The story of Ojito is a long and circuitous one. Today the area is on the brink of becoming the first newly designated wilderness area in New Mexico in eighteen years. The legislation that will accomplish this feat results from bipartisanship cooperation, locally-endorsed conservation, the efforts of numerous environmental organizations, and native groups like the Pueblo of Zia who value the Ojito area’s wildlife, rangelands, and religious sites. If this bill succeeds, it will be the result of years of effort, scores of dedicated advocates, and the kind of local organizing that put all of the stakeholders at the table from the beginning.

The Ojito Wilderness Act was recently passed by the Senate and is waiting to be scheduled for a vote in the House of Representatives. From there it will move on to the President’s desk for his signature. If all goes well, the Ojito Wilderness Act could be law as early as October of this year.

But how did we get here? The effort to protect Ojito emphasizes the importance of collaborative teamwork to unite very different people for a common and positive goal.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) looked for potential wilderness areas among their land holdings in the state of New Mexico. Ojito was an attractive piece of land from the beginning due to its unscarred landscape and diverse plant
It has been a long wait—18 years to be exact. But we are perhaps weeks away from making Ojito into New Mexico’s newest wilderness area. This beautiful spot (about an hour northwest of Albuquerque) will soon become part of the great wilderness tradition, born in New Mexico, that has been a symbol of the importance of land and wildlife to our spirit and sanity. Despite the tough political climate for environmental issues, this bill was produced in a strong bi-partisan manner and will hopefully open the door to more wilderness in the coming years! Special thanks need to go to Tribal Administrator Peter Pino and the people of Zia Pueblo, Dave Mielke, Melissa Watson, Martin Heinrich, Arturo Sandoval and the staff of our congressional delegation who have put countless hours into making this bill a reality.

In the past month, Senator Bingaman made a very positive move in the effort to protect Otero Mesa by asking the United States Geological Survey to conduct a study of the aquifer underneath the mesa. Such a study will likely show a vast amount of fresh water that is vulnerable to contamination from oil and gas development. A USGS study is as conclusive as it comes and will hopefully bolster our efforts to keep this wild grassland protected. It’s a positive first step and we should all thank the Senator for his efforts.

Representative Heather Wilson recently toured the Valle Vidal for a day of hiking. The event was terrific for all involved, including her children, Joshua and Caitlin, and she clearly enjoyed her time hiking near McCrystal Creek. Wilson hiked for about 2 hours taking in the vistas, asking about wildlife and plants and getting a better understanding of what oil and gas development would look like in this beautiful and wildlife-filled landscape. It seemed clear that the Congresswoman was impressed with what she saw and her children were animated as they crossed streams, collected washed out elk jaws in an open meadow, and took photos of the many blooming wild flowers. It was indeed a very good day.

After enjoying a great time with Congresswoman Wilson, we returned to Valle Vidal the next weekend to greet Governor Richardson who made an important announcement concerning Valle Vidal. The Governor announced that the state was proposing designating the waters of the Valle Vidal “Outstanding National Resource Waters” to protect the watershed and water quality of the area. It would not stop development but would create serious barriers to coalbed methane development. The Governor spoke strongly of the need to protect Valle Vidal. Here in New Mexico we are fortunate to have such a strong and determined conservationist as our Governor; a politician willing to take tough stands on the environment, demand justice for wildlife and common sense when it comes to energy development. Thank you once again Governor Richardson.

Though I’d love to continue on with the good news, the truth is that our public lands are under attack. In this issue we report on several of the challenges we face and how they could impact our wild landscapes forever. We must continue to hold the line against the “Oil and Gas Revolution” and protect what is left of our wildest public lands. Our voice remains our power! We proudly continue to work for wilderness everyday and we thank all of our 4,200 members for their support and for working with us to protect New Mexico’s wildlife and wildest public lands.
New Energy Bill Offers a Great Mix of Corporate Welfare and Renewable Starvation

by Stephen Capra

After years of the Bush Administration pushing for a new energy bill, they were able to successfully pull it off just before the August Congressional recess. What many did not expect was that our entire New Mexico Congressional Delegation would support the multi-billion dollar giveaway to the GOP’s staunchest corporate supporters. The bill gives billions to some of our nation’s wealthiest corporations – the oil and gas industry. These companies are currently enjoying record profits. In fact, they are having trouble spending all their money. The numbers for the second quarter this year show Exxon-Mobil enjoying a 32% increase in earnings over this time last year. That translates into $7.6 billion dollars. BP enjoyed a 38% increase, while ConocoPhillips enjoyed a whopping 56% increase in profits. But for consumers the price at the pump has risen 36% in the last 12 months. By comparison, college tuition has risen 11% and health care 41% over the past three years respectively. It’s not just gas at the pump; energy prices are affecting the produce we buy in stores, the cost of an airline ticket, shipping a package, and the price we pay to heat and cool our homes. This is having a dramatic impact on those living on a fixed income. Currently PNM is anticipating a 25% increase in this coming winter’s energy bills.

As the argument goes, the bill could have been far worse given the current political climate. Perhaps a more logical strategy would have been to delay the vote on the bill until after the August recess. What the Bush Administration didn’t anticipate was that the Democrats would make serious offers to delay the vote. Their strategy seemed more geared at not being viewed as obstructionists and taking a slice of the pie, rather than stoping a bad bill.

By promoting more drilling, we accept a net loss of species, and thus diversity. Our connection to the land is increasingly more industrial rather than respectful. That we are therefore experiencing a tremendous outsourcing of violence should surprise no one.

The Bush Energy bill ignores the reality that our country remains hopelessly addicted to oil and gas and thus vulnerable to terrorists and instability in the Middle-East and around the world. In America today we produce less energy, while our oil and gas reserves continue to diminish. Energy bill incentives for the oil and gas industry will clearly lead to more drilling on our wildest public lands, including upping the ante in Otero Mesa and Valle Vidal. Yet, gas prices will likely remain very high, allowing industry more record profits. So far Congress seems content to not intervene and investigate this clear abuse of power. That’s because, since 1990, the energy sector has contributed more than $183 million dollars to presidential and congressional campaigns (according to the Center for Responsive Politics), with three-quarters of the money going to Republicans. In the 2004 election, President Bush received $2.6 million from the oil, gas, coal and nuclear industries compared with John Kerry who received $300,000.

Congress also saw no reason to make American cars more fuel efficient in this bill or give real incentives for conservation. There was lots of talk about a future hydrogen economy, but what was ignored was that current technology allows for plug-in versions of hybrid cars (like the Toyota Prius) that, once modified, can achieve up to 250 miles per gallon. But Congress did see wisdom in putting about 90% of alternative energy spending into nuclear, rather than wind or solar power, even though today wind energy comes cheaper than nuclear and is also free of that messy storage and terrorist problem.

Democrats deserve as much scorn as Republicans when it comes to the energy bill. While they offered some solid amendments (that were mostly voted down), their strategy seemed more geared at not being viewed as obstructionists and taking a slice of the pie, rather than stopping a bad bill.

For some time now the Bush Administration has said that we can have a clean environment and develop our domestic oil and gas reserves. Since the passing of the energy bill, the rhetoric has changed. Now they are telling us ‘people in the Rocky Mountains must be willing to sacrifice, for the good of all Americans.’

So what can we do? It seems clear in the coming years we will have to work on a local and state level to promote a sane energy future. Our delegation should clearly hear from people about the need for 21st century energy solutions. But perhaps more important is the need for those in Washington to get more connected to the land. We need them to understand the ecosystems of wild grasslands and wolves. We need them to be bold when it comes to new energy solutions today and be willing to hike, raft and smell the crisp air of the Gila after a summer storm. We need them to feel it in their soul. Call it a miracle. I call it therapy- for the planet and us.

The next big debate will be over the beloved Arctic Refuge. There will be a major rally in Washington, D.C. on September 20th in support of protecting America’s crown jewel, (check our web site for more information). The question remains: Who will demand justice for our wildest public lands and have the courage to stand up to the oil and gas industry? We will. Will you?
The White Mountain Wilderness is 48,266 scenic acres located in the northern Sacramento Moun-
tains, immediately north of the Mescalero Indian Reservation in the Lincoln National Forest. With eleva-
tions ranging up to nearly 12,000-feet, it presents a stark contrast to the nearby White Sands National Monument and the Little Black Peak/ Carrizozo Lava Flow WSAs almost 8000 feet below, in the Tularosa Basin. This elevation differential is the greatest in all New Mexico and creates a dramatic profile visible for miles throughout southeast New Mexico and West Texas. This is especially true in the winter when the higher elevations are blanketed with up to six feet of snow. From the crest of the White Mountains, it is possible to view more than 20 other mountain ranges, including the Sandias to the north, the Black Range to the west, the Capitans to the east, and mountains in Texas and Mexico to the south. This hiker-friendly Wilderness is easily accessed and contains more than 50 miles of generally well-maintained trails providing outstanding hiking and backpacking opportunities.

The primary motorized access points to the Wilderness are the Three Rivers Campground on the west side and the Argentina Canyon and South Fork Campgrounds on the east side. The turn off for the Three Rivers Campground is about half way between Alamogordo and Carrizozo on US Highway 54. From the turnout, follow Forest Road 579 for about 15 miles to the campground. To reach the Argentina Canyon and South Fork Campgrounds, take NM Highway 37 north of Ruidoso to the signs for Bonito Lake. From here, follow Forest Road 107 to just beyond Bonito Lake where the road splits with one fork going left to the South Fork Campground and the other going right for 3 more miles to the Argentina Canyon Campground. Access to the southern part of the Wilderness is via the road going to the Ski Apache Ski Area (NM 532) and a dirt road going to the Monjeau Lookout (FR 117). All roads are passable by regular passenger cars when they are dry.

While there are many special things about the White Mountain Wilderness, its extensive trail system is what makes it one of the most wonderful places to visit in New Mexico. The hike along the Crest Trail, which runs 21 miles from Monjeau Lookout in the south to just past Nogal Peak in the north, is considered by many to be among the most scenic in the state. Hiking the Crest Trail as a 3-day backpack requires a moderate effort that can be accomplished by most anyone who is in reasonably good condition. Starting at the Monjeau Lookout, the first day takes hikers 7 miles to the high point of the hike at Ice Point (11,300 feet). On the second day, hikers turn north along the crest and travel about 8 miles to Spring Cabin to camp at a scenic overlook. The last day involves a six mile trek to Forest Road 108 and an optional climb of Nogal Peak (9900 feet). Water is available along the route at various points and at both camping spots.

Hiking access on the west side is limited to the Three Rivers Campground Trailhead. Here, the Three Rivers Trail climbs about 3600 feet over 5.6 miles to reach the crest and its vast network of trails. Although there are a number of other, mainly non-maintained trails that ascend to the crest from the west, access is blocked by private property. This is not the case on the east side, however, where a wide array of trails and trailheads are available for hikers. These trails provide opportunities for a number of loop hikes of varying length and difficulty. At the Argentina Canyon Trailhead, for example, four trails (Argentina, Aspen, Big Bonito and Little Bonito) can be accessed from a single point, and a fifth trail, Turkey Canyon, is less than a half-mile down FR 107. All these trails follow small streams for most of their lengths and all intersect with the Crest Trail, providing opportunities for loop hikes tailored to almost anyone’s hiking ability. Other major trails on the east side include the South Fork and Blue Front, both of which can be accessed from the South Fork Campground. Both of these trails also connect with the Crest Trail, again providing great opportunities for loop hikes. The stream in the South Fork is the largest in the wilderness and is in a canyon more than 3000 feet deep at places.

The best times to visit the White Mountain Wilderness are the late spring and early fall, although snow can linger in the higher elevations well into June. While water is less available in the fall, the colors are among the best in New Mexico, especially along the high ridge running from Monjeau Lookout to Ice Point. Because of its high elevation and exposed meadows, electrical storms can pose a real danger during the monsoon season. Hiking use is moderate, except during holiday weekends. During the summer, horse parties are common, but most are out only for day rides. There are many more day hikers than back-packers, and during the week, back-packers seemingly have the wilderness to themselves. Unless you are hunting, the area should be avoided during elk and deer seasons when outfitters set up large camps and hunting pressure is high.

The White Mountain Wilderness was one of the eight New Mexico areas that were established with the passage of the original Wilderness Act of 1964. It was enlarged to its present size with additions included in the 1980 New Mexico Wilderness Act. Areas near the Wilderness around Ruidoso, Capitan and Nogal are being subdivided and developed at an astonishing rate. We owe much to the conservation pioneers who had the foresight to work for the protection of this outstanding part of New Mexico’s natural heritage, and you can be sure that the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance will work for its continued protection and expansion.
Holding on to Wildness

By Tisha Broska and Trisha London

As Dave Foreman put it, these are bleak times in the conservation movement. We are losing potential Wilderness. Large roadless areas in our National Forests are disappearing and many more of our wild landscapes are threatened by oil and gas development. Many of the liberties that we have grown accustomed to may be lost in our lifetime. In the last issue of New Mexico Wild!, Dave Foreman wrote about “Nature’s Crisis” and pro- voked us to “stand tall for our values and to not flinch in the good fight.”

Reverence for nature is one value that most of us treasure. But have we forgotten what is natural? Most of us have been living apart from nature for so long now, that we have become disconnected from our natural world. We grasp to connect with nature. Getting outside on the weekends, getting into our gardens or escaping to the wild a few short weeks out of the year. When we do, we find that connection, the inspiration and the wherewithal to stand tall for our values.

“Wildness reminds us what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from.” -Terry Tempest Williams

We all need to work to remember the wild, to not get consumed in the rigors of daily life, and our high-speed world. If we forget, or lose touch with our connection to the wild, how can we stand tall to fight the good fight? How can we teach our children about the importance of this value?

Terry Tempest Williams speaks about an “open space of democracy” where the health of the environment is seen as the wealth of our communities. That our character has been shaped by the diversity of America’s landscapes is precisely what will protect those wild places. She says “In the open space of democracy, beauty is not optional, but essential to our survival as a species. And technology is not rendered at the expense of life, but developed out of a reverence for life.” 1 She reminds us internal dialogue in the mind, and to really begin observing and listening to the ever-changing environment around us. The trip ended too soon, but we returned relaxed with a deeper awareness and appreciation of wild nature’s importance to the human spirit. These rich experiences can fill an empty space in life that nothing else can satisfy.

A recent article in Orion Magazine discusses several studies that have found links between symptoms of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) in adults and children and the lack of exposure to the natural environment. One theory as to why this may be true is that engagement with nature has a powerful influence on brain function related to attention. For children, the nature experience engages a child in a “natural” way, consistent with how humans have evolved. Clearly, more studies are needed to determine if a greener environment can play a role in curing ADHD and to look at whether ADHD is a symptom of a lack of exposure to nature. But, isn’t it possible that society’s disengagement from nature has diminished the senses and that our fast pace lives have caused a condition of nature-deficit disorder? 3 If so, we have the cure in Wilderness.

“Underlying the beauty of the spectacle there is meaning and significance. It is the elusive nature of the meaning that haunts us and sends us again and again into the natural world where the key to the riddle is hidden.” - Rachel Carson

Even in 1930, Bob Marshall (founder of the Wilderness Society) felt the pressures of our increasingly modern way of life and the impacts it would have on civilization. He wrote:

“In a civilization which requires most lives to be passed amid inordinate dissonance, pressure and intrusion, the chance of retiring now and then to the quietude and privacy of sylvan haunts becomes for some people a psychic necessity. It is only the possibility of convalescing in the wilderness which saves them from being destroyed by the terrible neural tension of modern existence.” 4

Bob Marshall placed his hope in the spirited people who would fight for the freedom of the wilderness. We must keep this vision alive. When extractive industry degrades the air we breathe, the water we drink, the land we live upon, it impacts much more than our quality of life. When splendid wild habitats are altered and destroyed it robs us of the genuine experience of the living world and its elegant relationships that lend meaning to our lives.

1. The Open Space of Democracy, published by The Orion Society in September, 2004
2. (The Progressive, February 2005 Interview of Terry Tempest Williams by David Kapfer.)
3. (Orion, July/August, 2005 Nature Deficit by Richard Louv)
**Service Projects Protect and Restore Wild Lands**

**PECOS WILDERNESS**

During the June 4th weekend, over 20 volunteers participated in National Trail’s Day by closing a trail used by ATVs to illegally access the Pecos Wilderness. Those that camped on Friday night were treated to cold, gusting winds that howled through the night. Hot coffee and tea rejuvenated us and got us ready for a long day. It was not easy work as large post holes had to be dug 3 feet into an old roadbed. Large, buried boulders made this a particular challenge. Into these holes we placed 10” x 10” posts and attached over 100-feet of guardrail. The end result was a circular barrier that serves as trailhead parking for horses and hikers. So far, there have been no reported violations. Further up the trail, we rebuilt a bridge taken out by spring floods.

**RED RIVER WATERSHED**

Two weeks later we were at Mid-night Meadows, near the headwaters of the Red River to team up with Amigos Bravos who is working on restoring the Red River Watershed. Over 20 volunteers strung 1/10 mile of barbed wire and set poles for another 2/3 mile. We joked that as wilderness advocates we often thought of taking fences down, but never thought we would put them up. But here, the fencing was to keep ATVs from tearing up a beautiful, but fragile, alpine meadow and to prevent access to a road (closed long ago) that leads to the Valle Vidal.

That evening after we had finished dinner, those that stayed to camp until Sunday were enjoying the sunset and talking. The rumble of ATVs in the distance became constant and wouldn’t fade. A volunteer popped out to see what was up and saw 2 ATVs tearing it up in the meadow, going through the poles we had just installed where the barb wire wasn’t up yet. They had come by earlier to make a statement about our project. Seeing us come in to view, they immediately left. One of the people who stayed to camp with us is a Forest Service employee, whose job is to enforce ATV regulations in the Red River area. He followed their dust back to their camp and asked why they were in the meadow. One of the riders stated ‘well, you hadn’t put up the fence yet.’ They received $100 tickets for driving off forest roads… BUSTED!

**VALLE VIDAL**

Over the July 16th weekend, we joined with Albuquerque Wildlife Federation (AWF) to assist in their ongoing restoration of Comanche Creek. The main project was to put up elk-proof exclosures around willows and alders to give the vegetation a chance to establish itself. This, in turn, would help the creek erode less and meander more, improving habitat for the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout. Downstream exclosures (done years before) were full of vegetation. We also pounded in posts to help stabilize the stream bank. That evening, 35 volunteers were treated to a potluck cookout. AWF providing beef & veggie burgers for all, while we sampled the delicious side dishes and desserts that everyone brought.

**UPDATE:** No violation of our work has been noted in follow-up monitoring in San Lorenzo Canyon. In April, over 30 volunteers worked to block illegal ATV routes in the area. This hard work has clearly paid off, protecting the area’s archeological, historical, and scenic values.

Volunteer projects are a fun and rewarding way to get involved in public lands protection. See below for a list of projects we will be working on through October. For more information, contact Michael Scialdone at 843-8696 or scial@nmwild.org.

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**2005 Volunteer Projects**

Volunteer Projects give you an opportunity to do something for the Land of Enchantment. Whether digging post holes for barriers to stop ATV abuse, performing trail maintenance and clean-up, or helping with the logistics of set-up and food, NMWA Volunteer Projects offer something for all ages and abilities. Please RSVP so we can plan for food, car-pooling, and other logistics. Call us for directions and further project information.

Contact: Michael Scialdone at 843-8696, scial@nmwild.org

October 1st weekend, 2005 Columbine-Hondo WSA
Preventing ATV access on a single-track trail. We need around 15 people.
Distance: about 3 ½ hours north of ABQ

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**Wells Fargo**

Purchase or refinance your home at Wells Fargo & mention New Mexico Wilderness Alliance: we’ll receive a $300 donation!
Contact Craig Chapman 505-281-2403

Thanks Wells Fargo!

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**by Michael Scialdone**

NMWA continues to have great success with our service projects. We have completed five projects this year and have one more to go.

**PECOS WILDERNESS**

During the June 4th weekend, over 20 volunteers participated in National Trail’s Day by closing a trail used by ATVs to illegally access the Pecos Wilderness. Those that camped on Friday night were treated to cold, gusting winds that howled through the night. Hot coffee and tea rejuvenated us and got us ready for a long day. It was not easy work as large post holes had to be dug 3 feet into an old roadbed. Large, buried boulders made this a particular challenge. Into these holes we placed 10” x 10” posts and attached over 100-
For the last 4 years, we have been fighting to protect the beautiful grasslands of Otero Mesa from oil and gas development. The last several months have been exciting to say the least. First and foremost, in mid-August two Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Range Management Specialists sighted two aplomado falcons on Otero Mesa. The endangered aplomados were seen on an area of Otero Mesa slated for oil and gas drilling. These sightings should require a new round of consultation between the Fish and Wildlife Service and the BLM to reconsider whether falcons and their Chihuahuan desert grassland habitat will be protected from the impacts of oil and gas drilling, related road-building, and new power lines. But already the BLM is saying their plan is solid and the need for such talk is very limited.

The falcon sightings come just after the BLM pushed forward with oil and gas development on Otero Mesa. In late July, the BLM leased 1,600 acres on Otero Mesa to the Harvey E. Yates Company. BLM is permitting flare tests of one existing well and expansion of the gathering system (the oil and gas transportation system that includes significant amounts of equipment) for existing wells without any additional environmental analysis. The agency also recently announced plans to release previously suspended leases on the Mesa, thereby allowing them to be drilled as well.

Governor Bill Richardson and Attorney General Patricia Madrid filed a federal lawsuit challenging the Bureau of Land Management’s decision to allow oil and gas leasing and exploration on 95% of Otero Mesa in southern New Mexico. Madrid said, “We cannot permit oil and gas leasing to go forward and allow the federal government to set in motion steps that will irretrievably lead to the permanent damage of Otero Mesa. We will do all we can to stop the feds from harming Otero Mesa while our lawsuit battle goes on.”

The confusing part is that the State BLM office, the agency that is charge of these lands and who has studied this area extensively, estimates that there is very little potential for natural gas in Otero Mesa. This underreported fact set the stage for the July oil and gas lease sale that only drew one oil company bid, for $2 an acre. One bidder at $2 an acre - does it sound like the oil companies believe there is much oil or gas there?

Now the potential water resources in the Otero Mesa are getting some attention. The water under Otero Mesa has been subject to an ongoing private study that suggests there may be more water than previously estimated. In mid-July U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman requested an extensive U.S. Geological Survey study of this sensitive aquifer.

The Tularosa Basin 40-Year Water Plan has shown that under the Otero Mesa lies New Mexico’s largest untapped aquifer, known as the Salt Basin Aquifer. It is a fresh water aquifer containing at least 15 million acre-feet of potable water and as much as 30 million acre-feet of recoverable water. It is also a sensitive shallow water aquifer with a large recharge area stretching to the Sacramento Mountains.

We have studied the numbers, researched the facts and found that using current figures adopted in the state and regional water plans for New Mexico, as well as by simply looking at average household water use in Albuquerque, there is enough fresh water to easily supply 1 million people for over 100 years.

As New Mexicans, we know that nothing is more precious to us than our water, let alone 15 million acre feet worth. Certainly folks in Alamogordo and Otero County, who are used to water rationing and are exploring desalination opportunities, can appreciate how important this water resource is, especially considering it is located literally in their back yards—Southern Otero County. But, despite the minimal oil and gas potential in Otero Mesa, federal land managers are willing to risk polluting a potentially valuable water resource and fragmenting a rare grassland in search of it.

As Senator Bingaman stated in his request to the U.S. Geological Survey to conduct a study of the Otero Mesa aquifer: “In an arid state like New Mexico, we simply cannot take chances with a water supply as valuable as the Salt Aquifer.”

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As Senator Bingaman stated in his request to the U.S. Geological Survey to conduct a study of the Otero Mesa aquifer: “In an arid state like New Mexico, we simply cannot take chances with a water supply as valuable as the Salt Aquifer.”
The Roadless Debacle

by Stephen Capra

Over the next several weeks, millions of Americans will take advantage of the wonders found in our national parks and forests. From a weekend hike to a family fishing getaway, there’s something magical about taking time out to enjoy the wonders of the land and nature. And here in New Mexico, as anyone who has visited the Carson National Forest or the Gila Wilderness will attest to, we are blessed with an abundance of natural treasures to see and experience.

Unfortunately, if some get their way, many of New Mexico’s most precious natural treasures, its roadless forests, might not be around for future generations of Americans to enjoy. The good news, however, is that a group of leaders around the nation, including our own governor, are working hard to stop this from happening. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance will continue to push for preservation of our roadless forests. We are performing an on-the-ground inventory of New Mexico’s national forests and have already found that some roadless tracts in the Carson National Forest—that should have been protected—have already been leased for oil and gas development.

This past May, the Bush administration repealed the Roadless Area Conservation Rule — opening the last unspoiled lands in our national forests to road building, logging, mining, and drilling. Pushed through by Washington lobbyists for these extractive industries, the administration’s new roadless policy would strip protection for over 1.6 million acres of pristine national forests here in New Mexico — roughly 17% of all the national forest lands in the state.

Further, the administration’s new approach to managing our national forests puts in place a “pay-to-protect” system. Governors who want just the chance of recovering previously guaranteed forest protections must participate in a costly and burdensome petition process. And even if governors decide to play in the administration’s game of forest roulette, no protections are certain. Instead, all roadless petitions first need approval from an advisory panel appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. If the requests clear that hurdle, they still have to receive the blessing of the Forest Service, including former timber industry lobbyist and current Undersecretary of Agriculture Mark Rey. Despite these hurdles, Gov. Richardson has pledged to petition for the protection of all of New Mexico’s roadless areas. He should be commended for doing so.

As many here in New Mexico know, our national forests serve as a precious economic engine for tourism and outdoor recreation. And America’s roadless areas are the backbone of our national forests and wilderness. Roadless areas provide homes to over 220 endangered or threatened wildlife species and, perhaps most importantly, serve as a vital source of drinking water.

While consisting of just under a third of the nation’s total land area, our national forests supply an astounding two-thirds of total U.S. water runoff. In fact, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, estimates that over 60 million Americans across the nation rely on national forests for their drinking water. Roadless areas provide clean drinking water for thousands of U.S. communities by purifying the water, slowing runoff, and reducing flooding and erosion — a priceless service that, if preserved, will continue to grow exponentially in years and decades ahead.

When the Bush administration announced its initial plans in early 2001 to end protections for our roadless areas, concerned citizens from around the nation submitted over 4 million comments suggesting the administration think again. This past spring, Gov. Richardson, along with 11 of his colleagues, sent letters to the administration urging it to change course on its forest policy. While the administration chose to ignore these requests and the wishes of millions of Americans, the good news is that someone in Washington was listening — over 140 members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

On July 28, a bipartisan coalition in the U.S. House of Representatives introduced legislation to bring federal safeguards back for our national forests. Let’s just hope that when Congress comes back from its summer vacation it takes immediate steps to ensure that our forests are around for generations. Georgia O’Keeffe’s paintings shouldn’t be the only place where Americans can experience the natural wonders and treasures that have so rightfully earned New Mexico’s reputation as the “Land of Enchantment.”
Update: The Valle Vidal

by Jim O’Donnell & Jeremy Vesbach

The Valle Vidal is a 100,000 acre gem smack in the heart of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains northwest of Cimarron, New Mexico. It has been called a ‘reservoir of wildlife’ and justly so. The Valle hosts the largest elk herd in the state, sixty other species of mammals including black bear, turkey, bobcat and bison, nearly 200 species of birds and 33 kinds of reptiles and amphibians. Its verdant valleys are rimmed by one of the largest stands of Bristlecone Pine in the nation. Pure strains of the Rio Grande cutthroat trout can be found in many of the waterways.

The Valle Vidal is also culturally treasured lifeblood for local recreation-based economies. Each year it hosts 50,000 PEOPLE who come for horseback riding, world class fly fishing, backpacking, mountain biking, and some of the top elk hunting in the nation. More than 3,000 Boy Scouts come to the Valle Vidal each year for high adventure training. In total, the Valle contributes $3-5 million/year to local economies supporting dozens of jobs and local industries.

The Valle Vidal Defines The Land of Enchantment

But the Valle Vidal is in danger of industrialization. In 2002, El Paso corporation petitioned the Forest Service to lease the eastern 40,000 acres of the Valle for coalbed methane (CBM) development. This last summer (2004), the Forest Service released its Reasonable Forseeable Development Scenario (RFDS). The scenario predicted only enough natural gas to supply the nation with about 11 hours of gas.

Coalbed methane development would be catastrophic for the Valle Vidal. At a minimum, hundreds of wells and a spiderweb of roads and pipelines would carve up this natural jewel as if it were slated for subdivision. New Mexico would see the calving grounds of the state’s largest herd of elk disrupted, other wildlife populations displaced, habitat fragmented, waterways poisoned and the loss of a vital portion of the economies of north-central New Mexico. Few, if any, jobs would be created by this development and income to local communities would be less than that already had through sustainable recreational use.

Surrounding Communities Are Outraged

“Thousands of people come to the Valle Vidal from thousands of miles away to show their children what America used to be. I love it. They come to our little town and spend their money here and I get just compliment after compliment on the Valle Vidal. It’s incredible what that little area does for our business. But people aren’t going to come here to see a drilling field,” said Henry Gonzales, owner of an auto repair shop in Cimarron, H&J Tires. Gonzales has lived in the area for all of his 42 years, except for a stint serving our country in the armed forces.

Don Francisco Trujillo II, Taos County Commissioner and Chairman of the Intergovernmental Council of the Enchanted Circle in northern New Mexico agrees, insisting that Taos does not have anything to gain and has everything to lose from the drilling. “I come from a long standing, time honored family whose love for the land runs deep in our roots and flows through our veins. Our protected public lands are our lifeline to a sustainable future. More and more we are seeing that communities that protect their public lands are benefiting economically.”

The Forest Service is in the process of preparing an amendment to its Forest Plan for the Carson National Forest to include the Valle Vidal. This amendment will pave the way for drilling to commence if New Mexicans don’t make their voices heard. The Forest Service projects completing the plan by September 2006 at which point the leasing process may begin.

The Coalition for the Valle Vidal is a broad-based, non-partisan gathering of over 200 Northern New Mexico local governments, businesses, organizations and individuals that have come together to ensure permanent protection for the Valle Vidal. There is too much to lose by industrializing one of our treasured wildlands for 11 hours of natural gas.

Jim O’Donnell, a member of the Coalition says, “Washington D.C. needs to understand that the Valle Vidal provides jobs. If the Valle Vidal is industrialized those jobs will be lost, leaving us with busted economies and a ruined landscape.”

The full diversity of people in New Mexico are coming together and standing up for the Valle Vidal, but we face a difficult challenge: special interests want us to sacrifice our values and our long-term economy for their profit - and they have massive, behind the scenes power.

Please see Page 22 to learn how you can take action on this issue.
upcoming events

2005 WILDLANDS CONFERENCE DE SANTA FE

Saturday, October 8, 2005
9am to 4pm, Reception from 4pm to 6pm
Registration begins at 8am
EL DORADO HOTEL
309 West San Francisco Street
downtown Santa Fe

Featuring
Dave Foreman speaking on Wilderness
Guest speakers include: former Albuquerque Mayor Jim Baca and Representatives from the U.S. Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service

The Workshop fee is $40 and includes lunch.

Workshop Sessions
Emergency Wilderness Medicine
Diversifying Outreach in NM
NM Wilderness Areas
NM Roadless Areas
Wilderness Activism
Youth in the Environment
Wildlife and Wilderness
Oil and Gas Threats to Wilderness
Creatively Protecting Wilderness:
Art, Film and Writing.

For more information call
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
505-843-8696 or register online at www.nmwild.org, or by mail.

Special room rates are available at El Dorado.
Please contact Tisha Broska at tisha@nmwild.org to reserve a room.

Organ Mountains Artist Retreat
November 4th - 6th

Spend 3 days & 2 nights at the beautiful Meson de Mesilla B&B in Historic Old Mesilla.

Enjoy guided painting trips to the Organs with outdoor “plein air” painting instructor and wilderness guide. Nightly activities include guest speakers and group critiques.

For artists of all levels & mediums.

Retreat cost with private room: $375 Lodging and full breakfast included. 50% deposit required by October 15th. Space is limited, so call now for reservations.

Contact: Trisha London at 505.843.8696

Proceeds to benefit New Mexico Wilderness Alliance.

Don’t miss this great opportunity to paint on location with wilderness painter, Michelle Chrisman (whose artwork is featured on the cover). Michelle will teach the basics of outdoor landscape painting, based on the principals of the French Impressionists: light/dark patterns, shapes and values, color temperature, and how to capture the effects of light, atmosphere and mood with your medium of choice.

2005 Wildlands Conference de Santa Fe Registration Form

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City State Zip ____________________________________________
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$40 Conference per person (includes Lunch)
Check (payable to New Mexico Wilderness Alliance)
Credit Card (Visa or Mastercard Only)
Credit Card # _______________________________ Exp _____ /

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Please mail the above form with your payment to:
NMWA, P.O. Box 25464, Albuquerque, NM 87125
The National Environmental Policy Act, also called NEPA, is one of the most important environmental laws in America. It is a landmark law that puts people before politics, values science over short-term thinking, and respects democracy more than dollars. It requires federal agencies to study and disclose the environmental effects of major projects on the surrounding community and include the public in the decision-making process for federally funded projects.

The House of Representatives has formed a “Task Force to Improve NEPA” and is in the process of holding hearings to collect testimony from people who have had direct dealings with NEPA. Such a hearing was held on August 1st in Rio Rancho, New Mexico to review the role of NEPA in mountain states. Although the auditorium was almost full of NEPA supporters, only a pre-selected list of witnesses were allowed to give testimony.

Joanna Prukup, Governor Richardson’s Secretary of Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources, Albuquerque City Councilor Martin Heinrich and Rancher Tweeti Blanccett were a few that spoke in support of the current NEPA law, while some others opposed to NEPA complained about delays, obstacles and court battles.

Representative Tom Udall is the Ranking member of the House Task Force and is working hard to see that the hearings are successful. “Given NEPA’s importance, those who seek to amend it face a heavy burden of proof to demonstrate that changes are necessary and in the public interest,” he said.

Udall also added that some people in Washington have won what their ideas are based on the revisions of NEPA. I want to see use the opportunity to make major revisions of NEPA. I want to see what their ideas are based on the hearings.

“If they want to make significant changes that are not warranted, then I will probably be one of the first people to object,” Udall said about the task force.

NEPA has also been under attack recently on several issues that could have a negative impact on our public lands. The new energy bill contains several provisions that undercut NEPA. First, various oil and gas (and other energy project) actions on public lands will be subject to limited review under NEPA. There is also a blanket exemption for oil and gas construction activities from storm water requirements that help protect our drinking water.

In the past few years, several other significant limitations have been placed on NEPA and the protections it provides to our public lands. Many federal projects, including oil and gas leasing and “forest restoration”, have been exempted from specific NEPA requirements simply because they were slated as “accelerated.” Public participation and environmental review are fundamentally important to the development of high quality projects and protection of natural resources and other community assets. NEPA provides a guarantee that Americans affected by federal action will get the best information about its impacts, a choice of good alternatives, and the right to have their voice heard before the government makes a final decision. We need NEPA to protect our wild public lands!
and animal life. During the public evaluation process to determine which areas would receive interim protection as Wilderness Study Areas, Ojito captured the public’s imagination and inspired advocates. Eventually, the BLM designated 10,903 acres in Ojito for Wilderness Study Area (WSA) status. Historically, it was not uncommon for the BLM and the Secretary of Interior to create a WSA, but then not recommend the area for full-fledged Wilderness status. However, in the case of Ojito, Secretary of Interior and native New Mexican Manuel Lujan recommended in 1991 that all 10,903 acres receive full Wilderness protection. Lujan was a former Republican Congressman for the area and Secretary of Interior under President George H.W. Bush. The recommendation from Lujan would stand the test of time and add to Ojito’s bi-partisan appeal.

In 1991, wilderness advocates tried to move forward with a state wide BLM wilderness proposal, but could not find agreement or compromise with New Mexico’s Washington D.C. delegation. This meant that all New Mexico WSAs, including Ojito, would have to wait. In 1992, Congress changed hands and conservation-minded committee chairs were replaced with Members of Congress skeptical of measures to protect public lands. Then in the mid-1990s, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance formed and established itself as the statewide grassroots voice for wildlands. NMWA began looking for potential wilderness areas across the state, with a special eye toward lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Soon after, the Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness formed as a voice for businesses and organizations wanting to protect these untrammeled landscapes that generate significant statewide economic activity. This independent coalition played an important role in the Ojito effort. Incorporating the economic arguments for land protection along with a non-confrontational style and a strictly legislative focus, the coalition made a powerful and effective force for wilderness.

That’s not to say that there weren’t plenty of bumps along the way. Ojito grew out of an unsuccessful attempt by wilderness advocates to designate quite a number of areas as wilderness in Sandoval County. That failed campaign was a key turning point for land protection in New Mexico because those involved learned the hard way that local people and local politics are what make or break any effort to legislatively protect wild country. All the slick brochures and high powered campaign materials are just no match for local relationships built on trust. Unfortunately, much animosity would have to be overcome to move Ojito forward. Fortunately, some amazing individuals who harbored common values and a strong land ethic were able to do just that.

Among them were Daymon Ely, who at the time was Chair of the Sandoval County Commission, and Peter Pino, the longtime Tribal Administrator for the Pueblo of Zia. These two individuals deserve as much credit as anyone for laying the groundwork that made Ojito possible. They were able to forge strong bonds with conservationists and turn around a formerly hostile county commission. Daymon Ely’s evenhanded and measured leadership on the Sandoval County Commission, along with Peter Pino’s effective advocacy in front of that body, were very much the turning point for Ojito. Together they worked openly with every San- doval County Commissioner to overcome opposition from a number of key entities including the Bureau of Land Management itself. In addition, Ojito picked up support from the King brothers, who own a large ranch in the area. The Kings had recently sold part of their ranch to Zia so that petroglyphs, priceless cultural sites and key wildlife areas could be protected on those lands. Sam and Don King even attended the Commission meeting to testify for the Ojito Resolution. On December 5, 2002 the Commission voted unanimously to endorse the proposal to protect 25,000 acres, making 11,000 a federal wilderness and transferring the rest to Zia with continued public access.

Former Zia Governor Gilbert Lucero, Congressman Tom Udall and Current Zia Governor Peter Pino at Ojito
The resolution of support by the Sandoval County Commission would prove to be one of the most significant milestones the Ojito campaign would pass, but many hurdles still lay in its future. Foremost among these was with the congressional delegation. With the county behind Ojito, the first of many trips to Washington D.C. was planned. Joining wilderness advocates on this trip was Peter Pino representing Zia and former New Mexico Governor Bruce King. Though Bruce is a prominent Democrat, his presence on this trip gave the effort increased credibility with all the members of New Mexico’s delegation and showed them that advocates were serious about seeking out support from ranching interests. The Ojito supporters left Washington D.C. having made positive impressions all around.

With the Ojito effort quickly gaining credibility, local boosters began to turn their attention to local, and soon thereafter, statewide elected officials in an effort to demonstrate widespread support. Before long, the list of supporters was truly impressive. Sandoval County, Bernalillo County, the City of Albuquerque, State Representative Roger Madelena, State Representative Tom Swisstack, Lt. Governor Diane Denish, and Governor Richardson were just some of the local and state elected officials to officially endorse this effort. By the time Ojito’s advocates returned to Washington D.C. in June of 2003, support for the idea so overwhelmingly outweighed opposition that the delegation was getting serious about introducing federal legislation. On this trip Congressman Udall committed to finding a way to protect Ojito and agreed to visit the area while Congress was in recess. That visit would deeply cement his commitment. Meanwhile both Udall’s office and that of Senator Bingaman were reviewing draft legislation prepared by Zia on behalf of the coalition of Ojito supporters.

On September 24, 2003 the Ojito Wilderness Act (S. 1649/H.R. 3176) was introduced in the House and Senate during the 108th Congress. With great diplomatic efforts by Bingaman’s office and a strong grassroots effort to build support for Ojito in Representative Wilson’s district, we were able to see this occur not with just one House and one Senate sponsor, but with both New Mexican Senators and two of New Mexico’s three Representatives. S. 1649 was introduced by Senator Bingaman, but was also co-sponsored by Senator Domenici. On the House side H.R. 3176 was introduced by Congressman Udall, but with co-sponsorship from Heather Wilson. The efforts made in the summer of 2003 to work across party lines for the benefit of these lands would be another milestone in this history. In the current Washington D.C. climate it isn’t easy to pass a wilderness bill. Ojito would need all the friends it could get.

By February of 2004, the bill was scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. In that committee, New Mexico is well represented. Pete Domenici is the chair and Jeff Bingaman is the ranking minority member. The bill was heard on February 12, and testimony was taken from Peter Pino, Martin Heinrich, and Rebecca Watson. Peter Pino had just been appointed Governor of Zia for 2004 and was also the tribal administrator. He began his testimony with a prayer in his native Keresan language. He was followed by Martin Heinrich, a City Councilor from Albuquerque and a well-known supporter of the area. Mr. Pino and Mr. Heinrich related the substantial support and logical reasons for supporting the bill. Ms. Watson, who is the Deputy Director of the BLM, was not as positive. In her testimony she raised the ideologically charged issue of water rights. Despite a complete lack of permanent watercourses, this issue would haunt Ojito through the rest of the 108th Congress. Ms. Watson would haunt Ojito through the rest of the 108th Congress. Ms. Watson

There is more to the Ojito Wilderness Act than just a wilderness designation. While 11,000 acres will be permanently preserved as wilderness, an area equal in size will be protected for its cultural values. This area, which is to the South and West of the proposed Ojito Wilderness, was used extensively by the ancestral Zia and will be returned to their Pueblo. Public access will be preserved here, but this area that did not qualify as wilderness, will receive a far higher level of protection under this legislation than it has under the current BLM management plan.

For the Pueblo of Zia, the return of this land will also mean that the two separate pieces of land that make up their Pueblo will now be joined. Although Zia will have to purchase this land from the BLM, sites of great importance to their cultural heritage will remain safe and undisrupted.
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Albuquerque REI will give $3,000 to The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance to fund the design and printing of a guide that will provide detailed outlines of their 2006 hikes and volunteer projects.

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also introduced a completely unexpected wild card by suggesting that we could not move forward with this particular land transfer without dealing with the larger pending and more global issue of Indian Trust land reform. Fortunately this issue did not resonate with any of the Senators and was not actively pursued by the BLM or the Department of Interior.

Because of the water rights issue and a disagreement between Senator Bingaman and Domenici on how to handle it, progress on the bill began to stall in the Senate. The next step, a “mark up” or approval of the bill by the full committee was not forthcoming. However, progress continued in the House. Despite a hostile Resources Committee chair, Ojito was scheduled for a hearing on July 20. Both Congressman Udall, who holds an important minority position on the committee, and Congresswoman Wilson, who has the advantage of being in the majority party, testified in favor of the bill. With the strong support of both Udall and Wilson the bill’s progress continued. There were some very worrisome efforts by some members of the House Committee to stir up opposition to the bill and even to suggest using this bill as a vehicle to release other WSAs in the state. With strong resistance from Congresswoman Wilson and Congressman Udall, these efforts did not gain traction and the bill was marked up by the House Resources Committee on October 4, 2004. From there it went straight to the floor and it passed the House unanimously on October 5, 2004. In the process however, it was combined with a bill from Nevada that also included wilderness designation and a series of other public lands-related issues. The packaging issue was a somewhat unexpected complication, which as the end of the Congressional session approached, cost the most precious resource in Washington D.C. … time.

On the Senate side things were still stalled and the clock was ticking. Congress was getting closer and closer to adjournment and the Ojito Wilderness Act was small potatoes compared to some of the other legislation the Senate was trying to finalize. As time ran out, Senator Domenici and Senator Bingaman finally agreed upon language to address the controversial issue of water rights. Amazingly, Ojito passed the Senate as part of a package of public lands bills on December 7, 2004. This was impressive and fortuitous since the bill was never actually approved by the relevant Senate committee.

Sadly, this breakthrough came too late in the 108th Congress. The version which had been passed by the House in October was slightly different than the Senate version. In addition, the Senate passed the Ojito legislation as part of a package of bills that included several controversial measures that would not be taken up by the House. Congress adjourned having passed the Ojito Wilderness Act through both the House and Senate, but because the legislation was not identical, this bill would have to wait for the 109th Congress.

Ojito was among the first bills introduced into the 109th Congress by the New Mexico delegation. On January 24, 2005 it was reintroduced in both chambers. This time there was agreement on all aspects of the measure and the House and Senate versions were carbon copies of one another. As a result, progress was relatively quick. On February 9, 2005 the Ojito bill was marked up by the Senate Energy Committee without so much as a hearing. On May 18 the House Resources Committee unanimously approved the bill. By the end of May, all that lay ahead for Ojito was to see it scheduled for a floor vote in both chambers of Congress.

On July 26 of this year the stars aligned and the US Senate passed the Ojito Wilderness Act (S. 156) as a standalone piece of legislation. No packages, no surprises, just a successful unanimous vote. That clears the way for the House bill to take up the Senate passed legislation and send it on to the President. It is worthy to note that all of our House and Senate sponsors deserve credit for putting the preservation of the Ojito ahead of politics. Each of their offices has repeatedly committed to passing whichever bill moved first, whether it was S. 156 in the Senate, or H.R. 362 in the House. As silly as it may seem, it is not uncommon for legislation to stall over whether the bill signed by the President has the House or Senate number on it. Our delegation has shown they are bigger than that, and we should be proud and thankful. Today, all that remains left to accomplish on the Ojito Wilderness Act’s long journey to becoming a law, is for the House to take up and pass the Senate version. Congressman Udall and Congresswoman Wilson have pledged to move forward as quickly as the House leadership will allow. Let us all hope that by the time you receive your next newsletter, the Ojito Wilderness Act will be part of New Mexico’s successful Wilderness history.
Pat Lyons: Land Boss Manages 9 million acres of New Mexico’s Future

by Stephen Capra

Until this last election, few people in our state were familiar with the name Pat Lyons. Lyons, a third-generation New Mexican who owns a 15,000-acre ranch in the eastern plains of New Mexico, became only the second Republican Land Commissioner since the Great Depression. He did so by squeaking out a razor thin victory over Democrat Art Trujillo. Lyons previously served ten years in the State Senate representing Senate District 7.

The role of the State Land Commissioner is to oversee 9 million acres of state trust lands and over 13 million acres of subsurface mineral rights, including oil and gas. Royalties from these state lands and interests controlled by the Land Office help support New Mexico Public Schools, as well as universities, special schools, hospitals, prisons and state buildings.

By all accounts, Pat Lyons is a genuinely nice person who has demonstrated that he can petition for the environment. He wrote a strong letter of support for our efforts to protect the Ojito Wilderness area. However, he also fought hard to ensure the opening of the Zuni Salt Lake Mine and was dismayed when a bi-partisan group of New Mexico Representatives sent a letter to the U.S. Interior Department asking for a suspension of the mining permit.

It appears that Lyons views his mission as Land Commissioner as solely to make money for the state trust and education. In an Albuquerque Tribune article, Lyons stated clearly, “I think the whole attitude of New Mexico should be pro-business and to create job opportunities for our citizens, we have to change our attitude in New Mexico.”

From a conservationist perspective, this mission may seem short-sited, but the fault is not completely with the commissioner. Our state constitution was written more than 100 years ago and within that framework, Lyons can argue fairly that he is simply following his mandate. However, former Land Commissioners including Jim Baca and Ray Powell chose a more modern interpretation of their roles and tried to balance development with preservation. In Arizona (a state that came into the Union at the same time as New Mexico and shared the Enabling Act and Constitution that spelled out the duties of the Commissioner), they have passed amendments that make it far easier to manage state trust lands in the 21st century. New Mexico’s land management policies need aggressive changes if we are to protect some of these important wild state lands from irresponsible development.

Lyons has pursued oil and gas development on many tracts of our state lands- all in the name of raising money for our schools. While education is a worthy cause, this mission ignores the other potential roles of a Land Commissioner: being a steward of the land, managing multiple-use lands and in some cases leaving them wild. A Land Commissioner should also understand that wildlife is an integral part of our state lands, not simply a problem needing control.

Shortly after his election, Lyons moved quickly to change some of the rules laid down by his predecessor Ray Powell. One of these changes was to allow ranchers to shoot or trap so-called “problem coyotes” on their state-leased lands. During his ten year reign in office, Powell had prohibited coyote killing on most state lands. After an outcry from wildlife activists, Lyons pulled back some of these changes, but a pattern in the Commissioner’s style was emerging.

Early in his tenure, Lyons appeared to reach out to the conservation community, appointing David Bacon, New Mexico Green Party nominee (who had an inconsistent position on the protection of Otero Mesa) for governor to the important Land Trust Advisory Board. Lyons, an avid hunter and angler, also removed a rancher from this board because the man shot and killed numerous elk that had been feeding on his ranch property. But there were other, more controversial issues that define the tenure of the current Commissioner.

Velarde Mining

In June of 2004, with no more than 48 hours notice, the State Land Office held a public meeting to inform the community of Velarde that they had withdrawn the lawsuit that former Land Commissioner Ray Powell had used to stop a sand and gravel operation in the community. To make matters worse, Commissioner Lyons had leased an additional 160 acres of State Land adjacent to the property (and the village of Velarde) to Coppola Mining for further sand and gravel mining. In this case a five-year lease was negotiated (with options to renew) without any public input or advance notification to the community. Land Office officials estimated the mine would bring $250,000 to $500,000 to the state fund. Within days of this deal, the State Land Office denied another lease application for the same tract of land, because in their words it was “not in the best interest of the people of New Mexico.” The reality of this deal was that almost overnight Coppola started mining sand and gravel on the state land and trucking it out through Velarde. This meant some 200 loads a day or 400 truck trips operating 6-7 days a week starting at 5:30 in the morning.

In August of 2004, about two-dozen Velarde residents, working with a law firm (mostly pro bono), filed a Writ of Mandamus in the First Judicial Court. The writ accuses the State Land Office of failing to follow the law by awarding the mining lease and demanded that it address the reclamation of the dangerous 150-foot high wall left from previous mining operations on private land that abuts state land. The lawsuit also claimed that the mine violated the Clean Water Act and that Lyons violated the state constitution’s anti-donation clause by awarding a mining contract to Coppola Mining. The clause bars state resources from being used for private gain and may have been violated because Lyons awarded a mining contract to Coppola Mining for less than the minimum required payment. In November, the judge signed an order calling for both parties to discuss settling the case. Since that time, discussions were ongoing, but have recently broken off. This means the case will likely be resolved by the courts.

White Peak

No issue, except perhaps Otero Mesa, has created the controversy that came from the Land Commissioner’s decision to trade lands in the White Peak area in Colfax County. Lyons once again moved quickly on a deal he felt was in the state’s best interest.

In the early 1980’s, the state sold 2,000 acres of wilderness land to the federal government for $500,000. This property, referred to as the “White Peak” or “2,000 acres” was not only a no-regrets sale, but the state received additional land of 5,000 acres as a trade. Now, the state’s attorney general has announced that the land is no longer a no-regrets sale and is moving ahead with a federal lawsuit to try to recover the land. For more information, visit the Web site of the New Mexico Land Action Group or the New Mexico Green Party.
He promoted a plan to swap out 40,000 acres of prime state hunting land near the top of White Peak and acquire the 50,000-acre Dawson Ranch (a.k.a. Spanish Trail Land and Cattle Co.) owned by Tobacco tycoon Brad Kelly of Florida. Lyons’ plan was to make the Dawson into a state park that would include a railroad line for better access and the development of oil and gas to bring in money for the state. Lyons promoted this deal as a way to resolve growing conflicts of access on White Peak between ranchers and hunters and as a means to consolidate the land ownership of the area. While many hunters agreed that consolidation of the White Peak area was a good idea, many sportsmen remained skeptical about the Land Commissioner’s approach. They claimed that the Dawson was a far inferior source of game and was scenically less appealing. Governor Richardson agreed with the sportsmen and in June of 2003 issued the following statement. “Pat Lyons’ land swap would trade some of the best hunting and recreation land for lesser land that includes a mountain that has been heavily mined. Pat Lyons’ policy will deprive access to New Mexicans and allow out-of-state interests to get full access.”

With the Governor fighting and the sportsmen opposed, Lyons yielded and the deal was dead. However, Lyons would try one more time to trade out the prime state lands at White Peak. He put together a new deal covering a smaller amount of land. This deal involved trading 1,800 acres of state land, again near the top of White Peak to the CS Cattle Co. In return, the CS would trade 1,200 acres of prairie lands near the base of the mountain and retain full grazing rights. Once again, sportsmen cried foul. This time Lyons met with some of the sportsmen to try to convince them to back him up on this deal. In one exchange Ed Olona remembers Lyons telling him that “at night elk come down to the watering holes,” implying they could be hunted. Olona’s soft-spoken wife reminded the Land Commissioner that hunting was illegal at night.

Had this deal occurred, it would have consolidated lands for the CS, but also could have created more controversy about the closing of State Highway 199. This highway is an access road that has created problems for ranchers and sportsmen since 1978. The access battle has involved the State Attorney General and so far has favored access for sportsmen. Had the CS acquired this land they would have controlled land on both sides of this road and prime game habitat that could bring private hunts for as much as $10,000 per client thus cutting many New Mexico sportsmen out of the area.

Currently, there is a bill in the state Senate sponsored by Senator Pete Campos that would work to acquire the CS Ranch thus preserving the prime state hunting lands of White Peak. This bill would end the checkerboard situation that has lead to conflicts between sportsmen and ranchers and would continue to allow New Mexican’s access to this beautiful mountain.

Otero Mesa

As the Governor and Attorney General push hard to prevent oil and gas development in Otero Mesa (including filing a lawsuit against the Bureau of Land Management), Pat Lyons suddenly filed a brief in support of drilling in this wild grassland. For Lyons, once again, the message was raising money for schoolchildren, not destruction of a wild and important grassland or contaminating New Mexico’s largest remaining fresh water aquifer. The Land Commissioner remains steadfastly on message (the oil and gas industry’s message) that the drilling is seemingly the most restrictive ever and that they can drill in an environmentally sound manner. More than anything, he speaks about the need for more revenue. Currently, the state has over 50,000 producing wells and that number continues to grow. To contend that our children’s future hinges on the development of Otero Mesa is, of course, a false rationalization.

In June, Lyons made a presentation to the Lincoln County Commissioners. His talk was straight from the BLM’s playbook that highlights restrictive drilling and environmentally sound development. All these so-called “facts” continue to distort the reality on the ground. Without giving the Governor’s office the chance to refute these arguments, the Lincoln County Commissioners voted unanimously to support the development of Otero Mesa. Several weeks later, the Land Commissioner went public with his efforts to battle the Governor and Attorney General in their lawsuit to protect Otero Mesa.

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NM HIKES

September 17th, 2005- Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument

Cone-shaped rock structures form one of New Mexico’s most unusual vistas, and the Monument’s archeological sites reflect 4,000 years of human occupation. The formations were carved by water and wind out of a soft layer of pumice and ash deposited by massive volcanoes about 6.8 million years ago. The hike consists of an easy loop with some steep climbs here and there. A easy day hike into one of New Mexico’s most wondrous natural formations, and only an hour from Albuquerque.

Contact: Nathan Newcomer at 843-8696 for more info.

Distance: 3 miles round-trip
Time: 2 to 4 hours round-trip plus driving time
Elevation Range: 5,750 to 6,381 feet
Difficulty: Easy to Strenuous

September 24th, 2005- Yapashi Ruins, Bandelier Wilderness

This is perhaps the most interesting and scenic trail in the Bandelier Back country. It is not extraordinarily difficult, but it’s not for the woefully out-of-shape. The Yapashi Ruins Trail meanders through open grassy parkland studded with ponderosas. The canyon is littered with bright cottonwoods, willows, box elder and other plants that survive due to a stream. The trail eventually leads to the ancient Yapashi Ruins where we will break and turn back.

Contact: Nathan Newcomer at 843-8696 for more info.

Distance: 10 miles round-trip
Time: 6 to 8 hours round-trip plus driving time
Elevation Range: 6,066 to 6,625 feet
Difficulty: Moderate to Strenuous

October 15th, 2005-4th of July Canyon, Manzano Wilderness

Come experience one of the most beautiful sights in all of New Mexico—the Fall foliage of the Red Maples in the Manzano Wilderness! Experience one of the most rare sights in the Rocky Mountain West as we hike through the lush maple forest in all of its fall magnificence.

Contact: Nathan Newcomer at 843-8696 for more info.

Distance: 4.5 miles round-trip
Time: 4 to 6 hours round-trip plus driving time
Elevation Range: 7,600 to 8,680 feet
Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

FALL 2005
SOUTHERN
NM HIKES

Contact Alberto Zavala in NMWA’s Las Cruces office for information on all the following hikes. You can reach him at 505-527-9962 or send an e-mail to alberto@nmwild.org

September 24
Dona Ana Peak

Distance: 8 miles
Low point: 5,435 feet
High point: 5,835 feet
Difficulty: Moderate

The Dona Ana mountains are located approximately ten miles north of Las Cruces, forming a divide between the Mesilla Valley on the west and the Jornada del Muerto to the north and east. These mountains are composed primarily of volcanic rocks. The view from Dona Ana Peak is spectacular; at least ten other mountain ranges can be seen from this vantage point at the southern end of the Jornada del Muerto. We will watch for Yellow Bell on this hike, a unique, small shrub with beautiful yellow blossoms.

October 15
Fillmore-La Cueva, Organ Mts.

Distance: 3.25 miles
Low point: 5,450 feet
High point: 5,850 feet
Difficulty: easy

Located in the Organ Mountains, this is a loop hike that can be hiked in either direction. At least a small amount of water is found at the upper end of the trail in Fillmore Canyon. La Cueva is an interesting archeological site. Interpretive signs tell the story of a hermit that lived in that cave in the 1800’s.

November 12
Achenbach Canyon, Organ Mts.

Distance: 5.0 miles
Low point: 5,100 feet
High point: 6,330 feet
Difficulty: Moderate

The views to the west out of Achenbach canyon are superb, especially from the picturesque outcroppings around Achenbach Tank. From the ridge at the end of the hike, you can look east down Soledad Canyon to the Tularosa Basin. Baldy Peak and the Needles...
I step into the water and a chill goes up my back. The water is cold, only about 52 degrees even though it’s July and 85 degrees in the sun. I’m up at about 8,800 feet in elevation and the sun is so bright I can barely see through the water, even with my polarized sunglasses. As I step into the water, I step into a day of reflection. Not just of sun off the water, but of self reflection, and to a higher degree, reflection on Wilderness. On this part of the river I won’t see another person for the whole day, or for that matter, for the whole weekend. Not true on the higher section where a reservoir captures snowfall as it first melts on its long journey to the Gulf of Mexico. And not true on the lower section where there’s a 4x4 road adjacent to the river with 25 campsites along its seven mile length in the National Forest. But here, this section flows through Wilderness. Hard to get to and hard to leave. Hard to get to because I had to drive over 25 miles of dirt and gravel and mud, and then hike three miles to a gorge and then bushwhack my way down. Down through scree of rocks—down through the tangle of thoughts I came to leave behind—and down seemingly, through time.

I came to cast a little piece of nylon, string and color through the air and into the timelessness of Wilderness. The kind of fly fishing I like to do isn’t done from the bank of the river where my truck is parked. This kind of fly fishing can only be found in places where, in turn, you might find yourself lost. It’s a plain fact that the best trout fishing in America is found in roadless areas and the best roadless areas are found in Wilderness.

Wilderness obviously means wild, and for me, the best caught fish is a wild fish. Sure, those factory, farm-raised fish that were released earlier this year have gone wild from a fishery’s management perspective. But from the river's perspective, they’re about as wild as a free-ranging Angus. From my perspective, they’re tainted from meal pellets, antibiotics, and artificial insemination. No thanks! I want a fish born of a fish that fought the high waters of spring runoff; that beat the odds of natural selection; that survived the cold of winter and the low waters of drought. I want to take part in a natural cycle that only the river can maintain. I want to fish in a place where there’s mystery around every bend and every meander. I want to fish in a place that takes work to get to because it makes the cast, and the catch, and the release so much sweeter.

Like I said, hard to get to and hard to leave. Hard to leave because my time here is so short and the river just keeps on flowing. Hard to leave because I know it will be far too long before I can find the time to return. Hard to leave because I’m afraid that Wilderness and wild places may be becoming a thing of the past. If we lose Wilderness, I may lose the only places I really like to fish.

WE NEED YOUR OPINION.
We’re working hard to serve New Mexico’s Wilderness Community, but we need your help. Download and complete our survey, located at NMWild.org to help shape the future of wilderness!
Bringing Back the Jaguar

although Jaguars are native to New Mexico, habitat loss has forced them south beyond our borders, where they now only make forays into the wilder parts of New Mexico’s Boot Heel country. Recently though, a dedicated group of folks who call themselves ‘tablers’ began bringing the jaguar back to New Mexico, this time as the face of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. In this new role the big cats neither roar nor run, but they do help protect wilderness. New wilderness offers the jaguar its best chance to permanently return to New Mexico, along with preserving the many different wildlands that collectively make New Mexico the “Land of Enchantment.”

Bekah McAnn, one of our most effective tablers and a native New Mexican, puts it this way, “Tabling to me is a great way to reach out to the community on important local issues.” This simplicity ensures wilderness always remains the focus of tabling, while also allowing for wide-ranging conversations to develop at the table. Bekah adds, “I love having positive conversations because I really feel that the tabling is making a difference.”

Tabling is not just sunshine and roses though. Bekah goes on to say, “the worst kinds of conversations are those where people tell me that I am tabling for no reason.” Whether done out of spite or apathy, every tabler deals with this. When it happens, it is important to reflect on some successes tabling has secured for New Mexico Wilderness. Among other things, we have signed on hundreds of new members, had countless informative conversations, spread Protect Wilderness and Keep It Wild bumper stickers across New Mexico, and most importantly been a constant voice for wilderness and common sense conservation.

Tabling is divisible into two categories: education and action. Education covers everything from wildlife species on Otero Mesa to the actual history and goals of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. But, as Edward Abbey once wrote, “Sentiment without action is the ruin of the soul.” Tablers therefore pride themselves on offering ways for engaged citizens to join in protecting New Mexican wildlands. Whether this means signing the petition to make much of Otero Mesa a National Conservation Area, or becoming a member with the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, action ensures New Mexico remains “The Land of Enchantment” complete with el tigre, the jaguar.

Most of us, whether we like to admit it or not, can remember growing up in high school and trying to figure out just what the heck life is really all about. We struggled with understanding schoolwork, our emotions, our thoughts, and many other issues which contributed to the discovery of our identities and opinions. So, not surprisingly, amidst all the turmoil of adolescents, most New Mexico high school students have no idea what conservation, activism and wilderness preservation are, let alone how important these concepts are to the vitality of the planet and our lives.

However, even though a student may be thinking: “What is wilderness?” their ears tend to perk up intently, whether with skepticism or intrigue. For those of us that value and understand the integrity of wilderness preservation, this is fantastic news. Moreover, even for those of us that only have a minor understanding of wilderness and conservation, we too can be excited. Our high school students are open books gathering chapters to create their own personal novel. Those sections, which invite wonder and inspiration, tend to be the more memorable ones that produce our outlook and convictions. Wilderness is one of those convictions that the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is working to achieve within our high school system.

Today, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is organizing outreach and involvement within New Mexico’s public and private high schools, and the response has been tremendous. From administrators and teachers, right down to the kids in the classroom, the idea of wilderness education is beginning to emerge.

Over the course of five months, NMWA has given presentations to the high schools of St. Pius, Academy, and Highland, with Albuquerque High, Sandia Prep, Amy Biehl, and Taos Public Schools next in line. In addition to presentations, work is being done to establish a practical wilderness curriculum that schools can incorporate into the classroom. Such curriculum ideas include integrating wilderness service projects, where the students themselves get to experience firsthand how to restore a watershed in the Sandia Wilderness, close an illegal ATV access road, or how to document petro-glyphs on Alamo Mountain. Furthermore, while talking about current wilderness issues like Otero Mesa and the Ojoito Wilderness Act, the notion of activism and applying it within the community has become a cornerstone of the discussion. Students are especially fascinated about how to participate in government, and how their voices can help make a difference in protecting wild lands in New Mexico.

Much work is still needed to ensure the continuation of educating New Mexico’s young minds. The wave of the future is gearing up for yet another year of classes, and New Mexico Wilderness Alliance will continue to work to be a part of quality education within our high schools.

If you or someone you know would be interested in having a presentation given to your classroom or school, please contact Nathan Newcomer at nathan@nmwild.org or 505-843-8696. 
Dear Editor:

Thanks for your excellent summer issue of New Mexico Wild! Stephen Capra’s article, The Birthplace of Wilderness, was very informative. It helped me to understand the complex history of roadless and wilderness areas.

I also read with interest Dave Foreman’s article about Nature’s Crisis, and his critique of the environmental movement. The trend toward “sustainable development” in place of preservation of wilderness is a disturbing one.

Last, I want to thank Trisha London for her article about the Native Plant Society of New Mexico’s hike on Otero Mesa, and for helping to organize our visit to this unique landscape. We thoroughly enjoyed our encounter with the beautiful native plants on Alamo Mountain. And for the curious reader and plant lover, the photo on page 8 is Gilia rigidula, or Blue Bowls, a stunning, albeit miniscule, member of the Phlox family.

Sincerely,

Donna Stevens, President
Gila Chapter, Native Plant Society of New Mexico

Dear NMWA-

Regarding “2005: Nature’s Crisis” (volume VII, number II): I am with Dave Foreman on the importance of protecting nature for its own sake. I am disturbed, however, by his characterization of the sustainable development movement as a compromise, rather than a necessary complement, to conservation efforts.

All of us are dependent on the foods produced by the ranchers and farmers whose practices often conflict with habitat protection. Most of us are dependent on cars, flush toilets, and other facts of modern life which rely on environmentally destructive technologies. A focus on the development of less destructive technologies and practices is absolutely crucial if we hope to protect the wilderness and the planet as a whole.

Mr. Foreman criticizes conservation publications for giving too much space to sustainable development. I applaud them for seeing the crucial connection between conservation and the need for both small and large scale changes in the way humans occupy the planet.

Sincerely,

Deanna L. Nichols

Dear NMWA-

Hello. I just wanted to let you know that I was in Albuquerque last month having lunch downtown at someplace called Pearl’s Dive. I discovered your publication entitled NM Wild. What a great publication!

Congratulations for having the brains and courage to publish such a much needed publication. Few Americans know this country better than I. Trust me, this country is rapidly going to hell in a hand-basket. With 300 million people currently living in the USA, wide open spaces and vanishing wildlife will continue to be the trend. Therefore, we need you!

Please continue to fight the good fight!

Sincerely,

Scott A. Kline
Battle Creek Michigan

Dear President Bush:

It has been said that what separates homo sapiens from other animal species is the human capacity for rational thought, decision-making and compassion. Humans pride themselves on being a “civilized” and “evolved” life form. If this is indeed true, does it not become our natural responsibility to use these talents and gifts for the betterment of all life on the planet? I believe that to push ahead with a personal agenda without considering the effect on the environment and all living things is an irresponsible use of these talents and gifts. The people of New Mexico have made it clear that the intrinsic value of Otero Mesa - every stone, every blade of grass, every drop of clean water and every living creature there-outweighs the desperate quest for oil. Some things in life cannot be bought and sold, indeed their values cannot be measured in dollars. It has been proven that pre-existing oil wells sit dormant in other places around the country, and there has been a considerable neglect at the highest governmental level to invest in alternatives to oil and gas. Please respect Otero Mesa, the people and creatures of New Mexico!

A. Bickel
Albuquerque, NM

Dear President Bush:

Those of us who live near Otero Mesa don’t want it turned into the ugly, smelly mess that southeast New Mexico/West Texas oil patch country is.

We don’t need the paltry amount of oil/gas likely to be found there. We need more renewable energy and energy efficient technologies. By the way, the Geo Metro I drive gets 50 miles per gallon. We need more vehicles like this not gas guzzling SUVs!

Save Otero Mesa!
Stephen Cook
Weed, NM

Dear President Bush:

It is a sad and terrible thing to contemplate the possible oil and gas development on Otero Mesa. The impact of oil and gas drilling would be devastating. We who are natives of New Mexico cherish this land and do everything possible to protect it from predation. Less than 9% of New Mexico is protected. If Otero Mesa is not saved, it is an invitation to destroy more wilderness areas. Such an act amounts to stealing land which should belong to future generations.

In a world that is torn apart by cruelty and violence, it is so important to let there be places of peace and beauty. When we work to save endangered species, we are saving ourselves.

President Bush, please look beyond the superficiality of what may appear to be practical reality. Drilling for gas and oil on Otero Mesa does not represent progress; instead annihilation. Please reach beyond your advisers in order to connect with the creator who gave us the gift of such beauty - the wilderness that soothes the soul. The wilderness belongs to Native Americans, also. Follow their example. Understand the wisdom of the Universe, the profundity of wildlands.

MFD
Rio Rancho, NM
Tell the Forest Service to Protect New Mexico’s Valle Vidal

On June 14, 2005, the U.S. Forest Service began a formal process that will ultimately determine whether or not the eastern half of the Valle Vidal will be leased for coalbed methane development. The first step in this process is the preparation of a Forest Plan Amendment to incorporate the Valle Vidal Unit into the Carson National Forest’s overall Forest Plan. That Forest Plan Amendment will establish a specific vision for the Valle Vidal, and set out certain “management highlights,” and standards and guidelines.

The Carson National Forest is accepting public comments on this Forest Plan Amendment now through September 14, 2005. Speak up today to ensure that the Valle Vidal is not slated for energy development!

What to Do:

Send your comments to the Forest Service by September 14, 2005, urging the agency to protect the Valle Vidal by closing the entire area to energy leasing and development.

Talking points, a sample letter and background information are below.

If at all possible, please write your own, original comments that incorporate the talking points below. Original comments are the most effective way to make your voice heard in this Forest Service planning process. If you cannot write your own comments by the deadline, please use the sample letter. You must provide your name and address for your comments to count.

Talking points:

· “The Vision” for the Valle Vidal as written in the Forest Service’s Proposed Action, does not reflect my vision for the Valle Vidal. I want to see the Valle Vidal’s “unique combination of wild land resources”—habitat, range, fish, wildlife, riparian and watershed resources “restored and improved” across the board, NOT simply “maintained or sustained.”

· The Forest Service must establish a management framework that incorporates the common sense principle that it is easier to prevent harm to the land than to attempt to repair it later. Preventing devastating impacts, like those of coalbed methane development, is the only way that the Valle Vidal can truly be restored and improved.

· The Forest Service should permanently close the entire Valle Vidal to energy leasing and development. The Valle Vidal should be protected for the benefit of sportsmen, ranchers, outfitters and guides, local business, outdoor enthusiasts, Boy Scouts, and future generations.

· The Forest Service should put the entire Valle Vidal off limits to oil and gas leasing NOW, in the Forest Plan Amendment stage. They should NOT defer this decision to a future analysis of leasing.

Send Your Comments To:
Carson National Forest
Attn: Valle Vidal Forest Plan Amendment
208 Cruz Alta Road
Taos, NM 87571

Or email: comments-southwestern-carson@fs.fed.us

“Valle Vidal Forest Plan Amendment” must be in the subject line.

Congress has the ultimate power to protect the Valle Vidal!

Send copies of your comments to our congressional representatives with a short note asking them to permanently protect the Valle Vidal. See page 23 for your Congresperson’s address.

WHAT MORE CAN I DO?

Have you written your letters for Otero Mesa? Have you ever attended an event to show your support for protecting this wild Chihuahuan desert grassland? Have you donated money to ensure the work goes on to prevent oil and gas development in America’s wildest grassland? Do you find yourself asking, “What more can I do?” If you answered yes to any of these questions, then there is something else that you can do to further the protection for Otero Mesa and help shape political policy and attitude.

Nathan Newcomer, Grassroots Organizer and Media Coordinator with the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance will be organizing our members, volunteers, and supporters to meet with Senator Jeff Bingaman and/or his staff, right here in New Mexico! No expensive plane ticket to Washington D.C. needed. You also will not have to meet the Senator or his staff by yourself.

Every month is available, so there is no need to be confined to a certain date. Periodically, Senator Bingaman will be back in New Mexico during recess, but even if he is not here you can still meet with his staff. We are working to make sure that Otero Mesa is the number one issue he hears about. This is an important opportunity to help make a difference in saving Otero Mesa, and is actually a relatively easy process.

If you are interested in doing more for Otero Mesa and you want to set-up a meeting with Senator Bingaman and/or his staff, please contact Nathan Newcomer at 505-843-8696 or nathan@nmwild.org. Nathan will be able to guide you through the process step-by-step and help you set up your meeting. You’ll be glad you did!

It’s people that make a difference.
**New Mexico WILD!**

**Show your WILDness!**

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
P.O. Box 25464, Albuquerque, NM 87125

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**Join the Friends of Wilderness monthly giving program.**

Contact Roxanne at 505/843-8696 to get set up.

**Join New Mexico Wilderness Alliance!**

Today! You’ll not only help preserve New Mexico’s Wild Places for your own enjoyment… but you’ll help insure that future generations may enjoy them too.

**Mail your Tax Deductible Donations to:**

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
PO Box 25464
Albuquerque, NM 87125-0464

Questions? 505/843-8696

YES! I want to be a member of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance! My contribution will go towards the continued protection and wilderness designation of New Mexico’s natural heritage.

☐ $25 – Individual  ☐ $100 – Contributing  ☐ Other $___________
☐ $30 – Family  ☐ $500 – Lifetime
☐ $50 – Supporting  ☐ $10 – Student/Senior

Name: ____________________________ Phone: ____________________________

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**BE HEARD.**

**GOVERNMENT CONTACTS**

Call Washington, D.C. toll-free.
Capitol Switchboard Number:

877-762-8762

Just ask the operator to connect you to your New Mexico Senator or Congressman.

**Senator Pete V. Domenici**
328 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510-3101
(202) 224-6621
(202) 228-0900

**Senator Jeff Bingaman**
703 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510
(202) 224-5521
(202) 224-2852 fax

**Congresswoman Heather Wilson**
318 Cannon House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-6316
(202) 225-4975 fax

**Congressman Steve Pearce**
1408 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-2365
(202) 225-9599 fax

**Congressman Tom Udall**
1414 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-6190
(202) 226-1331 fax

**Governor Bill Richardson**
Office of the Governor
State Capitol Bldg., Suite 300
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 476-2200
(505) 476-2226 fax

Concerned about oil and gas development on our public lands?
write:

Linda Rundell
BLM State Director
P.O. Box 27115
Santa Fe, NM 87502-0115

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Mike Calton $23 with shipping

Day Hikes and Nature Walks in the Las Cruces—El Paso Area
Greg Magee $10.00

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Highlighting the controversies surrounding the pursuit of oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Cost $20

Malkolm the Birder Boy DVD
Attendees of the 2005 KiMo event will remember this touching tale of a young boy in search of a rare bird in the Arctic. Only $12.00, shipping included

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
Wildlands Conference de Santa Fe
October 8th
El Dorado Hotel
309 West San Francisco Street
Santa Fe, NM
9 am to 4 pm

The conference will focus on the current issues impacting New Mexico Wilderness, including the Valle Vidal and Otero Mesa.

Space is limited, so please register early. Registration: $40 includes lunch.

Please email Tisha Broska today at tisha@nmwild.org to reserve your space or go to www.nmwild.org for on-line registration.