

Rio Grande Sierran



NEWS OF THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

MARCH/APRIL 2007

Hundreds Gather to Protest Proposed Desert Rock Coal Plant

A rally held in early February at the Roundhouse in Santa Fe drew more than 250 people from all around New Mexico. Native American and faith-based groups joined with the Sierra Club and other environmental groups to say no to a polluting coal power plant from Sithe Global Power. The rotunda of the Roundhouse was full as the crowd heard speakers from all over the state talk about their concerns.

by Carol Oldham

The plant would be built on the Navajo Nation near Farmington. Though Sithe Global Power says the project could provide up to 200 jobs in the plant, they admit it would emit millions of tons of greenhouse gas pollution into New Mexico's air and water. Sithe, a Texas-based multinational company, is seeking \$85 million in New Mexico state tax breaks for the plant, which would export power to Arizona and Utah.

Many on the Navajo Nation are unhappy with plans for the plant despite Sithe's promises of economic development in the area. A blockade of the building site by Navajo elders has been in place since early December. Alice Gilmore, one of the elders in



The Governor (left) came out to speak to a group of Navajo elders and hear their concerns before the rally, and teens from the Navajo Nation (right) brought a beautiful banner they painted for the occasion. (Photos by Carol Oldham)

the blockade, says, "I still herd sheep on that land and now they want to put that power plant there. I never gave them approval to put it there." More than 25 elders and 50 other tribal members came to Santa Fe to protest the tax breaks and oppose the project. Many of the folks from the area spoke at the rally, saying their water, land, and air are polluted enough from the two dirty coal plants already in the area.

The elders met briefly with Governor Richardson and his environmental policy advisor, Sarah Cotrell, in the lobby of his office. Richardson asked the elders about their opposition to the plant and listened as they talked about the health effects and the global-warming effects. After the rally, more than 75 letters expressing opposition to the plant were written to Richardson by rally attendees and delivered to him. In addition, almost 100 letters were written and delivered to state legislators by their constituents.

The planned plant, though it would use "clean coal" technology, would emit more than 10 million tons of carbon into the atmosphere every year. Other pollutants, like mercury, which are known to have major health impacts, would also be emitted by the plant. The emissions from the plant would push the area over EPA pollution allowances, severely limiting future economic development in the Four Corners. Jesse Weahkee, a 12-year-old from Shiprock and

Albuquerque who is Navajo and Cochiti and spoke at the rally, asked, "If the plant is so great, why don't they build it in *their* backyard?"

The plant would also erase all the greenhouse gas-emission savings that the state is considering, based on the recommendations of the Climate Change Advisory Group (CCAG). The CCAG was ordered by the Governor to deal with New Mexico's contribution to global warming, and consisted of government agencies, business and industry representatives, and advocacy groups. The Sierra Club was represented on the Advisory Group by Eva Thaddeus (see article on page 4).

The coalition opposing the plant and the tax breaks includes Dine CARE, Dooda Desert Rock, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Sierra Club, Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy, NM Conference of Churches, NM Interfaith Power and Light, and Physicians for Social Responsibility.

The massive tax-subsidy bill is going through the both the House and Senate sides of the New Mexico legislature. As of press time, the House bill (HB 178) was up for a pass or re-table in the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and the Senate Bill (SB 431) was tabled in a 4-to-4 vote.

For more information, contact Carol Oldham (243-7767, carol.oldham@sierraclub.org).

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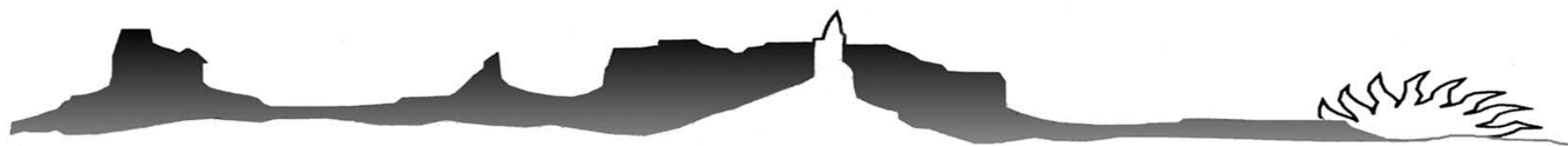


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A Note from the Chair

I recently spent four hours on a Sunday afternoon sitting (and once standing) in a crowded room. Ordinarily, I'd rather have been outside, exploring and enjoying the planet, as the Sierra Club motto encourages. But I was following through on the last part of the motto: to protect the planet.

The New Mexico Senate Conservation Committee was meeting that February day to consider whether to give a tax break to the proposed Desert Rock coal-fired power plant (see article on page 1). I was there to oppose not only the tax break, but also the plant itself.

I wasn't the only one. Although it was sunny afternoon, the committee room was packed with the usual crowd of lobbyists – and with the more uncommon sight of many Navajos of all ages. They had traveled from the reservation to talk to the committee about how the plant would destroy their lands and endanger their health and that of subsequent generations. Also in attendance were other members of the Rio Grande Chapter.

A powerful moment occurred when the Senate Conservation Committee Chair Phil Griego asked members of the audience who opposed the plant to stand. The majority in the room rose, mostly Sierra Club members and the Dooda Desert Rock Committee members. Then he asked those who



supported the plant to stand. A few people stood. Next, he asked if there were any Navajo citizens there who supported the plant. He explained that by citizens, he meant individuals there on their own, not as a representative of Navajo government. No hands went up.

Following a discussion about the potential economic benefits of the power plant, the committee took two votes. The first vote, to table the bill and not to send it on for further consideration, was 4-to-4 and failed. The second vote, to pass the bill out

of committee but *without* a positive recommendation, also failed on a 4-to-4 vote.

Obviously, we wanted the bill to be decisively defeated, but these votes were a victory in that the bill did not make progress. In large part, this success is attributable to those of you who called, wrote, and emailed your senators on the committee to oppose the tax break. Some of you helped out by joining the Chapter's Adopt-a-Legislator program (see "A Note from the Chair," *Sierran*, Jan/Feb 2007), in which our members establish relationships with state senators and representatives. Thank you!

Your efforts in contacting and/or adopting a legislator can make a huge difference in protecting the environment in our state. Even if you're unable to participate in the Adopt-a-Legislator program, be sure to call, write, or email your representative about specific legislation. Your voice counts. To become involved in the Adopt-a-Legislator program, contact Chapter Conservation Coordinator Dan Lorimier (243-7767 or 740-2927, daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org). And visit our website (<http://riogrande.sierraclub.org>) for the latest action alerts on specific campaigns and legislation.

—Susan Martin

Grand Opening and Office Warming!

The Sierra Club's NM office is moving to a LEED-certified Silver (soon to be Gold) building, and we want you to join us for our office warming and the building's grand opening. Snacks and drinks will be provided!

- **When:** Friday, April 13, 4-11 p.m.
 - **Where:** 142 Truman NE, Albuquerque
- Please RSVP by calling 243-7767.

National Club Election Underway

The annual election for the Club's Board of Directors is now underway. In March, those of you who are eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) your national Sierra Club ballot. This will include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club's website (www.sierraclub.org/bod/2007election).

You should use your own judgment by taking several minutes to read the ballot statement of each candidate. Then make your choices and cast your votes. A growing number of Club members are finding the user-friendly Internet voting option to be very convenient.

Rio Grande Chapter Quarterly Meetings

The Chapter's Conservation and Executive Committee meetings are scheduled for March 23-25, in conjunction with the Leadership Development Project, at the Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge near Socorro. Contact Conservation Chair Ken Hughes or Chapter Chair Susan Martin (see masthead page 2) for more information. Carpooling is encouraged.

Let Us Know Your Email Address!

We **promise not** to sell it or constantly ask for money. We will use it to occasionally contact you with important news or when a simple email, letter, or phone call to decision makers right here in New Mexico can make a huge difference for **our** environment. It's one of the **simplest** and most effective ways you can help. Plus, email saves us mailing costs, which we can use for other purposes and, of course, saves resources, which is good for everyone. We have set up list topics so you will only get the emails in which you're interested. **Please** send your email address with your name and regular address, and if possible your member number (which is on all Sierra Club mailings), to address.changes@sierraclub.org. **Thank you!**

Land, Wildlife, and Clean Energy Act: Ticket to Sustainable Future

New Mexico is on the verge of so many great things. Our Environment Department has one of the best visions for open space and habitat protection in the country. There are efforts all across the state to reconnect urban centers with local family farmers, and to protect those family farms permanently from development. And we are emerging as a leader in the fight to stop global climate change and develop new technologies for energy conservation and efficiency as well as renewable energy sources.

But if we are to break ahead of the pack in any of these arenas, we need a real commitment from our political leaders. We need to put our money where our mouth is. The Land, Wildlife, and Clean Energy Act, HB 433 (sponsored by Representative Richard Vigil) and SB 309 (sponsored by Senator Michael Sanchez), would really help us get there.

The Act (as drafted) would redirect about \$9.6 million per year from the existing Oil and Gas Conservation Tax to a special fund. It would be used to protect family farms and ranches by purchasing development rights from willing sellers. It would increase outdoor

recreation opportunities and improve habitat for hunting and fishing. The fund would help dairy farmers turn harmful waste into energy. It'd assist communities with needed forest-thinning projects and spur wind- and solar-power projects. And it'd conserve our state's natural areas for native plants and wildlife.

The Land, Wildlife, and Clean Energy Act would not only protect the natural resources of our state, but also our economy. More than \$1 billion is spent every year on wildlife-associated recreation, and another \$1 billion is spent on hiking, camping, and skiing. In 2002, individually or family-owned farms contributed more than \$3 billion to our economy. And with funding for clean energy projects, New Mexico would be able to help grow local businesses like Advent Solar. Finally, this bill (as drafted) would give us a dedicated funding source against which to bond, so that we can participate in many federal and private conservation programs, which would bring an estimated \$20 million a year to the state.

Despite these environmental, social, and economic benefits, there is still a chance that the Act could

never reach the Governor's desk. Certain powerful members of the legislature don't like the idea of a dedicated funding source that would have to be provided every year. The Senate version of the bill has already had the dedicated funding removed and replaced with annual legislative review of the proposed projects and an annual legislative appropriation. They would rather have the power to control this rather small amount of funding in the grand scheme of things, and force us to ask for it year after year. The House bill language may end up reflecting similar funding and oversight changes.

Despite the changes being made to help assure passage of these bills, The Land, Wildlife, and Clean Energy Act is New Mexico's conservation ticket to a more sustainable future – a future where our grandchildren can experience the same special places in New Mexico that we love today.

For more information, contact Chapter Conservation Coordinator Dan Lorimier (243-7767 or 740-2927, daniel.lorimier@sierraclub.org).

—Dan Lorimier and Lisa Hummon

State Task Force Makes Recommendations on Climate Change

New Mexico has achieved something big in the effort to turn the tide of global warming. I had the privilege of being part of it, serving as Sierra Club representative on the New Mexico Climate Change Advisory Group. This state task force had a big charge – we were asked to figure out how to cut New Mexico's global-warming emissions way back. Back to the levels the world needs to achieve in order to have a good chance of stabilizing the climate. And we did well.

The Governor instructed us to find ways to cut carbon dioxide and other global-warming emissions back to 2000 levels by 2012 (i.e., stop the problem of ever-increasing emissions), 10% below these levels by 2020 (begin to reverse the problem), and 75% below by 2050 (really transform our energy economy).

The composition of the task force was diverse, including 18 representatives of industry, 9 nongovernmental organizations of which the Sierra Club was one, and representatives of universities, city and tribal governments, and the national labs. We met as a full group, and also in four subgroups, which addressed buildings, transportation/land use, agriculture/forestry, and energy supply.

These subgroups reflect the three main ways people use energy:

1. in our buildings (lighting, heating, cooling),
2. in transportation, and

3. in our diets (food production and distribution).

Energy supply was the most heavy-duty of all the committees, because New Mexico is an energy-producing state. In fact, it is the first energy-producing state that has gone through a stakeholders' process on climate change. Other states have pioneered this kind of process, but none of them export oil, natural gas, or electricity. We do, and our energy producers were stakeholders in this process. For these reasons, it was a special triumph to finish with 69 recommendations to the Governor, all but two unanimous.

Trained analysts took each proposed policy and estimated how much carbon dioxide (CO₂) it would save the state, and how much money it would cost. The good news is this: according to their analysis, if all our recommendations become reality, they will meet the Governor's carbon-reduction target for 2020 and save the state's economy \$2 billion. The analysts were unable to make projections out to 2050, so there is uncertainty there, but we hope and expect that, if New Mexico starts remaking its energy economy in the ways we propose, we can reach those long-term targets as well, and truly become a clean energy state.

The policies that would accomplish the most are:

- Have incentives and requirements to make more efficient use of electricity.
- Revise building codes to require buildings to be more energy-efficient.

- Incentivize fossil-fuel plants to use the cleanest available technologies (such as carbon capture and sequestration for coal plants).
- Increase the renewable energy standard for utilities from 10% (where it is now) to 20% or 30% of the energy they supply.
- Require all new electric plants to be at least as clean as natural gas plants. (California has this law, and is no longer buying electricity from coal plants.)
- Require the oil and gas industries to retrofit their operations to reduce methane leakage and release of CO₂ into the atmosphere.
- Implement smart development and land-use practices that would reduce the number of miles people travel by car.
- Institute a "clean cars" program that mandates lower emissions from vehicles sold here.
- Establish an aggressive program to produce, sell, and promote alternative fuels in NM.

Notice a couple of points:

- We reached our goals without including the use of nuclear power. The group considered nuclear and decided to remain neutral on the pros and cons of this energy source. It was the one issue that would have torn us apart and ruined our consensus.
- These recommendations are only that – recommendations. We will reach acceptable greenhouse gas levels in New Mexico only if *all* or *nearly all* of these policies become reality. That is where you come in!

Governor Richardson has turned some of our recommendations into bills for this current legislative session, including the renewable portfolio standard and the transmission authority. **Please get on our alert list so you can help lobby for them** (see page 3). And, keep paying attention. The job of transforming our energy economy is huge, and will take all hands. The advocates who took part in this task force are not going away. We are going to continue to meet and push for these policies for at least three more years, probably longer – as long as it takes.

You can read the executive summary and the full report of the Climate Change Advisory Group at www.nmclimatechange.us. For more information, contact Global Warming Committee Chair Eva Thaddeus (see masthead page 2).

—Eva Thaddeus

Chupadera Peak and the Bosque del Apache

Those who like to hike in the Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge south of Socorro know there is more to the Bosque than birds. Wildflowers abound, particularly in the Chupadera Wilderness Area and along the trail ascending Chupadera Peak, a 9-mile round-trip ascent of 1700 feet. A trip to the 6200-foot summit yields breathtaking panoramic vistas and views of the Magdalena and San Mateo Mountain ranges. The trailhead is 1.5 miles north of the Visitor Center, and is a special favorite when fire season causes trail closures in the National Forests.

Unfortunately, public access to the peak ends at the Chupadera Wilderness Area fence line, 200 yards short of the summit. The private property

beyond the fence is owned by a developer who is willing to sell the 140 acres that would provide a buffer between the fast-selling 20-acre ranchettes and the Chupadera Wilderness.

The Friends of the Bosque are spearheading the fund drive for its purchase. To date they have raised \$48,000 of the required \$63,000. Contributors of \$450 (the price of one acre) will be recognized with a plaque in an appropriate location. Tax-deductible contributions may be sent to Friends of the Bosque del Apache, PO Box 340, San Antonio, NM 87832. For more information, contact John Bertrand (john_bertrand@hotmail.com).

—Robyn Harrison

Drilling Moratorium Sought for Otero Mesa

There is a lot of talk amongst environmental groups that campaigns must have a strong legal component in order to win. While this may be true, it is even more important to have a strong grassroots foundation. When it comes to protecting Otero Mesa, these two strategies alone cannot produce a winnable outcome. We are witness to that fact today.

In order for us to preserve the Serengeti of the Southwest, we need strong leadership on the part of our congressional delegation. This includes Representatives Heather Wilson and Tom Udall, and more specifically, Senator Jeff Bingaman.

As the incoming chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Senator Bingaman has an important opportunity to lead our country on energy policy. Where this leadership must begin is in his own backyard, where the Bush Administration, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and oil and gas industry are wreaking havoc.

In late September 2006, the U.S. District Court for the State of New Mexico recognized the importance of protecting Otero Mesa. The court's decision validated arguments made by the State of New Mexico and conservation groups that the BLM must thoroughly analyze the impacts of oil and gas development prior to leasing. However, the Coalition for Otero Mesa has appealed the court's decision because the court's requirements for thorough environmental analysis is merely piecemeal – applying only to individual parcels up for lease, rather than landscape-wide.

In a move that is both shocking and revealing, the BLM is appealing the outcome of the court's decision, too. Even though the BLM has been given the go-ahead to move forward with their shortsighted oil- and gas-rich agenda, they are fighting the court's decision because they do not want to spend the resources or sheer morality necessary to safeguard this wild landscape. The main focus of the BLM's challenge to the court's decision is that they do not want to have to perform National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis at the leasing stage. They would prefer to perform NEPA at the Application for Permit to Drill (APD) stage.

NEPA requires governmental agencies to analyze how development will impact the environment, and provides the public with the opportunity to comment. BLM claims that it is easier for them to conduct NEPA at the APD phase and that it can be done properly. However, the agency's track record on performing a thorough NEPA analysis at the APD stage is utterly abysmal. The entire purpose of NEPA is to act as a warning sign that says, "Hey, before moving forward, we better make sure this isn't going to have drastic impacts." Yet, once an APD is issued, the oil and gas company has a legal right to proceed with that permit, regardless of whether the agency objects.

This reasoning speaks volumes about the BLM's unwillingness to protect Otero Mesa's grasslands, abundant wildlife, or freshwater aquifer, and is why it is imperative that federal legislation be introduced and passed through Congress.

Though a National Conservation Area is our ultimate goal for permanently protecting Otero Mesa, it seems apparent that we cannot get this type of legislation passed quickly enough to stop oil and gas drilling – in theory, the oil and gas industry could begin putting new wells into Otero Mesa by April 2007. Yet, the State of New Mexico is still strongly committed to preserving this ecological jewel and will continue to fight any attempts by the oil companies.

While the state's stout leadership is helping to hold the line and will bring about more opportunities for the protection of Otero Mesa, we must keep our

focus on the congressional delegation to quickly introduce legislation in 2007.

Instead of pursuing National Conservation Area legislation now, a more realistic approach would be to strive for a middle-ground proposal that can gain a majority of support from the delegation. This strategy would focus on requesting a three-year moratorium on drilling in Otero Mesa so that a full study of the Salt Basin Aquifer could occur. In addition, we would work for a state-funded study on the potential economic benefits of tourism and recreation in Otero Mesa.

During the three-year moratorium, we would have the chance to continue our grassroots outreach across the state, focusing on Otero and Lincoln counties. We would also have put the oil and gas industry even further behind in their efforts to drill the area, creating an incentive for them to sell their leases. We would circumvent any more bad decisions by the courts in the short term. We would put the BLM on notice and have them stop additional leasing. We also would set the stage for a new President and the chance that s/he will be more favorable to conservation and thus protection for this area. In addition, the results of the study will likely bolster our efforts to protect the area. For example, in any economic study, one question to consider might be, "If Otero Mesa was made into a National Conservation Area, what impact might that have on tourism?" A moratorium also would allow Bingaman and our delegation more time to get comfortable with the idea of long-term protection.



Southern Otero Mesa, looking east toward Wind and Flattop Mountains. The area in the photograph has been nominated for leasing by the oil and gas industry. (Photo by Nathan Newcomer)

Many people may be uncomfortable with the focus on water and economics, but even in our new political climate, it is unlikely that wildlife and solitude are going to be enough to gain solid protection for the area. However, three more years of outreach and the ability to better educate the public on the wildlife, plants, bird species, and the wilderness potential of Otero Mesa will build an even larger constituency for its protection.

Contact your representatives and urge them to support a three-year moratorium on drilling in Otero Mesa so that a thorough water study can be done on the Salt Basin Aquifer.

For more information, contact Otero Mesa Coalition member Margot Wilson in Elephant Butte (744-5860, margotwilson40@hotmail.com). You can also sign up for the Otero Mesa listserve (www.oteromesa.org).

—Nathan Newcomer

Protecting the Stewards of Our Land: 2007 Farm Bill Up for Reauthorization

Farmers and ranchers don't have it easy. They work long, hard days, are at the mercy of Mother Nature and fluctuating market prices, and have to contend with powerful corporate giants and pressures to sell their land. In addition to dealing with all these pressures and putting food on our tables, farmers and ranchers are also the stewards of our land, water, and wildlife. For all their work, it behooves us to do all we can to improve upon and expand policy in Washington, D.C. to help support their efforts.

Seventy percent of land in the United States is privately owned and managed by farmers, ranchers, and foresters. Sixty percent of at-risk species are found on private or state lands. And 40 percent of federally listed threatened and endangered species are found *only* on private or state lands. These statistics make it clear that farm and ranch lands are incredibly important for protecting and recovering threatened and endangered species, as well as preventing species from becoming listed in the first place.

Here in the Southwest, we know that water is a precious natural resource we all need. Healthy rivers with clean and strong flowing waters mean healthy ecosystems not only for populations of fish, birds, plants, and other species, but also for our local farmers, urban and rural communities, and future generations.

And in the Land of Enchantment, we treasure

our open space. Our breathtaking sunsets, mountain views, and far-stretching landscapes are some of the reasons people visit our state and choose to move here. Ironically, it is in part because of this that we are facing increasing pressure on our natural resources, including our water supply, open space, and local farmland.

It is for these reasons that Defenders of Wildlife and a coalition of conservation, farming and ranching, nutrition, and rural advocacy groups have come together to fight for changes in the 2007 Farm Bill. At \$20 billion per year, the Farm Bill is one of the largest taxpayer-supported bills. But where does all that money go? The bill is broken up into a handful of "titles," each with a specific focus and separate funding levels.

Aside from the critical food-stamp program in the nutrition title, nearly half of the Farm Bill funding goes to the commodity title. In essence, these programs provide subsidies to growers of wheat, corn, upland cotton, rice, and soybeans. The remaining funding is divided between the conservation, energy, rural development, and other titles.

Through the conservation title, farmers and ranchers all across America are participating in programs, including the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), and

(continued on page 12)

Valles Caldera Coalition Marks 10th Year, Asks 'How Is It Going?'

In 2007, the Valles Caldera Coalition celebrates its 10th anniversary! With 10 more years to go in the Valles Caldera experiment, we are pausing to evaluate ourselves and the Valles Caldera Trust.

The Coalition formed in 1997 to mobilize the overwhelming public support that culminated in creation of the 89,000-acre Valles Caldera National Preserve in 2000. Sierra Club members were there in force and have been active in the Coalition ever since.



The Preserve was established with an experimental plan for its management – one that has promise as well as great risks. The experiment is designed to sunset (or be extended by an act of Congress) in 2015. Nearly halfway in, we are asking, “How far have we come toward achieving the original vision?”

Since early 2005, the Presidentially appointed board of trustees has led the experiment dangerously off track. The Coalition is calling for renewed grassroots attention to safeguard this landscape.

“If public ownership means one thing, it’s that those who cherish the Valles landscape no longer need to stare across the fence, prohibited from experiencing what the land has to offer and powerless to shape what happens there.” (Don Usner, from Valles Caldera: A Vision for New Mexico’s National Preserve, by Don Usner and William deBuys. 2006. Museum of New Mexico Press. Photo, “Temporarily Closed to Public Access,” by D. Usner)

We are calling on Coalition members, including all members of the Sierra Club, to help us assess our effectiveness thus far, and our goals, strategies, organizational structure, and funding for our next 10 years.

Since 1997, we have been a project of the National Parks and Conservation Association, then the NM Division of State Parks, and then Audubon New Mexico. We are now considering becoming a free-standing 501(c)(3) organization with working groups to pursue objectives (e.g., define appropriate access, promote ecotourism and education, challenge the Trust to fulfill its NEPA requirements, advocate for park or wildlife refuge status for the Preserve).

Please help us accept the original invitation extended by Congress and the Council of Environmental Quality – to actively shape an exceptional future for the Preserve. How have we best served you? How can we best serve you now? What would help you to have appropriate access, and to participate in protection and restoration of the Preserve?

(continued on page 7)

The Trust’s Progress 2000-2006 – A Scorecard

Protect the Preserve B+

It turns out that protecting the Preserve means giving it a chance to recover from past abuse. In fact, Preserve Manager Dennis Trujillo has said that, when he has the opportunity to do something on the ground, he asks himself what restoration objectives he might achieve at the same time.

As far as we know, the Preserve’s grasslands, groundwater hydrology, streambanks, water quality, and maybe even its predators are actually recovering. The Preserve’s staff has been actively gathering information on everything from archaeological resources, grassland productivity and use, and forest structure, to the patchiness of precipitation, streamwater quality, and the dynamics of coyotes, elk, and cattle.

A possible exception to the trend toward restoration is that the elk herd has severely browsed woody plants like aspen, willow, oak, and cinquefoil, apparently affecting the distribution of other native species such as mule deer and beaver. In some recent years, the elk calf survival rate has been half the average in the rest of the state, suggesting that the elk are also stressed. The Trust points out that the State Department of Game and Fish has jurisdiction over elk. Just the same, the staff is gathering information to serve as a foundation for region-wide collaborative decision-making.

Trustees Appointed by the U.S. President Improve Decision-Making by Pooling Expertise from Their Specific Fields D-

Bush-appointed trustees have usurped the role of the public and the Preserve’s staff in federal resource decision-making. Some argue that the trustees have no responsibility to solicit expertise or input from the staff or the Preserve’s constituencies but, rather, are tasked to serve with the expertise they already have. It is impossible to know what expertise trustees contribute to their closed deliberations, but since 2004, no notable board-driven progress has been made on management of the Trust’s finances, wildlife, recreation, forests, or relationships with the Preserve’s constituencies.

Operate with Transparency D

Until January 2007, the board gave only one week’s notice for public board meetings. The board is routinely months late in posting minutes from its public meetings. While it may be legal for the board to also convene closed work sessions, the practice of meeting without first publicly stating the purpose and agenda of such meetings and without keeping records is far from transparent, if not illegal. The Trust has not employed a communications director since May 2005.

Achieve Comprehensive Management .. D

The *Framework and Strategic Guidance for Comprehensive Management* (June 2005) articulated the Trust’s commendable vision and goals, but specifically skirted measurable objectives. The board has authorized no further progress. In November 2005, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report recommended that the Trust “develop (1) a strategic and performance plan that identifies measurable goals and objectives for protecting and preserving the Caldera, providing recreation, sustaining yield, and becoming financially self-sustaining; (2) a plan for becoming financially self-sustaining; (3) periodic performance monitoring and reporting that enable Congress and the Trust to track progress in achieving program goals; and (4) a plan to fill vacant positions. GAO also recommends that the board obtain the required financial audit for 2005....” Virtually no progress has been made on these counts.

Provide for Early and Meaningful Public Participation in Decisions D

As soon as they were seated in January 2001, the first trustees held “listening sessions” and used what they heard as the foundation for the *Framework*. Subsequent boards, however, have failed to authorize any further public discussion of long-range plans and, since September 2005, have not solicited public comment on any proposal for any activity. The inadequate recreation program, for instance, rolls forward under a categorical exclusion with no public review of “lessons learned,” proposed activities, or financial statements.

This may be about to change. In December 2006, the board authorized information gathering in spring 2007 for “Public Access and Use” planning. While

this is intended to set the stage for Phase 2 this fall (to develop and assess alternatives for long-term, Preserve-wide access and use), the board has not yet authorized Phase 2.

Achieve Financial Self-Sufficiency by 2015 D-

The Trust’s finances were in complete disarray when the Government Accountability Office conducted a scheduled review in 2005. The board has still not allowed a financial audit to be conducted. Although the Trust is a corporation, the board has refused to publicly develop a strategic plan and business plan, and has consistently prohibited the staff from developing such plans.

The Trust collected approximately \$500,000 in revenue in FY05 and \$600,000 in FY06 – roughly 18% of its \$3.5 million/year operating budget. While this may sound low at the halfway mark, it is substantial, considering that the Trust has made no investment in infrastructure, market research, or planning.

Multiple use is not a new or impossible concept, and the potential to generate revenue here is undeniable. A 2001 U.S. Fish and Wildlife survey estimated that, in New Mexico alone, residents and visitors spent \$558 million on wildlife-related activities. 0.7% of this would cover the Trust’s annual budget.

Use Science-Based Adaptive Management C

The Trust’s science program is relatively well funded. When the Trust sets management objectives, it is possible to design monitoring to test progress toward those objectives. The Trust must state only one objective for any given action. Although the board has failed to provide the leadership necessary for the staff and the public to set long-term objectives, the staff has been able to set up monitoring to track short-term objectives for grazing (cattle, elk, and other smaller herbivores), recreation (including hunting and fishing), visitor impacts on Bald Eagles, prescribed fire, noxious weed control, road reconstruction, and forest-thinning pilot projects. The Trust’s first cumulative effects assessment is due in August 2007, as part of its first five-year *State of the Preserve* report.

Taos Becomes an Even Cooler City

In December 2006, Ken Hughes, our Chapter Conservation Chair, gave a presentation to the Taos Mayor and Town Council, urging them to become a Cool City. In January 2007, Matt Foster, the Town Planner, announced that the Town Council approved the resolution endorsing the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement. The vote was unanimous. Taos now joins six other

New Mexico communities that took the pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As Matt said, they will need a community effort to keep the momentum going, and he will be asking for assistance in the next few months to get things started. With this exciting development, the time is ripe for a new focus for the Sierra Club's Taos Branch. To that end, several of us from Santa Fe are planning to meet March 14 with local activists and Matt Foster. We will discuss some internal reorganization, and will talk with Matt and Voitek Byszewski, point person for our Santa Fe Cool Cities Project, on what ways we may be able to work with Taos in implementing this broad-based effort to cut global warming through reducing heating trapping emissions, lowering energy bills, saving taxpayer dollars, and better protecting our environment. Through strategies such as using greener vehicle fleets, achieving energy efficiencies through such simple steps as putting in more efficient street and traffic lights,

and supporting renewable energy, Taos will not only reduce its carbon dioxide emissions, but also become an even more sustainable and livable community.

As Ken notes, through the adoption of the Cool Cities pledge, during the coming months, Sierra Club Taosenos will have both the obligation and opportunity to work with the Council and staff on measuring energy uses, offering ways to reduce those uses to the pledged reduction levels, and measuring progress to meet those pledges.

To become part of the new Cool Cities project, or to get involved with the Taos Branch, we urge you to join us for this important meeting! Contact acting chair Eric Patterson for time and place.

Meanwhile, we want to thank Susan Ressler for heading up our Taos presence during its first year and a half, and wish her bon voyage as she prepares to leave for a two-month-plus artist residency outside of Paris.

—Norma McCallan

Steering Committee

Eric Patterson, *Chair, Treasurer & Membership* • eepatt@gmail.com • *Director, Rios de Taos Water Sentinels Program* • 505/776-2833

Tom and Gwen Oaks, *Valle Vidal Liaison & Outings Coordinators* • gtoaks@ispwest.com

Anna Walters, *Publicity* • annaainsworth@kitcarson.net

FOUR CORNERS BRANCH NEWS

Get Involved with Desert Rock

After the air-quality victories at the San Juan and Four Corners power plants detailed in the last *Sierran*, our attention is now fully on the proposed Desert Rock power plant on Navajo land. Not only would it be the third coal-fired plant in the area, but it would discharge over 10 million tons of CO₂ each year and push the Four Corners' air pollution significantly over EPA standards.

We asked Andy Bessler, the tireless Sierra Club staffer from Flagstaff, Arizona, to speak to our members on January 3 about the issues surrounding Desert Rock. He encouraged a number of Navajos from the Dooda Desert Rock Committee to attend. The committee has been maintaining a vigil opposing the plant at its site, near Burnham, since December 12. The members spoke eloquently about their desire to keep their traditional lifestyle on these lands where their families have lived for generations. Mike Eisenfeld, the new director of the San Juan Citizens Alliance, presented a slide show on the many harmful implications of this third plant. An impressive 75 people showed up, and we had to find a larger room to hold them all!

Andy decided to do a followup meeting on January 15. At it, Mike Eisenfeld presented a compelling

new slide show about Desert Rock, and Andy laid the groundwork for grassroots work on the various angles of opposition to the plant. His list included the current legislative bills providing \$85 million in tax credits to Sithe Global, the upcoming draft Environmental Impact statement from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the EPA permit needed for air-quality regulations, and attention to the Salt River Project, a likely buyer of electric power from this proposed plant.

If you'd like to work on one of these efforts, contact Mike Eisenfeld (meisenfeld@frontier.net). And join us on Wednesday, April 18, for a daylong Green Energy Fair at the San Juan College, sponsored by the student environmental group RESPECT. The Sierra Club plans to have a table at this exciting event, and will probably have an evening program to cap it off.

To stay involved, join the Four Corners listserv (sjcsierraclub@yahoo.groups.com), which tracks local environmental issues and events, and call one of the steering committee members for more information on volunteer opportunities.

—Norma McCallan

Steering Committee

Art Jaquez, *Co-Chair*
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Beyond Suburbia: Re-envisioning Neighborhoods

If we want to live in balance with the Earth, it's clear we need to change the ways we live and work. To fearful reactionaries, that is often portrayed as "freezing in the dark." But what if there's a way to re-imagine and re-create the way we live that is just, joyous, sustainable, and profitable?

We believe there is, and that it can emerge right here in Santa Fe and spread across the nation.

Imagine transforming your neighborhood into one in which we enjoy:

- Safe, lively, pedestrian and bike-friendly streets, pathways, and trails,
- Knowing our neighbors, including children, who play, explore, and learn in the beauty and safety of a nurturing community,
- Mixed housing types and commercial uses so we can walk and bike to shops, cafes, schools, parks, services, and entertainment,
- Shared resources and infrastructure that reduce household costs and environmental impacts,
- Sustainable design and ownership of the "commons" of water, energy, communications, open spaces, and food production,

- Multi-age, multi-income affordability, lifelong learning, health, fitness, and recreation.

And while we are serving ourselves, we could also protect habitat and open space and curb sprawl; reduce pollution and global warming by eliminating commute time and raising efficiency; create new livelihoods serving the "extended family" of our neighborhood; help our parents (and, someday, us!) age in place, supported by family and community; free up time to spend with friends and family, pursue art and hobbies, play, etc. Serving self while serving others!

What else could such a neighborhood become, and what would it take to create it? That's for you to help figure out! Join Village Development of America (VIDA) April 14, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. at Alvord School, 551 Alarid Street, in Santa Fe for an "Open Space" day of Designing Sustainable Neighborhoods.

For additional details and to sign up, visit VIDA's website (www.2010turnaround.com) or call Brian Skeele (984-1739).

—Brian Skeele

Valles Caldera (continued from page 6)

We could be loosely knit volunteers, or a membership organization with dues to fund our services (e.g., dedicated oversight of the Trust, regular updates and analysis of Trust activities, networking among members who wish to mobilize).

We know that everyone who has visited the Preserve – or dreamed of it – has insights, ideas, and something to give back to the place. We urge you to contact us before our mid-March convocation to chart our future.

As a springboard for discussion, we have drafted a brief overview – a "Scorecard" of the Trust's progress (see page 6).

For more information, contact Coalition Coordinator Marty Peale in Santa Fe (983-0841, mpeale@vallescalderacoalition.org) or see the Coalition's website (www.vallescalderacoalition.org).

—Marty Peale

The Pajarito Group's First Los Alamos Environmental Powwow

Nobody said it couldn't be done, just that it would be a lot of work, but after weeks of organizing, when we finally began inviting others, the idea expanded like mycorrhizae. And as symbiotically, the first invitees called others they knew who called more, until the Powwow ended up with groups as diverse as Los Alamos National Bank, Pajarito Environmental Education Center, and Energy Related Devices.

The Los Alamos connection to nature is historic. The founders of Los Alamos chose this location not only because of its isolation, but because of its physical beauty. Perhaps it was because of the work they were doing, but the relationship between those developers of the bomb and the local wildlands, mountains, and canyons has been deep. The quote from one of the early women here sums it up: We may not have had bathtubs, "...but oh God! we had the view!" Now the community has many environmental groups with scientists and residents as concerned with saving the planet as they were about saving democracy.

The Pajarito Group's goal was to create a strong and united voice for environmental protection and for a sustainable Los Alamos. The Powwow, held February 3, was a ravingly successful first step.

About 200 participants moved among the displays, swapping ideas, hearing about activities and efforts, enjoying stimulating company, hors d'oeuvres (donated in part by Trader Joe's and Whole Foods, and elegantly created by Group ExCom member Dave and wife Donna Gemeinhart), and the heartening, acoustic folk music of Monty and John reminiscent of the good-old-days of the Monkey Wrench Gang. Here is what we learned:

- Powwow co-sponsor Los Alamos National Bank offers lower rates and fees for Eco-Smart loans. Los Alamos Family YMCA is hoping to incorporate green construction and programs as part of its goals. Both Los Alamos Sustainable Energy Network (LASE) and Energy Independent Los Alamos have ideas that could actually create a renewable-energy community.
- There's a "Green Tag" you can purchase to offset your current pollution by buying an investment in development of new, renewable-energy facilities in New Mexico. Or get this – right



Julie Williams-Hill, of Los Alamos Department of Public Utilities and representing the County's water conservation efforts, sticks her comments on posters about local issues.

here in Los Alamos, Energy Related Devices is developing both Solar Cell and Alternate Aerodynamic Windmill Technologies, as well as a remarkable Micro Fuel Cell™ technology designed to use processes that mimic a living cell.

- The Friends of Bandelier offers opportunities to provide support for special projects, such as archaeology, scientific research, and Native crafts expositions. Los Alamos Cooperative Market hopes to create a local market selling products produced as locally and naturally as possible for the health of both human and the planet. Craig Martin's Volunteer Task Force gives residents an excuse to both enjoy our local wildlands and help with conservation efforts and trail development.
- Los Alamos Sustainable Energy is dedicated to

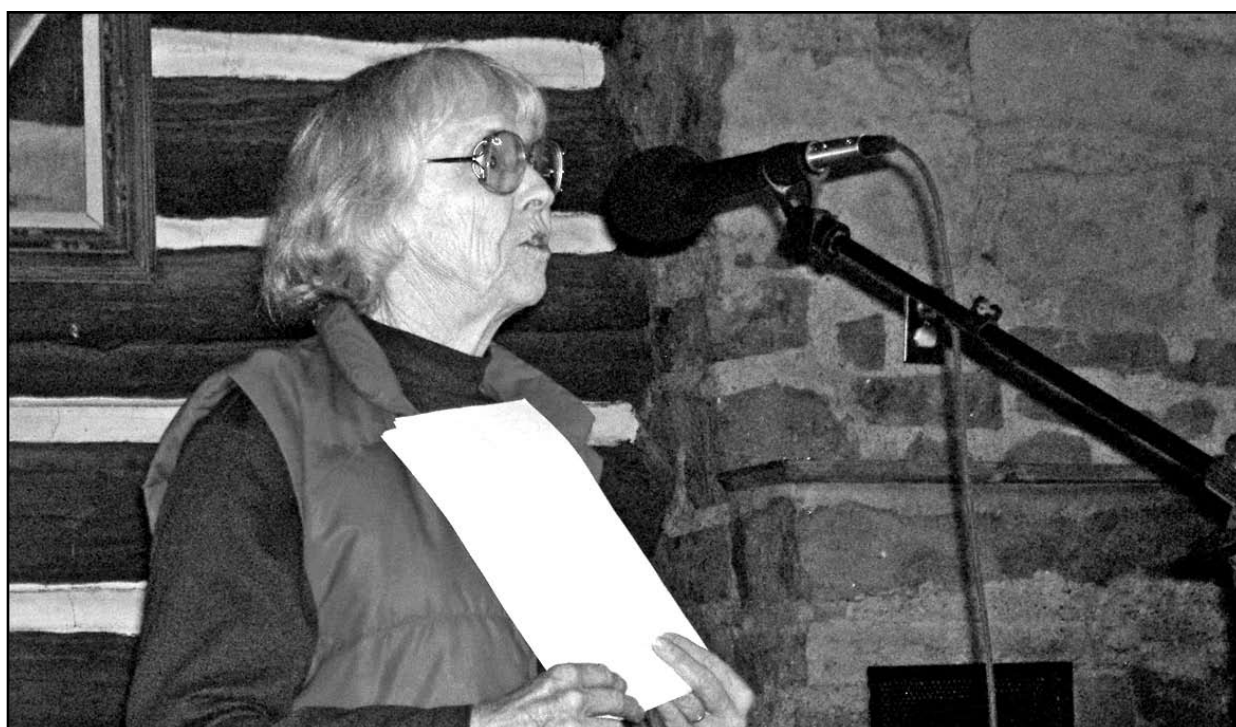
promoting the development, use, and education of sustainable energy in our community. The goal of the newly formed Los Amigos de Valles Caldera is to raise funds for important resource and infrastructure projects (including several wetlands projects) on the Preserve, thereby offsetting operating costs.

- NM Citizens for Clean Air and Water is an environmental advocacy group that uses its scientific and technical expertise to stop pollution, and in the end, to work toward a society in which both individuals and corporations will cooperate with the goal of a clean environment. The League of Women Voters has programs to sustain not only democracy but the Earth itself.
- The Pajarito Environmental Education Center (PEEC) is our local clearinghouse of environmental issues and activities, offering everything from a gift shop and herbarium, to kids camp, demonstration gardens, talks on energy and the environment, and inkjet cartridge recycling.
- Los Alamos County's Julie Williams-Hill of the Utilities Department presented the green energy and the water conservation programs of the County, and David Apple, of the Public Works Department, showed the green-building programs of the County as it embarks on an ambitious agenda of upgrading the physical assets of the County.

We keep quoting the maxim for untiring activists: "Sometimes it's hard when you wake up in the morning to choose whether to save the Earth or savor it." But once in a while, we can actually measure the progress created by our efforts. Once in a while – as at the Powwow, we can celebrate in the company of our compatriots who share the passion for preserving the one World we're traveling on together.

Please watch for the Blue Moon Production video of the Powwow to be presented on Los Alamos local access channel PAC 8. Los Alamos National Bank was a sponsor.

—Jody Benson



Los Alamos "Living Treasure" Dorothy Hoard tells of opportunities for service and volunteering with Friends of Bandelier.



PAJARITO GROUP NEWS

Powwow Participants

- Energy Independent Los Alamos Energy Related Devices** • www.energyrelateddevices.com
- The Family YMCA** • www.laymca.org
- Friends of Bandelier** • www.friendsofbandelier.org
- Green Tags for Green Energy NM** • www.greentagsusa.org/greentags/newmexico.cfm
- League of Women Voters** • www.lowvlosalamos.org
- Los Alamos Cooperative Market** • www.lacoopmarket.com
- Los Alamos County's Green Building Program and Water Conservation Program** • www.lac-nm.us
- Los Alamos National Bank** • www.lanb.com
- Los Alamos Sustainable Energy Network** • www.lasenergy.net
- Los Alamos Volunteer Task Force** • www.volunteertaskforce.org
- Los Amigos de Valles Caldera** • www.vallescaldera.gov/about
- NM Citizens for Clean Air and Water** • <http://members.aol.com/nmcit/>
- Pajarito Environmental Education Center** • www.parajitoeec.org/la_home/index.htm

Meetings

Wednesday, March 7, 7:00 PM

Robert B. Gibson: "Powering Los Alamos Through the 21st Century, Leading the Nation Towards Energy Independence"

Hydrocarbon fuels are becoming more scarce. Meanwhile, their combustion products are raising global temperatures. The 19,000 residents of Los Alamos (not counting LANL) consume about 2500 TJ of energy annually for heating, electricity, and motor vehicle transportation. More than 95% of this is derived from hydrocarbons – natural gas, coal, and oil. Approximately 200,000 tons of carbon dioxide are released. Wiser use can greatly reduce the amount of energy we use. Conversion to alternate primary sources to meet remaining needs could greatly reduce hydrocarbon sources and "greenhouse gas" emissions. Solar, hydroelectric, and nuclear energy are all among the possible substitutes. Los Alamos County recently decided to "pursue community-wide independence from hydrocarbon energy sources." Robert will review potential paths to reaching that goal, and consider the intellectual and economic opportunities for Los Alamos.

Wednesday, April 4, 7:00 PM

Our Successes: Science Fair Winners and the Environmental Powwow

Come and be amazed by our Sierra Club Science Fair winners as they present their winning projects! After their presentations, we will have a slide show of our very successful, community-wide Environmental Powwow.

Wednesday, May 2, 7:00 PM

Regina Wheeler Talks Trash: "Recycling and Solid Waste Projects"

Los Alamos County's Doyen of Trash and the mover behind many of the recycle and renewable energy projects in Los Alamos will tell us what's happening in the County and how we can help.

Outings

Saturday, March 17 • Canyon del Cobre area hike (Abiquiu) – Strenuous. Michael DiRosa (663-0648).

Saturday, April 21 • Hike to Window Rock near Española – Moderate 8 miles. Bring lunch and plenty of water. Rainer and Ilse Bleck (ibleck@yahoo.com or 662-2368).

Pajarito Group Directory

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

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Best of Los Alamos Open Spaces

At the Powwow, we had a list of favorite places that we put forth in our Best of Los Alamos Open Spaces survey. The favorite of the favorites are in bold in each category.

Best Trail

- **Red Dot/Blue Dot**
- Bayo Canyon
- Quemezón Nature
- Falls Trail, Bandelier
- Cañada Bonita
- White Rock Perimeter Path

Best Bird Watching

- **Pajarito Mountain**
- Pueblo Canyon
- Red Dot/Blue Dot
- Falls Trail, Bandelier
- Burnt Mesa Trail, Bandelier
- Valles Caldera

Best Downhill Ski/Snowboard Run

- **One More Time**
- Aspen
- Evershine Ridge
- Terrain Park
- Breathless
- Gene's Choice

Best Cross-Country Skiing/Snowshoe Trail

- **Cañada Bonita/Nordic Center**
- American Springs
- Camp May
- Los Alamos Golf Course
- Bandelier Cross Country
- Perimeter Trail

Favorite Day Trip

- **Bandelier**
- Jemez Falls/East Fork of the Jemez River
- Valles Caldera
- Fenton Lake
- Pilar/Taos Canyon
- Cumbres Pass Area

Best Biking

- **Pajarito Mountain Trails**
- Pipeline Road
- Perimeter Trail
- The Road loop around LANL
- Cañada Bonita Trail
- Ski Hill road

Best Rock Climbing

- **Overlook Park**
- The Dungeon
- The Y
- The Gallows Area
- Las Conchas
- Gilman Tunnel area

Favorite Bandelier Place

- **Falls Trail to Rio Grande**
- Main Loop Trail
- Tsankawi
- Visitor's Center
- Upper Crossing
- Backcountry

Best Dog Walk

- **Bayo Canyon**
- White Rock Perimeter Path
- Los Alamos Perimeter Trail
- Pueblo/Acid/Walnut Canyons
- Quemezón
- Water/Valle Canyon



NORTHERN GROUP NEWS

Tuesday, March 20, 7 PM
SEEING STARS
 Preserving The Night Sky

The night sky is one of the few constants in the human experience. While the natural landscape of the earth has changed with time, when you look at the night sky, you are looking at the same sky viewed by people for millennia. However, light pollution is seriously encroaching on our ability to enjoy a starry night as well as the natural cycles of creatures that depend on darkness for survival.

Peter Lipscomb, director of the Night Sky Program for the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance, will discuss efforts to preserve New Mexico's starry nights. In 1999, the Alliance declared the New Mexico Night Sky as one of the state's "Most Endangered" cultural resources and the Legislature enacted the "Night Sky Protection Act." Santa Fe has adopted a night sky friendly lighting ordinance. Find out more about how to ensure that future generations can stargaze and connect to the cultural heritage we all share and need to preserve.

INTO THE FUTURE ...
 Tuesday, May 15, 2007, 7 PM
THOREAU AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

"In wildness is the preservation of the world" are Thoreau's famous words and the motto of the Sierra Club. Why did John Muir keep a picture of Thoreau on his mantle? Why are Thoreau's ideas still influential? And how do media present false stereotypes of Thoreau and environmentalism? **Tom Potter, photographer and president of the Thoreau Society based in Concord, Massachusetts**, will answer these questions.

Northern New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club
 802 Early Street, Santa Fe, NM 87505
 505 · 983 · 2703 <http://riogrande.sierraclub.org/santafe/>

GROUP CHAIR

John Buchser

A record 30-inch snowfall in Santa Fe on New Years! The drought must be over! Highly unlikely, based on the 400-year historical record from tree ring data. Also, given that the climate is very variable in the Southwest, climate change induced by man-produced greenhouse gases should guarantee even more variability in precipitation.

You can find out how you can help with the Club's Cool Cities campaign by putting Tuesday, September 18, on your calendar. Or if you can't wait, contact Voitek (see masthead) and he will get you involved sooner.

Don't forget to get out there and recharge your batteries in the desert. The wildflowers should be awesome!

Check out our website. Both Monika and Geoff have been busy adding to that valuable resource. riogrande.sierraclub.org

NORTHERN GROUP EXCOM ELECTION RESULTS

The Chapter Election Committee has announced that the following candidates were elected to the Northern Group Excom: John Buchser, Voitek Byszewski, Dexter Coolidge and Barbara McIntyre. In other Excom changes, Mark Walztoni has been appointed to the Excom to replace Brian Skeele.

Thank you to all the candidates for your dedication to the Sierra Club.

Jim Hannan, Chapter Election Chair

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

Chair – John Buchser * ‡	jbuchser@comcast.net	820-0201
Vice-Chair – Norma McCallan * ‡	nmccallan@mindspring.com	471-0005
Secretary – Retta Prophet *	h20baby2@yahoo.com	505-315-6152
Treasurer – Anne Stauffer	arsinm@comcast.net	986-1412
Chapter Rep – Dexter Coolidge *	dextercoolidge@yahoo.com	988-1197
Computer Ch (& Muir Data Base) – Membership/Volunteer – Alice Cox	auntialice@cybermesa.com	757-2145
Barbara McIntyre *	b@barbaramac.com	820-1815
Newsletter – Kay Carlson	kcarlsonwp@earthlink.net	982-3926
Outings – Norbert Sperlich	bsperlich@cybermesa.com	474-4354
Tobin Oruch	oruch@lanl.gov	820-2844
Political Committee – Susan Martin	smartin31@comcast.net	988-5206
Tom Robey	trobey@cybermesa.com	955-9578
Phone Answerer – Bevs Taylor		983-9129
Publicity – Richard Kristin *	rkristin@csf.edu	982-1671
Social Cohesion – Jean Watts	jeanwatts@comcast.net	989-5010
Taos Branch – Eric Patterson	cepatt@gmail.com	776-2883
Farmington Branch – Art Jaquez	artjaquez@yahoo.com	505-326-5229
Nick Cullander	ncullander@hotmail.com	505-334-0935
Web Master – Monika Bittman		505-581-0130
Dan Rusthoi	rusthoi@lanl.gov	474-3965
Mark Walztoni *	markgail97@msn.com	466-1918
Carol Raymond *	Carol@SFSR.com	989-8600, ext 27 (w)

Tuesday, April 17, 2007, 7 PM
RIVER HEALTH IN NEW MEXICO

Steve Harris, director of Rio Grande Restoration, who has been following river issues in New Mexico and along the Rio Grande for longer than any of us can remember, will bring us up to date on how our rivers are doing. All our rivers suffer from over-use of our water resource. It is only with our continued stewardship that they will survive along with the complex ecosystems they support. Steve knows all the players in this complex game of over-appropriation and over-use of our water resource. The rivers need your help too; come find out more.

*Group Program meetings are held at the
 Unitarian Church
 107 W. Barcelona Street (between Galisteo and Don Gaspar).
 All meetings, outings, and activities are FREE and open to the public
 unless otherwise indicated.*

GROUP COMMITTEE MEETINGS Sierra Club Office, 802 Early Street

Group Executive Committee:	Tuesday, March 6, 7 PM
Tuesday, April 3, 7 PM	Tuesday, May 1, 7 PM
Group Conservation Committee:	Thursday, March 22, 7 PM
Forest Subcommittee:	Tuesday, April 10, 7 PM
Tuesday, March 13, 7 PM	

See elsewhere in this newsletter for information on our Taos and Four Corners branches.

CONSERVATION CHAIR

Dexter Coolidge

Still on a high from our two major victories last year – the successful settlement of the Four Corners lawsuit and the legislation to protect the Valle Vidal – we are off to a great start in 2007. On every critical front we have new energy, new volunteers, and new engagement on the issues.

The Cool Cities program in Santa Fe remains our biggest initiative, with about 30 volunteers supporting it. As we go to press, we are starting our presentations in the public schools and our program to reach businesses. We are also now fully engaged with the City of Santa Fe on its programs to reduce global warming; the city and county have both welcomed our input.

The rally in the Capitol to stop an \$85 million tax subsidy for the coal-fired plant at Desert Rock was an enormous success, largely due to an extraordinary team effort by the Club. Andy Bessler has worked for years with the Navajo; Norma McCallan has worked untiringly to develop a branch in Farmington; and the Northern Group committed \$700 to pay for transportation to bring people to Santa Fe. Alice Cox and Russell Miller set up a phone bank to get our members to attend. Carol Oldham from National did an exceptional job of coordinating everything. The result was 250 people at the rally, including 30 Navajo and many others from the Farmington area. We are now expanding our Desert Rock initiative into a broader program to promote clean generation of electricity.

Next issue: Major initiatives for Forests and Water.

Conservation – Chair Dexter Coolidge *	dextercoolidge@yahoo.com	988-1197
Activist Outings–Norma McCallan * ‡	nmccallan@mindspring.com	471-0005
Air Quality – Doug Fraser	fraser@thuntek.net	474-7615
Carson Nat'l Forest – Ami Diallo	a.diallo@zianet.com	471-2414
John Green	jegzuni@aol.com	995-8749
SF Nat'l Forest – Eric Peterson	emozart@cybermesa.com	
Marke Talley		505-747-2422
Genetically Engineered Food – Jim Hannan	jhannan505@aol.com	988-5760
Mining – Cliff Larsen	clarsen1@ix.netcom.com	466-2128
Cool Cities Campaign		
Lead Organizer – Voitek Byszewski * ‡	swinia@comcast.net	466-6211
Eco Footprints – Brian Skeele	brianvida@nm.net	984-1739
Las Vegas Point Person – Betty Quick	betty@mathllc.com	505-454-9123
Resources – Ken Hughes ‡	blfamily@comcast.net	474-0550
Valle Vidal – Dexter Coolidge *	dextercoolidge@yahoo.com	988-1197
Norma McCallan *	nmccallan@mindspring.com	471-0005
Water – Sig Silber ‡	ssilber1@juno.com	473-7006
Paul Paryski ‡	pparyski@aol.com	992-1984
Wildlife/Nat'l Parks/Rangelands – Roger Peterson ‡	rogpete@aol.com	983-7559

* Member of the Northern Group Executive Committee

‡ Member of the Core Conservation Committee



NORTHERN GROUP NEWS

NORTHERN GROUP OUTINGS

Sat Sun March

- 3 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** (Ojito, Red Mesa or Jemez), possibly off-trail. Early start. **Stephen Markowitz** (983-2779 before 8 PM or stepdov@hotmail.com)
- 4 **Easy Hike** on Dale Ball Trails. Dogs on leash okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 4 **Moderate Snowshoe Hike** if no snow. **Marcia Skillman** (699-7744)
- 10 **River Clean-Up Paige Grant** (982-4081 or paigeanna@comcast.net)
- 10 **Moderate Hike Lester Drapela** (438-3306)
- 10 **Moderate X-Country Ski Trip** in Jemez, snow conditions permitting. **Page Press** (946-0169)

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS – TURN CLOCKS FORWARD ONE HOUR SATURDAY NIGHT

- 11 **Easy Hike** in Diablo Canyon. Leave 9 AM. **Victor Atyas** (438-9434)
- 17 **Easy Birdwatch Walk** jointly with Audubon Society. Bring binoculars. **Ron Duffy** (982-2890)
- 17 **Easy Hike** in Petroglyph National Monument (Albuquerque). **Dan Rusthoi** (690-8967)
- 17 **Strenuous Hike** in Canyon del Cobre area (Abiquiú). **Michael DiRosa** (663-0648)
- 18 **Moderate Hike** in Sandias (lower elevation). Dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 24 **Strenuous Hike** Bandelier backcountry (Crane Kiva), 12+ miles, some off trail. **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354)
- 25 **Moderate Hike** up Tesuque Creek, until snow gets too deep, 7-9 miles, dogs okay. **Tobin Oruch** (820-2844 before 8 PM)
- 31 **Moderate Hike** along the West Rim Trail, 9 flat miles, with car shuttle. Gorgeous vistas of the Rio Grande Gorge, mountain views in all directions. Dogs okay. Long drive (3 hours total). **Norma McCallan and Bob McKee** (471-0005)

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

All outings are open to the public and free unless otherwise noted. For additional outings in Northern New Mexico, please check the Pajarito Group page in this newsletter.

Sat Sun May

- 5 **Moderate Hike** in a suitable location, maybe Alamo Canyon in Bandelier (otherwise dogs okay). **Les Drapela** (438-3306)
 - 6 **Easy/Moderate Hike** to Tent Rocks, 3-4 miles, some scrambling, dogs okay on leash. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
 - 6 **Strenuous Hike** to Shaggy Peak and Deer Creek. Mostly off trail, some stream crossings. About 13 miles RT loop, 2000' gain. **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354)
- Saturday, May 12, to Sunday, May 20**
Car Camping and Moderate Day Hiking in the red rock splendor of southern Utah, dogs okay. Call for reservations/details. **Norma McCallan** (471-0005)
- 12 **Strenuous Hike** probably Holiday Mesa in Jemez, off-trail, stream crossing, dogs okay. **Stephen Markowitz** (983-2779) before 8 PM.
 - 13 **Easy/Moderate Hike** on Frey Trail in Bandelier, 6 miles, 600' gain, 9 AM start, call to confirm. **Victor Atyas** (438-9434)
 - 13 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** to Pederal, famous mesa by Abiquiú, 9 AM, 1900' gain, opt'l. scramble to top. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)
 - 19 **Moderate Hike** in Abiquiú area, 5-7 miles, about 1000' gain, dogs okay. **Page Press** (946-0169)
 - 19 **Easy Birdwatch Walk** jointly with Audubon Society, bring binoculars. **Ron Duffy** (982-2890)
 - 20 **Moderate Hike** on Sandia Peak, Tramway trail to La Luz trail (not all the way to top), about 8-10 miles, 1000', dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
 - 26 **Moderate Hike** to Kitchen Mesa at Ghost Ranch. **Dan Rusthoi** (690-8967)
 - 27 **Strenuous Hike** maybe Stewart Lake loop in the Pecos, 11 miles, 2300', dogs okay. **Tobin Oruch** (820-2844) before 8 PM.

WEBSITE ADDRESS !!

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

Now you can join the Sierra Club through this site. Also, you can view the entire *Rio Grande Sierran* at this site.

Sat Sun April

- 1 **Moderate Hike** in a suitable location, maybe Ancho Rapids near White Rock, 6 miles, 1100' gain, dogs okay. **Les Drapela** (438-3306)
 - 7 **Strenuous Hike** to Tapia canyon near Cabezon/San Ysidro, off-trail, optional canyoneering, very early start, or alternate. Dogs okay. **Stephen Markowitz** (983-2779) before 8 PM.
 - 8 **Easy/Moderate Hike** to Glorieta Ghost Hotel, 7 miles, gradual 900' gain, stream, dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
 - 14 **Easy Moderate Hike** on forest road and an abandoned trail to the Rio Grande in the Caja del Rio, dogs okay. **Norma McCallan** (471-0005)
 - 14 **Strenuous Hike** maybe Shaggy Peak from Apache Canyon, about 12 miles, 3000', off-trail, scrambling, dogs okay. **Tobin Oruch** (820-2844) before 8 PM.
 - 15 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** in Santa Fe River Canyon, rough terrain, several stream crossings, all off trail. If water's too high, maybe Wild Rivers near Questa. About 8 miles RT, 1500' gain. **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354)
 - 21 **Moderate Hike** to Tetilla Peak, landmark SW of town, 3-4 miles, 1000' gain, off-trail and rocky but great views, possible alternate if road muddy, dogs okay. **Dan Rusthoi** (690-8967)
 - 21 **Easy Birdwatch Walk** jointly with Audubon Society, bring binoculars. **Ron Duffy** (982-2890)
 - 22 **Moderate Hike** on Sandia Peak Tramway and La Cueva trails, dogs okay. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
 - 22 **Strenuous Short Hike** Big Tesuque to saddle below radio towers, 5-6 miles, 1500+' gain. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)
- April 28-30, Saturday to Monday**
Moderate Bandelier Backpack We'll establish a base camp in Capulin Canyon and do a day hike from there on the middle day. Dates are flexible in case would-be participants need them altered. **Bob McKee** (471-0005)
- 28 **Easy-Moderate Hike** to Otowi Mesa in Los Alamos, 5-6 miles, 500' gain, some mild rock scrambling. **Michael Goldey** (820-7302)
 - 28 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** to Tchichoma Peak near Española **Michael DiRosa** (667-0095 or 663-0648)
 - 29 **Moderate Hike** with nice stream runoff, leave 8 AM, call to confirm. **Art Judd** (982-3212)

Outings Notes – Unless otherwise noted, outings leave from the Sierra office, now at 802 Early Street, which is one block east of St. Francis and runs between Marquez Place and Cerrillos Road. 802 is most easily reached by turning south onto Early Street from Cerrillos Road. Office is the first building on the right. Carpooling is encouraged. Each driver should come prepared to pay 10 cents a mile to the driver if 1-2 riders, 5 cents if 3 or more. Bring lunch, water, sturdy hiking boots or shoes and clothing suitable for the weather. Leader reserves the right to turn away anyone whose equipment or experience appears unsuitable. Leader may alter destination of hike or cancel trip due to weather, other unfavorable conditions, or insufficient number of participants. Unaccompanied minors need written permission from parents or guardians to participate—ask leader for form. Dogs permitted only if so noted in write up. To participate you will need to sign a liability waiver at meeting site.

SANTA FE RIVER CLEANUP AND VEGETATION MAINTENANCE

Saturday – 10 AM to 12:30 PM – March 10

Help keep our river looking great! Meet at Lower Alto Street Boy's Club park footbridge over the Santa Fe River. Bring work boots, gloves and drinking water. **Paige Grant** (982-5180 or paigeanna@comcast.net)

2010 TURNAROUND CHALLENGE Dream and Design the Future You Hope For

Saturday, April 14, 9 AM to 7 PM

Alvord Community School, 551 Alarid Street

A community design day to begin to transform our existing communities into alive, thriving, fun neighborhoods that are pro people and pro planet. **Free with potluck dish to share.** **Brian Skeele** (984-1739) or signup@2010turnaround.com (www.2010turnaround.com)

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Membership development** – Barbara McIntyre (820-1815) Calling members for emails and recruiting members to be more involved
- Publicity** – Richard Kristin (982-1671)
Help get out announcements of our meetings and other events
- Forest issues** – Work on the Travel Management Plan that is now designating which roads and trails are open to ORVs
Norma McCallan (471-0005)
- Social & environmental events** – Jean Watts (989-5010)
Help organize and set up for events
- Cool Cities Campaign** – Voitek Byszewski (983-2703)
Help with this campaign that seeks to lessen our carbon footprint. Especially needed is a coordinator for educational outreach.



Central Group Directory

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

Executive Committee

Michal Mudd, Chair mudd_pi@mac.com	884-3315
David Ther, Treasurer grelbik@worldnet.att.net	260-1553
(Open), Secretary	
Paul Braiman spacewiz@comcast.net	858-1988
Marilynn Cooper marilyncooper@qwest.net	842-0185
Howard Karnes einstructionhk@aol.com	379-1294
Marilyn Lohr (no email)	247-1722
Patrick Redmond redmonpa@law.unm.edu	298-1298
Eva Thaddeus evathad@nmia.com	266-9646

Committee Chairs

Richard Barish, River Issues rdbarish@aol.com	232-3013
Marilynn Cooper, Chapter Representative (Alt.) marilyncooper@qwest.net	842-0185
Michal Mudd, Chapter Representative, Membership/Publicity mudd_pi@mac.com	884-3315
Patrick Redmond, Political redmonpa@law.unm.edu	298-1298
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 p.m. 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.

Group Develops 2007 Cool Cities Campaign Plan

The Albuquerque Cool Cities Campaign is a coalition to turn the tide of global warming at the local level.

Our goal is to get our city to meet the carbon-emission reductions specified by the Kyoto Protocol: 7% below 1990 levels by 2012. Our Core Group met in January 2007 and developed a campaign plan for 2007. We identified four priorities:

- Get the city to develop and publicize a Climate Action Plan, which will serve as a blueprint for achieving the Kyoto reductions.
- Launch a Compact Fluorescent Initiative, which will get energy-saving light bulbs into the hands of ordinary citizens, and reduce electricity use in households and businesses across Albuquerque.
- Begin a public education campaign that will inform young people and motivate them to save energy.
- Recruit volunteers to grow our coalition.

If you are interested in helping in any of the areas above, please contact Eva Thaddeus (266-9646, evathad@nmia.com).

Desert Exploratory Hikes

Come and visit some of New Mexico's most incredible and beautiful landscapes hidden in its desert places. Strangely eroded and colorful rocks, badlands, precipitous cliffs, outstanding vistas, mysterious narrow and winding canyons, archaeological sites, petrified forests and other fossils, historic inscriptions, stone tools, pottery, pictographs, and petroglyphs are some of the discoveries we have made on the Desert Exploratory Hikes in the past.

These hikes are not physically difficult, but will require a sense of adventure on the part of participants. There will rarely be a trail, and the route will be very rocky and uneven at times. Sometimes we scramble (easy climbing) over rock surfaces and walk narrow ledges, though this is always optional. Typical distance traveled is between 4 and 8 miles and we usually gain less than 1000 feet of elevation.

Leader determines outing details and meeting time by previous Wednesday, so you may call for details at that time. You may also request to be included on an email list for receiving the same info, so you won't have to call. Meeting time will vary from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. Meeting place will always be Smith's, Carlisle and Menaul, nearest to Carlisle. Sierra Club and Outdoor Adventures For Singles joint outings.

For more information, contact Tom Petencin (271-9928, tompeten@juno.com).

Outings

Sunday, March 18 • Cerrillos Hills – Along the Turquoise Trail, the Cerrillos Hills were mined for turquoise in ancient times by Native Americans. Later, they were mined for lead used in producing glaze-decorated pottery. In the late 1800s, Anglo prospectors searched for an alleged silver deposit in these hills. Some struck it rich but most didn't. We won't be digging, but we'll pass by visible remnants of those mining days on this 5- to 6-mile hike. Walking at a moderate pace, we'll be following trails with many gentle ups and downs within the hills. We'll have an optional post-hike stop in Madrid for a snack and/or browsing through quirky and charming shops. Bring lunch, liquids, and layers and meet at 9 a.m. in Smith's parking

lot (Carlisle and Menaul) for carpooling. Santa Fe hikers may join us at the trailhead, but let leader know in advance. For more info, contact Carol Chamberland (341-1027).

Sunday, April 29 • North Crest Trail Up & Down – Starting from Placitas, the North Crest Trail ascends the Sandias in a gentle but relentless manner, providing terrific views and interesting geology along the way. On this moderately paced walk we will climb, break for lunch, and retrace our steps for a total of 8 to 10 miles and roughly 2000 feet of elevation gain. Bring lunch, liquids, and layers and meet for carpooling at 8:30 a.m. in Smith's parking lot (Carlisle and Menaul). For more information, contact Carol Chamberland (341-1027).

Farm Bill (continued from page 5)

Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP), just to name a few. These programs seek to recover imperiled species, protect habitat, conserve natural resources, and protect farmland threatened with urban encroachment.

The conservation title of the 2002 Farm Bill contained the single-largest appropriation for natural resource conservation in the nation – averaging nearly \$3 billion a year from 2002-2006. This amount far exceeds funding provided through the Endangered Species Act, but it is not nearly enough. The Farm Bill sets a ceiling on the amount of funding that can be spent on conservation and other programs. It is then up to Congress every year to decide how much money these programs will actually receive through the appropriations process. Year after year, Congress

fails to fully fund these vitally important programs.

The program that has taken the biggest funding hit, the Conservation Security Program (CSP), is also the program that has the greatest potential to reward good farm and ranch stewardship. The program is authorized at \$2.8 billion, but has only been funded at \$489 million, an 82.5% shortfall. Overall, farm conservation programs have faced a 13.3% shortfall since 2002.

There is also a steady "backlog," or waiting list, of farmers and ranchers for conservation programs. This backlog represents project applications that met the selection criteria and were accepted, but there was not enough funding to support them. The 2004 backlog reached a record \$4.5 billion, representing 151,716 disappointed landowners nationwide.

The Farm Bill is reauthorized every five years, and 2007 happens to be one of those years. We now have the opportunity to influence change and create a new vision for the Farm Bill. One that makes a real commitment to sustainable agriculture and ecosystem protection. One that provides healthy food choices for all Americans. And one that recognizes the value and importance of family farms and takes action to protect rural communities.

To learn more about the Farm Bill, contact Lisa Hummon in Albuquerque, New Mexico Outreach Representative for Defenders of Wildlife, (248-0118 ext. 5, lhummon@defenders.org).

—Lisa Hummon



Energy Fair in Las Cruces

The Southwest Energy Alliance (SWEA), together with the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Southwest Environmental Center, will host Las Cruces' first Energy Fair on Saturday, May 12, 2007. The event will take place outside the Southwest Environmental Center, at 275 North Downtown Mall.

The Sierra Club Energy Film Festival will be presented on Thursday, May 10, and Friday, May 11, from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. Film screenings will also take place along with the Energy Fair throughout the day on Saturday. All films will be shown at the Southwest Environmental Center free of charge.

The Sierra Club Energy Film Festival

has been screened throughout the United States and will travel extensively throughout 2007. The Energy Film Festival is a wonderful lineup of films that Sierra Club provides on many sustainable issues. A complete schedule of films and events will be published in the next issue of the *Rio Grande Sierran*.

On Saturday, May 12, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., the public can browse through many booths featuring products, services, and organizations, such as the Sierra Club and the First Affirmative Financial Network. All participants will promote the use of clean and renewable energy. Commercial vendors, including sustainable-building contractors, will be present. The public is invited to test drive hybrid and electric vehicles, including the low-speed electric Zenn Car.

Folksy, acoustic music will be performed by local musicians. Natural-food vendors will offer lunch and snacks to visitors during the event. Come by and enjoy a glass of sun tea or cookies baked in a solar oven!

Booths for vendors are free, but business, individuals, and organizations can co-sponsor the event with as little as a \$100 donation. Sponsors' name will appear on all promotional material. To reserve booth space for your product, service, or organization or to co-sponsor and advertise in any marketing materials, please contact Sandy Katayanagi (635-9584, stkataya@yahoo.com). For more information, contact Lou McCall (312-3174, lou@pixiecircus.org).

Outings

Precipitation has been good so far this year, so get out and see the wildflowers and enjoy! Please call your outing leader to confirm the hikes or outings – changes might be possible to due various reasons.

Friday-Sunday, March 16-18 – Join us for a trail maintenance week on the Black Range. The Scenic Trail, a 4.5-mile trail running from the Kingston Cemetery to Emory Pass needs some work. Rebuilt by Chet and Mern Warwick 20 years ago, it needs a few repairs. The Black Range District of the Gila National Forest will host us at the administration site east of Kingston and provide tools and safety training. Chet and the Forest Service need to know how many people will be participating, so please sign up now. Directions to the administration site are: turn west off I-25 south of TorC on State Road 152 to Hillsboro. Kingston is nine miles west of Hillsboro. We plan to arrive at Kingston late in the afternoon of the 16th for an early start on Saturday morning, but you are welcome if you can come for a shorter time. You may camp out locally or stay at the Black Range Lodge. For information call Chet Warwick (894-6427), Margot Wilson (744-5860), or Forest Service Recreation Officer Les Dufour (894-6677).

Saturday, March 17 – Hike along Alameda Arroyo on the East Mesa of the Organ Mountains. Easy rating. 4.5 miles, bring water, food, binoculars. Meet in parking lot of North Main K-Mart on I-70 at 9:00 a.m. Call John Waugh (526-7116) if you have questions.

Saturday, March 31 – We will revisit Valles Canyon, worth a visit all by itself, for another look at the amazing petroglyphs. Meet Dan Lorimier at the Rincon exit on I-25 at 9:00 a.m. To enter the canyon, four-wheel drive is a necessity but don't be discouraged if you don't own one. Bring your camera and lunch. For details, call Dan Lorimier (740-2927) or Margot Wilson (744-5860).

Sunday, April 15 – Hike to Ice Canyon and Dripping Springs. Easy 3.5-mile hike. Bring water, and

binoculars for birding. Meet at Pan American Center north parking lot on NMSU campus at 9:00 a.m. There will be a \$3-per-vehicle fee at the visitor center. Call John Waugh (526-7116) if you have any questions.

Friday-Saturday, April 20-21 – Begin your weekend with a Birders' Breakfast on Saturday the 21st at the "Migration Sensation" at Percha State Park. Breakfast will begin at 7:30 a.m. and continue through the morning. There will be bird tours with experienced birders, and Steve Cary of the New Mexico State Parks will give a butterfly walk at 11:00 a.m. Saturday. Games for children and guides to birding will be available as the Sierra Club and the Forest Service celebrate International Migratory Bird Day. The Migration Sensation is a joint effort of Percha State Park, the Forest Service, Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, and other organizations. Call Margot Wilson (744-5860) or Marikay Ramsay (894-7593).

Saturday, May 5 – An outing at Straight Gulch off the Beaverhead Road in the Black Range with Mary Katherine Ray. This is a fairly easy hike in a beautiful canyon at 8500 feet. Leave the Forest Service Office parking lot in Truth or Consequences at 8:30 a.m. Bring lunch, good walking shoes for a pleasant outing. Call Margot Wilson (744-6860) or Mary Katherine Ray (772-5655).

Sunday, May 6 – Join Rich Anderson for an exciting hike on the Hermosa Allotment in the Black Range: follow Morgan Creek and Seco Circle into the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. The distance is not great, 8.5 miles and moderate elevation changes. We will leave the Forest Service Office in Truth or Consequences at 7:30 a.m. because of the time it will take to get to the trailhead south of Winston. This hike is well worth the extra driving time! Bring appropriate clothing for a higher elevation, snacks, and lunch. For information, be sure to call Rick Anderson (612/518-5632) or Margot Wilson (744-5860).

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

Glenn Landers

Vice Chair, Pollution, Grasslands Issues
glenn.landiers@gmail.com 525-0491

Cheryll Blevins

Treasurer, Editor Southern NM
Group Page
spotblev@earthlink.net 524-4861

Mary Katherine Ray

Wildlife, Membership
mkscriam@kitcarson.net 772-5655

Robert Gray

Secretary, Alternate Chapter Delegate,
Transportation 894-6774

Jane L. Grider

Political, Alternate Chapter Delegate
jane4u2@email2me.net 526-5620

Lou McCall

lou@pixiecircus.org 312-3174

John Waugh

Outings, Endangered Species/
Wildlife, Chapter Delegate
cactoblast@hotmail.com 526-7116

Earle Pittman

Global Warming
espittman@zianet.com 541-6281



EL PASO GROUP NEWS

EPA Libraries Threatened

El Paso Regional Group Activists make extensive use of Environmental Protection Agency libraries in their fight against polluters like ASARCO. Indeed, El Paso Regional Group Executive Committee Member Juan Garza just returned from the EPA library in Dallas where he viewed documents related to El Paso's air quality. It has come to our attention that the quality and future of these invaluable resources is being threatened. Indeed, it appears that public access and ease of use has already been compromised. The Sierra Club's Environmental Quality Program has stepped in, joining the fight to preserve these libraries. The following is a recent letter from Ed Hopkins, Director of the Sierra Club Environmental Quality Program to Barbara Boxer. --Ed.

February 13, 2007

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chair, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Boxer:

Thank you for providing much-needed oversight to the Environmental Protection Agency in your February 6 committee hearing. We respectfully request that you include this letter in the hearing record.

The Sierra Club wishes to express its profound concern over EPA's recent actions to close or to restrict the use or availability of the EPA libraries. A key principle of sound government is a citizens right to know. In order for citizens to petition their government, they need access to information about matters that concern them and have confidence that the information is credible and unbiased. We no longer have that access nor confidence in what remains of the EPA library system.

We find the claims by EPA that they are simply modernizing, and that their full collection will be digitized, to be unconvincing. Several facilities have been closed or otherwise restricted and only a fraction of the documents has been processed. The remainder could take up to two years according to one staffer, and yet there is no plan, no standards and no budget to accomplish this task. Those EPA staff who are willing to talk (or retired and not at risk) have said that materials are being at best dispersed and, at worst, discarded.

EPA says walk-ins have declined, but that is not the only way information is accessed. According to press reports, the EPA libraries fielded about 134,000 information requests in fiscal year 2005. Of these, the now-closed EPA regional libraries in Chicago, Kansas City and Dallas handled more than 32,000 requests for information. Individuals, either citizens or staff librarians, have said that often the digitized documents are difficult or impossible to locate because of substandard data systems and search tools. It isn't just the documents, we also need the librarians. Because of these and other flaws in the EPA library closure policy, the Sierra Club asks that access to scientific information be restored quickly and we endorse the requests of the American Library Association that EPA immediately undertake the following actions:

- a) Halt all library closures;
- b) Discuss a plan with stakeholders on how best to meet user needs and plan for the future;
- c) Base any actions upon these users' needs;
- d) Stop dispersing and dumping of any of their library materials immediately;
- e) Stabilize and inventory the collections that have been put in storage;
- f) Develop and implement a government-wide process to assist agencies designing effective digitization programs; and
- g) Reestablish library professionals - inherently governmental library professionals.

Finally, we are pleased to learn that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) is conducting a thorough investigation on this matter. We urge that EPA staff be fully protected from retaliation for giving testimony about the disposition of EPA materials.

Thank you for considering our concerns about the EPA library system.

Sincerely,
Ed Hopkins
Director, Environmental Quality Program

Gore Greet Gilbert

El Paso activist and Burges High School teacher Gilbert Pinon has recently completed a rigorous training program led by former Vice President Al Gore to spread the message about the threat of and solutions to global warming.

"Gilbert Pinon is an outstanding example of the millions of Americans who have been energized by the call to action on the climate crisis," said Gore. "We are so pleased that he has made a serious commitment to this challenge by coming to Nashville to become part of this unprecedented grassroots effort." "Gilbert will be spending the next year making presentations in and around El Paso, discussing how individuals and businesses, schools, and other organizations can be a major part of the solution to the growing crisis of global warming," continued Gore.

Gil was part of a select group of individuals chosen to receive this important training last December 1-3. Each trainee took part in an intensive tutorial about issues surrounding global warming, led by Gore and a team of renowned scientists and environmental educators. In addition, each received technical training to become experienced presenters of a version of Gore's computer-based slide show, which became the basis of his best-selling book and documentary film, "An Inconvenient Truth."

Selected Outing

Apr 21-22: Chiricahua Backpack

Place: Chiricahua National Forest 3 hours west of El Paso

Class: Moderate with some easy portions

Length: 8 miles round trip

Elevation gain: 1000 ft

Leader: Harry Newman swtraveller@aol.com

We plan to leave from the westside of El Paso Saturday morning around 6:30 am. After setting up a shuttle and eating an early lunch, we will contour up and around the sky islands of the Chiricahuas, which normally offer excellent views. Breaks are planned around some of the more scenic views. After setting up camp, there may be time to take in a small side hike before or after dinner. Sunday morning, we plan to descend by Winn Falls (which should be running) into the desert where we will complete the shuttle after lunch and head back to El Paso. Suitable for strong beginners; bring a puffy sleeping bag and puffy jacket for chilly nighttime temps. Along with carpooling, there may be a very small fee for vehicle parking. Contact leader for specifics and meeting location.

El Paso Group Directory

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

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Chaco Road Update: County Asks for More Money – Say No Now

San Juan County representatives met with Representative Tom Udall in mid-February to ask for additional funding totaling \$1,200,000 for the paving of CR 7950, the main access road to Chaco Canyon National Historical Park. (See “Save Chaco Canyon from Desecration – Stop the Paving,” *Sierran*, Sept/Oct 2006.) Rep. Udall earmarked an initial funding of \$800,000 for the road project. Udall’s decision whether to grant the request in the form of a new appropriation is due any day. Please immediately contact Rep. Udall (see page 3) to oppose the granting of any new funding. The San Juan Citizens Alliance has joined the Chaco Alliance’s efforts to stop the paving and has co-signed two letters to Udall supporting our cause.

The arguments the County has advanced for paving the road are that the road is “dangerous,” and that it does not work for access unless you are in a special vehicle like a four-wheel drive. Neither of these arguments is true. According to a document prepared by the State of New Mexico’s Preservation Division, the road is in fact “usable by ordinary passenger vehicles throughout the year” and four-wheel drive is “not a necessity.” I have driven the road many times and have never been unable to get to Chaco, even in a compact rental car. The canyon, after all, sits in an arid high-desert environment that receives little precipitation.

What is necessary is for drivers to slow down, but this small inconvenience is not an argument that the road does not provide adequate access. Anyone who

wants to get to Chaco can already do so. The argument that it is “dangerous” and creates a liability is the opposite of the truth, and no evidence whatsoever has been presented by San Juan County to back up its claim. Paving the road and increasing the speed and number of visitors will in fact create a huge liability for San Juan County. If the road becomes a superhighway packed with tourists anxious to get to Chaco, the frequency and the severity of accidents will increase, not decrease. And emergency response in this remote area is very difficult. The area is also open grazing land to horses, cattle, sheep, and goats. There are no fences to keep livestock off the road, few speed limit signs, and many unmarked sharp curves.

We continue to ask for improvements, not paving. San Juan County is touting a fallback position that it will pave the road using local funds if federal funds are not available. Please ask Rep. Udall to oppose any effort that in effect circumvents the thorough impact studies of a complete Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). With his leadership, the earmarked \$800,000 can be directed into improvements like good fencing, good signs, and good maintenance.

Chaco is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is both a fragile archaeological site as well as sacred ancestral land to many Native Americans. At the entrance to many of the large pueblos in Chaco, there are signs that read “Sacred site. Enter with respect.” That is what we are asking for here. Let the unpaved road protect the canyon from commercialization and overwhelming visitation. Let it slow us all down a

little, the proper response when you are entering a land still held as sacred by so many.

Links for important email addresses are available at our website (www.dont-pave-chaco.com). If possible, please send copies to the Chaco Alliance (dontpavechaco@gmail.com). Thanks to all of you for your support.

—Anson Wright
Coordinator, Chaco Alliance

Advertisement

Rental Wanted

Santa Fe Sierra Club member seeks to rent unfurnished place in Santa Fe. Long-term? Minimum needs: 300-square-foot living (1-2 rooms) + private bath + kitchen access. No “apartment complex,” etc. Must be very quiet between 10 p.m.-6 a.m. I’m educated professional, divorced, no kids, NS, N D/A, NP. Quiet, clean, responsible tenant. Modest price, please. Robert 471-4184

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).

Preserve the Future

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

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

For more information and confidential assistance, please contact:

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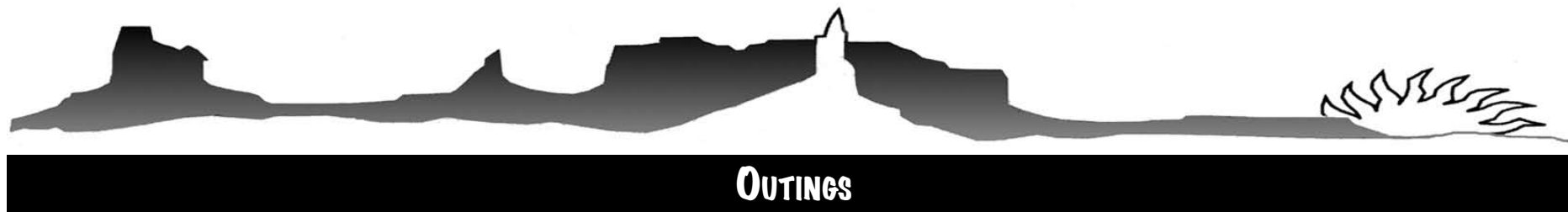
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Contributions, gifts, and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletter.



Selected Sierra Club Outings for March, April, and May 2007

Saturday, March 10 • Cross-country ski trip in Jemez – Moderate. Snow conditions permitting. Page Press (946-0169 – Northern Group).

Saturday-Saturday, March 10-17 • Grand Canyon backpack – 34 miles. Strenuous hike along Hermit-Tonto-Bright Angel Trails. Rollin Wickenden (915/855-6697, rwickgila@aol.com – El Paso Group).

Friday-Sunday, March 16-18 • Trail maintenance on the Black Range – Help repair the Scenic Trail from Kingston Cemetery to Emory Pass. Camp locally or stay at the Black Range Lodge. Black Range Forest Service District will provide tools and training. Chet Warwick (894-6427 – Southern Group), Margot Wilson (744-5860 – Southern Group), or Forest Service Recreation Officer Les Dufour (894-6677).

Saturday, March 17 • Canyon del Cobre area hike, in Abiquiu – Strenuous. Michael DiRosa (667-0095 or 663-0648 – Northern and Pajarito Groups).

Sunday, March 18 • Cerrillos Hills hike, near the Turquoise Trail – 5-6 miles. Moderate. View remnants of earlier mining days when the area was mined for turquoise, lead, and silver. Optional stop in Madrid on return trip. Bring lunch, water, appropriate clothing. Meet at Smith's parking lot (Carlisle and Menaul) at 9 a.m. Santa Fe hikers meet at trailhead. Call to confirm. Carol Chamberland (341-1027 – Central Group).

Saturday, March 24 • Bandelier backcountry hike (Crane Kiva) – 12-plus miles. Strenuous. Some off-trail. Norbert Sperlich (474-4354 – Northern Group).

Sunday, March 25 • Tesuque Creek hike – 7-9 miles until snow gets too deep. Moderate. Dogs OK. Tobin Oruch (820-2844 before 8 p.m. – Northern Group).

Saturday, March 31 • West Rim Trail hike – 9 flat miles with car shuttle. Gorgeous vistas of the Rio Grande Gorge, mountain views. Dogs OK. 3-hour drive. Norma McCallan and Bob McKee (471-0005 – Northern Group).

Saturday, March 31 • Valles Canyon hike – View amazing petroglyphs. Meet at the Rincon exit on I-25 at 9 a.m. Four-wheel drive a necessity, call to carpool. Bring camera and lunch. Dan Lorimier (740-2927 – Southern Group) or Margot Wilson (744-5860 – Southern Group).

Saturday, April 7 • Tapia Canyon hike, near Cabezon/San Ysidro – Strenuous. Off-trail, optional canyoneering. Dogs OK. Stephen Markowitz (983-2779 before 8 p.m. – Northern Group).

Sunday, April 8 • Hike to Glorieta Ghost Hotel – 7 miles, gradual 900' gain. Easy/moderate. Stream. Dogs OK. Eliza Schmid (474-5846 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 14 • Shaggy Peak hike, from Apache Canyon – 12 miles, 3000' gain. Strenuous. Off-trail, scrambling. Dogs OK. Tobin Oruch (820-2844 before 8 p.m. – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 14 • Rio Grande hike, in the Caja del Rio – Easy/moderate hike on a forest road and an abandoned trail to the Rio Grande in the Caja del Rio. Dogs OK. Norma McCallan (471-0005 – Northern Group).

Sunday, April 15 • Santa Fe River Canyon hike – About 8 miles, 1500' gain. Moderate/strenuous. Rough terrain, stream crossings, all off-trail. If water's too high, maybe Wild Rivers near Questa. Norbert Sperlich (474-4354 – Northern Group).

Friday-Sunday, April 20-22 • International Migratory Bird Day – Breakfast beginning at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday at "Migration Sensation" in Perch State Park. Bird walk Sunday morning. Butterfly walk at 11 a.m. Games for children. Margot Wilson (744-5860 – Southern Group) or Marikay Ramsay (894-7593 – Southern Group).

Saturday, April 21 • Tetilla Peak hike – 3-4 miles, 1000' gain. Off-trail and rocky. Great views from landmark southwest of Santa Fe. Possible alternate if road is muddy. Dogs OK. Dan Rusthoi (690-8967 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 21 • Hike to Window Rock, near Española – 8 miles. Moderate. Bring lunch and plenty of water. Rainer and Ilse Bleck (662-2368, ibleck@yahoo.com – Pajarito Group).

Sunday, April 22 • Big Tesuque hike – 5-6 miles, 1500'-plus gain. Strenuous. Hike to saddle below radio towers. Marcia Skillman (699-3008 – Northern Group).

Saturday-Monday, April 28-30 • Bandelier backpack – Base camp in Capulin Canyon, day hike on second day. Bob McKee (471-0005 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 28 • Otowi Mesa hike, in Los Alamos – 5-6 miles, 500' gain. Easy/moderate. Some rock scrambling, Michael Goldey (820-7302 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 28 • Tchichoma Peak Hike, near Española – Moderate/strenuous. Michael DiRosa (667-0095 or 663-0648 – Northern and Pajarito Groups).

Sunday, April 29 • North Crest Trail hike – 8-10 miles, 2000' gain. Start from Placitas, ascend the Sandias. Terrific views, interesting geology. Bring lunch, water, appropriate clothing. Meet at Smith's parking lot at 8:30 a.m. Carol Chamberland (341-1027 – Central Group).

Sunday, May 6 • Shaggy Peak and Deer Creek hike – 13 miles, 2000' gain. Strenuous. Mostly off-trail, some stream crossings. Norbert Sperlich (474-4354 – Northern Group).

Sunday, May 6 • Straight Gulch hike, off the Beaverhead Road in the Black Range – Easy hike in a beautiful canyon at 8500'. Meet at Forest Service Office parking lot in Truth or Consequences at 8:30 a.m. Bring lunch, good walking shoes. Margot Wilson (744-6860 – Southern Group) or Mary Katherine Ray (772-5655 – Southern Group).

Monday, May 7 • Hermosa Allotment hike, in the Black Range – 8.5 miles. Moderate. Follow Morgan Creek and Seco Circle into the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. Leave Forest Service Office in Truth or Consequences at 7:30 a.m. Bring appropriate clothing for higher elevation, snacks, and lunch. Rick Anderson (612/518-5632) or Margot Wilson (744-5860 – Southern Group).

Saturday, May 12 • Holiday Mesa hike, in Jemez – Strenuous. Off-trail, stream crossing. Dogs OK. Stephen Markowitz (983-2779 before 8 p.m. – Northern Group).

Saturday-Sunday, May 12-20 • Southern Utah camp and hike – Car camping and moderate day hiking in the red rock splendor of southern Utah. Dogs OK. Call for reservations/details. Norma McCallan (471-0005 – Northern Group).

Sunday, May 13 • Pedernal hike – 9 miles, 1900' gain. Moderate/strenuous. Optional scramble to top of famous mesa near Abiquiu. Marcia Skillman (699-3008 – Northern Group).

Please check the five Groups' pages for more information on these trips and additional activities. Area code is 505, except as noted. All mileages are round trips. Participants must sign a liability waiver.

Valle Vidal Outing

Join this National Services Outings trip to our own Valle Vidal, which will include stream restoration with the Quivira Coalition on Comanche Creek; helping the Forest Service with trail maintenance, exotic vegetation removal, or wildlife projects; a tour of this special place with Jim O'Donnell from the Valle Vidal Coalition; and an exploration of Ute Mountain and the Rio Grande Gorge, both candidates for Wilderness designation. It will be held July 22-29 and cost \$525, which includes all meals. For more info, visit the Sierra Club's website (www.sierraclub.org/outings/national/brochure/07315A.asp), or call leader Gene Goldberg (303/329-6624) or Norma McCallan (471-0005).

Upper Gila Watershed Alliance Hikes

The Upper Gila Watershed Alliance is sponsoring several outings in their Friends of the Burros hike series.

Saturday, April 7 • Birds of Gold Gulch and Jack's Peak – 2 miles, easy. Leaders: David Beatty and Rinda Metz, birders extraordinaire.

Saturday, April 28 • Wildflowers of Wild Horse Spring – 3 miles, easy. Leader: Donna Stevens, Upper Gila Watershed Alliance Adopt-A-Spring Coordinator and co-author of *Common Southwestern Native Plants: An Identification Guide*.

Wednesday, May 2 • Vistas of Black Hawk and Saddle Rock Canyons – 4 miles, moderate. Leader: Frank Kirschner, soil scientist.

Wednesday, May 9 • Geomorphology of Black Hawk Canyon – 3 miles, easy. Leader: Rebecca Summer, geomorphologist.

All hikes are free and open to the public. We will meet at 9 a.m. at the Visitors' Center on Hudson and Broadway, and carpool to the site. If you have a 4WD vehicle, please bring it. You'll also need water, lunch, good walking shoes, hat, and sunscreen. No dogs, please.

For more information, please call Donna Stevens of the Upper Gila Watershed Alliance (388-5296, donnastevens@aznexus.net).

—Donna Stevens