Rio Grande Sierran

News of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club

May/June 2006

When Will NM Recognize Wildlife As More Than "Furbearers"?

urbearers" is the word the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDG&F) uses for the 17 species of wildlife that are legal to trap, as if all of these diverse animals serve only to provide their skins for human use. There is no suggestion in the word "furbearer" of how essential small predators like bobcats, badgers, weasels, foxes, and coyotes are to the health of the biotic communities of which they are a part. In many places, they are the only predators left after decades of persecution have exterminated their larger counterparts. Without them, prey species like rab-

by Mary Katherine Ray

bits, ground squirrels, and rats multiply and, in turn, impact vegetation, which, in turn, impacts species like songbirds and the spread of disease. Aquatic mammals like beavers and muskrats alter ecosystems, affecting water cycles and patterns of wildfire disturbance and benefiting many other animals. But to trappers they are a "valuable resource" only after they have been "harvested," as though, in being brutally trapped and bludgeoned or strangled to death, they were being picked like so many peaches – these ripe little bearers of fur.

Uncontrolled Trapping

Some call trapping a form of wildlife management. But in New Mexico, there are no limits to how many traps a trapper may set or how many animals he may kill. Unbelievably, even with rules like this, no one is monitoring the populations of these animals to see how they are doing. There is no allowance for pernicious drought or for the relentless rise in human population, which fragments wildlife habitat and presses these animals further to the edges. We do know that, as animals are destroyed by traps, more will drift in from surrounding areas to fill the vacant territories. Then these will be trapped and removed as the five-month season progresses. Trapping is

State and Local Election Endorsements on Page 3! a wildlife sink, draining away animals from a much larger area than that occupied by the trap line itself. Trappers even have a word for this. They say the place is "trapped out." This isn't "management" at all – it is destructive chaos.

Because pelt prices have risen sharply in the past few years, trapping activity is escalating. No other wildlife may be killed for commercial sale in New Mexico – not deer, not elk, not quail, not fish. We don't deconstruct these by calling them "fleshbearers." Yet we still allow trappers to exploit trapped species – the public's wildlife – for their own financial gain. A different standard is applied - one that suggests a lack of regard and respect for these creatures and one that fosters the notion that they have no purpose while alive in the wild.

Unintended Victims

Another word that trappers can't avoid using is "non-target." Coatis, javelina, deer, squirrels, and birds like quail, hawks, owls, and ravens are vulnerable to traps, as are endangered species like Mexican wolves, jaguars, lynx, and otters. If the trap

is large and the animal small, the injuries may be immediately fatal. When trappers release the nontarget victims that are still alive, there is no way to know if their survival is compromised by damage that might not be readily apparent, like bone fractures, broken teeth, and frostbite. Other things can go wrong, too. Animals in traps are easy pickings for other predators. Sometimes in fighting the trap, a victim can pull it out from its mooring, thus escaping only to die later, unable to get food with a trap clamped on the useless limb.



A bobcat awaiting "harvest." The price on a bobcat's pelt is averaging \$300 and some can bring as much as \$500. There is no limit to how many a trapper may kill (photo by HSUS). "Furbearers" need you! The NM Department of Game and Fish is accepting comments on trapping now. Briefly let them know your thoughts about this virtually unregulated activity on our public lands. Contact Rick Winslow at frederic .winslow@state.nm.us or write him at P.O. Box 25112, Santa Fe, NM 87504.

Traps may be placed on public land. For unsuspecting hikers and campers, a trap can ruin what should be a peaceful day in the outdoors. The family dog is very vulnerable. The sound a dog makes when a trap slams on him is universally described by owners as "screaming." In incidents that have been reported from all over the state, the pain makes dogs bite in a frenzy at the trap, themselves, and the person trying desperately to free it. This may be difficult or impossible, requiring people to endure waiting (continued on page 14)

SIERRA CLUB

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A Note from the Conservation Chair

t's spring as I write this, and renewal is in the air. Many towns in New Mexico and in El Paso have **L** recently renewed their elected leadership. Now is the time to ask that they act on behalf of both their constituents and Mother Earth.

Sierra Club's Cool Cities Campaign (www.sierra club.org/globalwarming/coolcities), which seeks to stop global warming one community at a time, is a great entrée. Ask your community's leadership to adopt it. Let's all work, wherever we live, to:

- Seek the campaign's adoption locally, and offer to provide baseline analysis and monitor progress in meeting greenhouse gas reductions.
- Conduct an "eco footprint campaign" to teach individuals how many earths it takes to support their everyday lifestyles.
- Birddog the community to build within five minutes of every home a complete system of bike lanes and sidewalks, the latter unimpeded by trees, trucks, utility boxes, mailboxes. or light poles.
- Support a 10%-by-transit campaign, urging employers to fund the first 30 days of their employees' public transit costs.
- Work to change building standards, so that all new construction leaves a carbon footprint no

more than 50% of the current average.

- Advocate switching to the most efficient uses of electricity in street and traffic lights.
- Work to get your community to grade new development using standards for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND). Projects will be judged by location efficiency; environmental preservation; compact, complete, and connected neighborhoods; and resource efficiency, such as recycled materials and wastewater systems.
- Conduct a "fight global warming funding campaign" to pay for efficient energy, water, and transportation projects. Possible mechanisms include general obligation bonds, a gas/electric surcharge to building owners for exceeding local energy-consumption standards, a "transportation utility fee" surcharge to auto owners based on estimates of their use of city streets.

One hundred years ago living lightly on this arid land was a matter of necessity. Now that we realize the fallacy of living as if fossil fuels were manna from heaven, let's take this time of renewal to renew our planet, one community at a time.

—Ken Hughes

Letter to the Editor

Dear New Mexico Members of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club:

I write to urge you to vote for Gary King for Attorney General in the June Democratic primary. I have known Gary for more than 15 years, during which I have been impressed by his commitment to protection of the environment. I met him when I was working for passage of a law governing disposal of municipal solid waste in New Mexico, a law he helped to enact in 1990. Several years later, in 1993, Gary was the moving force behind the New Mexico Mining Act, a law that requires that hard rock (copper, gold, molybdenum, silver, etc.) mines be cleaned up and reclaimed so that they do not cause pollution. To Gary's credit, the Mining Act is probably the most stringent environmental protection hard rock mining law in the country.

Gary has considerable experience working to protect the environment, and he is committed to continuing that work as Attorney General. He will work to prevent drilling on Otero Mesa and extraction of coal bed methane in the Valle Vidal. He supports the efforts of the State Environment Department to clean up Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), and believes that more resources should be devoted to those efforts. He has worked for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to make the Waste Isolation Pilot Plan (WIPP) safe and to facilitate the clean up of waste at DOE sites, including LANL. He also has consistently opposed disposal of high level waste and spent nuclear fuel at WIPP.

Gary's record of environmental work and his commitment to environmental protection distinguish him from his primary opponents. One of them is a District Attorney. The other works for the law firm that represents the Phelps Dodge mining company, whose large open pit copper mines in Grant county have caused considerable environmental degradation there.

As Attorney General, Gary will fight to preserve our environment and to protect all New Mexicans against environmental contamination. I urge you to join me and vote for him on June sixth.

> Douglas Meiklejohn Santa Fe

Call for Candidates

▼he Chapter and Groups are seeking candidates for their Executive Committees (ExCom). Three Chapter ExCom positions will be open. These are three-year terms. Members attend quarterly meetings, starting in December 2006. Interested Club members should contact a member of the Nominating Committee by 1 June 2006. The Nominating Committee is Margot Wilson, Ken Hughes, Michal Mudd, Ted Mertig, and Jody Benson (see masthead page 2 and Group pages). Candidates for Group ExComs should contact their respective Group chairs. For a full schedule, see the Chapter website, http://riogrande.sierraclub.org. For more information, contact Elections Committee Chair Jim Hannan in Santa Fe (see masthead page 2).

State and Local **Election Endorsements**

Attorney General: Gary King PRC District 4: Derrith Watchman-Moore House District 18: Gail Chasey (formerly Gail Beam)

House District 40: Nick Salazar House District 41: Moises A. Morales Jr.

For more information, please contact Political Committee Chair Tom Robey (see masthead page 2).

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Energy Efficiency: What Is It, and How Is It Measured?

ou're likely to hear a lot about energy efficiency in the coming months and years as communities across the nation focus on reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. This is because efficiency is probably the cheapest way to quickly achieve significant greenhouse-gas reductions.

So, what exactly is energy efficiency, and how can you measure it?

Energy efficiency means that we can continue using the same services, for example, heating, cooling, lighting, and transport, while consuming less energy. In many cases, we can even improve the services, like when we reduce drafts of cold air, which makes our home more comfortable and saves us energy and money. Many energy-efficiency advocates strive to point out that energy efficiency does not mean shivering in the dark. Moreover, cost-effective energy efficiency means we use economic resources more efficiently, since we are producing the same or more while using less energy and, therefore, less money.

Energy conservation more typically refers to using less energy through changes in behavior or processes that eliminate the need for the energy. These can include putting on a sweater and turning down the thermostat, remembering to turn off the lights when you leave the room, carpooling, and telecommuting. Energy conservation can be considered a subset of energy-efficiency practices.

In the world of gas and electric utilities, a more technical term for efficiency is *demand-side management* (DSM). DSM can be understood in relation to *supply-side resources*, such as coal-burning power plants. Those plants supply electricity. Demand-side management also supplies energy, but it does so by reducing the consumption or demand, rather than the supply.

For now, I will try to explain just how much energy we typically use.

Natural Gas

I'll start with natural gas, which is what most New

Mexicans use to heat their homes. On our gas utility bill, the gas use is measured in *therms*. Technically, a therm is 100,000 *British thermal units* (Btu). In a scientific definition, one Btu can raise the temperature of one pound of water one degree Fahrenheit. In more practical terms, one Btu is approximately equal to the heat given off by a wooden kitchen match. One gallon of gasoline contains about 120,000 Btus, or slightly more than one therm. So you can think of each therm you use in your house as being roughly equal to a gallon of gasoline in terms of energy. Lately one therm has been costing about \$1.00, compared to roughly \$0.50 about five years ago.

You can look at your utility bill to see how many therms you use. Generally, if your typical family of four has gas heating and a gas-fired water heater in Albuquerque, you might use around 100 therms per month in the winter and 20 therms in the summer, primarily for hot water. According to PNM's website, PNM's residential customers typically peak in gas use at 131 therms in January. Santa Fe is colder, and therefore higher than the average, while Albuquerque is close to the average, and southern areas are lower.

If your home is using more than 100 therms in January, you can probably find cost-effective ways to reduce your gas use. In the March/April 2006 issue of the *Rio Grande Sierran*, I outlined an example of how much gas I might be able to save with some insulation and other measures.

Electricity

Electricity is measured in *kilowatt-hours* (kWh). If you go look at the meter spinning outside your house, you will see the kWh clicking by at a pretty steady clip. Average American homes use 15-20 kWh per day. Many refrigerators use 3-5 kWh per day, although the better, newer Energy Star ones use half of that.

In New Mexico, we are very fortunate that we don't have much air-conditioning using refrigerated air, since refrigerated air uses about four times more



The author's hen inspects the latest crop of "bulbs"—compact fluorescent lightbulbs, that is (photo by Gail Ryba).

electricity than does a swamp (evaporative) cooler. New Mexico's average household electricity-consumption is about 600 kWh per month, while in Louisiana, which often ranks near New Mexico in economic terms, the average is almost twice as much, which I believe is primarily due to air-conditioning.

As most Sierra Club members probably already know, one of the easiest ways to cost-effectively save electricity is to replace your incandescent bulbs with *compact fluorescent lightbulbs* (CFLs), which pay for themselves in a couple of years, especially if they are in high-use areas.

In the next issue, I will talk about how much energy savings we could achieve in New Mexico if we really put our minds to it, and if we encourage our Public Regulation Commissioners and our elected officials to make it a priority that we are willing to invest in.

For more information, contact Chapter Energy Issues Chair Gail Ryba in Santa Fe (see masthead page 2).

—Gail Ryba



Rail Runner On Track to Begin Service

The new Rail Runner commuter train paid a surprise visit to Santa Fe on 7 April to attend the groundbreaking ceremonies for the Railyard Project. Governor Bill Richardson and other dignitaries were on board. Regular service from Belen to Bernalillo will begin this summer. For more information, see "Rail Runner Update" in Central Group News on page 11 (photo by Robert McKee).

Tour Highlights "Green" Design

ach year the New Mexico Chapter of the US Green Building Council hosts the Green Built Tour. This two-day, self-directed tour is being held 20-21 May 2006. It is designed to showcase buildings and homes that incorporate the principles of "green" design and construction, including material recycling, passive solar and active solar power, water harvesting, indoor environments, wind energy, ultra-efficient insulation, low-impact construction, and renewable products.

This year's tour will display 30 homes and commercial buildings in the Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Los Alamos, and Taos areas. Everyone who takes the tour receives a copy of the *Green Built Tourbook*, which shows the homes and contains articles useful for building or remodeling your own green home. Some of the homes are still under construction, which allows you to see the hidden details. Homes are also featured on www.greenbuilttour.net.

Tickets for the tour are \$10 (\$5 seniors and students, kids under 12 free) and are available from Whole Foods, Wild Oats, La Montanita Co-op, Ecoversity, and the Market Place Co-op beginning 1 May, or you can participate for free by volunteering to assist as a home monitor for a half day. To volunteer, email greenbuilttour@yahoo.com or call James Wernicke at 688-0781.

—James Wernicke

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"Our Climate, Our Future": Young People Tackle Global Warming

he Rio Grande Chapter sponsored first and second prizes in a poster and essay contest on "Our Climate, Our Future." This contest for young people was organized by the Climate Change Action Project, a citizens' group founded by Sierra Club members and others. Winners were honored in a ceremony at the Albuquerque Zoo on 20 April. Here is the work of the Sierra Club's winners.

"Global Warming" Second Prize Middle School Essay by Jamie Brown The Bosque School, Albuquerque

Global warming is very hazardous to the world. Many people do not know how bad it is. We need to stop global warming, but first we need to know how.

Global warming is caused when anything lets out carbon dioxide, methane, or nitrous oxide. These gases reflect the heat that is trying to leave the Earth back to the Earth, making it warmer. Things that create these gases are usually powered by fossil fuels, like driving a car or using electricity, things that Americans do very often.

The effects of global warming are very serious. First of all, the polar ice caps are melting, which could be very bad for the polar bears because they rely on ice floes to hunt. Also, because the polar ice caps are melting, the ocean levels are rising. If the ocean levels rise too much, the beaches will be covered in water, making the land smaller. Global warming is also bad for New Mexico because when it rains, it might come down in downpours and cause mud slides. Also a drought might happen which would kill animals and even endangered species.

To stop global warming we will have to work very hard. We will have to stop driving cars and using electricity as much. Also, to help we could plant trees or install solar panels on our houses. We also need to tell elected officials, like a governor, who can get the word out and help save the environment. It will be a big change in our lifestyle to do these things, but it will help save our world.

I think we should try to save the environment because it is very important. It is important because it is the place we live in and I think it should be a good place for all of us to live, including other animals.

Now that we have learned about global warming, we should do everything we can to stop it.

First Prize Elementary School Poster by Naomi Valenzuela Alvarado Elementary, Albuquerque



Off-Road Vehicle Reform: On the Road to a Solution

ur public lands are being subjected to unprecedented intrusion as motorized access increases in scope and popularity. In 2004, Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth identified unmanaged recreation, specifically off-road vehicle (ORV) use, as one of four "key threats" facing national forests. As a result, in November 2005, the Forest Service released a rule to govern the use of ORVs on national forest lands.

The final Travel Management Rule directs each national forest to work with the public to identify and designate routes, trails, and areas that are suitable for motor vehicle use. Once this designation process is complete, ORV use will be permitted only on designated routes identified on an agency "travel use map." This feature of the new rule is welcomed because it closes national forests to cross-country travel.

Depending on how it is implemented and enforced in New Mexico, this rule has the potential to curb further impacts and heal damage on national forest lands in the state. Currently, most NM forests are finalizing their inventories and updating their mapping data. The Gila, Lincoln, and Santa Fe national forests have begun or will begin seeking public involvement on the issue this spring. The Gila and the Santa Fe are striving to release proposed actions

to the public by the end of this fiscal year, while other forests are still formulating their plans and timelines. The Lincoln will also go through this process, but it is unique because it has been closed to cross-country travel since 1987. All forests in New Mexico expect to complete designations and release travel maps by 2009.

Although ORV riders are a minority user group, they are very vocal and active in securing areas for recreation and representing their interests. The Center for Biological Diversity has begun an ORV Reform Campaign to ensure that members of the conservation community, "quiet users," and wildlife and plants have a voice in this process. It is not our intent to close national forests to ORV use. Rather, we are working with agencies to help create enforceable and sustainable recreational opportunities that afford protection to wildlife and their habitat and to nonmotorized users.

Concerns

Our major concerns regarding ORVs and the implementation of the rule include the following:

- Other Users Planning focused only on motorized use will not alone achieve balance and reduce conflicts between motorized recreation and hikers, hunters, horsemen, and other quiet users.
 - Environmental Impacts

 Unmanaged ORV use is a great threat to the ecological integrity of our public lands because it damages soils, vegetation, and wildlife.
 - Scale of Impacts ORVs cover a lot of ground precisely because they are motorized vehicles. The scale of their impacts, in terms of both noise and ground disturbance, is therefore relatively great among recreational uses.
 - User-Created Routes

 One of the most damaging impacts to public land is the proliferation of unplanned trails due to repeated cross-country travel. "Renegade routes" are responsible for a significant amount of the

Get Involved

- Call or write a letter to your local forest asking to be put on the list for public notification for their route designation process under their new Travel Management Rule (see Action Alert at http://actionnetwork.org/campaign/National_Forest).
- Call or email Harv Forsgren, Regional Forester (842-3292, hforsgren@fs.fed.us), to express your concerns and make recommendations. To view other recommendations, visit www.endangeredearth.org/orv; under Publications, click Recommendations.
- Join the team of ORV Reform Advocates by contacting Chris Kassar (520/623-5252 ext. 317, ckassar@biologicaldiversity.org).
- Learn more at www.endangeredearth .org/orv.

natural resource damage found on national forests and are a serious challenge for land managers.

• Enforcement and Funding – The Forest Service already has limited ability to maintain its current system of roads and trails. Now the agency is being asked to consider designating thousands more miles of user-created motorized routes that will require similar maintenance and more enforcement to prevent off-route driving and riding.

Recommendations

To address these concerns, we recommend that the agency approach this as a comprehensive travel-planning exercise that plans for nonmotorized trails at the same time as designating ORV routes. This balanced approach would provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to participate.

If the agency chooses to focus only on the designation of motorized opportunities, then there must be safeguards to ensure that the rights of hikers, equestrians, birders, botanists, and other quiet recreationists are not trampled through this process. Thus, designation of routes at this time should be minimal by beginning with an analysis of established system routes only. Evaluation of renegade

(continued on page 14)



Redundant, user-created hill climbs in the Santa Fe National Forest near Medanales, NM (photo by Chris Kassar).

Valles Caldera Hires Director from Grand Canyon, Raises Hopes

In late March 2006, the Valles Caldera Board of Trustees announced that they had hired Dr. Jeffrey Cross to serve as the new executive director of the Trust, beginning 1 May 2006.

Cross comes to the Trust from Grand Canyon National Park, where he has been chief of resource management and director of the Grand Canyon Science Center. The Science Center manages natural and cultural resources for the park, backcountry recreation planning, and environmental compliance. As chief of resource management, Cross was responsible for developing and implementing interdisciplinary resource management, monitoring, and research programs to protect natural and cultural resources.

As part of his duties, Cross oversaw the highly controversial Colorado River Management Plan update, which is now being appealed. Nevertheless, even the activists who are spearheading the appeal give Cross an enthusiastic thumbs-up. They say his hands were tied by the Bush Administration, but that he was fair and direct, that he is a strong advocate for good science, and that we are lucky to have him.

Cross has a master's degree in zoology and a doctorate in fisheries, and he spent 10 years in research on fish biology and ecology before moving into resource management.

The Trust has operated without an executive director since August 2005, when Ray Powell resigned, citing differences with the Board over policies that he felt he could not accept responsibility for implementing (see *Sierran* September/October 2005).

The Valles Caldera Coalition applauds the Board for selecting a candidate who has a strong background in resource and recreation management, public process, education, and the sciences. We are also encouraged that Cross is familiar with the West, as resource issues in the Jemez are undeniably intertwined with the West's overarching social, economic, and ecological issues.

The Trust is considered to be an experiment in land management that explicitly includes early and meaningful public involvement in decision making, science-based adaptive management, and financial accountability. The Colorado River Management Plan update, which Dr. Cross has overseen for the Grand Canyon National Park, has been very controversial – maybe predictably so, in a national climate of rapidly changing social, economic, and ecological

circumstances. His insights about the value – as well as the challenges – of soliciting public input will be very useful here in the Preserve.

The Valles Caldera Board of Trustees affirms that it has begun, or is poised to begin, long-range planning. In that process, observations from all of us will be important, and good science will go a long way toward double-checking the cause-and-effect connections we think we see out there.

For all these reasons, Cross appears to be very well qualified to lead the Trust and engage the public here. It seems entirely possible that this year could be far more rewarding than the past year has been.

Long-Range Planning

The Valles Caldera Preservation Act clearly outlines diverse and ambitious mandates that must be integrated within the Preserve and coordinated with other entities in order to be achieved by 2015.

The good news is that the Board has recently indicated that it has seriously considered the wisdom of having a planner on staff. Now that it has hired an executive director, the Trust can move forward with the task of filling this and other positions that have been vacant for months.

Last fall, in addition to the Trust's \$3.5 million budget for fiscal year 2006 (FY06), Congress funded three supplemental appropriations totaling \$1.5 million – \$500,000 each for recreation planning, infrastructure planing, and ranch-related improvements (e.g., fencing, stock tanks).

These appropriations make it possible for the Trust to advance its development strategy as outlined in its 2000-2015 Plan for Decreasing Appropriations. That plan anticipated that the Trust would focus on "institution building" in the first five years – specifically including "business plans for infrastructure development and long-term public programs ... produced with input from the public and assistance from subject matter experts."

In spite of this commitment, 2005 passed without any attempt on the part of the Trust to address any such long-term integrated planning.

The Valles Caldera Coalition, increasingly concerned about this lapse, has communicated steadily with the Trust since September 2005, strongly urging the Board to address this phase of planning with full public participation as guaranteed by the

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Trust's own innovative NEPA procedures. We have also urged the Trust not to prepare an isolated Forage Management EIS, for 2007 forward, before addressing long-range strategic planning. Nevertheless, the Board signed a contract in February 2006, outsourcing the task of preparing that EIS.

The 2000-2015 Plan went on to state that the Trust would launch "infrastructure development" in Phase 2 (2005-10), including:

- an integrated road and trails system to accommodate recreation and administration needs,
- a visitor facility,
- an administrative/science facility, and
- an integrated interpretive plan focused on the Highway 4 corridor that skirts the Valle Grande.

The Coalition has urged the Trust to use the FY06 supplemental appropriations as core funding to develop the implementation component of its comprehensive plan (including the business plan), duly vetted by the public. Only with such a foundation can further program and resource planning proceed strategically, systematically, efficiently, and with the collaborative support of the public – as envisioned by the founders of the Trust and the Preserve.

Long-Awaited Data and Reports

In mid-April 2006, for the first time ever, the Valles Caldera Board of Trustees authorized the staff to release data that the Trust has collected since the Preserve was created in 2000.

The authorization came in response to a request from the Coalition to the Board, asking for the data and summaries that the Trust committed to collecting and compiling when it launched its Interim Livestock Grazing Program in August 2002. That program, designed to provide short-term drought relief for area livestock operators, has been carried forward for four years, and the Board is now hoping that late spring precipitation will rescue the proposed fifth season from a winter of severe drought.

As of April 2006, however, the Trust had released neither data nor summaries for any year.

The Coalition has asked for these data and summaries over the years. In March, the Coalition requested these documents again, in part because the Trust is proposing to more than double utilization by cattle this summer, following an exceptionally dry winter when some 3,000 elk were able to remain on the Preserve, consuming vegetation that would otherwise have been available to cattle early in the 2006 season.

For a list or for the data sets and reports, contact the Coalition, or Preserve Scientist Bob Parmenter (bparmenter@vallescaldera.gov, 661-3333).

The Coalition Is Not Opposed to Grazing

The law and procedures that set up the Caldera "experiment in land management" championed the cultural diversity of the Southwest, invoked collaboration, affirmed that the public would be engaged early and meaningfully in management decisions, and dedicated the Trust to collecting and sharing scientific data — to double-check the accuracy of our observations and to serve as one of the cornerstones of state-of-the-art decision making.

The Valles Caldera Preservation Act states explicitly that the Preserve will accommodate domestic livestock grazing insofar as it is consistent with the other purposes for which the Preserve was established. The Coalition is dedicated to helping the Valles Caldera experiment succeed, as it is defined.

For more information, contact Coalition Coordinator Marty Peale in Santa Fe (983-4609, mpeale@vallescalderacoalition.org) or see the Coalition's website (www.vallescalderacoalition.org).

—Marty Peale



The Coalition remains committed to helping the Trust abide by its own innovative laws and procedures. By now, the Board should be accountable for seeing that its interim programs are implemented well. This includes stating objectives, doing monitoring, reporting results annually, and updating objectives and monitoring designs, if necessary. This holds true for all existing programs, including not only livestock grazing, but also fishing, elk hunting, hiking and tours, winter recreation, noxious weed control, road maintenance, and prescribed fire (photo by D. Usner).

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PAJARITO GROUP NEWS

Meetings

Pajarito Group Open Meetings Wednesday, June 7, 7:00 PM. Upstairs Meeting Rooms in Mesa Public Library

Craig Martin, Striking Balance: Issues Facing Los **Alamos County Open Space**

As Los Alamos County heads toward expanding the local economy, it also strives to protect its open space, its viewsheds, and the great recreational opportunities around town. Nailing down a definition of open space, respecting critical viewsheds, and enhancing the trail system are stated objectives of the County Council under its goal of "Protect the Environment." Come hear about some of the issues that are being addressed as the community seeks to diversify the economy, provide protection against wildland fires, institute storm water management, protect natural and cultural resources, and maintain just-beyond-the-backyard recreational opportunities.

Craig Martin is the Los Alamos County Open Space Specialist. He is the author of 17 books on recreation and local history in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado.

There will be no Pajarito Group Open Meetings in July and August.

Outings

Saturday-Monday, May 27-29: Issues Outing to the Valle Vidal.

Join us for a Memorial Day Campout. Explore this area threatened by coalbed methane development. Arrive Saturday and enjoy easy to moderate hikes on Sunday and Monday. With group agreement we can organize for communal meals on one or both nights. This hike is co-sponsored by the Pajarito Environmental Education Center. Reservations a must! Ilse Bleck, 662-2368.

Wednesday, June 21: Summer Solstice Hike and Potluck at the Top of Pajarito Ski Area.

Meet at Pajarito Ski Lodge at 5:30 PM with food, drink, and utensils for shared potluck on the picnic-bench platform between the Aspen and Big Mother lifts. We'll return to the parking lot by 9:00 PM. Bring a flashlight and extra layers for the cool of the evening. Intermediate difficulty. Jean Dewart, 662-9592

Some of our Executive Committee members are moving and we are looking for new volunteers. Please contact Ilse Bleck for more information.

Ned Farquhar Speaks on Gov. Richardson's Environmental Policy

ot everyone believes that public lands should remain public, climate change exists, or the world needs to move to renewable sources of energy, but for those who do, Ned Farquhar, Gov. Richardson's Energy and Environmental Policy Advisor, offered a thread of hope. Richardson's political agenda includes developing renewable energy, preserving roadless areas, supporting the wolf-reintroduction program, regulating and reining-in oil-and-gas development, protecting both the Valle Vidal and Otero Mesa, developing a dialogue between the ranching and environmentalist communities, and working with the Western-states governors to make resource protection as vital as resource extraction.

Farguhar pointed out that those land-use issues often throttle the conservation effort. For example, (primarily) urban environmentalists that want public lands protected for recreation and wildlife, pits itself against the rancher whom they see as the overgrazing pillager. Many environmentalists, he said, demand No-Moo, thus shutting down any dialogue between themselves and the ranchers.

But, Farquhar said, the Governor's office recognizes that most ranchers have managed their land for generations. Even those who don't look it actually share the environmentalist's deep dedication to the land. The difference is merely in the level of pragmatism that comes from needing the land for survival.

"We don't want to use the aplomado falcon," he said, referring to the endangered falcon found on Otero Mesa, "as a big salami to bang [ranchers] over the head with. We just want the aplomado falcon back. How do we do that?"

"A healthy ecosystem and restoring the native structure is good for both. [We're] working to establish conservation easements on private property. The State pays ranchers for conservation easements where ranchers do habitat restoration and protect riparian areas by providing watering sources away from streams, but can still graze other sections.

Sustainable/renewable energy was the audience's main concern. If the bottom line for converting to clean energy is cost, why not have New Mexico smash the perception that renewables are more expensive, by powering all government buildings with solar? Is the State working to limit the negative effects of wind such as siting, noise, road- and power-corridor-development? What about nukes? What about the solar tax credit? What about recycling trash?

Farquhar said, "We're working on it."

The eastern New Mexico wind farm is partially on private land with already-developed roads. Power transmission in the US is primitive—we lose energy from the old and inefficient lines. But, Farquhar said, "Much attention is being paid to siting the farms on not-natural land, and to maximize the use of existing corridors." So far, he said, the turbines have killed three golden eagles.

Nuclear power could be an option in 20 or 30 years, but now we have no safe way to dispose of the waste, and there's the issue of weapons proliferation. We need an international solution, not state-by-state where everyone finds a dump in some economically place desperate place. The deal the Bush Administration made with India didn't help," he said. "We could be letting Pandora out of the box."

"There's a deadline in developing new plants generating power through renewables. If we don't do it now, new coal, gas, and nuclear plants will come on-line, and people will continue to expect cheap energy."

But, he said, the most underutilized energy source

Pajarito Group Directory

Executive Committee Chair: Ilse Bleck ibleck@yahoo.com 662-2368 Co-Chair: Jody Benson bensonj@lanl.gov 662-4782 Secretary: Betsy Barnett betsybeee@earthlink.net 662-9581 Treasurer: David Gemeinhart ddgem@losalamos.com 672-6267 Mat Johansen matjohansen@cybermesa.net 662-9763 Chuck Pergler pergler@att.net 661-6169 Julie Pearson juliepearson@msn.com 661-1121

Committee Chairs

Conservation; Oil & Gas: Betsy Barnett betsybeee@earthlink.net 662-9581 Endangered Species/Wildlife: Chuck Pergler pergler@att.net 661-6169 Environmental Education: Julie Pearson juliepearson@msn.com 661-1121 Global Warming: Charles Keller alfanso@mail.cybermesa.com 662-7915 Membership: Gita Carey gitacarey@yahoo.com 661-9604 Newsletter Editor; Publicity: Jody Benson bensonj@lanl.gov 662-4782 Outings; Parks/Refuges: Ilse Bleck ibleck@yahoo.com 662-2368 Political: Paul Frederickson paulfrederickson@ieee.org 662-5915 Programs; Genetic Engineering; Water; Marine: Mat Johansen matjohansen@cybermesa.net 662-9763 Webmeister: Rob Pine bobdaddy@spinn.net 281-6076 htttp://riogrande.sierraclub.org/pajarito/

is efficiency. "We have vast amounts of efficiency lying out there waiting to be harvested. Why put billions into creating new power plants, and eliminate investing in efficiency?"

Something hopeful on the national political scene: Richardson is a member of the Western Governors Association. Although most Western governors are oriented toward traditional forms of energy (oil, gas, and coal), and many don't even believe in climate change, some states such as Oregon, Washington, California, and New Mexico, are using consumerdriven mandates to cut emissions and work for renewable energy. "Gov. Schwarzenagger has 40-million voters saying [of clean energy] here's what we

Finally, he said, it's up to us New Mexicans to require a consumer-driven government. Let the Governor (and the President) know the electorate. Even a Republican has an excuse to listen to 40-million

Ned Farquhar would like to speak to other groups. Contact him at (505) 476-2241, and Ned .Farquhar@state.nm.us.

—Jody Benson

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May/June 2006 RIO GRANDE SIERRAN



Northern Group News

Tuesday, May 16, 7 PM NEW MEXICO GLOBAL WARMING INITIATIVES

John Fogarty MD, co-founder of New Energy Economy and member of Physicians for Social Responsibility, will discuss how you can get involved in environmentally based initiatives to address global warming.

New Energy Economy was conceived to promote the implementation of Governor Richardson's executive order to set up a Climate Change Advisory Group and come up with recommendations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 75 percent by 2050. Hear Dr. Fogarty's preview of some of the recommendations coming forward and how you can help promote their adoption.



General meetings are held at the Unitarian Church 107 W. Barcelona St (between Galisteo and Don Gaspar).

All meetings, butings, and activities are FREE and open to the public.

DO WE HAVE YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS?

Because of the high cost of mailing, and the urgency of some of the information we would like to send you, we are moving in the coming months to more email messages to our members. In some cases these will be in place of postal mailings. If you aren't sure we have your e-mail address, please send it, along with your name, postal address and (if you have it) your member number to: address.changes@sierraclub.org

Saturday June 10, 6-9 PM SUMMER SOLSTICE POT LUCK PICNIC

The Commons, 2300 West Alameda (corner of Camino Carlos Real)

Join our annual social and visit with old and new friends. Good food and conversation! The Chapter Executive Committee, here for their quarterly meeting, will attend, and we have a special treat. The national Club is putting on a Leader Development Project training at the Commons that weekend for our Chapter and Group activists – one of four pilot projects across the country. The Project team, led by Board of Directors member Greg Cassini and Marshall Ganz, the renowned Farmworker organizer turned Harvard professor, will join us for supper and promise fun afterdinner festivities for all.

Please bring about eight servings of one of the following: main dish or casserole, salad, meat or vegetable dish, dessert, or appetizer. If you don't want to cook, bring wine, beer, juice or soft drinks. Refrigerator and warming oven available.

GROUP COMMITTEE MEETING DATES

Group Executive Committee:

Tuesday, June 6, 7 PM } Eleonor Eisenmenger's home Tuesday, July 11, 7 PM } (contact Excom member for directions)

Group Conservation Committee (at Eleonor Eisenmenger's home):

Tuesday, May 23, 7 PM Tuesday, June 27, 7 PM Tuesday, July 25, 7 PM

No Water Potlucks until further notice

See page 14 for information on our Taos and Four Corners branches.

Northern New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club 1472 South St. Francis Drive, Santa Fe, NM 87505 505 · 983·2703 www.nnmsierraclub.org

GROUP CHAIR John Buchser

The Conservation Committee has two relevant sub-groups becoming active, one titled Smart Energy Solutions – or "Cool Cities," focused on alternative energy and energy use reduction, headed by Voitek Byszewski. The other committee will be following forest policies in the Carson and Santa Fe national forests, as well as getting more involved on the forest-urban interface. Contact Dexter, Norma, or myself if you have an interest in either.

I would like to personally thank Lionel Soracco for his volunteer work as our treasurer for over a decade. He and his wife are moving to Rhode Island to be closer to their family. Taking over the management of our finances is Anne Stauffer, who spends her days working for the Department of Finance and Administration in NM State Government.

Please vote in the June 6 primaries if you are registered in one of the major parties here in NM. More of us must get involved in the political process if we are to save our planet for our families and the critters.

Thank you to all those who supported Chris Calvert and Anna Hansen in the race for City Council. We wish our member Chris the best of luck in his new political career as new Santa Fe City Councilor.

CONSERVATION CHAIR

Norma McCallan

With Smart Energy Solutions the Number 1 priority for the national Sierra Club and the Cool Cities Campaign as its flagship, we have combined our Energy Issue Group with our Urban Issues to create one strong committee working to make Santa Fe a Cool City, then working with members in other locales like Las Vegas, Taos and Farmington to achieve Cool City status for their hometowns. Later there may be energy/global warming related legislative issues we can apply our efforts to. The concept of Cool Cities recognizes that cities, counties and states have to take the lead in helping to solve the urgent problem of global warming. Strategies that forward-looking cities are already pursuing include cleaner vehicles, energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Ken Hughes has been helping to create a campaign specific to Santa Fe, including bike trails, intracity rail service and continuous, unimpeded sidewalks!

With national forests under a mandate to produce a Transportation Management Plan, our small Forests Committee welcomes new members to help them work with the Forest Service and other groups in achieving a Plan that clearly defines where ORV use is appropriate and where it should not be allowed. Please join us in these grassroots endeavors!

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

Chair - John Buchser *	jbuchser@comcast.net	820.0201
Vice-Chair – Dexter Coolidge *	dextercoolidge@yahoo.com	988.1197
Secretary – Retta Prophet *	retta.prophet@state.nm.us 505	-315-6152
Treasurer - Anne Stauffer	arsinnm@comcast.net	986-1412
Chapter Rep – Dexter Coolidge *	dextercoolidge@yahoo.com	988.1197
Computer Chair (and Muir Data Base) –		
Tom Robey	trobey@cybermesa.com	955.9578
Membership/Volunteer – Alice Cox	auntiealice@cybermesa.com	757.2145
Dexter Coolidge *	dextercoolidge@yahoo.com	988.1197
Newsletter - Kay Carlson	kcarlsonwp@earthlink.net	982.3926
Outings - Norbert Sperlich	bsperlich@cybermesa.com	474.4354
Tobin Oruch	oruch@lanl.gov	820.2844
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Tom Robey	trobey@cybermesa.com	955-9578
Publicity - Jan Marquart		466-1807
Taos Branch – Susan Ressler	artemis@newmex.com	776.1544
Farmington Branch - Art Jaquez	artjaquez@yahoo.com 505	-326-5229
Web Master - Monika Bittman	webfoot@cybermesa.com 505	-581-0130
Dan Rusthoi	rusthoi@lanl.gov	474-3965

^{*} Member of the Northern Group Executive Committee

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Activist Outings-Norma McCallan *	nmccallan@mindspring.com	471.0005
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Genetically Engineered Food - Jim Har	nnan jhannan505@aol.com	988.5760
Mining - Cliff Larsen	clarsen1@ix.netcom.com	466.2128
Smart Energy Solutions		
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Las Vegas Point Person - Betty Quic	k bwallace@igc.org 505	-454-9123
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Wildlife/Nat'l Parks/Rangelands - Rog	er Peterson rogpete@aol.com	983.7559
Doug Fraser *	fraser@thuntek.net	474.7615
Richard Kristin *	rkristin@csf.edu	982.1671
Carol Raymond *	Carol@SFSR.com 989-8600, e	ext 27 (w)

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Northern Group News

Sat Sun May

- 6 <u>Strenuous Hike</u> near Grass Mountain, Pecos, 12 miles RT, 1500' gain. Call before 6-4, 9 PM **Michael Di Rosa** (663-0648 h or 667-0095 w)
 - 7 <u>Easy Hike</u> along Tesuque Creek. Dogs okay. Leave 9 AM. Eliza Schmid (474-5846)

May 12, 13, 14 - Friday night, Saturday and Sunday <u>Valle Vidal Car Camp</u> "Take A Llama To Lunch #2," see article below. Reservations Norma McCallan (471-0005)



- 13 <u>Strenuous Hike</u> to Nambe Lake, steep climb, 7 miles RT, 2100' gain Lester Drapula (438-3306)
 - 14 <u>Moderate Hike</u> in high country. Leave 8 AM. Art Judd (982-3212)
 - 14 <u>Moderate Singles Hike</u> with gourmet potluck. Call Lavi Malhotra (995-8547)
- 20 **Santa Fe River Cleanup** 9 AM 12 Noon **John Buchser** (820-0201)
- 20 <u>Easy Birdwatch Walk</u> jointly with Audubon Society, bring binoculars Ron Duffy (982-2890)
- 20 Moderate Hike to Ghost Hotel. Call Gail Bryant (1-505-757-6654)
- 20 <u>Strenuous Hike</u> on Tunnel Springs Trail, Sandias. Sweeping vistas, lovely wildflowers, 14 miles RT, 3240' gain. **Dan Rusthoi** (690-8967)
 - 21 <u>Moderate Hike</u> to Atalaya. Dogs okay. Leave 9 AM. Eliza Schmid (474-5846)
- 27 <u>Moderate/Strenuous Hike</u> high country. Marcia Skillman (474-7414)
 - 28 Strenuous Hike in Jemez, Los Griegos Ridge. 9 miles RT, 2000' gain. Norbert Sperlich (474-4354)

For additional outings in Northern New Mexico, please check the Pajarito Group page(s) in this newsletter.

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

PLEASE <u>ALWAYS</u> CALL THE OUTINGS LEADER PRIOR TO A HIKE FOR CONFIRMATION AND DETAILS.

Sat Sun July

- 1 <u>Easy/Moderate Hike</u> probably in Glorieta or Pecos area, maybe Jack's Cpgrd to Pecos River Gail Bryant (1-505-757-6654)
- Strenuous Loop Hike in the Truchas, up San Leonardo Creek, gain the ridge to Sheepshead Pk, and return by way of Trampas Lakes trail, 12 mi, 4000 ft' gain. Call **Michael Di Rosa** (663-0648 home; 667-0095 work) before 9 PM Thursday 6-29
 - 2 <u>Easy/Moderate Hike</u> to Rio en Medio Waterfalls, approx 6 mi, 400' gain, dogs okay Eliza Schmid (474-5846)
 - 2 <u>Moderate or Strenuous High Country Hike</u>, wonderful destination TBD, maybe Nambe Lk. **Marcia Skillman** (699-7744)
- No outing scheduled; check website or next newsletter.
 - 9 <u>Strenuous Hike</u> probably to Spirit Lake, perhaps from Holy Ghost CG, 14 mi, 2800' gain **Tobin Oruch** (820-2844) before 8 PM
- 15 <u>Santa Fe River Cleanup</u> 9 AM 12 N John Buchser (820-0201)
- 15 <u>Strenuous Hike</u> to Wheeler Peak via steep ascent from Williams Lake, 7 mi, 3300' gain, early start **Patrick O'Keefe** (820-2359)
- 15 <u>Easy Birdwatch Walk</u> jointly with Audubon Society, bring binoculars **Ron Duffy** (982-2890)
 - 16 <u>Moderate Hike</u> to lush East Fork Box in Jemez, some hiking in water, 8 mi, 900' gain **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354)
- 22 <u>Strenuous Hike</u> to Santa Fe Baldy, 14 mi, 3600' gain, dogs okay **Dan Rusthoi** (690-8967)
 - 23 <u>Moderate Hike</u> to Hamilton Mesa, Approx 5 mi, 900' gain **Michael** Goldey (820-7302)
- 29 <u>Moderate/Strenuous High Country Hike</u> location to be determined by conditions, 5-7 mi. **Page Press** (946-0169)
 - 30 <u>Moderate Hike</u> in the high country above Santa Fe, 5-10 mi, maybe 1000' gain. Lv 8 AM **Art Judd** (982-3212)

Taos Land Trust 12th Annual Art & Adventure Auction Taos Convention Center, Civic Plaza Drive Saturday, June 10, 2006

Silent Auction at 4:00, Dinner at 6:15 (\$50 cost), Live Auction 7:30 onward. You may attend the auctions without dinner for no charge. We will have a bar, hors d'oeuvres and music too.

Come support our efforts at preserving and conserving Open Space in Northern New Mexico. See www.taoslandtrust.org or call 505-751-3138 (office) or 505-751-1552 (Naima Shea, Auction Coordinator). See you there!

RIO GRANDE SIERRAN – WEBSITE ADDRESS!!

http://www.nnmsierraclub.org/

Sat Sun June

- 3 <u>Easy/Moderate Hike</u> to Otowi or Deer Trap Mesa near LA, great views, some rock scrambling, 5-6 mi, 500' gain. If too hot, Pajarito Mtn thru Cañada Bonita to Guaje Cyn **Michael Goldey** (820-7302)
- Moderate Hike to Los Griegos Ridge in Jemez, 7 mi RT, 1300' gain to saddle, optional additional 2 mi RT to east peak with 700' gain. Dogs okay. Robert McKee (471-0005)
 - 4 <u>Strenuous Loop Hike</u> in less-traveled Latir Wilderness, to Latir Peak environs via Lake Fork, return along Bull Crk, 14 mi, 3700' gain. <u>Car Camp</u> near Cabresto Lake Sat night (6-3), hike Sun, return. **Michael Di Rosa** (663-0648 home; 667-0095 work) before 9 PM Thursday 6-1
 - 4 Moderate/Strenuous Hike Marcia Skillman (699-7744)
- Moderate/Strenuous Hike on Red Dot/Blue Dot Loop in White Rock Cyn, 7-8 mi, 800' gain, rough, steep trail. **Dan Rusthoi** (690-8967)
 - 11 <u>Moderate Hike</u> in the high country above Santa Fe, 5-10 mi, maybe 1000' gain. Leave 8 AM **Art Judd** (982-3212)
 - 11 <u>Strenuous Hike</u> to Wheeler Peak via steep ascent from Williams Lake, 7 mi, 3300' gain **Robert Reifel** (984-1253)

gain on 1st, 750' on 2nd. Dogs okay. **Norma McCallan** (471-0005)

June 17 and 18, Saturday and Sunday (Leave Friday 6-16 at 5 PM) <u>Car Camp</u> at Cumbres Pass, <u>Moderate Day Hikes</u> Sat and Sun on 2 successive sections of Continental Divide Tr, marvelous views, ±1000'

- 17 <u>Singles Gourmet Potluck Moderate Hike</u> singles only please, call to coordinate food. Lavi Malhotra (995-8547)
- 17 <u>Strenuous Hike</u> to Pecos Baldy Lake and optional peak, 15-17 mi, 2600-3800' gain **Patrick O'Keefe** (820-2359)
- 17 <u>Easy Birdwatch Walk</u> jointly with Audubon Society, bring binoculars. Ron Duffy (982-2890)
 - 18 <u>Easy/Moderate Hike</u> to the Glorieta Ghost Hotel, 7 mi, 900' gain. Dogs okay. Eliza Schmid (474-5846)
- 24 Santa Fe River Cleanup 9 AM 12 Noon John Buchser (820-0201)
- 24 Moderate Hike to Hamilton Mesa, approx 5 mi, 900' gain. Dogs okay. Les Drapela (438-3306)
 - 25 <u>Easy/Moderate Hike</u> to Rio en Medio Waterfalls, 5-6 mi, 500' gain, dogs okay. Eliza Schmid (474-5846)
 - 25 <u>Strenuous Hike</u> to Gold Hill at Taos Ski Valley, 10 mi, 3400' gain Norbert Sperlich (474-4354)

SANTA FE RIVER CLEANUP AND VEGETATION MAINTENANCE

Saturdays – 9 AM to 12 Noon May 20 – June 24 – July 15

We expect to be more focused on vegetation maintenance this summer. Come help keep our river looking great! Meet at Closson Street footbridge over the Santa Fe River. Park on Lower Alto St, north end of Closson. Bring work boots, gloves and drinking water. **John Buchser** (820.0201 or jbuchser@comcast.net)

Thanks to City Councilors Patti Bushee and Karen Heldmeyer for their support in the recently completed Closson Street footbridge renovation. It took 3 years, but it happened!

My wife has pointed out that I am over-committed as a volunteer. The monthly river stewardship project is an opportunity for others looking for a role to help our environment. Let me know if you have an interest in leading this. *John Buchser*

Outings Notes - Unless otherwise noted, all outings leave from the Sierra office, 1472 St. Francis Drive, reached by turning west into the office complex at the clock tower north of San Mateo, then turning left and right. Carpooling will be arranged. Each hiker should come prepared to pay 10¢ a mile if 1-2 riders, 5¢ if 3 or more, to the driver. Bring lunch, water, sturdy hiking boots or shoes, and clothing suitable for weather leader reserves the right to turn away anyone whose equipment or experience appears unsuitable. Leader has right to alter destination of hike or cancel trip due to weather, unfavorable conditions, or insufficient numbers of participants. Unaccompanied minors must have written permission from parents or guardians to participate; permission forms are available at the Sierra Club office. Dogs not permitted unless noted otherwise. Telephone leader for details of the individual hike. To participate, you need to sign a liability waiver. To read the waiver, see http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms or contact Outings Dept at 415.977.5528 for printed version.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Richard Kristin (982.1671) – Valle Vidal Coalition

Recruit local businesses & organizations to support its Core Values **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354) – Help compiling 6th Edition Hiking Book **Norma McCallan** (471-0005)

Members for Forests and Smart Energy Solutions committees

TAKE A LLAMA TO LUNCH IN THE VALLE VIDAL #2 Saturday, May 13, 10 AM

Join the Group and Wild Earth Llama Adventures for a fun day of easy hiking, exploring and education in one of our most endangered special places. The gentle, sure-footed llamas will carry a gourmet lunch and experienced naturalist guide Stuart Wilde will share his knowledge of the flora and fauna, natural history, geology and folklore of the region. A delightful way to learn more about this "Yellowstone of New Mexico" and why coalbed methane gas development would devastate its lush beauty and centuries of sustaining the local economy. Group will camp at McCrystal campground Friday and Saturday nites and meet Stuart at 10 AM Saturday morning at nearby Whitman Vega – beautiful elk habitat projected to be of the major drilling sites. We will explore on our own Sunday before driving out. \$35 cost includes lunch. To reserve call **Norma McCallan** (471-0005) and **Wild Earth Llama Adventures** (1-800-758-5262)

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CENTRAL GROUP NEWS

bo Canyon. Yet another precious New Mexico habitat, rich in natural beauty, rich in wildlife, rich in our state's history, but like all too many such places in our state, is now threatened by the everincreasing need to move more freight around the country. The Dripping Springs Ranch, 7000 acres including land leased from the BLM, is located in part of that canyon, and has been home to Luis and Jean Rosas for 16 years.

The adjacent canyon land is a 14,000-acre recreational area for landowners of Tierra Grande Improvement Association. A small sliver of BLM land lies between the 2 properties. The Rosas are fighting to get the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) to expand their rail line in an environmentally responsible

manner. The Central Group is pleased to pass on their message and invite you to learn more.

-Paul Braiman

Dear New Mexico Sierra Club Members,

I am writing this Sierra Club Alert on behalf of Abo Canyon, part of the Historical Abo Pass Trail located in central New Mexico. Our family owns a portion of Abo Canyon, and for the past 26 months we have been working on ensuring that Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) installs its proposed Double Track Project through this area in an environmentally responsible way. BNSF insists on blasting its track through the very heart of the canyon, but we have engaged our own experts, who have designed a tunnel alternative that would preserve and even allow restoration of the canyon while better serving BNSF's long-term needs. BNSF, however, continues to ignore our alternative, as well as our call for a full environmental impact statement (EIS).

We are at a very critical stage in our effort to save Abo Canyon and that is essentially why we are asking for your help. Our website at www.abocanyon.com contains a link for "New Developments 2006" that will help you better understand our situation. Then when you get to the "What You Can Do To Help," take time to review this info which will help you in drafting a very much needed letter (or letters) to the

We Can Have More of These...



...or More of These

listed entities.

Remember, there is a feasible alternative to BNSF's plan, in the form of the Nemati Tunnel. You should be asking BNSF why they're even thinking of building through the canyon, rather than taking out what's there and putting a good modern set of tracks through a tunnel. This approach would solve BNSF's needs for

track expansion to haul more freight, while preserving the canyon, its history, culture, and a precious wildlife habitat.

Thanks for your time and energy to help save Abo Canyon.

Sincerely,

Luis Rosas & Jean Sawyer-Rosas luis@drippingspringsranch.com jean@drippingspringsranch.com



Toll Free 1-866-377-2624

P.S. To see what the proposed project will look like after construction, please go to "View the Movie" then click on "Movie" at the top of the page. There are also still photos with detailed info on the same page.

–Luis Rosas & Jean Sawyer-Rosas

Outings

Saturday May 13th, 27th, Saturday June 10th, 24th • High Mesa Exploratory Outings

May and June become far too hot for desert outings but there are places higher in elevation we can visit that have some outstanding landscapes and vistas. Most of these places are somewhat distant (up to 135 miles one-way) but easily done in a day trip given the long days in late spring. Drive times should be within 3 hours and we will avoid night driving as much as possible.

The format is largely the same as the Desert Outings; about 5 to 7 miles, elevation change of about 1,000 feet or less, and exploratory in nature. On extra-warm days we will limit the distance considerably, and to avoid a late return we'll meet earlier. Always carry more water than in the cooler months, at least 3 liters.

Contact leader by previous Wednesday for information on specific outing location.

You may also request to be included on an email list for advance information on outing locations. We

will meet at 7:30 am at Smith's, Carlisle and Menaul, nearest to Carlisle. Joint outing with Outdoor Adventures for Singles.

Thursday May 18th • Albuquerque Journal Science Writer John Fleck will talk about what go on at the intersection of science, politics, and put

Tom Petencin, 271-9928, tompeten@juno.com

Sunday May 14th • Mt. Taylor via Gooseberry Trail

Moderate hike to 11,301 feet. This is the prominent peak on the western skyline from Albuquerque, higher than Sandia Crest. Superb views in all directions. Cool and pleasant temperatures. Approx. 7 miles round trip, with 2,000 feet of elevation gain. David Ther, 260-1553

Sunday June 4th • Spirit Lake, Pecos Wilderness

Moderately strenuous hike to an alpine lake with lots of expansive views of the Sangre de Cristo high country. Approx. 12 miles round trip, up to 2,300 feet of elevation gain.

David Ther, 260-1553

Meetings

Thursday May 18th • Albuquerque Journal Science Writer John Fleck will talk about what goes on at the intersection of science, politics, and public policy, and the role of the news media (both what it is and what it should be). As case studies, he'll talk about global climate change, hurricanes, and drought, related domains that illustrate the political and public policy issues involved, and how he uses science to guide the journalistic decisions he makes.

Thursday June 15th • Abo Canyon and the Railroad Improvement Project • Luis Rosas talks about Abo Canyon and the potential impact on this beautiful, historically significant canyon located south of the Manzano Mountains.

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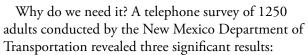
CENTRAL GROUP NEWS

Rail Runner Update

ail Runner. You've probably heard about it by now. But when does it begin? Why do we need it? Where are the stations? What is the schedule? What kind of rolling stock will be used? And of course, what's the fare?

Scheduled to begin service in July between Albuquerque and Bernalillo, with more service to follow between Albuquerque and Belen in August,

Rail Runner promises to be a great beginning to a long-term solution for commuters in the Belen - Bernalillo corridor, and also sets the stage to expand that corridor to Santa Fe.



- 73% feel that having a train and bus system is very important
- 45% feel that their commute is somewhat/very stressful
- 56% of those surveyed in Valencia County feel the time it takes to commute is a serious/very serious problem

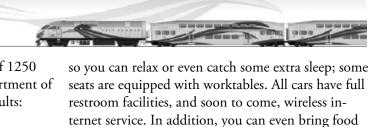
At nearly \$3 per gallon, gasoline is taking an ever bigger bite out of our wallets. For commuters, riding the train will significantly reduce that bite. It will also make for a more relaxed commute-and more relaxed commuter-to downtown Albuquerque, made even more so by not having to find (and pay for) downtown parking. And less cars on the road means less of the smog we see all too often in our usually crystal clear skies. Once in town, you'll have easy access to the Rapid Ride system and other connections. Future connection expansion plans include a continuous shuttle from the TVI Main Campus to the Downtown station, and a downtown shuttle loop bounded by 2nd Street, 6th Street, Tijeras Avenue, and Lead and Gold Avenues.

Initially, nine stations will be in service between Sandoval County/US 550 and Belen. Designed to reflect the character of their surrounding community, all stations feature free parking, bicycle and pedestrian access (including handicap), plenty of seating, shade, lighting, and a "kiss and ride" area where you can be dropped off by car directly at the station platform.

Since morning and evening commuters are expected to be the most significant users, the schedule has been designed to accommodate them, with more

frequent trains during commuting hours. However, there will also be midday and early evening service for students, shoppers, and entertainment-related travel. At first, trains will only run on weekdays, but Saturday service is expected to begin within the first year of operation. The weekday schedule is now being tested for verification with non-customer trains.

Each bi-level railcar features comfortable seating



and drink on board. The engines are diesel powered, and the Mid-Region Council of Governments

(MRCOG), the lead agency in the Rail Runner

implementation, is investigating the use of biodiesel

as an alternative fuel source.

So what's all this going to cost you? For the first three months, nothing! After three months, the full fare will be \$2 for a one-way trip between any two stations, and \$4 for an unlimited travel day pass. Seniors, children 3 and over, and the disabled will pay half fare. Children under 3 ride free, and 10-day and monthly passes are available. Speaking of children, please educate them about the dangers of playing near the tracks; trains are not cars and cannot stop

anywhere near as quickly as a car.

And the future, what does it hold? In the planning stage is an extension of service into Santa Fe, with the goal of beginning service in 2008. And unlike the Abo Canyon project (see facing page), the plan for the Albuquerque-Santa Fe extension is the result of inputs and consensus from a diverse set of communities. You can download and read the Albuquerque-Santa Fe Transportation Corridor Alternatives Analysis (AA) document, available at the MRCOG website www.mrcog-nm.gov/alternatives_analysis. htm.

So when service starts, take advantage of the free trial, and experience the beginning of a new era of a comfortable, cost-effective, and environmentally sound commuting solution for New Mexico.

For more information, including a route map, schedules, and more, visit www.nmrailrunner.com or call 505-247-1750.

–Paul Braiman

Honoring Beauty In Our Environment

Rainbow Artists is a New Mexico-based multiracial, multicultural, multigenerational collective organized to support and promote work in various art forms, creating projects that benefit both the group and the

Join us in exploring nature's wonders at our upcoming show, Honoring Beauty In Our Environment, running from June 30th to July 25th. A reception will be held on July 7, from 5 to 8 pm, at the

Arts Alliance Gallery 1100 San Mateo NE, Albuquerque (Corner of San Mateo and Lomas)

community.



For additional information, call Joan Fenicle at 505-771-4006, or visit www.rainbowartists.com.

Central Group Directory

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

Executive Committee

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Patrick Redmon, Political	
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David Ther, Outings	
grelbik@worldnet.att.net	260-1553

Want to Get Involved?

The Executive Committee normally meets on the 1st Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm. We meet at various locations, so please contact one of us for the meeting location. We also encourage you to contact us if you have issues you would like to discuss. Meetings are free and open to all members.

The Central New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club depends on the efforts of volunteers. To join us, call us!

Did You Know...

...that even though President Bush refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol, that Albuquerque Mayor Marty Chavez did? He joins 178 other mayors representing nearly 40 million Americans in 38 states, pledging to reduce global warming carbon dioxide (CO2) pollution in their cities to 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012. For more info, visit:

www.sierraclub.org/globalwarming/coolcities/

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SOUTHERN GROUP NEWS

Outings

Sunday, May 7 • Day hike to Robinson Cave in the Black Range—Meet at 8:00am for breakfast at the General Store in Hillsboro, and then hike to Robinson Cave near Percha Creek. This is an easy hike along an interesting drainage. Bring lunch and your camera. Margot Wilson (744-5860).

Saturday, May 13 • Celebrate Migratory Bird Day at Elephant Butte State Park from 8:30 'till sunset. This event is sponsored by Elephant Butte State Park, the Forest Service, the Friends of Elephant Butte and the Sierra Club. There will be bird tours at Paseo del Rio State Park at 8:30 and 9:30, in addition to birding in the Park on the Luchini Trail. There will be a booth where free materials, on birding will be distributed and other surprises. Children are welcome and there will be a special game for kids. Directions to the booth will be posted at the entrance to the State Park. Call Margot at 744-5860 or visit the NM State Park web site.

Memorial Day Weekend, May 27 - 29 • Abo Canyon Car camp and visit the Ranch of the Luis Rosas', site of one the most famous railroad grades where the BNSA plans to put in another track. This is also the site of ancient rock art and desert big horn sheep, which might be affected by the construction of the track. This outing will be done in collaboration with the Central Group and the date is subject to change—so call to double check. Call Dan at 740-2927, Margot at 744-5860 and David at 260-1553

June 4. A moderate hike to the Grand View Mines

west of Emory Pass. Meet at the General Store in Hillsboro for breakfast and be ready to leave there at 8:30. Bring lunch and sunscreen. This is an interesting trail though the forest, with the opportunity to see many warblers. Call Margot at 744-5860

June 17-18. Join us for a car camp at Bear Trap Campground in the San Mateo Mts., and for leisurely hikes down streams and up to view rock formations and whatever nature has to offer. These are easy hikes for folks with bad knees, etc., but for those who would like to explore on their own there are many trails and great diversity. Call Margot at 744-5860

Please call your outing leader to confirm the hikes or outings---- changes might be possible to due various reasons, including possible forest closures due to drought.

Program

Wednesday, May 17, 6:30 P.M. Watershed Planning: The Taylor Creek Project

Stephanie Bason, resource management specialist at Sierra County Soil and Water Conservation District, will discuss watershed management on a landscape scale and across a variety of boundaries, for the benefit of landowners and users. St.Paul's Episcopal Church, 407 Cedar St., TorC.

Southern NM Group Directory

Executive Committee P.O. Box 735, Mesilla, NM 88046

Margot Wilson

Chair, Conservation Chair, Parks/Refuges margotwilson40@hotmail.com 744-5860

Cheryll Blevins

Treasurer, editor Southern NM Group page spotblev@earthlink.net 524-4861

Rupert Clark

Env. Education, Programs

ruporch@netscape.com 522-0245

Mary Katherine Ray

Wildlife

Robert Grey

Alternate Chapter delegate, Global Warming; Chapter delegate 894-6774 P.O. Box 1579, Elephant Butte, NM 87935

Jane L. Grider

Political, Alternate Chapter Delegate

John Waugh

Outings, Endangered Species/ Wildlife, Student Coalition Liaison cactoblast@hotmail.com

Glenn Landers

Pollution

glanders@wildmesquite.org

Jo-an Smith

Mining, Grazing JAS4892@aol.com

526-4892

You Are the Hope: Editorial by Robert Grey

and expectation that our personal lives will improve and that the organization we support, the Sierra Club, will see success in its efforts to protect the natural world, the ultimate source of our spiritual and physical existence. This new year, however, will most probably see a worsening of ongoing trends with truly appalling consequences for everyone on the planet. With past action being the most probable indicator of future action, we know that we cannot depend on the Beltway Psychopaths or Corporate Kleptomaniacs to reverse trends which, for the most part, they are responsible for promoting. The real hope for the new year is an energized, toughminded YOU!

The ongoing trend with the most profound consequences is global warming. A recent finding by researchers in Antarctica is that the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere is one third higher than at any time in the last 650,000 years. The warmest year North America has experienced in 1200 years occurred in 2005. And, for those who maintain that storms like Katrina represent a peak in the hurricane cycle, the historically unprecedented high levels of this greenhouse gas strongly suggest that the cycles are no longer valid. For years, the most rational amongst us, the scientists, have warned us that global warming will result in more intense storms, drought, floods, wildlife extinctions, worldwide refugee movement, rising sea levels and the spread of tropical diseases into the temperate zone. Since global warming is dynamic, nonlinear and self energizing, the ultimate effects are uncertain. The only certainty is that there is no upside. The aforementioned psychos and kleptos are doing nothing, relative to the enormous dimensions of the problem.

Another trend, affecting everyone on the planet, is the rapidly approaching end of cheap energy. Three dollar a gallon gasoline will be a fondly remembered bargain as the demand for oil and natural gas climbs as the supply plateaus and begins its inevitable decline over the next few years. The United States, with its suburban lifestyle, long distances and consumer driven economy, demands cheap energy and lots of it. Securing (stealing?) this energy with

bloody, unwinnable resource wars amounts to immoral temporary stopgap measures with grave consequences for our country. The loss of cheap energy will amount to much more than expensive travel and home heating. The price and availability of food, pharmaceuticals, housing and hundreds of seemingly non-energy related items will be adversely affected. Because of the long lead times involved, the size of the problem and the importance of adequate energy supplies to the maintenance of our civilization, renewable energy development demands an effort comparable to the Manhattan Project, now. The psychos and kleptos offer little but talk and war.

The third trend of concern is the development of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Proponents of this essentially unregulated technology insist that it does not differ from the selective breeding of domestic plants and animals that has been going on for thousands of years. It does differ in a most fundamental way. The "breeding" of unrelated species is new and is potentially very dangerous to both humans and wildlife.

I am not referring to the controlled recombinant DNA production of pharmaceuticals in closed vessels in laboratories. I am referring to the unintended escape of GMO genes into the genomes of other species. Do you relish ingesting pesticides or pharmaceuticals produced by the very plants you are eating? Would you be happy to see wildlife species replaced by escaped GMO species? Once GMO genes have escaped into the wild, there is no calling them back. Yet the psychos and kleptos defend unregulated GMO technology as some sort of scientific breakthrough (profit opportunity).

These trends are both unprecedented and dangerous. There are groups worldwide addressing these issues, with varying levels of success. The power brokers in the most powerful nation on the earth, however, seem, in their arrogance, to have decided that the buck takes precedence over common sense and common decency.

Remember, though, that YOU are the hope for the new year and beyond. How hard would you fight for your children and grandchildren? I think that you would agree that their future is in great jeopardy.

Robledo Mountains news by Jo An Smith

The Paleozoic Trackways Foundation to preserving the Robledo trackways, had a presentation to the Dona Ana County Commission on March 28. Led by Commissioner McCamley, the Commission passed a strong resolution in support (4-0) of protecting the prehistoric trackways. PTF continues to gather public support for protection, while another group, the Friends of the Robledos continues their federal court challenge to BLM's plan to allow expansion of the rock quarry. New evidence submitted to the court by the group charges that BLM does not even know where the boundaries between the rock quarry and the Paleozoic Trackway meet, putting the trackways at risk.

So...what can you do? Write letters to the editor, harangue your elected officials and participate in elections. Automatically vote OUT incumbent officials who talk but do not deliver real, meaningful results. Vote with your wallet every time you make a purchase. Prepare now for the coming high price of energy. Be aggressive, tough minded and tenacious; the stakes are too high to be otherwise. Remember that the psychos and kleptos control the news to the extent that it is little more than propaganda. Independent news operations do exist, giving you the opportunity to sort out the truth. Talk to your friends and neighbors and use the web. You do not stand alone. You are the HOPE.

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Nuclear Power Not the Answer

by Bill Guerra Addington

Nuclear power is unsuited for a role in addressing climate change. Embarking on a nuclear construction program sufficient to achieve even modest carbon emissions reductions would require a new reactor going on-line every two weeks for the next 40-50 years—an unachievable goal and one too late to make a meaningful impact. Such a program would cost trillions of dollars; lead to greatly increased nuclear proliferation and safety concerns; establish 1,000 or more new potential terrorist targets of mass destruction across the world; require development of dozens of new high-level radioactive waste sites when the world has been unable to build even one; and squander the resources necessary to implement the sustainable energy technologies that will have the greatest impact on reducing carbon emissions and addressing the climate crisis. Nuclear power has not solved—and cannot solve what is inherent in the technology—its basic underlying drawbacks. It remains uniquely dangerous, extremely expensive, and no nation in the world has achieved the ability to isolate lethal, long-lived radioactive waste from the environment.

The choice is stark: the world can have nuclear power, or it can address climate change. The world cannot do both.

Nuclear power is the most expensive "technology" mankind has come up with to simply boil water. (That is, boil water to simply turn a turbine for electric generation) Without longtime billion dollar subsidies to nuclear plants by US Congress, nuclear power stations in the US would not exist. This failed "technology" is harmful to all life on the planet. What was promised and billed by the Atomic Energy Commission in the 1950's "Atoms for Peace" Program as: "Electricity too cheap to meter" has become in reality "too expensive to hook up to the meter..." "Low level" radioactive waste (LLRW) also remains a huge problem, with no new facilities wanted or built anywhere in the US. No new LLRW dump has been built in the US since Congress passed the Low Level Waste Policy Act was passed in 1980. Ten "Regional Compacts" have been created. The Texas LLRW Disposal Compact Disposal Agreement Act (1998) was the 10th Federal Compact, with no one to this day wanting to be the host to the National Texas "LL" dump or any other community wanting it in a "host state" in the other 9 US Compacts. This is "Radioactive Roulette, who wants the toxic radioactive dump? Routine release of radioactive noble gasses from the 103 nuclear US power plants fall back to earth in rainfall, to flow into drinking water lakes and rivers. People drink and use the contaminated rain water which then is disposed of and concentrated in sewage sludge after dewatering for land application of radioactive "biosolids." (land farming) Radioactive sludge particles then blown into the atmosphere by wind and flow into our water. People eat the contaminated cattle and crops grown on these sludged farms and ranches. Fifty percent of municipal and industrial sewage in the US is "land farmed".

Massive wasteful consumption of electricity is one root problem, conservation is not happening, but could be if promoted by the government. That is one big part of the solution.

I have spent the better part of my life opposing engineers, lawyers and politicians who wanted to destroy our home, life and heritage by creating three national Radioactive waste dumps in my home of Hudspeth County, a toxic NYC industrial and municipal sewage sludge dump at Sierra Blanca, (400 tons of hazardous NYC sludge cake a day spread over 91,000 acres for eight years, 1992 -2001)

Because I have researched and opposed using my home of Hudspeth County for Nuke Waste Dumps for the Nation since 1984, I have looked into the pros and cons of Nuclear Power for twenty years. We have defeated three "Low Level Radioactive Waste Dumps in my County of Hudspeth since the first one proposed in Dell City in 1984. I live on the El Paso Electric Grid, which half of this most expensive power comes from the triple reactor (3 - 1000 MGW Westinghouse Generators) Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station near Phoenix, Arizona. We have the most expensive electric rates in the state of Texas.

Selected Outings

May 20-21: Whitewater Creek Backpack

Place: Gila National Forest NE of Glenwood, NM

Class: Moderate+ Length: 14 miles Elevation gain: 1000 feet

Leader: Harry Newman swtraveller@aol.com or (915) 588-7192 after 6 pm After positioning the shuttle vehicles, we will hike up to a ridge with a scenic overview and descend to our lunch spot in a flat area along the creek. In the

MARIE

afternoon, we will hike down the canyon to our campsite, crossing the creek a few times; there should be ample time to sample nearby pools. Sunday morning we will hike up and out on the Gold Dust trail above the Catwalk to our vehicles. Stream crossings will be required but should not present a major problem this year.

May 27-29: Memorial Weekend Backpack

Place: Gila Wilderness from Bursum Road above Mogollon, NM

Class: Strenuous Length: 29 miles

Elevation gain: about 1000 feet

Leader: Rollin Wickenden 855-6697 (H) rwickgila@aol.com

We will depart from El Paso on Friday morning and drive to Willow Creek. We plan to hike into Iron Creek or Cooper Canyon that afternoon. Saturday we will continue on to White Creek Flat where we will enjoy the swimming hole. On Sunday, we will retrace our steps to Cub Creek or beyond. Monday, we will finish the hike back to Willow Creek and drive home. This is a long distance hike for experienced and fit backpackers. We will need to cover many miles each day. However, this is a unique opportunity for to see the heart of the Gila Wilderness and visit fabled White Creek flat.

June 12-20: Trans-Gila Backpack

Place: Gila Wilderness north of Silver City, NM

Class: Strenuous (multiday) Length: approximate 40 miles Elevation gain: 3000 feet

Leader: Laurence Gibson (915) 594-7342 lgibson@utep.edu

Although still in the planning stages, this trip will traverse our wonderful Gila Wilderness, probably beginning in the high country and ending at Willow Creek after a layover day at fantastic White Creek Flat. In the old days of the WPA and CCC this was the headquarters of the entire Gila Wilderness. Below the flat is the most spectacular swimming hole in this region. Participants must have some multiday backpacking experience to qualify for this trip. Exact dates (10 days in June sometime after the chapter meetings) and route as well as possible inclusion of dogs will be fine-tuned by the participants.

El Paso Group Directory

http://texas.sierraclub.org/elpaso **Executive Committee** 915/594-7342 Chair: Laurence Gibson lgibson@utep.edu Vice-Chair: Ted Mertig tmertig@earthlink.net 915/852-3011 Secretary: Ann Falknor afalknor@sbcglobal.net 915/833-9162 **Treasurer: Kathy Sunday** sundayt@zianet.com 915/584-9301 **Bill Addington** aquavida@valornet.com 915/369-2541 **Bob Geyer** 915/834-8242 Gilbert Pinon bifflehead@yahoo.com 915/307-3398 **Rick Provencio** rpiidye4@yahoo.com 281/727-9945 ewalsh@utep.edu Liz Walsh 915/584-1471 **Committee Chairs Chapter Delegate Bill Addington** aquavida@valornet.com 915/369-2541 Chapter Delegate (Alt.) Liz Walsh ewalsh@utep.edu 915/584-1471 **Editor, Outings** Laurence Gibson lgibson@utep.edu 915/594-7342 Inner City Outings, Membership 915/852-3011 Ted Mertig tmertig@earthlink.net **Outings** Rollin Wickenden rwickgila@aol.com 915/855-6697 Webmaster **Terry Sunday** sundayt@zianet.com 915/584-9301

May/June 2006 Rio Grande Sierran 13



Meeting

Tuesday, May 30, 7:00 p.m.

Film: Being Caribou, Bareiss Gallery, Ski Valley Road, Taos

Steering Committee

Susan Ressler, Chair • artemis@newmex.com **Heather Howitt,** *Secretary* • heatherhowitt@ hotmail.com

Eric Patterson, Treasurer • eepatt@gmail.com Tom and Gwen Oaks, Valle Vidal Liaison & Outings Coordinators • gtoaks@ispwest.com Anna Walters, Publicity • anna@kitcarson.net

Four Corners Branch News

Documentary Shows Irresponsible Drilling

▼ he newly formed Four Corners Branch has been presenting public programs for several months now, with good attendance and an enthusiastic audience. In February Dan Lorimier, Chapter Lobbyist, provided insight into the workings of the just-concluded State Legislature. March featured a discussion with two legislative candidates: Ann George, District 1; and Alice Marie Slaven-Emond, District 2. April will show the new Sierra Club documentary, Range Wars Rage On, one of seven Sierra Club Chronicles that are being shown on LinkTV. This episode features our own Tweeti Blancett and the dangerously polluting coalbed methane gas-drilling operations taking place immediately adjacent to her ranch on the Animas River. You can watch the half-hour episode at www .sierraclub.org/tv/. Public meetings are held the 4th Thursday. The May 25 program will be at the Stepback Inn, Aztec; the June 22 one at the Zia Room, San Juan Community College.

For information on local environmental events, subscribe to the Four Corners listserve by emailing sjcsierraclub-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Steering Committee

Art Jaquez, Co-Chair 326-5229 • artjaquez@yahoo.com Nick Cullander, Co-Chair 334-0935 • ncullander@hotmail.com Gordon Glass, Outings 564-4460 • agglass@earthlink.net

Another Film – Another Hit

▼ he Taos branch screened the award winning film, Oil On Ice, at their March meeting. This stunning film tells the story of the struggle to save the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In the film Adeline Peter Raboff, A Neet'ali Gwich'in Indian from Arctic Village, Alaska provides some moving tales of her people's history with the Porcupine Caribou herd in the area. Other highlights include fabulous footage of many of the other animals of the region as well as breathtaking

In addition, we were lucky to have a couple from Anchorage, Alaska who offered some personal insights about this ongoing battle to save the Refuge. Those present went on to discuss the similarities between trying to preserve the ANWR and the fight to save The Valle Vidal in Northern New Mexico.

Sustain Taos produced an Earth Day event on April 22nd at Kit Carson Park. With the help of some new enthusiastic volunteers, the Taos branch Sierra Club sponsored a table at the event. Our table was covered with informative and colorful brochures, pamphlets, and flyers of various sorts. There was quite a bit of interest in what the Sierra

Club is doing and planning to do, especially

Water sentinels: Water monitoring of the Rio Hondo and the Rio Pueblo for some common chemical pollutants is under discussion. Eric Patterson of the local branch of the Sierra Club, along with Amigos Bravos, the Taos Pueblo Environmental Office, and the Birds and Rivers organization would be involved. If it all gets coordinated, the local Taos Branch of Sierra Club will apply to the National Sierra Club Water Sentinels Program for a grant to cover some volunteer training and some testing equipment. This could provide an ongoing series of water monitoring to help keep our local waters in good condition.

On April 25th, our branch administrative and planning meeting included a potluck. It was hosted by Eric Patterson, our branch Treasurer, and showcased his and his wife Nora's huge and amazing garden in Valdez. It was a productive meeting and a good time was had by all.

The Taos branch is looking for outings leaders for summer and fall hikes. If you are interested in becoming a leader call the Oaks at 776-2252

–Tom Oaks

Support for Protecting Valle Vidal Grows

The avalanche of support for protecting the Valle Vidal from coalbed methane drilling is still gathering momentum. The Coalition for the Valle Vidal has grown to almost 400, with the city councils of Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Vegas being some of the newest members. The Carson National Forest expects to release its draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) sometime this summer. This will give us a better sense of their plans for the Valle and another chance to show support for protection of it, in the form of more letters! And the letters are helping. Attorney General Patricia Madrid, who is running against Heather Wilson for the 1st Congressional District (Bernalillo County, roughly), has said that she will support Representative Tom Udall's Valle Vidal Protection Act (H.R. 3817) if she is elected to Congress in the fall. The final count of comments that the Forest Service received on the Valle Vidal scoping plan was 54,029. Of those, only nine people favored coalbed methane drilling as part of the Valle's future. The Northern Group continues to enlist local businesses and organizations in the Coalition that support the protection of the Valle.

In Albuquerque, as part of the Building Environmental Communities (BEC) program—a grassroots effort promoting conservation of Valle Vidal—25 volunteers gathered to listen to Maribeth Oakes and Steve Capra; then they hit the streets in celebration of Earth Day. They also collected about 100 postcards urging Rep. Wilson (see contact info page 3) to do more to protect the Valle Vidal.

"Furbearers" (continued from page 1)

for rescue or frantic trips to a veterinarian and, in all cases, a sense of violation that alone should make trapping on public land illegal. That curious children are also placed in harm's way goes without saying.

These lands and the wildlife they harbor belong to all of us. Your words can help stop this. Please write NMDG&F and tell them that using the word "furbearer" is as narrow and inadequate as their trapping program is for "managing" them. Ask that they respect not only wildlife but the public by disallowing traps from New Mexico's public lands. Send your comments to Rick Winslow (frederic.winslow@state .nm.us; P.O. Box 25112, Santa Fe, NM 87504).

For more information, visit www.riogrande.sierra club.org and click on the trapping pages.

For more information, contact Sarah Lundstrum (see masthead page 2).

Coalition-Sponsored Valle Vidal Outings

May 13 • Take a Llama to Lunch in the Valle Vidal - Northern Group and Wild Earth Llama Adventures. (See page 9.)

May 27-29 • Memorial Day Weekend campout – Pajarito Group and Pajarito Envonmental Education Center. (See page 7.)

June 13-19 • Watershed and Restoration Structure Evaluation on Comanche Creek - Quivira Coalition and others. Jim O'Donnell (758-3874).

June 16-18 • Midnight Meadows ATV enclosure construction – Amigos Bravos and NM Wilderness Alliance. Rachel Conn (758-3874).

July 7-9 • Comanche Creek Restoration Work and work weekend with Bill Zeedyk – Quivira Coalition and others. Deborah (820-2544 ext. 5).

—Sarah Lundstrum

Off-Road Vehicles (continued from page 5)

routes, if necessary, can take place on a route-byroute basis after the basic route system is determined.

Sound science should play a large role in designations and decision making. Agencies should work to develop measurable criteria for designations. A landscape-scale approach would allow for routes to be designated within discrete, enforceable zones. Networks of routes designated in this manner would avoid riparian areas, critical habitat for listed and sensitive species, steep slopes, and fragile soils.

Past inaction has allowed for extensive damage to the land, but we now have the opportunity to contribute to positive change. The Center for Biological Diversity hopes to work closely with other organizations, agency officials, ORV riders, and the public to establish positive reforms. We encourage all concerned citizens to join in this effort to reduce damages associated with ORVs, protect public trust resources, and create appropriate recreational opportunities.

For more information, contact Chris Kassar, Wildlife Biologist, at Center for Biological Diversity in Tucson, Arizona (ckassar@biologicaldiversity.org, 520/623-5252 ext. 317).

—Chris Kassar

Sierra Club Selects Rio Grande Chapter for Leadership Program

he strongest social movements combine a national focus with a grassroots base, says Harvard Professor Marshall Ganz, who is working with the Sierra Club on an ambitious research project. Ganz notes, however, that most national advocacy groups founded in the past 40 years are not based on local organizing. They are funded by members who have neither met one another nor attended a meeting together.

The Sierra Club, by virtue of its 114-year history, has both an activist grassroots base and a national focus. To make most effective use of these advantages, we are challenged today to grow and mobilize our base more than ever before, and to increase the synergy between the local and national levels. The Sierra Club was founded in 1892, but its membership has grown 43-fold in the second half of its century, shooting up from 16,000 in 1960 to 700,000 today. This dramatic growth generated more local Chapters and Groups, but still only a fraction of Club members participate in local Groups. The effectiveness of these Groups varies widely, and their full potential has not been realized.

Launched in September 2003, the National Purpose, Local Action (NPLA) Project provided Club leadership at all levels with a first-ever comprehensive overview of the organization as a whole, its areas of

greatest strength, where its challenges lie, and how to fulfill its unrealized potential.

In September 2005, the Sierra Club Summit used the results of the NPLA study to determine three conservation priorities for 2006-2010:

- Smart Energy Solutions
- America's Wild Legacy
- Safe and Healthy Communities

Pilot Project

In March 2006, the Harvard research team and some members of the Leadership Development Pilot Committee selected the Rio Grande Chapter to be one of four Chapters (out of 64 total) to participate in a capacity-building pilot project to increase the effectiveness of Sierra Club Chapter and Group leaders. The other Chapters chosen to participate in this project were Cascade (western Washington state), Florida, and Loma Prieta (San Mateo, Santa Clara, and San Benito counties in California).

The pilot project will focus on cultivating skills that the NPLA study identified as having the most effectiveness, including:

- engaging new members;
- recruiting and retaining activists;
- developing leaders and succession plans;
- strategizing, deliberating, and implementing;
- team building;
- organization building;

- generating conservation, electoral, and outings program activity; and
- community building.

Participants will include members of the Chapter and Group Executive Committees, their conservation chairs, and other club activists working on conservation issues. The first meeting will be held 10-11 June 2006 in Santa Fe.

For more information, contact Chapter Chair Susan Martin in Santa Fe (see masthead page 2).

—Susan Martin

Gila River Festival

The second annual Gila River Festival will be held 12-14 May 2006 at sites in the the Cliff-Gila Valley area near Silver City. It is a three-day interpretive event focused on increasing the awareness of the natural and cultural heritage of the Gila River and its watershed, broadening our awareness of communities and community life along the Gila, New Mexico's last free-flowing river.

For more information on events, lodging, location, and registration, please call the Gila Conservation Coalition at 538-8078 or visit www.gilaconservation.org/gilariver festival.shtml.

To Contribute to the Rio Grande Sierran

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

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

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

Nonmember subscriptions are \$10 per year. Send checks to Thomas Robey, 145 W. Zia Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505. 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).

Rio Grande Chapter Quarterly Meetings

The Chapter's Conservation and Executive Committee meetings will be held (in a condensed format) 9-11 June 2006 at the Commons in Santa Fe in conjunction with the first training session of the Leadership Development project. Contact Conservation Chair Ken Hughes or Chapter Chair Susan Martin (see masthead page 2) for more information. Carpooling is encouraged at all meetings.

The next quarterly meeting will be held in mid-September 2006 at the Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge near Socorro.

Making Cities Livable Conference

Sierra Club members are invited to attend the 44th International Making Cities Livable Conference, which will be held 18-22 May 2006 in Santa Fe. A special rate of \$150 has been arranged to hear speakers from all the world discuss what makes cities livable. For more information about this year's conference, visit www .livablecities.org/44ConfSantaFe.htm.

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Chapter newsletter.

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May/June 2006 Rio Grande Sierran

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Outings

Selected Sierra Club Outings for May, June, and July 2006

- Saturday, May 6 McKittrick Canyon hike, in Guadalupe Mountains
 National Park 7 miles. Easy. Gil Pinon (915/307-3398, bifflehead@yahoo .com El Paso Group).
- **Sunday, May 7 Robinson Cave hike, near the Percha** Easy hike along interesting drainage. Margot Wilson (744-5860 Southern Group).
- **Sunday, May 7 Hillsboro Peak hike** 10 miles. Moderate/strenuous. Hike to the top of this 10,000' peak on the crest of the Black Range. Carolina Greenfield (915/526-7884 El Paso Group).
- **Saturday, May 13 Nambe Lake hike** 7 miles, 2100' gain. Steep and rocky in spots. Les Drapela (438-3306 Northern Group).
- **Saturday, May 13 Migratory Bird Day, Elephant Butte State Park** Many events, children encouraged. Margot Wilson (744-5860 Southern Group).
- Saturday-Sunday, May 13-14 Valle Vidal carcamp Take a llama to lunch on Saturday with eco-guide Stuart Wilde, whose gentle llamas carry a gourmet lunch while he shares his knowledge of the flora and fauna, history, geology, and folklore of this threatened and very special place. Stay at McCrystal Campground. Cost: \$35. Reservations Norma McCallan (471-0005 Northern Group) and Wild Earth Llama Adventures (800/758-5262).
- **Sunday, May 14 Mt. Taylor hike, via Gooseberry Trail** Moderate hike to this 11,301' prominent peak. Great views. David Ther (260-1553 Central Group).
- **Sunday, May 14 Singles hike** Moderate. Gourmet potluck. Lavi Malhotra (995-8547 Northern Group).
- **Saturday, May 20 Tunnel Springs Trail hike, in the Sandias** 14 miles. Strenuous. Great views. Dan Rusthoi (690-8967 Northern Group).
- Saturday-Sunday, May 20-21 Whitewater Creek backpack, in Gila National Forest – 14 miles, 1000' gain. Moderate. Great pools, car shuttle. Harry Newman (915/588-7192, swtraveller@aol.com – El Paso Group).
- **Saturday-Monday, May 27-29 Valle Vidal issues outing** Easy and moderate hikes Saturday and Sunday. Explore this area threatened by coalbed methane gas development. Co-sponsored by the Pajarito Environmental Education Center. Reservations Ilse Bleck (662-2368 Pajarito Group).
- **Saturday-Monday, May 27-29 Gila Wilderness backpack** 29 miles, 1000' gain. Strenuous. Experienced backpackers only. Rollin Wickenden (915/855-6697, rwickgila@aol.com El Paso Group).
- **Saturday-Monday, May 27-29 Abo Canyon carcamp** Visit the Luis Rosas Ranch, site of a famous railroad grade where the BNSF plans to put in another track, which may affect desert bighorn sheep and ancient rock art. Margot Wilson (744-5860 Southern Group), David Ther (260-1553 Central Group), or Dan Lorimier (740-2927 Southern Group). Date may change.
- Sunday, May 28 Los Griegos Ridge hike, in Jemez Mountains 9 miles, 2000' gain. Strenuous. Norbert Sprlich (474-4354 Northern Group).
- Saturday, June 3 Otowi Peak or Deer Trap Mesa hike Easy/moderate.

- Great views. Some rock scrambling. Michael Goldey (820-7302 Northern Group).
- **Saturday, June 3 Los Griegos Ridge hike, in Jemez Mountains** 7 miles, 1300' gain, optional 2-mile extension to east peak. Moderate. Robert McKee (471-0005 Northern Group).
- **Sunday, June 4 Grand View Mines hike, west of Emory Pass** Moderate. Breakfast at Hillsboro General Store. Margot Wilson (744-5860 Southern Group).
- Sunday, June 4 Latir Wilderness loop hike, via Lake Fork and Bull Creek 14 miles, 3700' gain. Strenuous. Carcamp Saturday at Cabresto Lake. Michael di Rosa (663-0648 Northern Group).
- Saturday, June 10 Red Dot/Blue Dot loop hike, in White Rock Canyon 7-8 miles. Moderate/strenuous. Steep trails. Dan Rusthoi (690-8967 Northern Group).
- Sunday, June 11 Wheeler Peak hike, from Williams Lake 7 miles, 3300' gain. Strenuous. Highest peak in NM. Robert Reifel (984-1253 Northern Group).
- Monday-Tuesday, June 12-20 Trans-Gila backpack 40 miles. Strenuous. Layover day at White Creek Flat with a spectacular swimming hole. Experienced backpackers only. Laurence Gibson (915/594-7342 El Paso Group).
- **Saturday, June 17 Singles hike** Moderate. Gourmet potluck. Lavi Malhotra (995-8547 Northern Group).
- **Saturday-Sunday, June 17-18 Cumbres Pass carcamp** Moderate hike each day on the Continental Divide Trail. Outstanding views. Leave Friday p.m. Norma McCallan (471-0005 Northern Group).
- Saturday-Sunday, June 17-18 Bear Trap Campground carcamp, in San Mateo Mountains Leisurely hikes along the streams, interesting rock formations. Margot Wilson (744-5860 Southern Group).
- **Sunday, June 18 Glorieta Ghost Hotel hike** 7 miles. Easy/moderate. Eliza Schmid (474-5846 Northern Group).
- Wednesday, June 21 Summer Solistice hike to top of Pajarito Ski Area Moderate. Potluck on picnic table between lifts. Jean Dewart (662-9592 Pajarito Group).
- **Saturday, June 24 Hamilton Mesa hike, in Pecos Wilderness** 5 miles, 900' gain. Moderate. Les Drapela (438-3306 Northern Group).
- **Sunday, June 25 Gold Hill hike, in Taos Ski Valley** 10 miles, 3400' gain. Strenuous. Great views. Norbert Sperlich (474-4354 Northern Group).
- Saturday, July 1 San Leonardo Creek/Sheepshead Peak, Trampas Lakes loop hike 12 miles, 4000' gain. Strenuous. Michael di Rosa (663-0648 Northern Group).
- **Saturday, July 1 Glorieta or Pecos area hike** Easy. Gail Bryant (757-6654 Northern Group).
- **Sunday, July 2 High-country destination hike** Maybe Nambe Lake. Moderate/strenuous. Marcia Skillman (699-7744 Northern Group).

Please check the five Groups' pages for more information on these trips and additional activities.

Area codes 505, except as noted. All mileages are round trips. Participants must sign a liability waiver.

Free Breakfast, Fun Events In Store for Bike Week Participants

he Bicycle Coalition of New Mexico and BikeABQ are organizing and promoting many Bike Month bicycling events in May, but the following events will be held during Bike Week. Events are subject to change. Check for the latest developments at www.BikeNM.org.

For more details or to help out, contact Gail Ryba in Santa Fe (820-1365, info@BikeNM.org).

Santa Fe

- **Monday-Sunday, May 15-21** Bike to participating shops displaying the yellow banner that says Bike Week Supporter for small incentives (cup of coffee, flat repair, etc.).
- **Friday, May 19 7:00-8:00 a.m.** Morning bike-to-work commute to the Santa Fe Plaza, with breakfast treats hosted by the City of Santa Fe.
- **Saturday, May 20 7:00 a.m.-noon** Bike-to-the Farmer's Market Day.
- **Saturday, May 20** Women's Health Services Mother-Daughter bike ride.
- **Saturday, May 20 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.** Gonzales Elementary Bicycle Safety Rodeo and BMX bonanza.

Albuquerque

Albuquerque is organizing Bike-to-Work Day events, as well, with four morning breakfast stops and one lunch stop for bicycle commuters. For more information, visit www.BikeABQ.org.

Friday, May 19 • 7:00-9:00 a.m. – Breakfast stops

- Downtown: Alvarado Transit Center (NM Rail Runner Downtown Station, 1st and Central).
- Uptown: Uptown Transit Center (near America's Parkway and Indiana).
- NE Heights: Erna Fergusson Library next to Paseo del Nordeste Trail near San Mateo.
- Journal Center: North Diversion Trail next to the Journal Center bridge.

Friday, May 19 • 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. – Lunch stop

• University Area: UNM Duckpond.

Silver City

Monday-Friday, May 15-19 – Silver City is organizing several events, which will be posted on www.BikeNM.com soon.

—Gail Ryba

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