should be obvious from this article that this author does not believe that we are responding at all adequately to the challenges of warming. Those interested in working on this problem are invited to contact the author. It matters not if the warming in New Mexico is caused by human activities or natural cycles. It has clearly been warming, and it is prudent to both be diligent in our efforts to reduce it and also learn how to adapt to it. We are dealing with stresses on both our water and energy situation and perhaps other threats to our existence related to population growth and potentially less per capita tax revenues. When you are dealing with two or three or more major changes happening, it requires a more integrated approach to planning for the future. This is not being done, and the Sierra Club wants to see more thought given to how we can improve the situation rather than the senseless competition between the Legislature and the Governor and among different parts of New Mexico, which appears to be dominating the debate.

For more information, contact Water Issues Chair Sigmund Silber (see masthead, page 2).



PAJARITO GROUP NEWS

COOL COUNTIES POWWOW!

Posse Shack, North Mesa: Saturday, March 8, 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Reducing production of CO₂ to limit global warming is one of the most critical issues facing us. It will require action as individuals, and at all levels of government. On Saturday, March 8, the Pajarito Group is hosting our Second Annual Environmental Powwow at the Posse Shack on North Mesa. We will be encouraging community members to both take action as individuals to reduce their own carbon footprint, and to encourage Los Alamos County to take further steps toward this goal.

Do you favor the County formally joining with over 950 U.S. cities and counties in the Cool Cities/Counties Program to commit to ongoing efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions by 80% below current levels by 2050?

The program was inspired by U.S. mayors who, tired of waiting for the federal government to enact legislation to reduce CO₂ pollution, initiated their own U.S. Mayors

Climate Protection Agreement with the goal of "Solving Global Warming One City at a Time."

Our County government has already taken significant steps to reduce our carbon footprint, and in fact, has taken the lead on LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). Los Alamos requires that new public construction must meet higher LEED standards. In addition, the Council has written into its development agreement with the Boyer Company that the new Trinity Development must build to basic LEED standards. But the County Council needs to know that the community stands firmly behind these and future efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions.

At the Cool Counties Powwow we will ask:

- What aspect of climate change is most important to each of us?
- What actions are we as individuals pledging to take in our daily lives to reduce life-threatening greenhouse gases?

- What can we do to support the County's goal of becoming Green?

The goals of the Powwow are to provide information on steps we can commit to taking as individuals to reduce our personal carbon use; to inform the community about the Cool Cities/Counties program; and to begin the process of generating the community support, which is needed before the County can be expected to participate in this program.

To find out more about being Cool, check out <http://coolcities.us>.

VOLUNTEERS ARE STILL NEEDED TO MAKE THE POWOW A SUCCESS!

Could you help set up tables, give out door-prize tickets, or run last-minute errands? Please call Ilse Bleck (505/662-2368) or Mark Jones (505/662-9443).

Pajarito Group Directory

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

Executive Committee

Chair: Ilse Bleck
ibleck@yahoo.com 505/662-2368
Vice-Chair: Jody Benson 505/662-4782
Secretary: Deirdre Witherell
witherell@lanl.gov 505/661-8249
Treasurer: David Gemeinhart
ddgem@losalamos.com 505/672-6267
Michael Di Rosa
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Mark Jones
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Committee Chairs

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Energy, Transportation: Deirdre Witherell
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Grazing, National Forests, Wetlands,
Wilderness: David Gemeinhart
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Global Warming: Charles Keller
alfanso@cybermesa.com 505/662-7915
Webmeister: Jennifer Macke
jpmacke@comcast.net 505/695-9275

Meetings

There will be no general meeting in March; please attend the Powwow instead!

Wednesday, April 2, 7:00 p.m. • Upstairs Meeting Room, Mesa Public Library

A Three-Part Extravaganza:

- The Sierra Club Science Fair Winners Present Their Projects
- Mark Jones Gives a Rundown on the 2007 NM Legislative Session
- The Results of the Powwow Challenge

The winners of the Pajarito Group's Special Environmental Awards for the 2008 Science Fair have been invited to present their projects. Their insights and enthusiasm will inspire us to remember the joy of asking questions and seeking answers about the natural world that we love. (Listed alphabetically) **Joe Abeyta's** fieldwork showed that (counter-intuitively, and despite the Cerro Grande Fire) in some areas neither County residents nor the County government have cleared flammable vegetation from near struc-

tures. **Nate Bublitz** observed birds at his feeder to discover whether or not the shape of the birds' beaks determined what kind of food the birds preferred. **Lily Fehler** also used The Burn as her laboratory, as her ongoing project questions whether thinning a tree adjacent or attached to another live tree destabilizes the remaining tree so that it will fall over. **Alexandra Hehlen** studied oceanographic research to model the relationship between the fishing industry and harbor porpoises. **Chandler Lauretzin** experimented with whether or how different types of "gray water" affected vegetation. **Ani Nadiga** studied whether overcrowding could affect survival of mealworms, and how mealworm overcrowding might compare to that of humans.

Earth Day, Saturday, April 26, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. • Pajarito Environmental Education Center, Orange Street – Hot Ideas for Cool Cities

Please join us to be informed and inspired, as well as to be challenged to continue our commitment to Cool Counties.

Outings

Saturday, March 15 • Hike in Caja del Rio, down to Rio Grande and up on Montoso Peak – 10 miles RT, 2000' gain. Strenuous. Mostly off-trail, some rough sections. Michael Di Rosa (505/663-0648 or 505/667-0095).

Saturday, April 5 • Cerro Grande hike – A steep climb of 2 miles and an elevation gain of 1300' will take us to the 10,199' peak, the highest in Bandelier National Monument. Bring sunscreen, appropriate clothing, snacks, and water. Ilse Bleck (505/662-2368 after March 31 or email ibleck@yahoo.com).

Saturday, April 12 • Ancho Rapids down Rio Grande to Frijoles Canyon, and up on Falls Trail to Bandelier Visitor Center – With car shuttle. Strenuous. 10 miles, 1000' gain. Some rough off-trail. Michael Di Rosa (505/663-0648 or 505/667-0095).

Please sign up now for this Labor Day outing:

Thursday-Monday, August 28-September 1 • Pecos Area Family Camping at the Holy Ghost Campground – Facilities include a covered gazebo with picnic benches and plenty of space for group meals, water, modern pit toilets. Dense, mature spruce forest. Excellent hiking possibilities: Redondo, Santa Fe Baldym and Lake Peak. Cave Creek for the kids. Limited to 8 cars or RVs and a max of 40 people. Price: \$25 per auto or RV or trailer space plus \$5 per person. To make a reservation, send a check to Dick Opsahl, 141 Chamisa St., Los Alamos, NM 87544. Dick and Judy Opsahl (opsahl@losalamos.com).

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



TAOS BRANCH NEWS

El Rio Grande Del Norte NCA

For some months the BLM, local stakeholders, and the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance have been working with our senators to craft a national conservation bill for north-central New Mexico. The proposal encompasses more than 303,000 acres of Taos and Rio Arriba counties and includes wilderness designation for the prominent volcanic cone known as Ute Mountain and the Rio Antonio Gorge. This spectacular landscape includes the 900-foot deep Rio Grande Gorge, beloved by rafters, which is also part of the Rio Grande Migratory Flyway, one of the great migratory routes of the world. Eagles, falcons, and hawks nest amongst the basalt walls of the Gorge. From the edge of the Gorge, vast grass and sagebrush mesas are interspersed with the forested slopes of volcanic intrusions, such as Cerro Chiflo, Cerro de la Olla, and Tres Orejas. Large herds of pronghorn and elk find winter forage and calve along the rim in late spring. The Rio Grande Chapter has endorsed this proposal to keep these special wildlands safe from mineral development or other exploitation. Senator Bingaman is on board. Please write to Senator Domenici (see contact info, page 3) and urge him to join Senator Bingaman in introducing the El Rio Grande Del Norte National Conservation Area legislation. In his final year in the Senate, passing this will be a fine legacy. See www.nmwild.org/campaigns/ute-mountain for further information.



Ute Mountain, with the Rio Grande Gorge in the foreground. (Photo by Jim O'Donnell)

Taos Branch Update

The newly reorganized Taos Branch of the Sierra Club will hold a program meeting on March 4 at the Bareiss Gallery (next to KTAO Solar Center) at 7:00 p.m. This presentation will feature the showing of "Pollen Nation" about the importance and state of the bee population in the USA. Local composer Michael Shorr, who composed the music in "Pollen Nation," will present the film, which was recently featured at the Santa Fe Film Festival. Also, Jim O'Donnell, Northern Director of the NM Wilderness Alliance, will speak regarding Ute Mountain and other wilderness issues in the area. Eric Patterson will discuss the local Sierra Club Water Sentinels program, and Scott Estep will lead the meeting. All interested persons are invited. Local members who would like to take a more active place in the Taos presence are encouraged to attend to learn more about how they can be involved in issues and activities. The Taos Sierra Club sees itself as a networking and facilitating group to the many active local Taos conservation organizations' efforts. Please call 575/770-7969 if you have any questions.

Outings

Sunday, April 13 • Wild Rivers hike – Local leader Hal Davis will lead a moderate/strenuous hike in Wild Rivers. Climb Guadalupe Mountain, then hike down spectacular canyon to confluence of Red River and Rio Grande. About 8 miles and 1800' gain. Dogs okay. Hal Davis (575/758-3949).

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@nmi.com

FOUR CORNERS BRANCH NEWS

Updates and Slideshow at April 2 Meeting

Put Wednesday, April 2, on your calendar for a joint Sierra Club/San Juan Citizens Alliance meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Zia Room at the San Juan Community College in Farmington. Gordon Glass will show the short but awe-inspiring slideshow, "Wild Utah, America's Redrock Wilderness." Mike Eisenfeld will provide an update on Desert Rock. Dan Lorimier, our Chapter lobbyist, will give an overview of the just-adjourned State Legislature and talk about our Adopt-a-Legislator project. Robb Thomson will raise the question of where do we go from here in regard to all three power plants, and Mike will update us on current Four Corners issues. It should be a very informative and action-oriented meeting! We hope to see you there!

To get involved with the Four Corners Branch, contact one of our steering committee members, or ask Art Jaquez to put you on his listserve for upcoming events, alerts, and commentary from local members.

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

Thursday, March 20, 7 PM

COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATE FORUM

The Sierra Club and the Santa Fe Basin Water Association are co-sponsoring a forum of County Commission Candidates. Bill Dupuy, news director of local radio station KSFR, will moderate. We have been fortunate over the last several years with a significant shift to more progressive commissioners. We extend our thanks to term-limited commissioners Jack Sullivan and Paul Campos. Even if you live in the City of Santa Fe, you also live in the County, and the actions of the County impact all of us. Come and participate.

GROUP COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Sierra Club Office, 1807 Second Street, Unit #45

Group Executive Committee: Tuesday, March 4, 7 PM
Tuesday, April 1, 7 PM

Group Conservation Cmte: March 26 or 27, 7 PM (contact Dexter if interested)

YARD SALE TIME!

After a long break, we are sponsoring a yard sale on **Saturday, May 10, 9 AM-3 PM**, at Carol Owens' house, 1859 Camino de Pabito, off of Galisteo between Zia & Rodeo. For a successful fundraiser, we need your saleable items! Start saving them now and urge friends and colleagues to do the same. Volunteers are needed to price items on Friday afternoon, and teams to work a couple of hours on Saturday.

To volunteer, or for more information call **Carol** (471-4769) or **Norma McCallan** (471-0005).



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

GROUP CHAIR

John Buchser

The political committee has been very active in recent months. Our process includes sending out questionnaires to candidates, reviewing them, and discussion. All endorsements require 2/3 votes of two entities, so our endorsements hold quite a lot of weight. Keep an eye on your mailboxes for City Council endorsements for the March 3 election. We will be offering our help to endorsed candidates prior to the primaries in June, so please contact one of the political committee chairs if you are interested in helping with your time or your money.

Your brain-power is needed for a few items. The City of Santa Fe is seeking a student or an educator to join the River Commission; contact me if interested. This summer, the O'Keeffe Museum is sponsoring an exhibition of O'Keeffe and Ansel Adams works. On July 7 over breakfast, we have agreed to provide 30 minutes of background on the Club. In particular, Adams worked extensively with the Club, promoting protection of America's special places. If you are a Club history buff, or knew Georgia or Ansel and their relationship with the Club's environmental protection activism, please contact Alice Cox.

Finally, a farewell to staffer Carol Oldham. Carol took a key position with a Club chapter in Massachusetts. It is thru Carol's persistence in reducing energy use that we have 40,000 compact fluorescent light bulbs from PNM currently being distributed, primarily thru schools in Santa Fe and Albuquerque. Her eternally positive energy will be missed (and we hope New Mexico's enchantment pulls her back).

Tuesday, April 15, 7 PM

SANTA FE GROWTH MANAGEMENT

The Sierra Club in cooperation with the League of Women Voters and AARP has organized a panel discussion on growth management issues. The Panel consists of Jack Kolkmeier, representing SF County; Reed Liming, the City of SF; Mary Helen Follingstad, Regional Planning Authority (Extraterritorial Zone); Steve Harris for his Water Expertise; Ken Hughes for his Government and Economics Expertise (who is bringing his entire UNM Class to this discussion); and Mike Chapman, Principal of Chapman Companies and Chair of the Industry Committee of PATH (Public Private Partnership for Advanced Housing Technology).

Hard questions that the panel will be asked to address 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? What are the population forecasts telling us and how do we deal with the instability of these population growth forecasts and even the current estimates of population? How does the projected warming trend impact growth management and vice versa?

*Group Program meetings are held at the
Unitarian Church*

107 W. Barcelona Street (between Galisteo and Don Gaspar).

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

CONSERVATION CHAIR

Dexter Coolidge

A major goal established by the Chapter this year is to gain passage of major energy efficiency legislation. This effort has been led by Gail Ryba, and the Northern Group has made a significant contribution to it. Six or eight of us appeared on two separate occasions at the Public Regulation Commission (they almost never see private citizens) to ask it to endorse the bill, which it subsequently did. Then ten of us phone banked, asking members in other parts of the state to call their legislators. Over a hundred responded with phone calls, and the calls seemed to have made an impression on the senators. As we go to press we are optimistic that the bill will pass this week.

A second major goal has been to raise awareness of global warming and what can be done about it in the public schools, as part of our Cool Cities Program. We have been using assembly presentations and the compact fluorescent bulb program to do this and, under Elaine Giovando's leadership, this has gone like gangbusters. So far, our volunteers have made presentations in five schools and handed out over 2,400 bulbs. With six more schools and three other events already scheduled, we expect to hand out 10,000 bulbs by March 10.

Our volunteer ranks have grown tremendously this year, and we can see from these two examples how much we can do together.

◆ ◆ 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
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4 Corners' Power Plants – Robb Thomson *	robbm@toast.net	988-8958
Santa Fe Nat'l Forest – Tom Gorman		438-3932
Carson Nat'l Forest – OPEN		
Genetically Engineered Food – Jim Hannan	jhannan505@aol.com	988-5760
Mining – Cliff Larsen	clarsen1@ix.netcom.com	466-2128
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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
Brendan Miller *	bmiller59@comcast.net	490-2680
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 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 **Moderate Snowshoe Outing** East Fork in the Jemez. Dogs okay. Call for details. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008) **NOTE CHANGE !!!**
- 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 ok. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)
- 22 **Strenuous Hike** 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)

SANTA FE RIVER CLEANUP AND VEGETATION MAINTENANCE

Saturdays – 9 to 11 AM – March 15, April 19, May 31

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.**

Sat Sun May

- 3 **Strenuous Hike** to Stone Lions shrine in Bandelier, maybe as a loop, about 13 miles, 2700' gain. **Bogdan Mihaila** (662-0421)
- 4 **Easy to Moderate Dale Ball Trail Hike** in town, under 8 miles and 800' gain, dogs okay on leash. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 10 **Strenuous Hike** to Glorieta Baldy via Apache Canyon. About 13 miles, 2700' gain, historic fire-lookout tower on top. Dogs okay. **Les Drapela** (438-3306)
- 11 **Strenuous Hike** to Shaggy Peak and Deer Creek near Glorieta. About 10 miles, 1700' gain, off-trail, great views from top of Shaggy, slickrock, cool dip in creek optional. Dogs okay. **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354)
- Saturday, May 17 to Sunday, May 24**
- Springtime Car Camping And Moderate Day Hikes** in Utah's canyon country, centered around the Abajo Mountains. Some off-trail, some exploratory, in this delightful landscape of forest and red rock. Dogs okay. Call for details. **Norma McCallan** (471-0005)
- 17 **Easy Birdwatch Walk** in local area, bring binoculars. **Ron Duffy** (466-6398)
- 17 **Moderate Hike** on Winsor Trail with car shuttle, maybe ski area down to Borrego or there to Chamisa, 7-8 miles and 900' gain max, dogs okay. **Robert Reifel** (984-1253)
- 17 **Strenuous Hike** up spectacular La Luz trail in Sandias, one-way uphill only from trailhead or lower tram terminal, tram down - great workout and easy on the knees: hike 8-10 miles, 4000' gain. **Dan Rusthoi** (690-8967)
- 18 **Easy to Moderate Hike** to Glorieta Ghost Town, 7 miles, 900' gain, dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 18 **Strenuous Hike** on Tunnel Spring trail in Sandias, 14 miles, 3200' gain, dogs okay. Expect interesting views, early spring flowers. **Tobin Oruch** (820-2844 before 8 PM)
- 24 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** to Pedernal, famous O'Keefe landmark. Rock scramble to top for sweeping views in all directions. About 8 miles, 1900' gain. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)
- 25 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** to Los Griegos Ridge near the Valle Grande, 8.5 miles, 2000' gain, one steep off-trail section. Dogs okay. **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354)
- 31 **Strenuous Hike** to Chicoma Mtn and Polvadera Pk NW of Espanola. Chicoma is highest in Jemez at 11,539. **Michael Di Rosa** (663-0648)
- 31 **Santa Fe River Cleanup** combined with the river festival. See inset article. **Kathleen Davis** (438-0357 or Kdav40@aol.com)

Sat Sun April

- 5 **Moderate Hike** to Cone Ridge and Tent Rocks in a loop, interesting geology, 7 miles, 1300' gain, some easy scrambling and loose footing, dogs okay on leash. **Alan Shapiro** (424-9242)
- 6 **Easy to Moderate Hike** South of town, under 8 miles and 800' gain, dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 6 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** Possibly Crane Kiva in Bandelier. About 8 miles, 1200' gain, off-trail. **Bogdan Mihaila** (662-0421)
- 12 **Strenuous Hike** Ancho Rapids, down Rio Grande to Frijoles Canyon, and up Falls Trail to Bandelier Visitor Center w/car shuttle. About 10 miles, 1000' gain. Some rough off-trail. **Michael Di Rosa** (663-0648)
- 13 **Easy/Moderate Hike** Tetilla Peak. Short, steep off-trail to prominent peak SW of town. Panoramic vistas, 3 mi, 1000' gain. High-clearance vehicles recommended. Dogs okay. **Norma McCallan** (471-0005)
- 13 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** in Wild Rivers. Climb Guadalupe Mtn, hike down spectacular canyon to confluence of Red River and Rio Grande. Spring flow should be impressive. About 8 miles and 1800' gain, some steep. Dogs on leash okay. **Hal Davis** (575-758-3949)
- 19 **Easy Birdwatch Walk** in local area, bring binoculars. **Ron Duffy** (466-6398)
- 19 **Moderate Hike** San Antonio Hot Springs area in the Jemez. Bring a suit and towel! Dogs okay. **Patrick O'Keefe** (820-2359)
- 19 **Strenuous Hike** Red Mesa near Bernalillo, 6-8 miles, 1400' gain, off-trail and rough ground, dogs okay. **Stephen Markowitz** (983-2779 before 8 PM)
- 19 **Santa Fe River Cleanup** See inset article. **Anne Stauffer** (986-1412 or scsftreasurer@comcast.net)
- 20 **Easy Hike** Tent Rocks, striking geologic features, 3-4 miles, 700', loose footing, dogs okay on leash. **David Van Winkle** (820-1006)
- 20 **Moderate Hike** south of town, 7-10 miles, under 1000' gain, dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 20 **Strenuous Hike** in Dixon foothills, 8-10 miles, 1500' gain, off-trail, dogs okay. **Page Press** (946-0169)
- 26 **Moderate Hike** Buckman Mesa. Views of the Rio Grande and White Rock Cyn. 6 miles, 1100' gain, dogs okay. **Dan Rusthoi** (690-8967)
- 27 **Moderate Hike** possibly Rio en Medio, up to 8 miles, under 1000' gain. **Art Judd** (982-3212)
- 27 **Moderate Hike** Atalaya Mtn. Views of Santa Fe. 7 miles and 1800' gain, some steep sections, dogs okay. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)

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.

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. Newsletters and other giveaways are in a rack in hallway in front of office door, 2nd floor. We are sharing again with CCAE (Coalition for Clean and Affordable Energy) and two individual researchers.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Assistant Webmaster – Monika Bittman, webmaster (466-0130)

For the Northern Group website, needed immediately.

Webmaster for the Rio Grande Chapter website - Geoff Brown, chapter webmaster (983-7349, PricelessPubs@comcast.net)

Webmaster is moving out of state 3/31.

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

Help get out announcements of our meetings and other events

2 Volunteers - Sig Silber (ssilber1@juno.com) or Norma McCallan (471-0005)

Help design and implement a survey of how others see the Sierra Club and how we see ourselves.

Forest issues – Tom Gorman (438-3932) or Norma McCallan (471-0005) Need a second person for the Carson and Santa Fe N.F. oversight teams.

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

Volunteers for Sierra Club yard sale – Norma McCallan 471-0005) Price items Friday afternoon, May 9; help with sale Saturday, May 10

San Juan-Chama Project in Final Phases

All of us in Albuquerque have noticed the streets being torn up over the last year or so for the installation of new pipelines, most recently in the area around Carlisle south of Coal. This is part of the final phases of the San Juan-Chama Drinking Water Project being implemented by the area's water utility, the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA). The \$400 million project is due to be activated later this year and will eventually supply up to 70% of the metropolitan area's water supply.

Currently, Albuquerque draws its water by pumping groundwater from the Albuquerque Basin Aquifer. USGS studies conducted in the mid-1990s showed that, contrary to prior studies, the aquifer was being depleted at a rate two to four times the rate of recharge, and groundwater levels were dropping over 150 feet below historic levels, making continued reliance exclusively on groundwater pumping unsustainable, particularly in light of the Albuquerque area's rapid growth. The Drinking Water Project was devised to provide a sustainable alternative water supply.

The Drinking Water Project will divert about 94,000 acre-feet per year, half of this composed of San Juan-Chama water (at a rate of 65 cubic feet per second, or "cfs"), and the other half, native Rio Grande water from the new Paseo del Norte Diversion Dam south of the Alameda Bridge. This water will be pumped east through a massive pipeline along Paseo del Norte and then south along the North Diversion Channel, to a new water treatment plant under construction near Montañito and I-25. The purified water will then be blended with groundwater and sent to consumers through the City's new pipeline system.

Although the San-Juan Chama water mingles with Rio Grande "native" water once the Rio Chama joins the Rio Grande near Española, a complicated accounting system attempts to ensure that withdrawals or diversions of San Juan-Chama water do not

deplete any of the native water essential to maintaining the Rio Grande's surface flows. These flows are essential for the survival of the endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow, the Southwestern willow flycatcher, and other constituents of the Rio Grande ecosystem. A minimal native flow of 100 cfs at the Central Bridge in Albuquerque is mandated by a 2003 Biological Opinion produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Of particular concern is that withdrawal of a massive quantity of water just as the Rio Grande makes its way through central Albuquerque could jeopardize the survival and recovery of the silvery minnow. Local residents are also concerned about long-term impacts on domestic wells and the water table around the Rio Grande below the diversion, and effects on the bosque as reduced surface flows result in diminished localized aquifer recharge.

To alleviate silvery minnow concerns and satisfy the requirements of the federal Endangered Species Act, the Drinking Water Project includes a complex "curtailment strategy," as well as several other measures. The curtailment strategy would kick in when flows above the Paseo Diversion fall below 260 cfs, at which point the ABCWUA would begin reducing the amount of its diversion, suspending it altogether when native flows fall to 130 cfs. At such times the ABCWUA would switch to partial or total reliance on the previous groundwater pumping. The project further seeks to accommodate silvery minnow needs by including on the Diversion Dam's east side a fish passage channel and fish screens within the intake structure.

The ABCWUA has funded studies on silvery minnow recovery and a captive breeding program at the Albuquerque BioPark. It has participated in efforts to remove non-native species like salt cedar and Russian olive, and restore native bosque ecosystems. And its investment of millions of dollars in water conservation education and incentives has achieved its target of a



30% reduction in per capita water use since 1995. The Authority's 2004 Long Range Water Conservation Strategy has now increased the reduction goal to 40%.

The Sierra Club remains concerned that the sudden availability of outside water may create a false sense of water security and prompt a fresh push for population growth and development. Water availability and a balance between human imperatives and instream flows for wildlife and ecosystem health continues to be a fundamental and overarching priority for conservation advocates throughout the arid West. The Central Group remains vigilant and involved with City officials to press for more forward-looking policies on sprawl, climate change, and energy efficiency, all of which are interrelated with water issues.

For more information on the Drinking Water Project, visit the ABCWUA's website (www.abcwua.org). For information on ecological restoration and management efforts for the Middle Rio Grande, see the Middle Rio Grande Bosque Initiative website and its many links (www.fws.gov/southwest/mrgbi/).

Central Group Directory

Executive Committee

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

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Eva Thaddeus, Co-Chair, Secretary, Global

Warming Issue Chair

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Rick Preston, Newsletter Editor

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Lori Healy, Membership Chair

suasti_o@yahoo.com 505/249-6695

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

Sunday, March 9 • Petroglyph Monument Hike

– Volcanos, petroglyphs, and fine vistas! This will be a one-way (car shuttle) hike from the Volcanos on Albuquerque's West Mesa to the Rinconada petroglyphs. We'll walk about 6 miles via trails, cross country and boulder scrambling. Bring lunch, liquids, and layers, and meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Rinconada trailhead parking lot on Unser Blvd. (roughly 1.5 miles south of Montañito) for carpooling. This hike is within city limits so driving time is minimal and we should be finished by mid-afternoon. For more information call Carol Chamberland (505/341-1027).

Saturday, March 22 • El Malpais Exploratory Hike – El Malpais National Monument contains a variety of landscapes, and this hike will explore the sandstone bluffs on the eastern edge of the lava flows. Arches, petroglyphs, and great vistas will be featured. No trails, strictly cross-country and boulder scrambling; we'll walk 6 to 8 miles. Bring lunch, liquids, and layers, and meet at Smith's parking lot at Carlisle and Menaul in Albuquerque at 8:30 a.m. for carpooling. Driving distance: 80 miles one-way. For more information call co-leaders Tom Petencin (505/271-9928) or Carol Chamberland (505/341-1027).

Saturday, March 29 • Desert Exploratory Hike

– 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 the previous Wednesday, so you may call for details at that time.

Please contact the outing leading no later than the Thursday preceding the hike.

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

Contact Tom Petencin (505/271-9928, tompeten@juno.com).



Lobos Facing a Second Extinction

Hundreds of people attended the Mexican wolf scoping meetings in December and thousands wrote a letter advocating for our lobos. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received over 13,000 comments, and the vast majority of those were in favor of wolf recovery. If you were one of them, thank you! The Service will be reviewing them and will have draft alternatives out in about a year.

Can wolves wait that long?

It's easy to forget that, like wolves, elk were also exterminated from the Southwest. It wasn't a deliberate persecution with poison and traps, but a consequence of unregulated and relentless hunting. It's hard to believe, given how common elk are now, that by the early 1900s, there were no more elk in the Southwest. A few decades later, wolves were also cast into the abyss of oblivion with an effective trapping and poisoning program. They and their howls, like elk bugles, echoed no more in our rocky canyons.

In the 1950s elk were brought back to the Gila from Yellowstone National Park. Like wolves, reintroduced elk faced opposition from some ranchers. They compete with livestock for forage and, unlike deer, eat pretty much exactly the same thing cows do. But think how much poorer the landscape would be without elk. Their presence has been a tremendous success story. The sound of bugles in the fall are exhilarating and wonderful. And there is no denying that a huge elk-hunting industry has sprung up, which in some cases offers enough income to allow people to stay on the land who might otherwise have had to get jobs in town. All this would be completely absent if, back then, those few detractors had had their way.

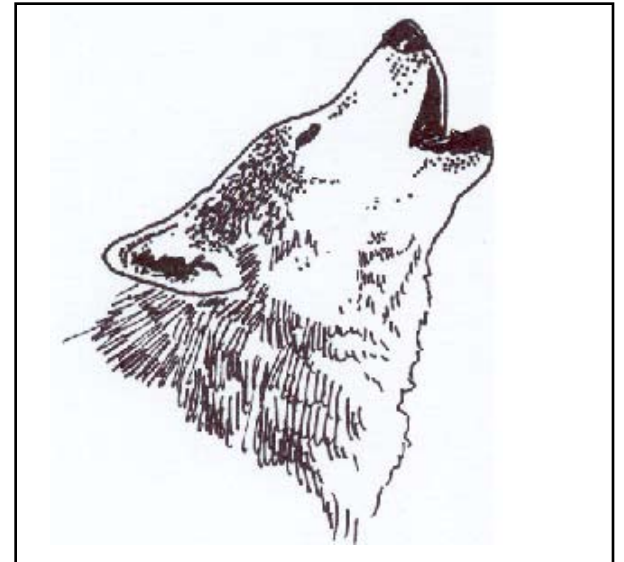
We hear bad things about wolves from similar detractors today. Just before Mexican wolves were snuffed out forever, the last five in the wild were captured in Mexico and placed into captivity. Only one was female and she was pregnant with a litter by a male who was never captured. She had the litter of the unknown male and later she and one of the other captured males went on to produce offspring. An additional two adults were found in a zoo in

Mexico City and two more in captivity at the Ghost Ranch were also determined to be purebred lobos and were added to the breeding program. The entire world population of Mexican wolves is descended from these seven individuals.

These wolves came as close to the brink of extinction as a species can get. But they could be a huge success story, too. Unfortunately, the yearly count has just come in from the Fish and Wildlife Service. Over the entire remote recovery area encompassing 4.4 million acres of Arizona and New Mexico, there are only 52 wolves in the wild today. Only 23 are in New Mexico. All together there are only three breeding pairs. It is not because wolves can't be successful in their ancestral home. The reason there are so few is that too many are being removed by the very program that is supposed to be recovering them. Twenty-two wolves were either trapped or shot in 2007. Nineteen of those were for depredating on livestock. The other two wandered out of bounds.

There is an administrative protocol called "standard operating procedure 13" that allows the Fish and Wildlife Service to trap or shoot wolves that have been involved in three livestock deaths in a year. But this protocol is just that – administrative. It isn't required by the Endangered Species Act, which mandates that wolves be recovered. Clearly, we have to find a better way to mitigate the interaction between wolves and cows so that cows don't always have the final say. These are animals on land belonging to everyone, and unlike cattle, wolves are a historic part of the biotic community. Cattle should not always be elevated above wolves or any wildlife.

Elk have been a big success, but a prosperous and diverse biotic community needs its predators. Unlike humans, wolves can kill only what they can physically run down: the sick, the old, the injured. Just the presence of wolves causes elk to move around more, resulting in less overgrazing and a positive cascade toward biodiversity all down the food chain. As with elk, we and the landscape would be much impoverished without wolves.



(Illustration by Mary Katherine Ray)

You can help wolves again by writing to Benjamin Tuggle, Regional Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, at the New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office, 2105 Osuna NE, Albuquerque, NM 87113; RDTuggle@fws.gov. Also write Bruce Thompson, Director of NM Game and Fish, at PO Box 25112, Santa Fe, NM 87504; bruce.thompson@state.nm.us. And write Alfredo Montoya, Chairman of the NM Game Commission, at PO Box 856, San Juan Pueblo, NM 87566; alfredo@nmmc.edu. Also write the Governor, Senator Bingaman, and Representative Udall, whose addresses are on page 3. Let them know that enough is enough. This killing of our wolves must stop.

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

—Mary Katherine Ray

Author to Speak About Water Harvesting

On Saturday, March 1, Brad Lancaster, acclaimed author of *Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands*, will speak on "Turning Drains Into Sponges and Water Scarcity Into Water Abundance," at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Truth or Consequences. The program will begin at 7:00 p.m.

Lancaster's presentation will share eight universal principles of water harvesting, along with simple strategies that turn water scarcity in abundance. You will be able to create intergrated water-sustainable landscape plans at home and throughout the community. Come and learn! Refreshments will be served. Hosted by Sierra Club and the Bountiful Alliance. For details, call Margot Wilson (575/744-5860).

Outings

Please call your outing leader to confirm the hikes or outings – changes might be possible to due various reasons.

Sunday, April 6 • Limestone Canyon day hike in the San Mateos – Come on a mostly easy walk in a beautiful mid-elevation canyon. Modest elevation changes in a distance of slightly more than 5 miles round trip will lead us through pinyon pines, under ponderosa trees with some gambel oak and grassland meadows thrown in. Bring lunch and meet at the Black Range District office of the Forest Service in T or C at 8:30 a.m. Call Margot Wilson (575/744-5860) or Mary Katherine Ray (575-772-5655). We can also give directions if you are coming from the north and would like to meet us there.

Saturday, April 12 • Mud Mountain near T or C – Join Margot Wilson on her first outing since knee replacement for a climb up Mud Mountain. Meet in front of the Forest Service office in Truth or Consequences at 8:30 a.m. Bring lunch, snacks, and binoculars and enjoy great views from the top. Call Margot (575/744-5860).

Southern NM Group Directory

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David Farrell

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The Border Battle Will Continue

On February 13 the three-member Texas Commission on Environmental Quality voted to approve renewal of a state air pollution permit for the ASARCO metal smelter in El Paso, which would allow the smelter to reopen. Sierra Club will work with the City of El Paso and community members to evaluate next steps, but the community has made it clear that they want to keep the smelter closed forever and get ASARCO to clean up the area.

The Sierra Club, the City of El Paso and community members insist that ASARCO has done enough damage to the health and livelihood of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez and does not deserve this additional chance to pollute. For the 112 years that it operated, the ASARCO smelter emitted hundreds of tons of lead, arsenic, and cadmium into the sky and onto the homes of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez residents. Children living in the area, ranging from 2-6 years of age, showed blood lead levels high enough to warrant immediate medical intervention.

More than 200 people attended the hearing, most traveling from El Paso, Mexico and New Mexico to oppose the permit renewal. While they did not get the decision they wanted, opponents were pleased that the commissioners required ASARCO to increase monitoring of lead emissions in Texas, New Mexico and across the border in Mexico. This is an important step, but this 19th century facility still should remain closed.

The commissioners argued that current Texas law does not let them deny a state air emissions permit renewal. ASARCO continues therefore to abuse the state's permitting process, since a permit application that cannot be denied is not much of a permit at all.

Sierra Club believes that it is critical for public health, for air quality, for promoting compliance with environmental law, and for Texas-Mexico border relations for the ASARCO smelter to remain closed. The City of El Paso hopes to transition to a cleaner, 21st century economy with "green-collar" jobs and healthy residents. ASARCO represents the past, and the Sierra Club will continue to support community efforts to keep the smelter closed.

Environmental Justice Organizer Mariana Chew continues her outstanding work in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, and we wish her the best as the campaign continues.

—*Oliver Bernstein*

El Paso: A Cool City?

El Paso Regional Group activist Gil Pinon has been working for months since returning from Al Gore's Global Warming Training in Atlanta to get El Paso's Mayor and City Council to sign on to the Cool Cities initiative. Attempting a feat which would have been impossible with past city administrations, Gil has meticulously laid the groundwork in one-on-one meetings with council members and the mayor, who has always been in favor of a Cool Cities designation for El Paso. Gil has also taken the time to work with council representatives to develop a full-fledged plan for implementation so that council's approval will lead to meaningful change in El Paso. With everyone now ready to support the ordinance, the time seems right to place it on the agenda for March 4th.

Gil Pinon is a member of what is probably El Paso's first family of environmentalism. His father Joe Pinon, a pharmacist by profession, has fought for many years against polluters like the Jobe Quarry on the eastern slope of the Franklins which not only defaced the mountain, but spewed dust across the road to a nearby elementary school, causing respiratory problems for students there. In issue outings to the quarry Joe would also point out the slurry running off the property and down toward the school. In the Sierra Club's previous encounter with the ASARCO smelter back in the '90's, Joe was outspoken about the poisoning of El Pasoans and the cover-up by the local medical establishment as well as the industry-dominated Texas Council on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). He had the foresight to oppose the Sierra Club's agreeing to the permitting of the failed ConTop technology at the smelter. Gil's brother Perry, a lawyer, also made many sacrifices in exposing and opposing the polluters. Sister Yvonne, a classically-trained soprano whose health and singing career were severely impacted, now volunteers with El Paso Environmental Justice Organizer Mariana Chew.

Selected Group Outings

Mar 22: Munday's Gap Dayhike

Place: Franklin Mountains State Park

Class: Moderate

Length: 4 miles

Elevation gain: 1000 feet

Leader: Gil Pinon (915) 307-3398 (M) bifflehead@yahoo.com

Years ago El Paso Sierrans began the push to have the Franklin Mountains included in the Texas State Park system. It took years and Texas still allocates very little money for state parks, but Franklin Mountains State Park is nevertheless the largest urban wilderness park in the nation!

Beginning early Saturday morning, about 8 am, at the crest of Trans-Mountain road, we will follow a good trail along the mountain's ridge to the Gap, where we should have great views both to the East and West. Get out early and be back for lunch! Call Gil for reservations.

Mar 28-30: Pueblo Creek Backpack

Place: Blue Range Wilderness, Northwest of Glenwood, NM

Class: Moderate

Length: Approximately 8 miles round trip

Elevation gain: 500 feet

Leader: Rollin Wickenden (915) 855-6705 (H) rwickgila@aol.com

We will depart El Paso on Friday afternoon and drive to the Cottonwood Campground north of Glenwood, NM. On Saturday, we will drive about 1/2 mile North on U.S. 180 and turn left on Forest Road # 232 which we follow to our trailhead at Pueblo Park Campground. We will hike trail #43 Southwest to our campsite along a flowing stream at or near Pup Creek. We tried to do this hike several years ago, but only a handful signed up. Come and join us on a new hike to a rarely visited Wilderness that we have never hiked before.

El Paso Group Directory

<http://texas.sierraclub.org/elpaso>

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Chaco Road Impact Study Flounders in Confusion and Challenge

The Environmental Assessment (EA) being conducted on CR7950, the primary access road to Chaco Culture National Historical Park, has drawn criticism from many groups as well as from Katherine Slick, New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer. After a third meeting in Aztec on February 12, Ms. Slick expressed concern that the purpose and need were still “not well articulated”; that the proponents’ involvement seemed “weak or vague”; and that the process described by the consultants hired by San Juan County – URS Corp. and Taschek Environmental – was not clear “in letting people know what was being requested.” Critics of the EA process cite a number of examples. Preliminary documents furnished by URS indicate that the purpose and need for the road improvements are to create better access for the local population and to fix a hazardous road. Undeniably, local Navajo, like many Native Americans, deserve easier lives, but URS itself claims that 90% of the traffic on CR7950 goes to Chaco, and is not local. In addition, all evidence suggests that the community serviced by CR7950 is very small. To date, URS and Taschek have not answered requests for population data. Whether the road poses a liability for San Juan County has also not been established. No statistics supporting any fatal or even serious accidents have been presented. Undocumented accounts point to the regrettable death of one cow. The County admits there has never been scheduled maintenance but does not accept maintenance as an alternative. Paving the road



Chaco ruins (Copyright 2007 O.P.M.)

will only make the road more dangerous by increasing speed and visitation.

The URS handout attempting to predict visitation increase brought about by road improvements provides more controversy. URS graphs suggest a modest increase in visitation, contradicting the National Park Service (NPS) 2005 Transportation Study by Jonathan Upchurch, which suggests potential fivefold increases. URS rejects the NPS study without providing comment. Common sense suggests that the visitation at Chaco might well match Mesa Verde’s, jumping to over 500,000 per year in several years.

Representative Tom Udall earmarked the original \$800,000 to improve the Chaco road. Many insiders contend that he now regrets that decision. San Juan County has approached him asking for \$1,000,000 more of taxpayer money to complete the project. Please contact Rep. Udall (see page 3) and urge him to direct the use of the existing funds into improvements other than paving, and to grant no more earmarks. In an election year, he does not need more association with this project. Not only does the project face growing challenges and questions about energy interests near Chaco, but there is a Pandora’s box of legal questions for San Juan County about the paving of the first three miles. Those questions have not been forgotten by the Hopi or by concerned groups. It may only be a matter of time before the box is opened further. For email addresses and information about how to participate and help preserve this pristine World Heritage Site, visit the Chaco Alliance at www.dont-pave-chaco.com, or the San Juan Citizens Alliance at www.sanjuancitizens.org. Thanks for the continued support.

—Anson Wright, Chaco Alliance



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Preserve the Future

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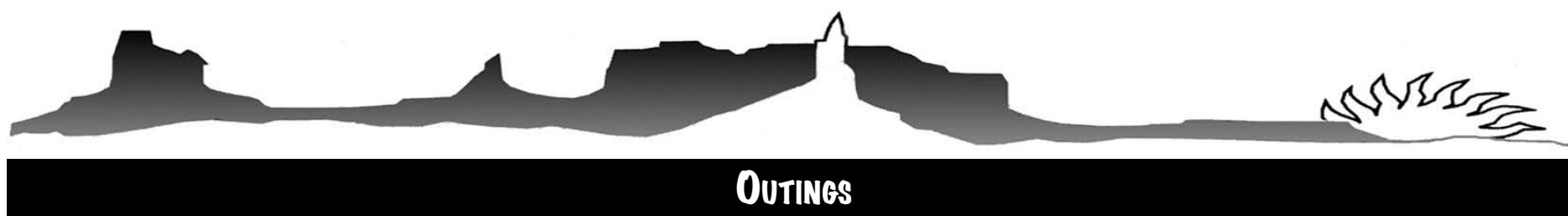
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Contributions, gifts, and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletter.



OUTINGS

Selected Sierra Club Outings for March, April, and May 2008

Sunday, March 2 • East Fork of Jemez snowshoe outing – Moderate. Dogs okay. Call for details. Marcia Stillman (505/699-3008 – Northern Group).

Saturday, March 8 • Caja del Rio hike – 7 miles. Moderate. Dogs okay. Nice vistas. Bob McKee (505/471-0005 – Northern Group).

Sunday, March 9 • Pecos (Serpent Lake) snowshoe trip – 8 miles, 1500' gain. Strenuous. Dogs okay. Patrick O'Keefe (505/820-2359 – Northern Group).

Sunday, March 9 • Petroglyph Monument hike – 6 miles. Volcanos, petroglyphs, and fine vistas! One-way hike (car shuttle) from Volcanos on Albuquerque's West Mesa to the Rinconada petroglyphs. Some cross-country and boulder scrambling. Bring lunch, liquids, layers. Carol Chamberland. See Central Group page for more info.

Saturday, March 15 • Caja del Rio hike, down to Rio Grande, up on Montoso Peak – 10 miles, 2000' gain. Strenuous. Mostly off-trail, some rough sections. Michael Di Rosa (505/663-0648, 505/667-0095 – Pajarito Group).

Saturday, March 15 • Birdwatch hike – Easy. Bring binoculars. Ron Duffy (505/466-6398 – Northern Group).

Sunday, March 16 • Snowshoe outing – Strenuous. Dogs okay. Marcia Stillman (505/699-3008 – Northern Group).

Saturday, March 22 • Bandelier backcountry hike – Strenuous. Norbert Sperlich (505/474-4354 – Northern Group).

Saturday, March 22 • El Malpais National Monument exploratory hike – 6-8 miles. Explore sandstone bluffs on eastern edge of lava flows. Arches, petroglyphs, great vistas. No trails, strictly cross-country and boulder scrambling. Bring lunch, liquids, layers. Tom Petencin (505/271-9928 – Central Group) or Carol Chamberland. See Central Group page for more info.

Sunday, March 23 • Hike to Window Rock – 6-9 miles, 1000' gain. Moderate. Dogs okay. Tobin Oruch (505/820-2844 before 8 p.m. – Northern Group).

Saturday, March 29 • Tapia Canyon (Cabezon area) hike – Strenuous. Rugged country, unique petroglyphs, ruins, desert vistas. Dogs okay. Early start. Call by March 26. Stephen Markowitz (505/983-2779 before 8:00 p.m. – Northern Group).

Friday-Sunday, March 28-30 • Pueblo Creek backpack, in Blue Range Wilderness – 8 miles, 500' gain. Moderate. New hike in a rarely visited wilderness. Rollin Wickenden (915/855-6705, rwickgila@aol.com – El Paso Group).

Sunday, March 30 • Red Dot, Blue Dot, and River Trail, near White Rock – Moderate/strenuous. Some steep sections. Dogs okay. Great views, petroglyphs. Dan Rusthoi (505/690-8967 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 5 • Cerro Grande hike – 2 miles, 1300' gain to 10,199', highest peak in Bandelier National Monument. Ilse Bleck (505/662-2368 after March 31 or email ibleck@yahoo.com – Pajarito Group).

Saturday, April 5 • Cone Ridge and Tent Rocks loop hike – 7 miles, 1300' gain. Moderate/strenuous. Some easy scrambling and loose footing. Dogs okay on leash. Alan Shapiro (505/424-9242 – Northern Group).

Sunday, April 6 • Limestone Canyon day hike, in the San Mateos – 5 miles. Easy walk through pines, oak, and grassland meadows. Bring lunch; meet at Black Range District office in T or C at 8:30 a.m. Margot Wilson (575/744-5860 – Southern Group) or Mary Katherine Ray (575/772-5655 – Southern Group).

Sunday, April 6 • Easy to moderate hike south of town – Under 8 miles, 800' gain. Dogs okay. Eliza Schmid (505/474-5846 – Northern Group).

Sunday, April 6 • Moderate to strenuous hike, possibly Crane Kiva in Bandelier – About 8 miles, 1200' gain. Off-trail. Bogdan Mihaila (505/662-0421 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 12 • Mud Mountain hike, near T or C – Join Margot for this climb on her first outing since knee replacement. Meet at Forest Service office in T or C at 8:30 a.m. Bring lunch, snacks, and binoculars. Great views. Margot Wilson (575/744-5860 – Southern Group).

Saturday, April 12 • Ancho Rapids hike, down Rio Grande to Frijoles Canyon, and up on Falls Trail to Bandelier Visitor Center, with car shuttle – 10 miles, 1000' gain. Strenuous. Some rough off-trail. Michael Di Rosa (505/663-0648 – Pajarito and Northern Groups.)

Sunday, April 13 • Tetilla Peak hike – 3 miles, 1000' gain. Easy/moderate. Off-trail. Panoramic vistas. High-clearance vehicles recommended. Dogs okay. Norma McCallan (505/471-0005 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 19 • San Antonio Hot Springs area outing, in the Jemez – Moderate. Bring a bathing suit and towel! Dogs okay. Patrick O'Keefe (505/820-2359 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 19 • Red Mesa hike, near Bernalillo – 6-8 miles, 1400' gain. Strenuous. Off-trail and rough ground. Dogs okay. Stephen Markowitz (505/983-2779 before 8 p.m. – Northern Group).

Sunday, April 20 • Tent Rocks hike – 3-4 miles, 700' gain. Some loose footing. Dogs okay on leash. David Van Winkle (505/820-1006 – Northern Group).

Sunday, April 20 • Dixon foothills hike – 8-10 miles, 1500' gain. Off-trail. Dogs okay. Page Press (505/946-0169 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 26 • Buckman Mesa hike – 6 miles, 1100' gain. Moderate. Dogs okay. Dan Rusthoi (505/690-8967 – Northern Group).

Sunday, April 27 • Rio en Medio hike (possibly) – 8-10 miles, 1000' gain. Moderate. Art Judd (505/982-3212 – Northern Group).

Sunday, April 27 • Hike to Atalaya, in Santa Fe – 7 miles and 1800' gain. Strenuous. Dogs okay. Marcia Skillman (505/699-3008 – Northern Group).

Saturday, May 3 • Stone Lions shrine hike, in Bandelier – 13 miles, 2700' gain. Strenuous. Bogdan Mihaila (505/662-0421 – Northern Group).

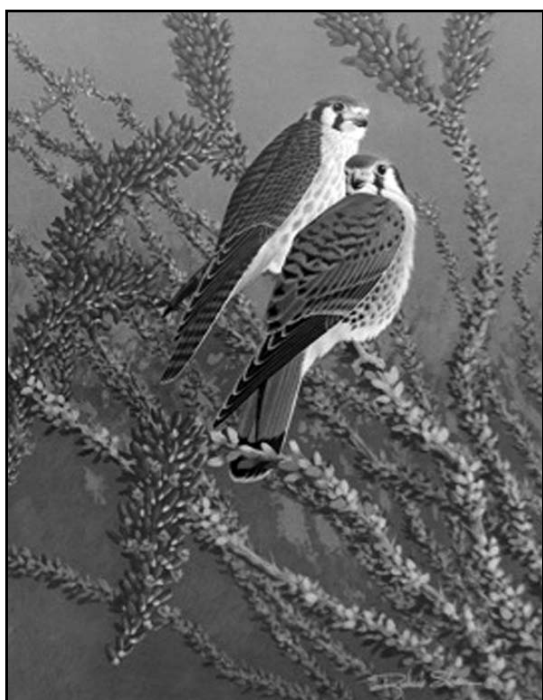
Sunday, May 4 • Dale Ball trail hike, in Santa Fe – Under 8 miles, 800' gain. Easy/moderate. Dogs okay on leash. Eliza Schmid (505/474-5846 – Northern Group).

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.

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—Dan Lorimier



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