

Rio Grande Sierran



NEWS OF THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

MARCH/APRIL 2009

“Muro de Odio”: A Border Wall of Hate and Fear

The greatest danger of all is to allow new walls to divide us from one another. The walls between old allies on either side of the Atlantic cannot stand. The walls between the countries with the most and those with the least cannot stand. The walls between races and tribes; natives and immigrants; Christian and Muslim and Jew cannot stand. These now are the walls we must tear down.

—Barack Obama
Berlin, Germany, July 24, 2008
“A World Stands As One”

Barack Obama spoke these precious words to over 200,000 German citizens in Berlin last July. Yet work continues with the same favored Bush-era “border fence” contractors after President Obama’s victory. At great profit, they are trying to finish over 600 miles of 18-foot-high “pedestrian fencing” in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas that most everyone calls a “wall.” In Mexico and to the millions of U.S. citizens living near the border frontier, it is called “Muro de Odio,” the Wall of Hate.

by Bill Addington

The damage caused to native habitat – by fragmentation of wildlife habitat caused by our manmade border wall – to ecosystems, and to the health and safety of human beings living on both sides of our U.S.-Mexico border frontier cannot be tolerated by any American who believes in liberty and freedom. Many in the interior of the United States do not understand the priceless value of our life-giving river, the Rio Grande. They do not know that the river in our high desert is the sole source of drinking water for many native wild and domestic animals. On the Texas-Mexico border, building a fence and cutting off access to the sole source of drinking water in an area that gets 8-10 inches of *average* rainfall a year, much less in a drought, can become a death sentence for wild animals, some that are federally listed

as threatened or endangered. While migrants can climb over, under, or cut through the “fence,” animals cannot. Endangered jaguar, ocelot, and jaguarundi and many other threatened animals have no voice in this political debate over our fears regarding security, immigration, and drug smuggling.

As Sierrans, we must make it a personal mission to promote awareness that this un-American destructive wall threatens many of our native wild animals’ very survival, and to educate other citizens that it threatens our underground water and the health of soils on farms and ranches that grow our food. The border wall will destroy vast areas of our remaining last wilderness borderlands. It will destroy our heritage and our history as free Americans.

Arguments for and against the border wall and alternatives against the wall really do not address the root cause of why “illegal” migration happens in the first place. Migration between countries happens when freedom, disaster, economic opportunity, environmental degradation, and desperation are distributed so unevenly across the two nations that people are forced to make very difficult choices: stay and either barely survive or die; or move and live and possibly thrive. These are the life-and-death questions that millions of our less-fortunate neighbors make to save their families from death or low levels of health, safety, and quality of life.

The High Cost of Free Trade

The dislocations caused by globalization’s “race to the bottom” are worsened by trade agreements that facilitate the unsustainable export of natural resources. Free trade agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are a set of rules that enhance the rights of corporations at the expense of citizens, those being people living in Mexico and the United States, by impeding or making moot laws and regulations that serve the public interest. The



The border wall stops wildlife near the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. (Photo courtesy of Matt Clark, Defenders of Wildlife)

Sierra Club strongly opposed NAFTA because it lacked adequate environmental, health, and worker safety regulations. NAFTA is also responsible for pushing over one million small-scale Mexican farmers off their land since its 1994 implementation. It allowed cheap, subsidized corn to flood Mexico’s market, resulting in a 68% poverty increase during the first eight years of NAFTA. This dissolution of

(continued on page 5)



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Inside

| | |
|---|----|
| Chapter Directory | 2 |
| Note from the Chair | 3 |
| Time for a Green Economy | 3 |
| Help Eliminate Inhumane Wildlife Services | 4 |
| Beryllium Mine Application Moves Forward | 5 |
| Improved Lodge Path | 5 |
| Reflections on the Obama Inauguration | 6 |
| National Club Elections | 7 |
| Chapter Information | 7 |
| Chapter Fund-raising | 16 |
| Selected Outings | 16 |

Group & Branch News

| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Pajarito Group | 8 |
| Northern Group | 10-11 |
| Four Corners Branch | 9 |
| Taos Branch | 9 |
| Central Group | 12-13 |
| Southern Group | 14 |
| El Paso Group | 15 |



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Note from the Chair

Our collective efforts last year have left us with a new challenge: how do we make best use of our “new energy” in Washington? As the newly elected Chair of the Rio Grande Chapter, I think the answer is to continue using the tactics we learned during the election: talk to your neighbors, share your views, listen to those you talk to, and tell your stories. My own challenge is to develop my storytelling, as I am finding that a good story is more effective than a heap of facts. Telling a story engages a listener and “turns on” their senses. I remember a story I was told of a teacher whose car stalled in one of our summertime thunderstorms

– so she got out of her car to walk for help. So trudging through the water that stalled her car she went. But she was near a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO), and their storage lagoon had overflowed – with that smelly stuff.

I am proud of the many volunteers in the Club who are addressing climate change head-on by making changes in their homes and lives, and sharing their knowledge with kids – and the adults – in their community. The one thing that can be guaranteed in the Southwest is that our weather will be more variable. The fact that research into tree-ring data has shown that the last 100 years was the



wettest of the last millennia adds to the threat to our wild places. Plants have a range they can survive in climatically, and a drier, shorter winter will affect where they survive. In turn, the critters that eat particular plants are affected.

So although my true love is of the outdoors and to share my outdoor experiences with others, it has become increasingly clear that we, as a species, must soften our footprint on the planet to protect the places we love.

—John Buchser

Time to Build a Green Economy

Our economy has taken more twists and turns than a drive to Silver City through the Black Range. There is, however, one critical point we must be clear about: we cannot afford to resurrect the same economy we had under George Bush. That was a fraud, based on wildly inflated asset values, driven by what President Obama would characterize as irresponsible greed, riddled with stratospheric levels of debt designed to puff up illusory paper gains.

We now suffer from years of living like all our tomorrows would be a wingding. Easy money was to be had and so-called real estate was its well-spring. Judging from this vantage point in Santa Fe, a lot of people wanted in on the deal, from out-of-state investors buying thousands of acres of desert land, to widows from Wyoming buying five-acre lots in split-up ranches, to locals aiming to double their money in three months by flipping houses. The economic collapse has had severe consequences, but a return to more rational real estate values and more responsible expectations is a blessing.

But unless we admit that our challenge is to build a new economy, fundamentally different from the 2007 version, we may be in worse shape than we are

today in 2017. We can learn from FDR's fiscal stimuli during the 1930s about what works and what fails. Price controls, production controls, and ingrained subsidies, which may seem laudable and effective at first, usually end up on the failed side. But FDR's alphabet soup programs, which put people to work on activities all across the country, have left a legacy of projects that to this day functions as well as inspires. Datil Meyers, grandfather of our adopted children, led many artists to produce murals that still grace courthouses throughout New Mexico.

Fiscal stimulus version 2.009 offers an opportunity to do more than stimulate the economy. It must go beyond the needed creation of jobs to transform our New Mexico plazas, pueblos, towns, and neighborhoods to what we need in our communities 50 to 100 years from now. Let's use this pause in our economy to eliminate the need to make 10 car trips per day for every house, a bad habit that turns parents into chauffeurs, employees into commuters, highways into parking lots. Indeed, it's time for New Mexicans to move beyond mobility monoculture to mobility choices: walking, bicycling, train or bus, shared vehicles, as well as the private vehicle.

—Ken Hughes, Chapter Conservation Chair

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Help Put Wildlife Services in the Budget Crosshairs

President Obama has said he would go through the budget “line by line” and eliminate programs that don’t make sense. Given our economic straits it defies credulity that an agency funded by taxpayers that kills wildlife for the questionable benefit of private livestock producers still exists. Once called “Animal Damage Control,” the name was changed several years ago to “Wildlife Services” to improve its deservedly sullied image. (This is not to be confused with the different agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.) But the purpose of Wildlife Services, regardless of the name, is to kill wildlife. This agency spends over \$100 million to kill over a million animals every year, mostly coyotes, for the benefit of private enterprise. Of course unintended victims are often caught in the carnage.

The means of slaughter are stupefying in creativity and brutality. Besides using leg-hold traps and snares, Wildlife Services litters the landscape with devices called M-44s. When set, these look like little fuzzy two-inch cylinders sticking out from the ground. They have been scented with an attractant so that when a coyote pulls on the cylinder, an explosion propels cyanide poison into his mouth. Death is assured. What is not assured is that it will even be a coyote that activates the device. One of our own members found this out when he went to pull up what he thought was an old stake. Bill Addington serves on our Chapter Executive Committee and lives in west Texas. The explosion went off in his hand and he describes the cloud of yellow powder that burst out. The wind was blowing away from him so he managed to avoid inhaling any of the deadly cyanide. As it is, he suffered burns on his hand and cyanide-tainted wounds that did not heal for months. He is lucky to be alive.

By now most of you have probably seen the footage of wolves being gunned down from planes in Alaska. As horrifying as this is, it happens to coyotes regularly in the lower 48. We were awakened at our rural home in southern New Mexico several years ago to the sound of a low-flying helicopter. Periodically gunfire could be heard blasting away. It turns out our rancher neighbor had been losing chickens to a coyote. So to “protect” a flock of hens that could not be worth more than \$50, Wildlife Services spent thousands on helicopter time and killed 24 coyotes



Coyotes are the most common target of Wildlife Services, which kills them with poisons, traps, and by shooting from aircraft. (Photo courtesy of the National Park Service)

that day. But the chicken-eating coyote was not among them. The un-fenced and un-cooped chickens continued to be lost.

Stories like these exemplify how dangerous and muddled Wildlife Services can be. They are not isolated. The U.S. Inspector General has sanctioned the agency as a security threat on several occasions for its negligent handling of toxicants. At least 10 people have been killed in air crashes while 28 have been injured flying to kill coyotes. As recently as 2001, a General Accounting Office report said the agency could not justify its costs compared to its benefits. The Environmental Protection Agency has charged the agency for improper placement of sodium cyanide traps on public lands that harmed a

Fish and Wildlife Service biologist and killed his dog. Wildlife Services has been called to task by biologists for failing to look at long-term, ecologically sound, and humane solutions to human-wildlife conflicts.

As President Obama famously said, “Enough!” Please write to the new administration and tell them to end this wasteful, ineffective, and environmentally destructive program. Send your letter to President Barack Obama, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC 20500.

For more information, contact Wildlife Issues Chair Mary Katherine Ray (575/772-5655, mkrscrim@kitcarson.net).

—Mary Katherine Ray

An Audit to Invite *(continued from page 8)*

Electricity

My consumption is edging upward a few percent per year. When I suspected my 1970s vintage refrigerator, though fully insulated with magnets, stickers, and art, Matt recommended doing two things: first, clean the condenser coils (usually found underneath); second, get a free loan of a Wattmeter from the DPU for a week to measure how much energy the refrigerator draws, then compare that usage against newer Energy Star standards. My old refrigerator likely demands more than \$200 per year (2000 kWh at Los Alamos rates), versus a new fridge at only \$40 (400 kWh). I admit I’m embarrassed to have not replaced this coal guzzler. A new unit would pay for itself in five years while sparing the air of one ton of CO₂ per year (determined through Matt’s conversion of 1.254 lbs CO₂ emitted for every kWh of fossil-fueled energy sent to Los Alamos).

Just as I was feeling fridge-shame, Matt reached for his tote to brighten my day with six free compact fluorescent bulbs. Under the DPU’s “Watt Swap” program, residents may trade six incandescent bulbs (three 100 W, two 75 W, and one 60 W) for their

CFL equivalents. With just these CFLs replacing their Edisonian forerunners I’ll save enough cash to defray a full subscription to LA Green, our County’s renewable-energy plan. Contact PEEC (www.pajaritoec.org) for more information about the Watt Swap and LA Green.

Matt then went on a hunt for waste. He measured each spigot and showerhead for flow rate. When a spigot flowed more than two gallons per minute (gpm), Matt handed me a free 1.5-gpm restrictor and aerator. When a shower flowed more than 2 gpm, Matt offered a free low-flow showerhead. He dunked a water-filled bladder in my old toilet’s tank to reduce flushes from five gallons to four. In inspecting and installing plumbing bits throughout my house, Matt gave my home the closest thing it has experienced to remodeling.

Matt then brought out his infrared imaging camera. He checked windows, doors, and electrical outlets for cold-air leaks from outside-in, then went outside to check for warm leaks from inside-out. He concluded with a few ideas for inexpensive window insulation. I was sorry to see Matt go, partly because

I wanted just 10 minutes with the imager to look for birds hiding in my trees and bushes.

Los Alamos is fortunate to have an energy-audit program that is free and personally conducted by someone of Matt’s caliber. As Conservation Officer, Matt’s charter is the County’s (as it should be ours) – by 2020, reduce County water use by at least 12% and reduce electricity and natural gas consumption by 10% or more. Through the free energy-audits and other DPU-sponsored programs (i.e. Watt Swap), we can hit the targets, both personally and as a County, while still living as comfortably as ever while using no more than we need.

—Michael Di Rosa

Application Process for Beryllium Mine at Monticello Box Moves Forward

The application for exploratory beryllium mining at the Monticello Box in southern NM has reached “administrative completeness.” This means that the NM Mining and Minerals Department is satisfied that the driller has properly reclaimed the holes that were illegally dug previously and now will begin to consider the current application, which is for additional exploratory bore holes. The first step is to consult with other agencies like NM Game and Fish, the State Engineer, the State Historic Preservation Office, and the Environment Department. The sheer scope of the diversity of these agencies reflects how many issues converge at the

Monticello Box, from the geologic warm springs, to the unique wildlife, to the occupation by many cultures across history. The water creates an oasis that mining activity cannot be allowed to despoil.

The drilling applicant will have the opportunity to modify his application based on feedback from these agencies. Then the public will be able to weigh in. There will be a public meeting but the time has not yet been announced. If you’d like to be on the mailing list so we can let you know when and how you can comment, send your email address to Mary Katherine Ray (mkrscrim@kitcarson.net).

—Mary Katherine Ray



Cottonwoods leafing out in the spring along the Alamosa River below the Monticello Box. (Photo by Mary Katherine Ray)

Greatly Improved Path to Clair Tappaan Lodge

You’ll be pleasantly surprised the next time you visit Clair Tappaan Lodge, the Sierra Club’s lodge at Donner Pass in Northern California, by how easy it is to get to the door. The main entry is now the improved Tri-Lodge road 600 yards to the east of the former entrance. A large and attractive new sign has been installed to identify the road. For those who want to continue to climb 40 feet up the steep path from the south, minor changes will increase safety.

You are now able to drive your car to a 20-minute loading zone just beneath the sign, unload your gear, return your car to the parking lot below, then walk the gentle slope to the Clair Tappaan Lodge meadow and into the Lodge. Once inside, turn to the left to find the Office.

For more information, contact Olivia Diaz, Co-chair, Sierra Club Clair Tappaan Lodge committee (odiaz@foothill.net).

—Olivia Diaz

Border Wall (continued from page 1)

the agricultural economy in Mexico has resulted in mass migration to the United States. Since 1994, illegal immigration from Mexico to the United States has increased 400%.

If our elected leaders really want to solve the problem of “illegal” migration and make both the United States and Mexico truly secure, they will work together with the country of Mexico to help lift our neighbors out of the abject poverty our trade policies have helped to create. If fair and sustainable jobs are created in Mexico, Mexicans will not be forced to make the risky life-or-death decisions to walk dozens or even a hundred miles through the desert for employment.

I could have used my space in this issue of the *Sierran* to describe and detail a lot of our two-year history opposing the wall and the sad tales of wildlife and human suffering. Instead, I ask all caring Sierrans and others reading this article to call your U.S. congressmembers (see page 3) and strongly advocate that they take a tougher stand in opposing this wall of shame.

For more information, contact Bill Addington, Border Issues and Environmental Justice Chair (915/539-4158).



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It’s time for America to get smart about energy and be less dependent on dwindling oil reserves. We need to increase our use of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power. Let your voice be heard.

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F94Q W 1

Fear by the Numbers

- Cost of the U.S.-Mexico border wall: \$49 billion
- Average cost per mile for the 18-foot-high wall: \$7.5 million
- Federal environmental laws waived under the Real ID Act: 40

Witness to History

With a little prodding from my wife (“But Ellen, we just got back from Europe!”), two days after the election we got plane tickets, hooked up with old friends from our DC time for places to stay, put in congressional requests for inauguration tickets, and reserved spots for the New Mexico and Native American inaugural balls.

Excitement is the word to describe the long inauguration weekend. Nearly every hand went up when the Southwest Air flight attendant asked who was

headed to DC for the celebration. Southwest even had a trio à la the Spinners performing for us at the baggage area. Washington weather was bitterly cold but clear. Yet people were out and about everywhere we went throughout the city: vendors outside the Eastern Market on Capitol Hill selling Obamaphania, locals shopping for viewing parties, and out-of-towners waiting for inauguration tickets in line outside Capitol Hill offices and swelling with pride while swelling DC’s population so that every 150th American was there to witness history. The daughter of Robb Thomson, Chapter energy activist, came all the way from South Africa with her 10-year old daughter in tow for the event!

My first time in a tuxedo did not raise an eyebrow in the bus or subway on the way down to the Native American Museum, which hosted the New Mexico Society Ball. The Society, which is a social venue for New Mexicans putting in time in DC, did it up right. We spent the evening eating hors d’oeuvres, dancing to a local band, and viewing exhibits in the wondrous museum. Chatting with our new Congressmen Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan, both endorsed and actively supported in the fall elections by Rio Grande Chapter members, was a treat. The following night, at the Native American ball, it was truly inspiring to meet the Crow tribe couple who “adopted” Obama last summer as a tribal member, giving him the name of Kooda Bilaxpak Kuuxshish, or “One Who Helps People Throughout the Land.”

Inauguration day itself was bittersweet. Ellen and I got up in our friend’s home, which had swelled

to a baker’s dozen all eager to be a witness to history. While the rest bussed to the Mall to join millions of others, Ellen and I biked through the empty streets all the way to Capitol Hill, exchanging waves with other excited inaugural goers and National Guardsmen occasioning the sidewalks. Reality intrudes the best-laid plans. Having tickets seemed to guarantee a spot, so we and tens of thousands thought as we waited for the purple gate to open. Once off our bikes, more lines and more waiting in the chaotic purple-ticket standing area meant more people to talk with about

how and why this moment was so important to them, to me. A Colorado Democratic national committee member regaled with convention stories. A lady drove up all night from North Carolina. A couple from Jacksonville hated the cold but loved the scene. A young African American was proudly wearing an Obama cap. We were all living history. Even when we were chanting “Purple! Purple! Let us in!” to no avail and thus were denied actually seeing the swearing-in,

it was a moment that in the maddening crush could have turned deadly but, out of deference to President Obama, remained nonviolent. From such a celebratory time, let’s now work to channel that energy into a new beginning.

You are invited to view photos from the inaugural weekend at www.kenhughes.org by clicking on the Washington DC photo on the right side of the page.

—Ken Hughes, Chapter Conservation Chair



Above: The Capitol decked out for the inauguration. (Photo by Ken Hughes)

Club Presses Obama to Start with a “Clean Slate”

Odds are that every fifth person who knocked on doors or made phone calls to help elect Barack Obama was a Sierra Club member. Such an impressive outpouring of grassroots activism that led to the Obama presidency can now be translated into grassroots actions. Sierra Club has asked the new administration to start with a Clean Slate of four energy and environmental issues. In his first week in office, President Obama responded by directing the Environmental Protection Agency to address the request by New Mexico and 13 other states to implement tougher emissions standards for cars than federal standards. We also ask him to take action on the other three – regulations on coal-fired power plants, tough interim goals for a climate plan, and an end to lawless dumping of coal-mining waste in rivers and streams.

—Ken Hughes

Being There

It’s different to be there.
It wasn’t easy,
but oh so worth it.
Lifetime memories
burned into every sense.

Millions gathered,
rich and poor,
influential and inconsequential,
all different, all together
they make the whole, America.

It appears to be
about the man
at the microphone
but he knows,
and we should,

that it’s about
you and me and him
and that’s the only
way it can work,
if it will.

Words raise the tone
for a nation, for a people,
for a hungry heart.
Cheers rise
along with hopes.

It won’t be easy.
It isn’t sure.
But it’s oh so much better
than the alternative,
and so we try.

It’s time.
Past time.
And oh so many hearts yearn
to be lifted with
the dream that has been dormant for far too long.

I got there
against some real odds, with the real help of friends,
and in the biting cold of winter.
I will always
be glad that I did.

And when the deed was done,
all I could do
was sit on the ground
of America’s Capitol
and weep for joy and relief.

Now, the work begins
in earnest
There is weight to be pulled,
change to be made,
and dignity to be restored.

It won’t be easy.
There are massive forces
that would oppose.
Cynicism and fear are close at hand
and power itself twists and distorts.

But the alternative
is not acceptable.
The Earth is too dear.
The possibilities too vast.
So we will try, with everything we have.

Now, for the moment,
joy prevails.
A city of millions
smiles and sings in unison,
and America’s flag is still there.

—For the Inauguration of President Barack Obama,
January 20, 2009, written by Rio de la Vista, an
ecologist from Del Norte, Colorado

National Club Election Coming This Spring

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

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well. Yearly participation in elections at all Club levels is a major membership obligation. Your Board of Directors is required to stand for election by the membership. This Board sets Club policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the Executive Director and staff to operate the Club. Voting for candidates who express your views on how the Club should grow

and change is both a privilege and responsibility of membership.

Members frequently state that they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. You can learn more by asking questions of your group and chapter leadership and other experienced members you know. Visit the Club's election website: www.sierraclub.org/bod/2009election. This site provides links to additional information about candidates, and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment.

You should use your own judgment by taking several minutes to read the ballot statement of each candidate. Then make your choice and cast your vote. Even if you receive your election materials in the mail, please go to the user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. If necessary, you will find the paper ballot(s) straightforward and easy to mark and mail.

Save Trees and Money: Opt to Read the *Sierran* Online

If you wish to opt out of the mailed copy of this newsletter and read it online, please contact our volunteer Ishwari Sollohub in Santa Fe (505/474-3945, ishwarisollohub@yahoo.com) and tell her you want to be on the opt-out list. Be sure and put the title SIERRA CLUB on the subject line of your email, or your message will not get through. Once your name is so marked on our membership database, you will receive an email from Ishwari each time our bimonthly paper has been put up on our website, so you can read it on your computer. We can save a few trees as well money this way, as it will cost the Rio Grande Chapter less for printing and mailing.



SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

A Will is a Way

Make a commitment to the next generation by remembering Sierra Club in your will. Your support will help others preserve the intricate balance of nature.

Contact
Gift Planning Program
(800) 932-4270
planned.giving@sierraclub.org

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 Norma McCallan, 627 Camino don Emilio, Santa Fe, NM 87507. Please allow eight weeks for processing.

Extra copies are often available. Please contact the editor (Ellen Cavalli, ellen@fireballindustries.com) or the Group Chair in your area (see Group pages).

Quarterly Meetings

The Chapter's Conservation and Executive Committee meetings will be held Saturday-Sunday, April 4-5, 2009, at Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge near Socorro. Contact Conservation Chair Ken Hughes or Chapter Chair John Buchser (see directory, page 2) for more information. Carpooling is encouraged.

New Chapter and Group Leadership

Be sure to check the Chapter directory (page 2) and Group pages for changes to the Executive Committees and Conservation Issues committees. Some Chapter highlights include the following: John Buchser, former Chair of the Northern Group, has been elected as Chair of the Rio Grande Chapter, replacing Susan Martin. Cliff Larsen has stepped down as Treasurer, and Barbara Scheer has taken up this important volunteer post. Bill Addington is Chair of the newly formed Border Issues committee. And Lou McCall is Chair of the new Recycling committee. Congratulations to all of the new leaders, and thank you to all those who have served in the past!

Office Changes

Michael Casaus, who has been working in our Albuquerque office as regional representative, is now the Regional Field Organizing Manager representing NM, Colorado, Utah, and Texas. Joining the Albuquerque office at the helm of the Building Bridges to the Outdoors program is Kristina Ortez. We welcome Kristina to the team, and congratulate Michael on his promotion!



PAJARITO GROUP NEWS

Pajarito Group Directory

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

Executive Committee

Chair: Ilse Bleck
ibleck@yahoo.com 505/662-2368
Vice-Chair: Mark Jones
jonesmm1@comcast.net 505/662-9443
Secretary: Jody Benson
505/662-4782
Treasurer: David Gemeinhart
ddgem@losalamos.com 505/672-6267
Michael Di Rosa
mdd@stanfordalumni.org 505/663-0648
Amy Galbraith
pajaritosierra@gmail.com 505/662-3849
Nona Girardi
nonamg@aol.com 505/661-8576

Committee Chairs

Conservation: Michael Di Rosa
mdd@stanfordalumni.org 505/663-0648
Environmental Education: Pauline Wilder
xxmpxx@gmail.com 505/662-7768
Global Warming: Charles Keller
alfanso@cybermesa.com 505/662-7915
Grazing, National Forests, Wetlands,
Wilderness: David Gemeinhart
ddgem@losalamos.com 505/672-6267
Newsletter Editor, Publicity, Sprawl,
Endangered Species/Wildlife:
Jody Benson 505/662-4782
Outings, Parks/Refuges, Membership Co-Chair:
Ilse Bleck
ibleck@yahoo.com 505/662-2368
Political, Cool Cities, Membership Co-Chair:
Mark Jones
jonesmm1@comcast.net 505/662-9443
Webmeister: Amy Galbraith
pajaritosierra@gmail.com 505/662-3849

Science Fair Award Winners

The insights and enthusiasm of the winners of the Pajarito Group's Special Environmental Awards for the 2009 Science Fair inspire us to remember the joy of asking questions and seeking answers about the natural world that we love. *Listed alphabetically:* Joe Abeyta designed a project to measure the water quality of Water Canyon from its headwaters to West Jemez Road. Connor Bailey tested the biodegradability of so-called biodegradable cups to reveal that though much more expensive, these cups, disposed of normally, are no more biodegradable than ordinary Styrofoam or paper. Ethan Clements experimented with how cell phone radiation affects planarian regeneration. Nathan Clements measured fish growth and health in the Valles Caldera Preserve, comparing fish in the human-predated San Antonio Creek with fish in the East Fork of the Jemez. Kaitlyn Dover gathered horse manure, made bricks out of it, dried them, then measured how much heat it created in her experiment on using horse manure for fuel. Isabelle Runde experimented with how water quality affected algae health and growth. The Pajarito Group thanks each student for that special dedication that helps us to not only understand but also sustain the life and systems that so nourish us.

Outings

Saturday, March 21 • Cajé del Rio hike – Strenuous, 10 miles RT, 1000' gain, rugged off-trail sections. Michael Di Rosa (505/667-0095 work, or 505/663-0648).

Saturday, April 18 • Very strenuous hike in the Sierra Ladrones near Socorro (ideally Ladron Peak) – Very early start or drive down Friday, April 17. Michael Di Rosa (505/667-0095 work, or 505/663-0648).

Grants for Sierra Club Environmental Projects

Second call: You can still apply for grant-money (up to \$20,000) that the Rio Grande Chapter has for energizing volunteers to work on projects directed at protecting the NM environment from global climate change. A project may be a cooperative effort with other local environmental organizations (i.e. PEEC, LASE), as long as our group has a leading role. (Funds may not be used for political activity, lobbying, or membership activities.) Go to our website to read the solicitation: <http://riogrande.sierraclub.org/pajarito/mainpaj.asp>. You can contact one of the Executive Committee members to discuss your idea, and for help with writing the grant.

Earth Day

"The Tree of Life" is the theme for the Los Alamos 2009 Earth Day at PEEC, 3540 Orange Street, behind the High School. We seek both volunteers and visitors for our Pajarito booth. We tentatively plan to feature two activities: first, an art table where all ages can draw their vision of Life; second, a computer simulation of global-warming scenarios under varying conditions of CO₂ production and forest cover/deforestation. This simulation, developed by a group of 6th graders, can run the program using different levels of carbon production and sequestration. Volunteering is an opportunity for you to participate in the spirit of Earth Day by teaching and inspiring people to pay attention to, as well as express their love for, our Earth. Please call Ilse Bleck at 505/662-2368.

Meetings

Wednesday, April 8, 7:00 p.m. • Upstairs Meeting Rooms, Mesa Public Library
Robert Gibson & Lori Heimdahl Gibson Present: World of Ice: An Antarctic Adventure

Join us for this long-awaited talk and slide show on the Gibsons' 10-day expedition in November 2007 to "The Ice" (Antarctica) aboard the *National Geographic Endeavour*. Featured are glaciers, icebergs, ice in many other forms, penguins, seals, whales, birds, the sinking of *MS Explorer*, and other adventures in a stunningly beautiful world.

Wednesday, May 6, 7:00 p.m. • Upstairs Meeting Rooms, Mesa Public Library
To be announced

An Audit to Invite

"Audit" never evoked the words educational, enjoyable, and free showerheads until I had one conducted by Matt Dickens, our own Conservation Officer for the Los Alamos County Department of Public Utilities (DPU). These free audits are done only at the utility customer's request, are scheduled for the customer's convenience, take only an hour or so, and serve to save the customer money while reducing the County's energy and water footprint.

Water

First Matt – plumber's tote in one hand, charts in the other – reviewed the charts summarizing my household usage of water, gas, and electricity from 2005 to 2008. These bar charts spanned from January to December, and grouped each month's usage year by year. Water use usually appears as an arch centered around summertime irrigation and gardening. The base of the arch in winter months indicates indoor use. By comparing summer and winter, Matt can compare your outdoor usage against known averages for watering your particular landscapes or

gardens. A substantial excess from average indicates either overkill watering or a horribly leaky irrigation system – either habits or plumbing are in need of repair.

Gas

Naturally, consumption is highest in winter. In my case, I burn about nine times more Therms in January than July. One inference from such a steep seasonal swing is that winterizing and insulating one's home, replacing an old and inefficient furnace, or installing programmable thermostats are among the most significant steps a homeowner can take to reduce energy use. Time and money spent on these changes yield more and faster savings than agonizing over water-heater efficiency figures or vowing to make tea with tepid water. Sometimes the attention to home heating yields purely comfort. In 2007, I replaced the rumbling, original Bryant installed in my 1957 Group 11 home; my gas consumption hasn't changed, but I no longer freeze.

(continued on page 4)

An Update on the Efforts to Stop the Desert Rock Coal Plant and Help Create a Clean Energy Future

A few months ago, the Bush administration's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was on full throttle towards making global warming worse by giving a green light for the Desert Rock's air permit. Sierra Club and others sued late last year to make sure that EPA would clean up the air of Northern New Mexico and say no to Desert Rock, which would not only spew out toxic mercury but also would add over 12.7 million tons of carbon dioxide to the air. Our appeal held, and EPA agreed to review our concerns with the air permit and opened up a public comment period that ends March 23.

In mid-February, EPA also announced that it was reconsidering former EPA head Stephen Johnson's midnight memo that sought to prohibit controls on global warming from coal-fired power plants right before Bush left office. While EPA is considering how to address carbon dioxide emissions, we recommended that EPA hold off on issuing the air permit for the Desert Rock plant. EPA, it seems, is taking global warming seriously and taking to task the effort to clean global warming gases to protect the future generations.

While this is great news, our efforts continue on the ground with tribal partner organizations like Dooda Desert Rock, Dine' CARE, and the Black Mesa Water Coalition to put the final nails in Desert Rock's coffin and instead inspire a just transition to a green economy for the Navajo communities near the Desert Rock plant. The Sierra Club's national Coal Campaign also worked with the Rio Grande Chapter to secure a \$10,000 grant to support the work of our tribal partners in public outreach on Desert Rock at the end of 2008. A true warrior, Elousie Brown is President of Dooda Desert Rock and an Iraqi war veteran. She worked with us to implement the grant by printing and distributing T-shirts, bumper stickers, and petitions all around

the Navajo Nation, and she is still leading the effort to stop Desert Rock. Sierra Club is also a proud supporter of the Navajo Green Economy Coalition, working to bring green jobs to the Navajo Nation through an innovative strategy for funding small-scale renewable energy projects. Everyone should be asking Desert Rock supporters, "Why not invest in wind and solar instead of the risky investment with coal and Desert Rock?" You can learn more at www.navajogreenjobs.com.

So to all those who think Desert Rock is a done deal, don't hold your breath. Better to take a deep breath; look to the alternatives that would create green jobs and respect the water, culture, and lands of the Navajo people; and work with us to build a green economy with wind and solar. To all those who support Elousie Brown and our other partners, keep the support going because this epic struggle continues. Lastly, be sure to thank EPA for reversing course on global warming pollution and tell them to wait on issuing the air permit for Desert Rock. On a personal note, I am so thankful for the great leadership and efforts of our partners to stop Desert Rock and bring a clean energy future, including the San Juan Citizens Alliance, Dooda Desert Rock, Honor the Earth, Indigenous Environmental Network, Black Mesa Water Coalition, Dine' CARE, and others!

For more information on Desert Rock, visit:

- www.doodadesertrock.com
- www.newmexico.sierraclub.org/campaigns/desert_rock_power_plant/desertrock_power_plant.htm
- www.dinecare.org
- www.sanjuancitizens.org

Or contact Andy Bessler of the Sierra Club's Tribal Partnerships Program, in Flagstaff, Arizona (928/774-6103, andy.bessler@sierraclub.org).

—Andy Bessler



Citizens rally against Desert Rock coal plant. (Photo by Andy Bessler)

Steering Committee

Art Jaquez, Co-Chair

505/360-0176 • artjaquez2@yahoo.com

Nick Cullander, Co-Chair

505/334-0935 • ncullander@hotmail.com

Gordon Glass, Air Quality, Outings

505/564-4460 • agglass@earthlink.net

TAOS BRANCH NEWS

Volunteers Wanted

The Taos presence continues to develop and is in need of members to step forward to be part our leadership core. We are looking to fill positions on the board as well as committee chairs. We anticipate the amount of time required will be minimal, and as our membership base solidifies in the Taos region, these leadership positions will play key roles in the future of the group and our community. Please contact Scott Estep (575/770-7969, wetmtn@rmi.net) for more information.

Contact List

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

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

William Brown, The Climate Project •

575/758-8008, nmglobalwarming@yahoo.com, www.nmglobalwarming.org

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

Take Action Today by Contacting EPA About Desert Rock

The EPA made the right decision in reconsidering the Bush administration's midnight memo that sought to prohibit controls on global warming from coal-fired power plants. While EPA is considering how to address carbon dioxide emissions, they should hold off on issuing the air permit for the Desert Rock plant, which is currently being considered. Given the 12.7 million tons of carbon dioxide that would be emitted from this plant each year, it is essential that global warming be taken into account and that steps are taken to bring about a just transition to a clean energy economy for the Navajo communities near the Desert Rock plant.

The Sierra Club's Rio Grande Chapter is proud to partner with the following organiza-

tions in this effort: San Juan Citizens' Alliance, Dooda Desert Rock, Indigenous Environmental Network, Honor the Earth, Black Mesa Water Coalition, Natural Resources Defense Council, Earthjustice, the Center for Biological Diversity, To Nizhoni Ani, C Aquifer for the Dine, and many others!

Be sure to visit our website (www.sierraclub.org/partnerships/tribal) to send an email letter to EPA that will tell them to hold off on permitting Desert Rock until EPA figures out how to regulate carbon from coal plants, as the Obama administration recently asked EPA to do. You can link on our site before March 23 to let EPA know how you feel about Desert Rock!

—Andy Bessler



NORTHERN GROUP NEWS

Friday, March 27, 5 to 8 PM

The Commons, 2300 West Alameda

CELEBRATE OUR VOLUNTEERS

Have you been volunteering for the Sierra Club? If so, please mark your calendars!

Volunteers are invited to attend this celebration of your efforts. Come meet with your fellow volunteers. Food and drinks will be provided. More details to follow, or contact **Alice Cox** (757-2145) or **Jean Watts** (989-5010).

NORTHERN GROUP COMMITTEE MEETINGS Sierra Club Office, 1807 Second Street, Unit #45

Group Executive Committee:

Tuesday, March 3, 7 PM

Tuesday, April 7, 7 PM

Group Conservation Committee:

Tuesday, March 24, 7 PM

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

unless otherwise indicated.

Tuesday, April 21, 6:30 to 7:45 PM

REI Community Room, 500 Market Street, Santa Fe Railyard

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Cedar Mountain Solar is teaming up with local businesses and organizations, such as **Positive Energy, AIA, Association of Energy Engineers, Santa Fe Community College, and Sierra Club of Northern New Mexico**, to provide workshops, classes, and presentation events throughout the area.

Learn about creating energy efficiency in your home, sustainable alternative energy solutions, and reducing energy costs, and the positive impact these creative solutions can have on our communities and the environment. We'll get practical, user-friendly, cost-effective strategies to embrace a more self-reliant way of living that will help us make better personal choices affecting our own lives and the lives of others in our community.

Northern New Mexico Group of the Sierra Club
1807 Second Street, Unit #45, Santa Fe, NM 87505
505 • 983 • 2703 ♦ website <http://riogrande.sierraclub.org/santafe/>

GROUP CHAIR

David Van Winkle

As many of you know, John Buchser has stepped down from his role as NNM group chair. I would like to thank John Buchser for his long-term service in this role. I have personally observed John's passion for the environment this past fall in his leadership towards getting a strong environmentally friendly group of elected officials into office. I ask that you also thank him for his service and accomplishments as Group Chair. John will still be serving the Rio Grande Chapter in critical roles where we need some help.

I have been elected as the new chair for the NNM group. Briefly, my background in the Sierra Club is: with the Dallas group, I served on ex-com, was outings chair, green building chair, and global warming/energy chair. With NNM, I have been the Santa Fe Cool Cities campaign leader in 2008. I also lead backpacking trips for the national organization, mostly in the Southwest.

Norma McCallan will continue to be the Vice Chair for the group. Norma has made many numerous contributions to the club over the years. Thank you, Norma, for your past service and your enthusiasm in the future. **Dexter Coolidge** will also continue to be the Conservation Chair for the group. He has brought many new ideas to the team and I am glad to be working with him as we move forward. **Anne Stauffer and Jean Watts** continue to serve as Treasurer and Secretary for the group. Thank you for your past support and for continuing to serve into the future. **Tom Gorman** is a newly elected ex-com member.

I look forward to working with all of you to improve the environment in our region. We have many dedicated people that can and will accomplish a lot towards meeting the club's goals.

One example of recent success is our hiking book. Many of you know that much of our income for the group comes from hiking book sales. In 2008, the hiking book was the #5 bestseller at Collected Works Bookstore and #9 at Garcia Street Books, both of Santa Fe. Thank you to all of you who contributed to this excellent hiking book.

CONSERVATION CHAIR

Dexter Coolidge

While our major current achievements are in the Cool Cities program in Santa Fe (which David van Winkle reviews in a separate column), the most important long-term issues for the Northern Group are in the Four Corners region. The national Sierra Club is starting a lawsuit to address fly ash from coal-fired plants and is using the Four Corners area as the test case; Norma McCallan has been working hard to identify plaintiffs from our ranks for that. Meanwhile, we are all increasingly hopeful that the delays we have forced in the Desert Rock plant, along with the change in administration in Washington, the likelihood of limits or taxes on greenhouse gases, and the current inaccessibility of capital, may result in the cancellation of the plant altogether. And finally, while we are waiting for a judicial decision from the Tenth Circuit on our lawsuit to force the EPA to establish tighter standards for the Four Corners Plant, we are considering other avenues that we can pursue to ensure a favorable outcome for the environment.

These are exciting and hopeful times for all of us!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Sierra Club Publicity** – Getting out information about events and speakers and writing short ads for KSFR and local newspapers (a team of 2 to 3 people) **Kia Mudge** (474-6697, kiamudge@hotmail.com)
- Cool Cities/Cool Biz** – Work with Santa Fe City officials and Santa Fe businesses, neighborhoods and schools to promote clean and affordable energy. **David Van Winkle** (820-1006, david@vw77.com) <http://riogrande.sierraclub.org/santafe/>
- Santa Fe River Clean-Up** – Assist in monthly cleanups of our section of the river. Also need coordinators and leaders of the monthly cleanups. **Kathleen Davis** (795-3286, kdav40@aol.com)
- Membership Data Entry** – on the HELEN database updating membership and volunteer entries. Can be done at home. **Donna Michalski** (473-3734, dmichalski@comcast.net)
- Forest & Public Lands Issues** – Work on various issues affecting public lands, including Forest Travel Management Plan, upcoming Forest Management Plan, BLM Management Plan, and designation of Sabinosa WSA as Wilderness. **Tom Gorman** (438-3032) or **Norma McCallan** (471-0005)

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

| | | |
|---|--|--------------|
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| Vice-Chair – Norma McCallan * ‡ | nmccallan@mindspring.com | 471-0005 |
| Secretary – Jean Watts * | jeanwatts@comcast.net | 989-5010 |
| Treasurer – Anne Stauffer | arsinm@comcast.net | 986-1412 |
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| Political Committee – Susan Martin | smartin31@comcast.net | 988-5206 |
| Phone Answerer – Bebs Taylor | | 983-9129 |
| Publicity – Kia Mudge 474-6697 and Mary Thomson | | 982-5486 |
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| Las Vegas contact – Betty Quick | bettydquick@gmail.com | 505-454-9123 |
| Taos Branch – Scott Estep | wetmtn@rmi.com | 575-770-7969 |

| | | |
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| Nick Cullander | ncullander@hotmail.com | 505-334-0935 |
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* Northern Group Executive Committee ‡ Core Conservation Committee



NORTHERN GROUP NEWS

NORTHERN GROUP OUTINGS

Sat Sun March

- 1 **Moderate Hike** along Petaca Point segment of the West Rim Trail, overlooking the Grande Gorge. Marvelous views, minimal elevation gain, 7.5 miles RT. Dogs okay. **Norma McCallan** (471-0005)
- 1 **Strenuous Snowshoe** Call for details. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)
- 7 **Easy/Moderate Hike** in Tsankawi area (Bandelier). No dogs. **Page Press** (946-0169)
- 8 **Strenuous Hike** to Stone Lions (Bandelier). 13 miles RT, 3100' gain. **Cynthia Good** (699-2717)
- 14 **Moderate Loop Hike** to Picacho and Atalaya. ±9 miles RT, 1800' gain. Dogs okay. **Bogdan Mihaila** (661-4184)
- 15 **Moderate Snowshoe** Dogs okay. **Royal Drews** (699-8713)
- 15 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** in Ojo Caliente Backcountry, 8+ miles RT, mostly off-trail. **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354)
- 21 **Easy Birdwatch Walk**, locally. Bring binocs. **Ron Duffy** (466-6398)
- 21 **Santa Fe River Cleanup** 9-11 AM. **Paige Grant** (982-5180, paigeanna@comcast.net). See inset article for details.
- 21 **Strenuous Hike** in Caja del Rio. ±10 miles RT, 1000' gain. Rugged off-trail sections. **Michael Di Rosa** (667-0095 work, 663-0648 home)
- 22 **Easy/Moderate Hike** on Falls Trail (Bandelier). 5 miles RT, 700' gain. **Victor Atyas** (438-9434)
- 28 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** through Abiquiú red rocks and white slickrock of Ghost Ranch's Kitchen Mesa. Awesome views. 8 miles RT, 1500' gain. All off-trail with minor scrambling. Dogs okay. **Tobin Oruch** (820-2844, call before 8 PM)
- 29 **Easy/Moderate Hike** in Villanueva State Park. 2.5 mile loop, 400' gain. Dogs okay. Spectacular views of Pecos Valley and surrounding mountains. On way back, stop at great restaurant – La Risa Café. **John Varner** (795-5948)
- 29 **Strenuous Snowshoe** Call for details. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)

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

For changes and updates in the hike schedule, check our website:

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



Sat Sun May

- 2 **Easy Hike** to Ojo Caliente mica mine followed by soak in the pools, 5 miles, 700' gain. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)
- 3 **Strenuous Hike** maybe a Shaggy Peak loop from the west via Apache Canyon. About 13 miles, 3000' gain, mostly off-trail and rough terrain. Dogs okay. **Tobin Oruch** (820-2844 before 8 PM)
- Thursday, May 7 **Easy/Moderate Hike**
Dogs okay. Call for details. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 9 **Moderate Hike** to Tetilla Peak southwest of town, off trail, 946' elevation, only 3+ miles, but rocky. Dogs okay, high clearance vehicles needed for carpooling. **Norma McCallan** (471-0005)
- 10 **Strenuous Loop Hike** to Shaggy Peak and Deer Creek (from the east), 12 miles RT, 2000' gain. Mostly off-trail, some steep sections, some scrambling. Dogs okay. **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354)
- Thursday, May 14 **Easy/Moderate Hike**
Dogs okay. Call for details. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 16 **Moderate Bike and Hike** (± 6 miles bike / 3-4 hike), maybe in Nat. Monument lands near Grants. Call about dogs. **Page Press** (946-0169)
- 16 **Strenuous Hike** in the Grass Mtn/Rio Mora area, 10-12 miles, 2000' plus gain, some off trail. **Michael Di Rosa** (667-0095 or 663-0648)
- 16 **Santa Fe River Cleanup** 9-11 AM. **Greg Lower** (699-6893)
- 16 **Easy Birdwatch Walk**. Bring binoculars. **Ron Duffy** (466-6398)
- 17 **Moderate Hike** probably up the Rio en Medio. Numerous waterfalls, shade, maybe 6 miles, 1000' gain. Dogs okay. **Art Judd** (982-3212)
- Thursday, May 21 **Easy/Moderate Hike**
Dogs okay. Call for details. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 23 **Easy/Moderate Hike/Geocache Hunting** in the Buckman area locating geocaches and some petroglyphs. Off trail, dogs okay. **Alan Shapiro** (424-9242)
- 24 **Easy/Moderate Hike** on Otowi Mesa outside Los Alamos. Some rock scrambling and narrow places. Up to 5 miles with 500' elevation gain. **Michael Goldey** (820-7302)
- Thursday, May 28 **Easy/Moderate Hike**
Dogs okay. Call for details. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 30 TBD, check website or next *Sierran*.
- 31 **Moderate Bike Ride** to San Antonio Hot Springs on forest roads 144/376 (non-technical). About 15 miles RT, limit of 8, bring suit/towel for soak in springs. **Miguel DeLuca** (820-0042)
- 31 **Strenuous Hike** on La Luz trail to Sandia crest, great views, 14 miles, 3600' gain, dogs okay. **Cynthia Good** (699-2717)

Sat Sun April

- Thursday, April 2 **Easy/Moderate Hike**
Dogs okay. Call for details. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 4 **Easy/Moderate Hike** Ojo Caliente, visit the Posi ruin and the mica mine. About 7 miles, 800' gain, dogs okay. **Alan Shapiro** (424-9242)
- 4 **Strenuous Hike** Climb up Cabezon volcanic plug west of Bernalillo. Great views, about 5 miles, 1000' gain, challenging rock scrambling. **Marcia Skillman** (699-3008)
- 5 **Moderate/Strenuous Hike** Ravens Ridge to Deception Peak, 5 miles, 2000' gain, alternate if icy, dogs okay. **Royal Drews** (699-8713)
- Thursday, April 9 **Easy/Moderate Hike**
Dogs okay. Call for details. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 11 **Easy/Moderate Morning Tour** Mesa Prieta petroglyph site north of Española with docents. This Wells preserve is a world-class rock art area with over 6000 petroglyphs representational of Archaic, Rio Grande style and Historic periods. Steep, rocky terrain. Cost \$10 per person. Call by April 4 to reserve a place. **Daisy Levine** (466-8338)
- 11 **Strenuous Hike** to Tapia Canyon west of Cabezon. Petroglyphs, ruins, slot canyon, and arch! Limit 12 hikers. Very early start and a long day. Alternate if roads are muddy. Dogs okay. **Stephen Markowitz** (983-2779 call before 8 PM)
- 12 **Moderate Hike** to Dome Wilderness (Sanchez Falls and beyond). About 8 miles RT, some steep off-trail sections. Dogs okay. **Norbert Sperlich** (474-4354)
- Thursday, April 17 **Easy/Moderate Hike**
Dogs okay. Call for details. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 18 **Moderate Hike** on Blue Dot / Red Dot trails in White Rock Canyon, 7 miles, 700' gain, some steep and loose footing, great views, dogs okay. **Dan Rusthoi** (690-8967)
- 18 **Very Strenuous Hike** in the Sierra Ladrones near Socorro (ideally Ladron Peak) Very early start or drive down Friday. **Michael Di Rosa** (667-0095 or 663-0648)
- 18 **Santa Fe River Cleanup** 9-11 AM, see sidenote. **Kathleen Davis** (kdav40@aol.com 505-795-3286)
- 18 **Easy Birdwatch Walk** Bring binoculars. **Ron Duffy** (466-6398)
- 19 **Moderate Hike** to Alamo Canyon in Bandelier, maybe 7 miles, 1000' gain. **Les Drapela** (438-3306)
- 19 **Strenuous Hike** in Bandelier, Dome Wilderness, 15 miles, 3000' gain, high clearance vehicles needed for carpooling. **Bogdan Mihaila** (661-4184)
- Thursday, April 23 **Easy/Moderate Hike**
Dogs okay. Call for details. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)
- 25 **Moderate Hike** to Cerro de la Cosena, most easterly of the Cerrillos Hills peaks. 8+ miles, 750' gain, dogs okay with leash, can meet folks from south at trailhead. **Norma McCallan** (471-0005)
- 26 **Strenuous Hike** to Santa Fe Baldy, 14 miles, 3600' gain, alternate if icy, dogs okay. **Royal Drews** (699-8713)
- Thursday, April 30 **Easy/Moderate Hike**
Dogs okay. Call for details. **Eliza Schmid** (474-5846)

COMING ATTRACTION – June 11-18 Abajo Mountains, Southeast Utah
On the weekend work with Red Rock Forests and the Forest Service closing an unauthorized route damaging archeological and cultural resources in a beautiful, remote area of the forest. Day hikes the other days. Dogs okay. **Norma McCallan** (471-0005.)

SANTA FE RIVER CLEANUP AND VEGETATION MAINTENANCE

Saturdays – 9 to 11 AM – March 21 • April 18 • May 16

Help keep our river looking great! Park at Lower Alto Street north end of Closson. Bring work boots, gloves and drinking water. Be sure to connect with appropriate contact prior to cleanup date. Contact leader of each event.

Climate Masters Is Coming To New Mexico ...

... with a series of free classes hosted by the **New Mexico Environment Department** focused on climate change and what you can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in your daily life. Learn how to conduct home energy audits and be asked to share the knowledge with other community members through a variety of volunteer options.

For more information: <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb/index.html> or **Emily Geery** (emily.geery@state.nm.us or 476-4315).

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

A Conversation on Collaboration in the Middle Rio Grande

For casual observers, things have been quiet along the Middle Rio Grande for the past few years, after several dry years early in the decade sparked a flurry of litigation between environmental organizations and water authorities over protections for endangered species—the Rio Grande silvery minnow in particular—in the first half of the decade. Maybe things have been too quiet.

The Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program, begun in the midst of the litigation and formalized in 2003, allows all the interested groups to sit around the same table and, theoretically at least, hash out all the difficult issues of water administration and management and species protection and recovery. Collaborative Program participants are a who's who of Rio Grande authorities, including the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corps of Engineers, who together run the water storage and flood control projects, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, New Mexico Dept. of Game and Fish, the City of Albuquerque, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD), which operates diversion dams and irrigation works for farmers in the Middle Rio Grande Valley, and a number of the Pueblos.

How has the Collaborative Program succeeded in addressing these difficult issues? We sat in on a conversation between two experts with slightly different perspectives.

"Everybody is still at the table, and that to me is huge," said biologist Lisa Croft, Program Manager for the Collaborative Program and Deputy Area Manager for the Bureau of Reclamation. "The thing about doing anything collaboratively is that it's deliberate, thoughtful and slow; it has to be organic. The fact is that it is 2009, and we still have not been back in court, and the fact is that those folks still



get together every month, and they hammer this stuff out, and it's rough going, but they're all still there."

"We had a collaborative process" said Reed Benson, UNM's new Professor at the School of Law, referring to his many years of involvement in the Klamath River controversy as staff attorney and executive director of the Oregon nonprofit WaterWatch. That was during the years of prolonged water negotiations leading up to the 2001 "water crisis," when many Klamath Project farmers saw their irrigation supply cut off, and the environmental catastrophe of 2002, when a federal decision to divert water to irrigators rather than leave it in the river resulted in a massive fish kill of tens of thousands of migrating salmon.

"Everybody forgets, if they ever knew, that there was a years-long collaborative process before 2001. But there wasn't really a willingness to tackle the tough stuff. And then when it did get dry, there was a hastily called mediation, before the first of the big court cases, challenging the 2001 Biological Opinions, but they couldn't come to an agreement, and so in the end the 2001 BOs held, water was allocated accordingly, and the rest is history. Hearing that there's a collaborative process that everybody is staying in, but there still isn't a willingness to talk about the tough stuff, sounds to me like Klamath 1999, and that's disturbing."

"There is a false sense of security" said Lisa. "I don't think people realize how precarious the situation is." Lisa attributes the complacency to sheer luck, something like "divine intervention," as heavy rains or snowpack have saved the area over the past five years whenever parts of the river seemed ready to dry up. These, and money for supplemental water whenever the minnow needed it, courtesy of New Mexico's former senior senator. Sen. Pete Domenici was the ranking member of the crucial Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, responsible for funding water agencies like the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation, and projects like the Collaborative Program. "There's been a couple of dry years, and it's been touch and go, but pumping and Sen. Domenici have saved it."

For the first time in 22 years, the entire Middle Rio Grande remained wet through an entire irrigation season in 2008, due in part to Reclamation leasing of over 32,000 acre-feet of "supplemental water," much of it from Albuquerque's water utility. But despite this good news, 2009 and 2010 promise to be turbulent years for the Middle Rio Grande. A 2003 Biological Opinion on the effects of federal

Outings

Desert Exploratory Hikes

March 28, April 5, 18, 26:

Come and explore some of New Mexico's beautiful desert landscapes in the cooler, drier seasons of Fall, Winter, and early Spring. These hikes are not difficult, and are at a slow pace, but will require a sense of adventure on the part of participants. There will rarely be a trail and the route can be rocky and uneven at times. Some road tracks and game trails will be used, if available, and we will always try for the least difficult route that is evident. We may occasionally encounter dense growth and downed logs in canyon bottoms, though I will try my best to avoid this. Sometimes we scramble (easy climbing) over rock surfaces and walk narrow ledges, if this can be done safely. Typical hike length is between 6 and 10 miles and we may gain 500 to 1500ft. of elevation. Leader determines outing details and meeting time by previous Wednesday, if possible.

Please contact leader for specifics no later than the Thursday preceding the scheduled hike date. Meeting time will vary from 8:00 AM to 9:30 AM. Meeting place will always be Smith's, Carlisle and Menaul. Both Sierra Club and Outdoor Adventures For Singles are invited for these outings. Leader: Tom Petencin, tompeten@msn.com, 271-9928.

* * * * *

and non-federal water operations on the minnow and the Southwestern willow flycatcher is due to expire in 2013, so the federal agencies are "consulting" with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to produce a new "BO" by early 2010. The Endangered Species Act requires a consultation with Fish and Wildlife for any federal actions that might jeopardize endangered species, and this provides "take protection" under certain "terms and conditions" for federal and non-federal entities whose actions result in some protected animals' deaths. Complicating the situation is the expectation of diminished funding, with Sen. Domenici's retirement, perhaps limiting much-needed continuing scientific research on optimizing minnow recovery conditions, and Albuquerque bringing its San Juan-Chama Drinking Water Project online over the next year or so, eliminating the main source of supplemental water for the minnow.

As the number of Program participants suggests (and there are many more, 20 signatories in all), the "layer upon layer of complexity," in Lisa's words, of the various water rights, laws governing water deliveries—especially the Rio Grande Compact with Texas, severely constraining New Mexico's ability to store and release water in its upstream reservoirs under certain conditions—environmental laws like the ESA, not to mention political interests and personal agendas, make the system downright "mind-boggling" even in the best of times. The 2003 BO required continuous flow from Cochiti Dam to the Isleta Diversion, with 100 cubic feet per second at Central Bridge in Albuquerque, so could a disastrous year, we asked Lisa, a really dry year overstretch the water supply among the various stakeholders and bring all this complexity to a head?

continued next page

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

Middle Rio Grande (continued from p.12)

“Biologically, we have some safeguards in place.” The City, the MRGCD, and the Interstate Stream Commission have all opened “refugia” to provide breeding habitat and protection for the minnow. But “if we have a dry year and we have the current Biological Opinion, people wouldn’t like it.” Environmentalists might press for enforcement of Section 9 of the ESA, which imposes civil and criminal penalties on private parties for harming an endangered species in violation of the terms and conditions in the BO. “The way everything’s on the books right now, you have to have water for the fish. I think it would be incredibly frustrating.” And so things might be easier in a dry year under a new Biological Opinion? It’s too soon to tell, since the federal agencies’ precursor document, the “Biological Assessment,” is still in its preliminary stages, but word is that the minnow biologists themselves are nowhere near consensus on whether maintaining river connectivity through continuous flow, or else focusing on restoring selective habitats, will be the more successful approach to minnow recovery.

Another complication as to what constitutes “recovery” for the minnow, according to Lisa, is that the species lacks “the genetic diversity in the current population that usually keeps species stable. Instead you have a lot of fish that are genetically a lot alike. In conservation biology there are two strategies we talk about, R-selective species and K selective. A classic K-selective species would be an elephant, there are not a lot of them, they’re big and they live a really long time—or there are dandelions and silvery minnows. There are a lot of them, and that’s how they get genes out in the gene pool, they have massive amounts of offspring, and they’re short-lived. Silvery minnows are classic R-selective species, so they really respond to habitat and what we’ve been seeing is habitat restoration works for species, except you’re constrained in the Albuquerque reach by really what can we do to restore the habitat and increase the carrying capacity of the river.”

The minnow went through a “biological bottleneck” several years ago, when it came perilously close to extinction, so it is inordinately susceptible to sudden extinction, even when it numbers in the hundreds of thousands. This would seem to mean that getting the science right is crucial before pulling any switches. The problem is, the cushion



of supplemental water simply will not be available, and the funding for the science is drying up as well. Explains Lisa, “We had 16 million dollars this year and next year we will have 9 and a half, and we currently have 15 million dollars worth of projects on the books that we started this year, to either meet the biological opinion, or necessary information for doing the next Biological Opinion. There is just going to be some rubber hitting the road.”

“It’s really a bad lining up of the stars for the Program.”

Are Collaborative Program participants prepared to find the additional water from savings elsewhere? Lisa has found that “forbearance” (voluntarily leasing away water by rights holders during drought) is “a really sensitive issue.” What tends to become the object of “intensive focus” in over-allocated river systems, according to Reed, is determining the least amount of water that fish need. “This has been a source of frustration for a number of people in the river community,” and he cited extensive studies conducted in the Klamath and elsewhere on minimum requirements for endangered fish recovery. “But the question is, is there a corresponding willingness that examines, specifically, how much do the existing uses need?” Lisa admitted that addressing that question might “threaten to melt down the Program.” “What’s ironic, said Reed, “based on my experience, is that you have these collaborative watershed processes and you can talk about everything except water rights.”

“Everybody’s got to be willing to talk about what’s anathema to them, to put all things equally on the table. I think what can happen—you’re talking about the recovery of a species or a natural system—is to put it in terms of science and data. But when talking about water use, some tend to say, this isn’t about science and data, it’s about entitlement. That means you are fundamentally disconnected. At that point you almost invite people to respond: if you’re just going to talk about entitlement, then I’m just going to talk about jeopardy.”

“That’s exactly where we are,” Lisa agreed.

What could move the process forward? “Greater public awareness and education,” said Lisa.

“Basically, stake-holders letting their decision-makers know, look, we’re willing to pay higher water rates, we’re willing to forbear, we’re willing to conserve. Irrigators saying, we stand to lose everything if we don’t give up something. The City saying, yeah, let’s do some more conservation. Everybody getting permission from the people they feel like they’re protecting and really engaging in the process, rather than folks who are being protected sort of checking out of the process.”

“I always think making the case for endangered species is hard. It’s always hard to say, Why are endangered species important? The whole third-grade argument of the canary in the coal mine, food chains and biodiversity and complexity.” People react with “So? It’s a bait fish, it’s this big? Yeah, it’s not charismatic megafauna, it doesn’t have big brown eyes ...”

Reed countered, “The flip-side is, that when the ESA comes in—especially a species like the minnow that isn’t just in trouble, there were times when it was that close to extinction—this is a species that unlike most on the list wasn’t always rare. Most listed species were almost always rare. The minnow used to be by the billions throughout this whole area. At the point where you’ve pushed a species like that this close to extinction, you say ‘What have we done to our systems in the name of doing what humans do to survive and prosper?’ Whether you think that the minnow is worth saving or not, I think that most people in this state would say, ‘We care about the river.’”

Lisa emphatically agreed, “We care about the river, exactly. I think that’s why you still have the Collaborative Program here. People are passionate about it, and they care. That’s why I think there’s a false sense of security, I don’t think they realize how precarious the situation is. We really have had divine intervention.”

Reed concluded, “In a situation like this, for it to work, everyone in the process has to feel that not only does this have to work, but now’s the time. There’s this sense with these processes, that I’m here because I really want this to work, that I can understand that I’d rather have the decisions made here than in some other forum where I feel like I’ve got less participation and less control. But when’s the right time?”



SOUTHERN GROUP NEWS

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Southern Group Sponsors Breakfast with the Birds at Rotary Park

Plans have been underway for the creation of the "Healing Waters Trail" in Truth or Consequences. The Southern Group has been an important contributor to this process in not only planning the trail, but also in sponsoring a "Breakfast with the Birds" event on December 6, 2008. The breakfast was a public forum for the proposed wetlands restoration at Rotary Park that will be an integral part of the Trail, which will wind its way from the Veterans Memorial Park through the wetlands and into the historic Hot Springs District of Truth or Consequences.

The Healing Waters Trail weaves together a multitude of historic, cultural, artistic, and natural elements of Truth or Consequences. It celebrates the ancient healing traditions of the hot mineral springs, connects us to native and migratory birds and wildlife along the Rio Grande, and brings us to the Veterans Memorial Park for quiet reflection.

For more info on the Healing Waters Trail, contact Gina Kelley (575/740-3902).

—Gina Kelley

Outings

Be sure to call the outings leader and confirm in case there are any changes.

Sunday, March 15 • Fra Cristobal Mountains fund-raiser – Don't miss this opportunity to hike in the Fra Cristobal Mountains on the Armendaris Ranch. This outing is a fund-raiser for the Southern Group of the Rio Grande Chapter. We will meet at the Ranch headquarters at 8:30 a.m. There will be numerous opportunities to view wildlife so bring your camera and lunch. Call Margot Wilson (575/744-5860) for details.

Saturday, March 21 • Ice Canyon-Dripping Springs hike – Moderate hike of 5 miles around resort and ruins. We'll also hike up to reservoirs above the springs. Bring water and lunch. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at NE parking lot of Pan Am Center on NMSU campus. Call John Waugh (575/526-7116).

Saturday, April 11 • Valles Canyon hike – Valles Canyon is a special place filled with amazing petroglyphs. Sorry we had to cancel in January because of bad weather. This outing is by reservation only; call Dan Lorimier (575/740-2923) or Margot Wilson (575/744-5860) for the details. Be sure to bring your camera, plus all the other accoutrements for hiking in the sun: water, hat, food, and good boots.

Sunday, April 19 • Mesilla Valley Bosque Park

– Visit New Mexico's newest state park. View birds and wildlife along the Rio Grande. Bring water and lunch. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at The Bean cafe on Avenida de Mesilla. Call John Waugh (575/526-7116).

Saturday, April 25 • Monticello Box and the Alamosa Canyon in the Springtime – Come see why it is imperative that this unique area not become a beryllium mining site (see article on page 5). High-clearance vehicles required. Meet across the street from the Winston store. Bring lunch, camera, shoes you don't mind getting wet (it is unavoidable, but worth it), and binoculars to look for migrating birds like warblers and other wildlife. Dogs okay; bring leashes. Easy 4-mile round-trip walk. Call Mary Katherine Ray (575/772-5655).

Saturday, May 2 • Tierra Blanca and southern Black Range hike – Hike up a little-known stream, Tierra Blanca, and visit the trout pools that are located in the southern Black Range. To access the trailhead, high-clearance vehicles are needed and four-wheel drive would be good. This is a fairly strenuous hike of about 11 miles with stream crossings. We will leave the Forest Service Parking lot in Truth or Consequences at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, water, and everything you might need for a day out. Call Margot Wilson (575/744-5860) for the details.

Recycling a Big Hit in Sierra County

It's the last Saturday of the month and that means many of Sierra County, New Mexico, residents to the monthly recycling drive. Paper or plastic? We take both, along with glass, junk mail, magazines, cardboard, and aluminum. Since March 2008, several tons of waste have been diverted from both the Sierra County and City of Truth or Consequences landfills. This serves to both extend the life of the local landfills and saves energy that would be used to produce products from raw material. In January 2009 alone, we had over 170 families recycling, filling so many trucks with cardboard, junk mail, and plastic that the City had to return to their facilities to bring in more collection containers.

The Bountiful Alliance's Recycling Project has taken off, and recycling is now a common activity for county residents. Partnering with the Sierra Club, The Bountiful Alliance has recently supported an Educational Poster Contest to promote recycling in Sierra County. Another important partner in this recycling project is the City of Truth or Consequences. The City has provided trucks and workers to help the recycling project safely dispose of collected materials. The final and most important partners in our efforts are the community members. Recycling not only engenders a sense of community involvement and responsibility, additionally it conserves natural resources, such as timber, water, and minerals from domestic and imported sources. It is truly a way to think globally while acting locally.

Saturday morning sees more than 20 volunteers arriving with tools to help local recyclers with their

delivery. From helping seniors, who might have difficulty removing rings from plastic bottles or lifting heavy loads of paper, to educating the county recyclers in making smart choices, there are a wide variety of efforts made to make each drive a success. Because of the educational efforts, some residents are now getting off of junk mail lists, selecting water filters as opposed to bottled water, and preparing their items so that they may be able to be recycled. Education also helps residents understand why some products are not recyclable at this time.

There are other sorts of volunteers across the county as well. Some county residents help others pool their separated items and they bring everyone's recycling to town. Communities that are a bit farther from the city of Truth or Consequences, such as Hillsboro and Monticello, have participated in this manner for at least three months. The sense of community and helping the environment is felt as cars and trucks drive up to drop off.

Beginning in February 2009, the City of Truth or Consequences will be making their Recycling Center available for the drive. With a permit on the way, moving to this new site, located at 601 Nadyne Ct., Williamsburg, will give a bit more protection to the drive and will begin introducing the community to a more-permanent facility with extended hours. The drives will continue in the near future, however, in efforts to help community members learn to properly separate the items and make certain they meet the standards for the companies that buy the collected items.

—Sandi Gardner



ASARCO Is Done in El Paso! Cleanup and Renewal Coming Soon

During a “dramatic downturn” in the price of copper in the world market, Asarco LLC announced February 3rd that it would abandon its long and hard-fought plans to restart its copper smelter and instead would tear it down.

Over the past year, copper prices on the world market have plummeted, making investments in metals industries like Asarco, which is in bankruptcy proceedings, financially unattractive. Asarco shut down the smelter in 1999 when copper prices fell to about 70 cents a pound. As prices started to soar in recent years to as much as \$4 a pound, so did the company’s interest in firing up the El Paso plant. By October of 2008 industry analysts were forecasting a 50% drop in the price of copper. The day of Asarco’s announcement copper futures closed at \$1.52 a pound in New York.

El Paso Regional Group activist Juan Garza, who helped launch Get the Lead Out, a grass-roots organization opposed to restarting the smelter, said he was surprised by the sudden announcement. “I’m happy this is taking place, but I will not believe it until I see the towers go down,” Garza said.

What the real story is, here is a community that rose against years of contamination and abuse. With this new administration, Asarco’s permit had to have a new...review, and that’s what stopped the permit.
 –Senator Eliot Shapleigh, D-El Paso

The City of El Paso has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on litigation to permanently shut down Asarco recently. The past three city administrations were opposed to its reopening. The city governments of Juarez and Sunland Park also were opposed to restarting the smelter. New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson said, “I am proud of the role New Mexico has played in keeping our region’s air clean and healthy for local residents. This decision to shutter the Asarco El Paso smelter once and for all comes on the same day that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency declared Texas’ permit for the facility invalid and directed environmental regulators in that state to start over.”

El Paso Regional Group activist Heather McMurray, a member of Sunland Park Grassroots Environmental Organization, said, “We knew this was coming down, but there is more to it than what’s in the company’s announcement.”

Regulatory problems were looming large for Asarco. In a February 3 letter from the EPA in Dallas to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), the EPA said that crucial equipment at the El Paso plant was in need of repair or replacement and that the smelter might not be able to comply with federal air quality standards if it reopened as is: “Our review (of the Asarco plant) confirms our initial conclusion that after the lengthy shutdown of nine years, the plant has been ‘permanently shut down.’ “The federal agency told Asarco and the TCEQ that the renewed permit given last year probably would not be valid under the Clean Air Act because of the length of time the plant had been closed and the lack of maintenance it had received. EPA spokesman Dave Bary said, “It was our finding that the company would have had to start the permit process from the beginning, which admittedly is a more complicated process.” The correspondence between the EPA and Asarco took place just hours before the company announced it would no longer seek to reopen the smelter. Although EPA said the timing of its correspondence and Asarco’s announcement were coincidental, officials in El Paso suggested it was the tougher environmental requirements that forced Asarco to leave the city for good. El Paso City Council Rep. Steve Ortega said, “Asarco has a history and record of distorting the truth. It comes as no surprise to me that they failed to acknowledge the findings of the EPA in their decision to close down the plant in El Paso.”

State Senator Eliot Shapleigh, D-El Paso, said that the EPA’s letter to Asarco was recognition from the federal government that old environmental standards should not apply to Asarco. “What the real story is, here is a community that rose against years of contamination and abuse, he said. “With this new (presidential) administration, Asarco’s permit had to have a new...review, and that’s what stopped the permit.”

The El Paso Times recently editorialized, “Now is not the time to let down our guard when it comes to Asarco. There’s still the matter of site cleanup, and if things don’t go well, a shade of Asarco could rise from the ashes and bite taxpayers. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and Asarco maintain that the cleanup costs at the closed site could be about \$50 million. Neither Asarco nor the TCEQ should be trusted, particularly based on past performance. While it’s understandable that Asarco would stand up for its own interests, TCEQ and Asarco have been joined at the hip throughout this whole, drawn-out permitting process. Indeed, some worry that costs might be five times the \$50 million estimate. So if a bankruptcy court makes Asarco put \$50 million into a cleanup trust fund and the cost is more than that, who pays? You guessed it, the taxpayers. It’s good to see state Sen. Eliot Shapleigh, D-El Paso,

keeping on top of the situation. He wants the federal Environmental Protection Agency to step in and ensure cleanup of the site at Asarco’s expense. Shapleigh also is continuing to question the relationship between Asarco and the TCEQ and will pursue obtaining documents from TCEQ concerning its dealings with Asarco. Shapleigh said, “We see a pattern of an agency

penetrated by polluters, so we want the road map to find out how polluters now control’ the TCEQ. That might go a long way toward explaining why Asarco had such a relatively easy time of it when company officials were seeking a permit that would have allowed the smelter to restart operations.

“Officials must make sure that Asarco doesn’t have the last laugh by sticking taxpayers with millions in cleanup costs. And a thorough check into the Asarco-TCEQ relationship can help ensure such a situation doesn’t occur again.”

Condensed and adapted from El Paso Times articles by Diana Washington Valdez and Gustavo Reveles Acosta.
 –Laurence Gibson

El Paso Group Directory

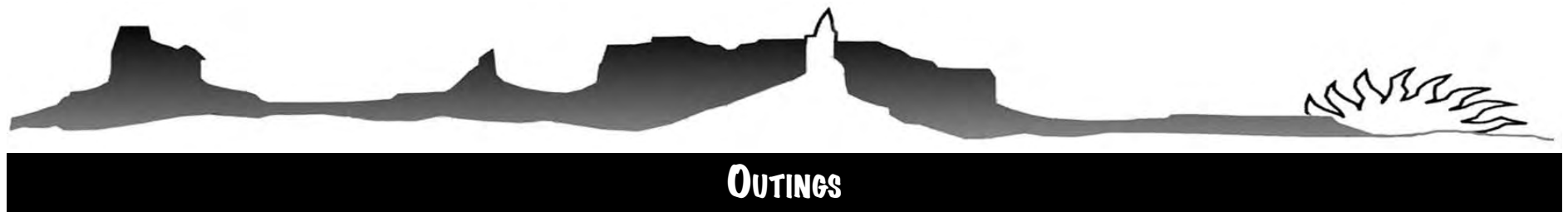
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Selected Sierra Club Outings for March and April 2009

Sunday, March 8 • Stone Lions hike, in Bandelier – 13 miles, 3100' gain. Strenuous. Cynthia Good (505/699-2717 – Northern Group).

Sunday, March 15 • Moderate snowshoe – Dogs okay. Royal Drews (505/699-8713 – Northern Group).

Sunday, March 15 • Ojo Caliente backcountry hike – 8-plus miles. Moderate/strenuous. Mostly off-trail. Norbert Sperlich (505/474-4354 – Northern Group).

Saturday, March 21 • Birdwatch hike – Bring binoculars. Ron Duffy (505/466-6398 – Northern Group).

Saturday, March 21 • Santa Fe River cleanup – 9:00-11:00 a.m. Paige Grant (505/982-5180 – Northern Group).

Saturday, March 21 • Cajé del Rio hike – 10 miles, 1000' gain. Strenuous. Rugged off-trail sections. Michael Di Rosa (505/667-0095 work, or 505/663-0648 – Pajarito Group).

Sunday, March 22 • Falls Trail hike, in Bandelier – 5 miles, 700' gain. Easy/moderate. Victor Atyas (505/438-9434 – Northern Group).

Saturday, March 28 • Kitchen Mesa hike, at Ghost Ranch – 8 miles, 1500' gain. Easy/moderate. Hike through Abiquiu red rocks and white sliprock. Great views. Off-trail with minor scrambling, dogs okay. Tobin Oruch (505/820-2844 before 8:00 p.m. – Northern Group).

Saturday, March 28 • Desert exploratory hike – 6-10 miles. Moderate pace. Off-trail, sometimes rocky. Unusual rock formations and scenic desert landscapes. Tom Petencin (505/271-9928, tompeten@msn.com – Central Group).

Sunday, March 29 • Villanueva State Park hike – 2.5-mile loop, 400' gain. Easy. Dogs okay. Great views of Poco Valley. John Varner (505/795-5948 – Northern Group).

Sunday, March 29 • Strenuous snowshoe – Call for details. Marcia Stillman (505/699-3008 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 4 • Ojo Caliente hike to Posi ruin and mica mine – 7 miles, 800' gain. Easy/moderate. Dogs okay. Alan Shapiro (505/424-9242 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 4 • Cabezon volcanic plug hike, west of Bernalillo – 5 miles, 1000' gain. Strenuous hike and climb, challenging rock scrambling. Marcia Skillman (505/699-3008 – Northern Group).

Sunday, April 5 • Ravens Ridge to Deception Peak hike – 5 miles, 2000' gain. Moderate/strenuous. Alternate if icy. Dogs okay. Royal Drews (505/699-8713 – Northern Group).

Sunday, April 5 • Desert exploratory hike – See description of March 28 hike. Tom Petencin (505/271-9928, tompeten@msn.com – Central Group).

Saturday, April 11 • Morning tour of Mesa Prieta petroglyph site, north of Española, with docents – Easy/moderate. Rio Grande style and Historic periods rock art. Steep, rocky terrain. Cost of \$10. Call by April 4 to reserve. Daisy Levine (505/466-8338 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 11 • Tapia Canyon hike, west of Bernalillo – Strenuous. Petroglyphs, ruins, slot canyon, and arch! Limit 15. Very early start. Stephen Markowitz (505/983-2779 before 8:00 p.m. – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 11 • Valles Canyon hike – View amazing petroglyphs. Reservations a must. Dan Lorimier (575/740-2923 – Southern Group) or Margot Wilson (575/744-5860 – Southern Group).

Sunday, April 12 • Dome Wilderness hike (Sanchez Falls and beyond) – 8 miles. Moderate. Some steep off-trail sections. Dogs okay. Norbert Sperlich (505/474-4354 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 18 • Blue Dot/Red Dot trails hike, in White Rock Canyon – 7 miles, 700' gain. Moderate. Some steep and loose footing, great views. Dogs okay. Dan Rusthoi (505/690-8967 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 18 • Sierra Ladrones hike, near Socorro (ideally Ladron Peak) – Very strenuous. Very early start or drive down Friday. Michael Di Rosa (505/667-0095 work, or 505/663-0648 – Pajarito Group).

Saturday, April 18 • Santa Fe River cleanup – 9:00-11:00 a.m. Kathleen Davis (505/795-3286, kdav40@aol.com – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 18 • Easy birdwatch walk – Bring binoculars. Ron Duffy (505/466-6398 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 18 • Desert exploratory hike – See description of March 28 hike. Tom Petencin (505/271-9928, tompeten@msn.com – Central Group).

Sunday, April 19 • Alamo Canyon hike, in Bandelier – 7 miles, 1000' gain. Moderate. Les Drapela (505/438-3306 – Northern Group).

Sunday, April 19 • Dome Wilderness hike, in Bandelier – 15 miles, 3000' gain. Strenuous. High-clearance vehicles needed for carpooling. Bogdan Mihaila (505/661-4184 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 25 • Cerro de la Cosena hike, most easterly of the Cerrillos Hills peaks – 8-plus miles, 750' gain. Moderate. Dogs okay with leash. Norma McCallan (505/471-0005 – Northern Group).

Saturday, April 25 • Monticello Box and the Alamosa Canyon hike – 4 miles. Easy. Unique area, needs protection from beryllium mining. Bring binoculars, dogs okay. High-clearance vehicles required. Mary Katherine Ray (575/772-5655 – Southern Group).

Sunday, April 26 • Santa Fe Baldy hike – 14 miles, 3600' gain. Strenuous. Alternate if icy. Dogs okay. Royal Drews (505/699-8713 – Northern Group).

Sunday, April 26 • Desert exploratory hike – See description of March 28 hike. Tom Petencin (505/271-9928, tompeten@msn.com – Central Group).

Upcoming Outings:

Saturday, May 2 • Tierra Blanca hike – 11 miles. Moderate/strenuous. Visit the trout pools in the southern Black Range. Stream crossings. High-clearance vehicles needed. Margot Wilson (575/744-5860 – Southern Group).

Saturday, May 2 • Ojo Caliente hike to mica mine, then soak in the pools – 5 miles, 700' gain. Easy. Marcia Skillman (505/699-3008 – Northern Group).

Sunday, May 3 • Shield in the Sandias or Shaggy Peak hike, via Apache Canyon – 8-13 miles, 2000-3000' gain. Strenuous. Mostly off-trail and rough terrain. Dogs okay. Tobin Oruch (505/820-2844 before 8:00 p.m. – Northern Group).

Saturday, May 9 • Tetilla Peak hike, southwest of town – 3-plus miles, 946' gain. Moderate. Off-trail but rocky. Dogs okay. High-clearance vehicles needed for carpooling. Norma McCallan (505/471-0005 – Northern Group).

Please check the appropriate Group page for additional information on these abridged outings, as well as for additional activities.

And please check the Chapter website (<http://riogrande.sierraclub.org>) for the latest information on all our outings. All mileages are round trips.

Participants must sign a liability waiver.

Bring Nature Indoors with This Beautiful Richard Sloan Print

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

—Dan Lorimier

American Kestrel

