Building Community

For a Stronger New Mexico
service projects that span the state and our hikes that take members into the many wilderness and proposed wilderness areas that define our state. We work with the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service to improve areas, to stop the illegal intrusion of off-road vehicles and often to improve the riparian habitat in our thirsty state.

For some, wilderness is a concept that remains confusing. How is it created? Does it stop all access? Is it federal land, state land or private land? Frankly, in some focus groups we contracted in 2001, most people thought roadside restrooms represented examples of our federal public lands. So the education of young and old alike is a priority for our organization and has helped to launch the Bob Langsenkamp Fund for the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. This fund, started by Bob’s widow Sally Strong will make sure the facts get to all the people and wilderness designation becomes the norm statewide.

Our opposition has done a great job over the years using scare tactics and an “us vs. them” attitude to distort the facts—screaming that wilderness will eliminate ranching. When, in fact, wilderness gives ranchers a guarantee that they can maintain their livestock operations in perpetuity. Well, there is no us or them, we are all part of this great state and our public lands desperately need our help. If last month’s disgraceful slaughter of 39 pronghorn by a person who calls himself a rancher is any indication, our wildlife needs our help and support just as much. That is why we believe so strongly in wilderness, as it provides the security and protection both the land and wildlife need to thrive. The reality is that it also makes our communities stronger.

Wilderness helps to build community by creating the protected landscapes that allow people to recreate. It also encourages tourism as people come from across the country and the world to visit areas that bear the gold standard of wilderness. Communities are also enjoying the economic benefits, just look at...
the expansion of Bed and Breakfasts in Silver City or outfitters in the Pecos. 

These are exciting times, and I think all of us at New Mexico Wilderness Alliance take seriously our role and responsibility to the communities across New Mexico. Building community speaks to building trust, understanding the people that call Questa home, or the lone rancher in the West Potrillos. In the end, we share the common goal of making the land better and our communities stronger.

We simply believe that wilderness is a tool that has tremendous power to make people, wildlife and landscapes stronger and more secure. To that end we will keep fighting, listening and working together for the communities we all call home.

Sabinoso Wilderness Bill Passes the House

Washington, D.C.—On June 9, the Sabinoso Wilderness Act of 2008 (H.R. 2632) passed out of the House of Representatives. If passed by the Senate, this will be the second wilderness bill in New Mexico to be created in the last three years. Prior to the Ojito Wilderness Bill of 2005 there had been no new Wilderness created in almost 20 years.

Introduced in 2007 by Congressman Tom Udall (D-NM), the Sabinoso Wilderness Act seeks to designate the majestic canyons and rugged beauty of one of the finest intact Great-Plains ecosystems left in New Mexico. Just 40 miles west of Las Vegas, New Mexico, the Sabinoso Wilderness Study Area encompasses approximately 20,000-acres of public land and is home to a variety of wildlife, including the American kestrel, savannah sparrow, red-tailed hawk, broad tailed hummingbird, coyote, mountain lions, mule deer and gray foxes.

“New Mexico’s varied wildlands enhance our quality of life and create a powerful incentive for attracting new businesses to our state by creating the kind of environment where people want to live, work and enjoy free time with their families,” said Nathan Newcomer, Media Director with the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. “Wilderness is a cornerstone of our heritage.”

The Sabinoso Wilderness Act is widely supported by local governments, business and economic development interests, sportsmen, conservation groups, and state officials. More specifically, the New Mexico State House of Representatives, San Miguel County Commission, Village of Wagon Mound, and the Town of Springer have passed resolutions supporting the designation of the Sabinoso Wilderness.

Bill Would Create 2nd Wilderness Area in New Mexico in the Last Three Years

The Wilderness Act of 1964 established the National Wilderness Preservation System to preserve the last remaining wildlands in America. The Wilderness Act, as federal policy, secures “an enduring resource of wilderness” for the people. Wilderness is defined as an area that has primarily been affected by the forces of nature with the imprint of humans substantially unnoticeable. It is an area that offers outstanding opportunity for solitude or a primitive or unconfined type of recreation, and an area that contains ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

What is Wilderness?

Mission Statement

The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is dedicated to the protection, restoration, and continued enjoyment of New Mexico’s wildlands and Wilderness areas.

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Please visit us at nmWILD.org

New Mexico WILD!
Help Sponsor the 2008 New Mexico Wilderness Conference

You can become a sponsor for the 2008 New Mexico Wilderness Conference and help make another successful event. We are in need of cash or in-kind sponsorships of all sizes. You can donate a gift certificate, service or vacation rental for our Silent Auction or give money to advertise your business at the event. Please call Tisha at 505.321.6131 or email her at tisha@nmwild.org to learn more about the sponsorship.

GEARSWAP 2008

Thanks to everyone who participated in and helped make the second annual GearSwap a very successful event. Both REI and SportzOutdoor, our main vendors, brought in new equipment with reduced prices. Thanks to all the volunteers who provided the excellent customer service that will keep the public coming back year after year. But most of all, thanks to all of our customers and those of you who cleaned out your garage to provide gently used equipment a second chance at outdoor life. Please join us next year in 2009 for our third annual GearSwap!

“It was worth the drive from Farmington. It was so much fun watching people discover the items I brought to sell. The joy of discovery was written all over their faces. The same joy I experienced when purchasing the item originally.”
- Anonymous, Farmington

By Tisha Broska

The 2008 New Mexico Wilderness Conference will be a little different from years past. The conference will feature predominantly women guest speakers, with Terry Tempest Williams giving the keynote address. Terry Tempest Williams has been called “a citizen writer,” a writer who speaks out eloquently on behalf of an ethical stance toward life. A naturalist and fierce advocate for freedom of speech, she has consistently shown us how environmental issues are social issues that ultimately become matters of justice. Terry Tempest Williams’ new book, Finding Beauty in a Broken World, will be released just in time for the conference.

Mary Beath, a local Albuquerque author, illustrator, and naturalist, will also be speaking at the event. Her book of poetry, Refuge of Whirling Light, received the Wrangler Award for Poetry and was a finalist for both the WILLA and Spur awards. Her latest book, Hiking Alone: Trails Out, Trails Home, is a collection of personal essays that have been described as “...generous sharings of a multi-faceted, intelligent mind...a courage-instilling book.”

Linda Rundell, State Director for the Bureau of Land Management in New Mexico will also speak about the agency’s role in protecting Wilderness.

Throughout the conference we will offer two break-out sessions of wilderness related workshops. Conference participants will have a choice of three different workshops during each session.

Robert Salazar, Executive Director of Rivers and Birds, will be presenting a special workshop focusing on birds in New Mexico. Roberta has worked for over 18 years as a Wildlife Biologist and educator. Her passion for her cultural roots and natural heritage comes alive in New Mexico, combined with her professional understanding of nature, inspired her to found Rivers and Birds. Roberta believes that, for a healthy, peaceful future, we must all, children and adults alike, understand and strengthen our sense of self in relationship to the physical world around us.

Special Workshop sessions by Robert Bawol of Laughing Waters Nature and Awareness School will be a change from some of the traditional workshops we have offered. Robert teaches a powerful and highly practical synergesty of awareness, wilderness, herbal and qigong/energetic skills, developed through decades of intense wilderness and international journeys. He is currently writing a book about his rich experiences in these realms, entitled Tracks Through Wilderness, Energy, and Spirit, which will be released in 2008. The two workshops he will present are:

**Basic Energetics of Wilderness Awareness**

In this workshop you will be introduced to some of the basics of using your vision in a way akin to both ancient tribes and Masters of some of the internal martial and energetic arts. You will also begin the process of moving in such a way that you blend and fuse far more effectively with the pulsing rhythms of the wilderness.

**Solar, Celestial and Energetic Navigational Skills**

In this workshop you will be introduced to practical and reliable ancient navigational tools. One of these tools is the little-known solar compass, which is surprisingly accurate and can be constructed in minutes. Using the patterns of the stars is also a powerful method for finding your way and even for estimating the passage of time. And finally, the skill of energetic sensitivity can be developed to such a high level that you can find your way to a particular spot or person while you are blindfolded -- believe it or not!

Additional workshops will be presented by New Mexico Wilderness Alliance staff including: Building Community for Wilderness with Land Grants and Acequias. Mary Beath will also be teaching a creative nature writing workshop at the conference.

The conference will be held on October 11 at the Hotel Albuquerque in Old Town, from 9AM to 4PM including lunch. We will also host a book signing period with guest speakers and a special silent auction. The cost of the conference is $50 or $45 for early-bird registration, July 1 through September 12.

*We hope you can make it to celebrate women's voices for wilderness. It just may be our best conference yet!*
Langsenkamp Legacy Lives on in Wilderness Education

Bob Langsenkamp was a dedicated public servant, life-long conservationist and devoted New Mexican. He encouraged his children, his friends and his community: to learn, explore, think, grow and laugh.

An enthusiastic river runner, hiker, snow-shoer and cross-country skier, Langsenkamp explored many of the state's little-known nooks and crannies on boat, bicycle and foot, and was known for humorous stories and photos of these adventures. After coming to Santa Fe from Silver City, where he had roamed the Gila Wilderness and much of the southern part of the state, he continued to discover out-of-the-way treasures in the North, taking family and friends along.

As a key organizer and activist during the 1982 elections, Langsenkamp had both a direct and indirect role in boosting the political careers of US Senator Jeff Bingaman, State Land Commissioner Jim Baca and Bill Richardson. Hired to the Land Office by Commissioner Jim Baca, Langsenkamp worked there for 14 years, retiring in 1996 from his position as Deputy Commissioner. He served as an active elder statesman and conciliator within an often-contentious environmental community, and was widely respected for his evenhandedness, integrity and commitment. He was among the few able to combine a strong understanding of ecological principles and conditions on-the-ground with an understanding of the political process. As a result, his counsel was respected and sought by leading New Mexico officeholders, including Senator Jeff Bingaman, Representative Tom Udall, Land Commissioners Jim Baca and Ray Powell, and numerous state legislators.

He played a key role in New Mexico's land-conservation and Wilderness protection movements for more than two decades. He was, for instance, a founder of the New Mexico Conservation Voters Alliance (CVA) in 1982 and the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance in 1997, and an active member of the Sierra Club. Before he died he had been involved with efforts to support a next generation of leaders, both at NMWA and CVA.

Today, we are very proud to carry on Bob’s vision with the Bob Langsenkamp Fund for the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. Bob left us with a legacy of goodwill, dedication and selfless devotion to the protection of our natural world. With the generous gift of $100,000 by Bob's widow, Sally Strong, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance will continue this devotion.

The fund is designed to support New Mexico Wilderness Alliance’s efforts to educate the community - community leaders, our congressional delegation, activists, editorial page editors and the general public about the value and importance of Wilderness. NMWA will engage our youth in wilderness activities.

The integration of these programs will occur over a period of three years and will explain the value and importance of wilderness for communities and individuals across our state.

Please join us in this important campaign to make Wilderness a long-term investment by making a generous contribution today to the Bob Langsenkamp Fund for the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. Our address is: The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, PO Box 25464, Albuquerque, NM 87125.


Wilderness Education

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance will begin Wilderness Education Program for the students of the Mora and Questa Independent School District this fall. The Bob Langsenkamp Fund for the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance will help us educate young people, grades 7-9, about the value of wild landscapes and wildlife in order to develop a new generation of wilderness and wildlife advocates. This will be a 3 year program that will be implemented within each of the school districts later this fall.

A Visit into the Past, Looking to the Future

Ethel Hess, Publisher, New Mexico Magazine

I'm embarrassed to admit it! I've lived in Santa Fe since September 1981 and my first visit to Chaco Canyon was on May 22, 2008. I don't know why it took me more than 26 years but I do know what got me there. The thought of Chaco Canyon being "infiltrated" by oil exploration and the potential dangers to the Historical Park were abhorrent to me. I needed to see and learn as much as I could.

The weather on the day of our visit was extremely wet – I hesitate to say it was horrible, because we need the rain so badly – and very windy. Luckily, I had "followed instructions" and brought a rain parka and some warm layers along.

We spent a fair amount of time with Deputy Superintendent Russ Bodnar and Ranger J.R. Cornelius in the warmth of a conference room in the Visitors' Center learning some of the park history and some of the modern day challenges facing the park. It was evident that both men had passionate feelings about the park and its future.

Two of the imminent dangers to the park are the development of existing oil leases that are contiguous to the park and the potential upgrading of the road leading into the park.

The argument for road improvement is that it could enhance the economic lives of the residents along its way. Among the arguments against is that it could bring much more traffic to the park than it can handle. Our tour of Pueblo Bonito made the fragility of the ruins painfully obvious. Although, the park rangers are welcoming to tourists, there is neither enough staffing nor adequate infrastructure to handle the potential numbers to which visitation might swell.

The danger of oil exploration is the potential damage to the ruins from seismic activity that may occur.

Why should Chaco Canyon be more protected from more visitors and from oil exploration? The value of Chaco Canyon is in its history and what we can learn from it. History teaches not only about the past, but it leads us to revelations about our present and our future. I am told that "upping" the designation of Chaco Canyon to Wilderness will help protect it. I believe that and wholeheartedly support that!

I want to thank David Ehrman and the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance for waking me up to Chaco Canyon and giving me the opportunity to share some of my thoughts.
In the United States, Acequias are an ancient form of water governance unique to New Mexico and Southern Colorado. The form of Acequia governance that endures today in New Mexico has been practiced for hundreds of years in the historic communities of the state. In fact, New Mexico is the only state that has statutes dedicated to Acequia governance for many thousands of miles of Acequias. Since the mid-1800s, New Mexico has carved out a unique place for Acequias with respect to local governance.

I can recall the traditional Acequia day for our ditch here in Holman, New Mexico. Just 5 miles from my home is where we had our Annual Chacon Cleaning Acequia Project. As a youngster in the community, I assisted on many Acequia cleaning projects. Sometime I got a small fee for my services, but most of the time I was a volunteer. The entire Mora Valley had Acequias and there was no shortage of work. Side-by-side we worked and told stories from the past. On one particular project, I met an individual, Efgracio Vigil, who was a second cousin of mine on my maternal side, who I had never met. (If you spend enough time here in the Mora Valley, you will find that most of the community has some relation or another). Mr. Vigil spent a couple hours with me sharing stories about my grandmother’s family. He had some stories I had never heard about my great grandparents that will be recorded soon. My current home is over 200 years old and has recently been remodeled. Mr. Vigil shared stories with me about when he was a child and his memories of spending time with my grandparents in my house. Memories like these are what make the culture and traditions of this area so fascinating.

Mr. Vigil is a local Parciante in Acequia de la Rito y la Sierra and its lateral, Acequia de la Joya in Chacon, New Mexico. He headed this year’s annual Acequia cleaning crew, otherwise known as Peones, and provided a brief history to the volunteers who worked side-by-side with each of us. At 65, Mr. Vigil did his share of the work and will continue to do so for years to come.

On May 30-June 1, 2008 the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, Wilderness Society, Sierra Club and Wildlife Federation went into the community of Chacon, New Mexico to assist in the annual cleaning of the Acequias (which included 3 miles each of Acequia de la Joya and Acequia del Rito y la Sierra). These Acequias have priority water rights dating back to 1865 and 1870, respectively. With support of these environmental organizations and the local community members (Parciante), there were 15-20 individuals per Acequia that assisted in the annual cleaning. Last year, there were only 5 peones who participated in cleaning the La Joya Acequia.

This effort by the environmental community gave our community a moral boost that had been missing for a very long time. We look forward to having you all back next year. Our Acequias have not been this clean in a very long time and we would like to thank all individuals involved in this year’s cleaning of the Acequias,” said Mr. Vigil.

The Mayordromos of the Chacon Acequias were Elias Duran Jr. (Acequia del Rito y la Sierra) and Benancio Trujillo (Acequia de la Joya). Thanks for all their hard work over the years!

A special thanks to Dr. Estevan Rael-Galvez, who provided a history of the Acequias in New Mexico at Saturday’s Matanza.

**Acequia Related Spanish Terms**

**Acequia** - Traditional and historical ditches in New Mexico that carry irrigated water from the main river to the crops for the people.

**Mayordromo** – Ditch boss and keeper of the water and traditions.

**Peon** – (Hired Individuals or Day Labor) Individuals that are responsible for cleaning tierras or assigned section of land areas on an Acequia.

**Parciante** – An individual that owns water rights on a specific Acequia and is responsible for making sure the Acequia is clean each year. These individuals use the Acequia water for irrigating their crop lands

**Matanza** - Cooking of an animal underground in a fire pit. Matanzas were very important back before there was refrigeration. A whole animal would spoil so the Matanza would have a community share in using the meat.
Building Community in Southern New Mexico

By Nathan Small

With hot temperatures and high winds, the summertime lends itself to inside activities. Despite weather forecasts, local Doña Ana County wilderness supporters continue to visit nearby natural treasures like the Robledo Mountains, and tend to the inside activities through monthly “Wilderness Wednesday” community events.

Like the weather, the political season is also running hot in Doña Ana County and throughout New Mexico. Since the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance does not endorse candidates, the time between now and November is the perfect time to re-examine the concept of wilderness, and ask why it is critical to permanently protect Doña Ana County’s natural treasures with this tried-and-true designation. By educating and engaging the community during this time of change, we can all be ready when the dust settles in November to get on with the important business of giving natural treasures like the Organ Mountains permanent wilderness protection.

Congressional Wilderness does not currently exist in Doña Ana County. However, temporary wilderness protections are in place over 80% of the Citizen’s Wilderness Proposal, and have been for over 15 years. Eight temporary Wilderness Study Areas, clustered in the Organ Mountains, the Potrillo Mountains, and the Robledo and Sierra de Las Uvas Mountains have been managed with temporary wilderness protections for over 15 years. Livestock grazing, hunting, and innumerable other land uses currently coexist with wilderness in these areas.

How can we do what is right for wild public lands and our growing community? First, for gold standard public lands, we need gold standard protections. Wilderness is the best protection available for public lands. This is recognized by many including the Las Cruces Sun News. Second, we must recognize that long term quality of life is heavily tied to protecting natural assets like the Organ Mountains. Communities with designated wilderness nearby become tourism meccas, and at the same time attract businesses whose employees look for a high quality of life. Wilderness nearby also provides young families with multiple outdoor recreation opportunities that are ensured for future generations. Most importantly, the third step to honoring both our natural heritage and our community’s growth is to make permanent the temporary protections already in place.

Building community is at the forefront of these efforts. For over a year now, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and partners of the Doña Ana County Wilderness coalition have offered weekend “Wilderness Walks” designed to make it easy to get outside and explore our region’s natural treasures. Participants have had the chance to climb Mt. Riley in the West Potrillo Mountains, explore the hidden delights of Broad Canyon, and ascend Top of the World Ridge to see Mesilla Valley views that offer a sublime reminder of how truly beautiful this region is.

Community members of all ages participate in “Wilderness Walks.” Our oldest walkers have been in their eighties, and (so far) the youngest was all of 6 months. One energetic couple came on the Robledo Mountains Honeybee hike despite artificial knees (hers) and weekly medical treatments (his). All walkers have had the chance to feel and enjoy the energy of outside. The walks are free of charge, and focus on relaxed enjoyment. We take the time to study animal tracks left in a sandy wash, admire a view, and let the delights of being in wild places seep in.

When temperatures camp out in the triple digits though, “Wilderness Wednesday” becomes a welcome alternative. The idea is simple: combine art, food, entertainment, and education around the theme of wilderness conservation. The response has been very positive, with over 70 people attending the initial Wilderness Wednesday in May and over 70 again at the second in June. With exciting programs like “Living on the Land: Wildlife in Doña Ana County” and artwork from renowned landscape artist David Rothermel, to great food from restaurants like Ono Grindz and Risottos, the foundation has been laid to continue this community building event far into the future.

Strong community support becomes even more important in the face of an extraordinary recent development. Congressman Steve Pearce has introduced legislation to strip wilderness protections from all temporarily protected wilderness areas in Doña Ana County, including the Organ Mountains. Pearce’s bill also creates a new handpicked special-interest committee that would fundamentally change how public lands are sold, including the distribution of money from these sales. Under Pearce’s proposal, money from the sale of public lands could pay for street sweepers, garbage pick up, and other every day services. Although extremely unpopular, the Bush Administration’s idea of selling public lands for short term profits is alive and well in Pearce’s bill.
Otero Mesa Update

By Nathan Newcomer

Background

Otero Mesa, located in south-central New Mexico, is the largest and wildest Chihuahuan Desert grassland left on public lands in America. At over 1.2 million acres in size, the area is home to 1,000 native wildlife species, including mule deer, mountain lion, black-tailed prairie dogs, golden eagles, 250 species of migratory songbirds, and the state’s healthiest pronghorn antelope herd. Thousands of ancient petroglyphs and archeological sites can be found on the volcanic Cornudas Mountains. Additionally, Otero Mesa sits above the Salt Basin Aquifer, which is suspected to be the largest, untapped, fresh water aquifer left in the state of New Mexico.

During the first term of the George W. Bush Administration, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) crafted a plan that would open 95% of Otero Mesa to oil and gas leasing and drilling. Though the area is not expected to hold economically viable amounts of oil and gas, the federal agency approved its final plan without adequately addressing the impacts that drilling will have on the fragile grasslands, wildlife, wilderness characteristics or the fresh water of the area.

Since that time, a diverse coalition of sportsmen, conservationists, ranchers, local elected officials, business leaders and the broader public have banded together to protect Otero Mesa from the shortsighted energy policies of the last seven years. To date, no new drilling has occurred in Otero Mesa. During the public comment period, more than 400 letters were sent into the BLM, including letters from Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Governor Richardson (D-NM), which both underlined the importance of preserving the fresh water aquifer.

By the beginning of April 2008, the BLM had decided that the public comments raised some serious issues that need to be addressed. The BLM plans to rewrite the Environmental Assessment (EA) needed to approve the third well by the end of July 2008. Once the EA is issued, the public will be given another opportunity to review the content and submit comments. The new EA is expected to include more cumulative impact analysis and include an alternative for directional drilling– where the new well would have to be drilled from one of the existing well pads. The new EA is also expected to clarify the BLM’s position regarding waste pits.

Meanwhile, the El Paso City Council and the El Paso County Commission both passed resolutions at the beginning of June calling for the permanent protection of Otero Mesa. These resolutions are the latest in a series of declarations that recognize the importance of Otero Mesa’s water, wildlife and wilderness characteristics.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern

At the beginning of 2008, the Coalition for Otero Mesa began to work on a proposal that would designate over 500,000 acres of this wild grassland as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

An ACEC is an area that the BLM recognizes as having important values, such as wildlife habitat, vegetation, or scenic values, and also needs special management to protect the values from other damaging uses. The BLM designates an ACEC so that it can formally acknowledge the special characteristics of an area and then decide what kind of management is needed to safeguard them.

We are seeking an ACEC designation so that the BLM can formally recognize the values of the vibrant Chihuahuan Desert grassland ecosystem of Otero Mesa and the need to protect them. This is an opportunity to highlight the many natural wonders of Otero Mesa by providing the BLM with substantial scientific documentation and giving the agency another chance to do the right thing. It also provides support for eventual legislation, by showing that Otero Mesa is an important area that needs to be protected for future generations.

To date, several state representatives and senators have endorsed the coalition’s ACEC proposal. Governor Bill Richardson also wrote a letter to the BLM, encouraging the agency to accept the nomination.

In the coming months we should have a sense of what the agency thinks of our proposal. In the meantime, we will continue to work to highlight Otero Mesa’s values and seek to pass further resolutions calling for the permanent protection of this wild and beautiful grassland.

Otero Mesa Service Project Outing
- September 19 - 21
(Note New Dates!)

Join us for autumn in Otero Mesa, where for the past two years the grasses have been 2 feet high! If you’ve never been to Otero Mesa, this is the time of year to be there and experience the wildness of America’s largest Chihuahuan desert grassland.

We will pick up where our last outing left off, by planting cottonwood trees on Alamo Mountain near Alamo Spring, where they once grew naturally. This is truly a wonderful project where we can make a real difference on the ground. We will explore the expansive grasslands, plus Alamo Mountain itself.

Contact Nathan Newcomer (nathan@nmwild.org / 505-843-8696) to RSVP.
The Time for Mining Reform is Now

by Nathan Newcomer

On May 10, 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the General Mining Act into law. Here we are 136 years later and the 1872 Mining Law has barely changed. Mining companies looking to extract silver, gold, uranium and other precious metals from our federal public lands are permitted to do so without paying taxpayers – who own the land and resources therein – a single penny. This antiquated law allows mining companies to purchase public lands for $5 per acre or less and doesn’t even speak to environmental protections, despite mining’s impact on our most precious resource, water. Worse yet is that even if it’s determined that a new mine would have detrimental impacts on our water resources state, local and tribal officials are powerless to stop the mine’s approval.

New Mexico has had its fair share of problems with pollution from mining operations and abandoned mines, many of which still need to be reclaimed. Part of the problem is the shortage of available funding for cleanup and part is the lack of adequate federal standards for mines on public lands. Reforming the 1872 Mining Law can address both these problems, which is critically important now as new mining claims on New Mexico’s public lands are rising significantly. The number of mining claims has risen dramatically in recent years, with a 50 percent hike at mid-2007, compared with January of 2003. To date, there are more than 21,000 active mining claims in New Mexico. Many of these claims lay in the heart of roadless areas, potential wilderness areas and major water drainages and channels.

Fortunately, New Mexico’s two Senators, Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici can right the wrongs of the past 136 years, as chairman and ranking minority member, respectively, of the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Senator Bingaman and his staff are working on a bill right now and not a moment too soon as the clock is running out on the 110th Congress. Senator Bingaman should roll up his sleeves and introduce a hardrock mining bill soon, so his committee and the Senate can finish the long overdue job of mining reform.

Led by Councilor Rey Garduño, the Albuquerque City Council in mid-April unanimously passed a resolution calling for the reform of the 1872 Mining Law. In early June, the normally conservative county commission of Lincoln County also passed a resolution urging action in the Senate. Governor Richardson, along with the governors of Washington and Oregon sent a letter to both Senator Bingaman and Senator Domenici calling for mining reform now.

Updating the 1872 Mining Law isn’t just good for New Mexico’s wildlands, water and wildlife, it’s also good for all American taxpayers. Protecting communities and taxpayers should be a bi-partisan effort, which is why Senator Domenici should also roll up his sleeves and work with Senator Bingaman to ensure mining reform passes the Senate with bi-partisan support this year.

A reasonable reform bill would still allow mining on public lands, but make sure that critical areas are protected from new operations and new claims and that all mines operate to high environmental standards. Revenues from a modest royalty could go toward cleaning up old mines, including abandoned uranium mines across New Mexico, and local and tribal governments could be given a new role in decisions about where mines are appropriate. Surely, after 136 years, our Senators can give us these common sense reforms.

Land Grants in New Mexico

By John Olivas, Northern Director- New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Some New Mexico land grants can be traced back to the original Spanish land grants of the early 1500’s. However, land grants that are currently recognized by the State of New Mexico are the Mexican land grants of the early to mid-1800’s that were recognized by the February 2, 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The New Mexico State Legislature recognizes the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo Day on February 2 every year at each state legislative session. In the 1990’s, the New Mexico Land Grant Forum was established to connect the leadership of the land grants across the state. Forums were hosted by local land grants several times a year and covered several topics ranging from history and legislative strategies. Currently, the Land Grant Forum continues to serve as a place for dialog and strategizing around land grant issues. After about 12 years, the Mexican Land Trust was established to provide technical assistance to land grants building their system of governance.

In 2004, New Mexico recognized land grants as local governments under state law enabling them to regulate land uses on their common lands and to acquire state and federal funds for community development. Specifically, the legislature passed legislation (see Chapter 49 NMSA) recognizing land grants as political subdivisions of the State of New Mexico or local governments. Currently there are 30 land grants that are recognized by the New Mexico Secretary of State’s office as organized entities.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (NMWA) is currently working with land grant communities around proposed wilderness areas throughout the state, specifically in northern New Mexico. Our El Rio Grande del Norte National Conservation Area (NCA) proposal of 303,000 acres, including proposed wilderness areas on Ute and San Antonio Mountains north of Taos, New Mexico, encompass three land grant communities that include:

- San Antonio de Rio Colorado Land Grant
- Sangre de Cristo Land Grant
- Casa de Guadalupe Land Grant

On June 11 and 18, 2008 NMWA staff, met with the Mayor of Questa, Melequia Rael, the President of the San Antonio de Rio Colorado Land Grant, Ester Garcia, and the Questa Economic Development Taskforce to assist in stimulating economic conditions within the community. As part of this effort, the Wilderness Society will provide workshops and an economic development study for Questa in relation to the proposed El Rio Grande del Norte NCA. Please see the advertisement for the Questa Vecindad Chamber of Commerce in this edition of the NMWA Newsletter.
by Craig Chapman

The debate between motorized and non-motorized access within our National Forests continues. The non-motorized-users, or those who enjoy quiet recreation, say that dirt bikes and ATVs are tearing up the land by building illegal trails, and that they are destroying the existing system of trails, disrupting wildlife, damaging riparian areas and degrading fragile soils. The motorized-users counter these statements by saying that they maintain the trails they ride and keep them in excellent shape. This is an opportunity for you to be the judge. Go see some of the trails non-motorized-users frequent. What kind of tracks do you see? What damage is occurring by motorized use on the trails? Do you agree that they ride only where authorized? Do you agree with their position that the trails are in excellent shape?

The following are three examples of trails that are being damaged by motorized access. All three trails are within a 2 hour drive of both Albuquerque and Santa Fe. These trails are in the Santa Fe National Forest, Jemez Ranger District. The directions below are meant to be used in conjunction with the map of the Santa Fe National Forest.

The first is Forest Trail 113. From Los Alamos take State Highway 501 south. From Bernalillo take Highway 550 north. Connect with State Highway 4. Then look for Forest Road 289 and turn south. The trail crosses the road about 1/4 mile south of a cattle guard and is marked on both sides of the road by posts that have “trail” carved on them. The trail goes downhill into Cochiti Canyon. After a short walk down the trail, you will see signs of braiding, erosion and a trail built on a slope that is too steep to be sustainable.

Crosstown Trail is an illegal dirt bike trail that is in a section of forest that is open to cross-country travel. Cross-country travel is one thing, but this trail was built without the required environmental assessment or proper engineering. You can access this trail from Forest Road 289. Exit I-25 at the Santa Domingo exit and take State Highway 22 north. The road is paved until you pass the town of Cochiti. Approximately 3 or 4 miles past the town, Forest Road 289 will veer to the right. Continue until Forest Road 289 intersects with Forest Road 36. Take a left at Forest Road 36 and continue until the road meets Forest Road 268. At this junction there is an old logging road that veers to the southeast. If you look off of this old road to the right you will see several eroded trails going down a steep hill through an aspen grove. This trail can also be reached by driving south on Forest Road 268 from State Highway 4.

These examples were provided by Kevin Stillman. Kevin owns property in the Santa Fe National Forest, Jemez Ranger District and has been working on this issue by himself for several years. Kevin has been watching the forest being destroyed from his front porch. A little over a year ago, Kevin contacted New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and brought this area to our attention. The Jemez Ranger District is an example of one of the worst areas in the state for illegal motorized access and damage to our National Forest. But it is not just an issue of legal and illegal trail. Even the legal trails display damage. It begs the question do OHV/ATV’s belong on these lands? If you agree and would like to get involved to stop the damage to this important natural resource, let us know. Contact Craig Chapman craig@nmwild.org or Michael (Scial) Scialdone scial@nmwild.org or call us at 505-843-8696.
By John Olivas, Northern Director of New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

New Mexico is an area of great beauty and resilience, particularly the northern portion of the state. From snow capped peaks sitting at over 13,000 feet near Taos to the high plateaus rising above 7,000 feet in Santa Fe, northern New Mexico offers some fascinating landscapes.

The Pecos Wilderness, Latir Peak Wilderness and Wheeler Peak Wilderness are located in the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests. These areas are within a few hours drive from Santa Fe and Albuquerque and offer a wide variety of outdoor recreational activities including hiking, fishing, camping and hunting opportunities.

In addition to these Wilderness areas in northern New Mexico, there are also proposed wilderness areas that include El Rio Grande National Conservation Area (NCA), Kiowa National Grasslands and the Sabino-S. Each of these areas possesses their own persona and uniqueness.

El Rio Grande Del Norte National Conservation Area (NCA) Proposal

A portion of the Rio Grande River flows through a sizeable gorge otherwise known as the infamous Rio Grande Gorge. From the Colorado border, the first 50 miles of the Rio Grande is a National Wild and Scenic River, the first area in the US to be designated in 1968. In this area the Rio Grande cuts through remote, volcanic land - a flat lava plateau dotted with the black cones of long extinct volcanoes, generally deserted and undeveloped. Most of the area is accessible only by unpaved tracks that run along the canyon rims on either side of the gorge. The deepest part of the gorge, west of Questa, is part of the Bureau of Land Management-Wild Rivers Recreation Area (WRRA). In the WRRA a paved road runs alongside the Rio Grande for 7 miles and ends at the Wild Rivers Visitor Center at the confluence of the Red River and the Rio Grande. This area is known to the locals as La Junta Point. The Red River flows westwards from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to La Junta Point, joining the Rio Grande 800 feet below the plateau.

El Rio Grande del Norte National Conservation Area (NCA) proposal of 303,000 acres, including proposed wilderness areas on Ute and San Antonio Mountains north of Taos, New Mexico also encompass three land grant communities: the San Antonio de Rio Colorado Land Grant, Sangre de Cristo Land Grant and the Casa de Guadalupe Land Grant. For several generations, the land grant communities have utilized the proposed NCA for grazing, firewood and pinon gathering and outdoor recreational activities. One site within Wild Rivers is Sheeps Crossing, an area traditional used by land grant heirs who have crossed sheep and cattle for over a century. This is the only crossing within the Rio Grande Gorge for ranchers of Questa to cross cattle without having to trailer their livestock.

The three land grants are looking to capitalize on the economic benefit of the proposed NCA if and when it becomes designated. Collaborative efforts with the environmental community on these efforts have already begun. The staff of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is currently working with the community of Questa to assist in capturing economic dollars as a result of the proposed wilderness designation.

The Proposed El Rio Grande Del Norte National Conservation Area is managed by the Bureau of Land Management-Taos Field Office 226 Cruz Alta Road Taos, New Mexico 87571-5983. Phone (575) 758-8851 (575) 758-1620 FAX.

Accessing Wild Rivers Recreation Area:
Wild Rivers Recreation Area can be accessed through Taos on Highway 522 three miles north of Questa. From NM 522 take NM 378 west, through the village of Cerro and into open land towards the gorge that encompasses the Wild Rivers Visitor Center. The 13-mile road crosses a level plain, which enters first into Sheeps Crossing and then to the gorge.

Kiowa National Grasslands

The Kiowa National Grasslands are part of a national grasslands system in north-eastern New Mexico that includes the Rita Blanca, McClellan Creek and Black Kettle. These four grasslands are administered for the U.S. Department of Agriculture by the Cibola National Forest and cover over 263,000 acres scattered throughout New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma.

The Kiowa National Grassland just north of Roy, New Mexico includes 12 miles of the Canadian River Canyon above the Conchas Reservoir. The Canadian River Potential Wilderness located within the Kiowa National Grasslands area is approximately 6,033 acres and encompasses part of the Mills Canyon.

As people entered the grasslands in the mid 1800’s, the Homestead Act of 1862 allowed for settlers to pour into the Mills area. The grasslands provided a promise of a better life for agriculture crops and the grazing of livestock. Within time, the dust bowl era of the 1930’s proved to be overwhelming and many of the settlers were forced to move out of the area. Remnants of old homesteads still exist today and can be seen in and around the Kiowa National Grasslands.

In addition, the grasslands provide forage for livestock and wildlife and provide protection to important watersheds. Protecting this pristine ecosystem should be the priority of all who embrace its beauty. The Kiowa National Grasslands are managed by the Cibola National Forest: 2113 Osuna Road, NE Suite A, Albuquerque, NM 87113 Phone (505) 346-3900

Accessing the Kiowa National Grasslands:
Take 1-25 north approximately 40 miles passed Las Vegas to Wagon Mound. From Wagon Mound head east 45 miles on Highway 120 to the town of Roy. From Roy make a left and head north on Highway 39 approximately 8 miles to Mills. In Mills take Forest Road 600 that extends from Mills above the canyon to the Mills Canyon Campground. The Forest Service has developed camp and picnic grounds in Mills Canyon that are open for public use.

Sabinoso

On June 9, the Sabinoso Wilderness Act of 2008 (H.R. 2632) passed out of the House of Representatives. If passed by the Senate, this will be the second wilderness bill in New Mexico to be created in the last three years. Prior to the Ojoito Wilderness Bill of 2005 there had been no new Wilderness created in almost 20 years.

Sabinoso is located 40 miles east of Las Vegas off Highway 65 in north central New Mexico. Sabinoso is a pristine landscape with long mesas engulfed by Canon Largo with dense stands of pinyon-juniper. With elevations ranging from 4,500 – 6100 feet, the area encompasses many cliff dwellings. Though no official archeological surveys have been conducted, the area has rich history that dates back to the Paleo-Indian era.

Currently there is no public access to the Proposed Sabinoso Area. The only way to access the area is to make arrangements with the Bureau of Land Management, Taos Field Office. The Taos Field Office is making efforts to purchase private lands within the proposed designation, which would provide a right-of-way to gain public access to the area.

To access the area you can contact the Bureau of Land Management, Taos Field Office 226 Cruz Alta Road Taos, New Mexico 87571-5983. Phone (575) 758-8851 (575) 758-1620 FAX.
As oil reaches record prices and Americans are digging deeper into their pockets to fill up the SUV and cool their homes, Congress debates the need for more domestic oil drilling. Meanwhile the airwaves are filled with oil and gas propaganda. We see a smiling woman talking about the so-called “vast” amounts of domestic oil just waiting to supply America with all its energy needs. Commercials tout Big Oil’s commitment to the environment, showing clean rivers, children, and speaking of a bright oil future with vague references to alternative energy. Now, a new breed of commercials shows dramatic shots of the ocean and the technology toys used by Big Oil. Giant offshore rigs with 3-D maps are portrayed under their banner of a strong commitment to the environment. There is even a new ‘reality’ show about roughnecks working in the oil fields. It is all part of an orchestrated effort to glamorize oil development and the altruistic effort to bring oil to average Americans. The goal is to get people, now paying $4 a gallon, to demand that we drill all our public lands, under the illusion that this will bring gas prices down—environment be dammed. It is smart, ruthless and disgraceful. But what do you expect from an industry devoid of soul?

Conservative columnists fill editorial pages with demands that we open our beautiful coastlines and the Arctic Refuge to full-scale oil and gas development, as though prices at the pump would suddenly radically drop. The same Republicans who speak almost daily about morality, religion and values seem to not see a connection with the protection and sanctity of wild nature and the animals that depend on our moral compass for their very survival. Democrats remain quiet and are waiting for a larger majority, but their silence and inaction allows the bully pulpit to be filled with oil drilling hysteria and they are not offering the solid alternatives that exist to the American public. The oil industry continues the drum beat that government regulation and environmental protections are causing our current high gas prices. This is simply part of the big lie that the oil and gas industry is perpetuating on the American people in an increasingly sophisticated manner.

For more than eight years, the Bush Administration squandered the opportunity to free our country from our oil addiction. Rather than put real money into alternatives, they boosted subsidies for the oil and gas industry by billions—even as they recorded record profits. They maintained tax breaks for purchasing Hummers. They have squashed attempts to maintain the solar energy tax credit and to encourage investment in wind power. Currently, H.R. 6049, “The Renewable Energy and Job Creation Act of 2008”, has been introduced to extend investment tax credits for renewables. It would extend the tax credit for solar energy installations for another eight years; wind power production for another year; and the credits for geothermal, wave energy and other renewables for three years. If this bill is not passed, these crucial tax credits will expire at years end and cost Americans thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of investments not made. Time is also lost. The time needed to make these alternative energy sources more mainstream, decreasing their costs. As advances continue, the need for expensive
and dangerous nuclear plants and coal gimmicks is removed, because these alternatives will become competitive price-wise. Jobs are already being put on hold, while some lawmakers push for gas tax holidays or more fictitious domestic drilling.

Despite meaningful advances in alternative energy, the President continues to demand access to the Arctic Refuge—even while oil companies have access and leases to more than 229 million acres of public and private lands in 12 western states (from 1982 to present). That is an area the size of Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona combined. Yet, over the past 15 years the oil and gas industry has produced only 53 days of current US oil consumption and 221 days of natural gas. The reality continues to be that drilling on western federal lands has done nothing to reduce our dependence on foreign sources of oil and gas.

During the Bush Administration, the applications for permits to drill increased 361 percent. Meanwhile, of the more than 68 million acres of federal lands and offshore areas that are currently being leased by the oil and gas industry, only 13 million acres are actually being drilled. The remainder is being stockpiled by an industry that is preparing for an Administration, Democrat or Republican, that will actually be willing to challenge their hardball tactics and the millions they spend on lobbying. Between 2000 and 2004, the oil and gas industry poured more than $75 million into political campaigns, with 79 percent going to Republicans—money that has clearly led to the opening of public lands and to increasing efforts to open the spectacular Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—the crown jewel of our protected public lands. It also reflects the current hard push lawmakers feel with increasing pressure from the oil industry. But it gets worse, between 2004 and 2007, oil company lobbying increased a whopping 62 percent as the oil companies battled democratic attempts to levy new taxes on oil profits. Exxon alone pumped $16.9 million into lobbying in 2007 alone. This lobbying effort helped to kill congressional proposals that would have cost the oil companies $18 billion in new taxes. That could have been new money that potentially Congress could have earmarked for renewables.

While the oil companies stuff their pockets, people like my father who is retired and on a fixed income, suffer. The cost of gas and home heating is causing real problems for everyone. Here in the West we also lose another precious resource, water. In producing oil and gas, large quantities of water are pumped from underground, particularly in coal bed methane development. In the past 15 years, companies have pumped out more than 181 billion gallons of water that is lost to evaporation, even after re-injection. In the arid west, this waste of such a precious resource, along with the toxic mixture that is injected into our aquifers, is unconscionable.

Why is gas $4 a gallon? Well there remain many reasons, but the history of the problem and why we face such tough choices can be traced in part to former President Ronald Reagan and the stubborn nature of Detroit automakers.

Many of us can remember the oil crisis of 1973, when members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC consisting of Arab members of OPEC plus Egypt and Syria) announced, as a result of the ongoing Yom Kippur War, that they would no longer ship oil to nations that had supported Israel in its conflict with Syria and Egypt (the United States, its allies in Western Europe, and Japan). At the same time, OPEC members agreed to use their leverage over world price-setting mechanism for oil in order to dramatically raise prices. Because America and its allies were so dependent on oil, our economies suffered greatly and many people remember rationing and long lines at the gas station. At that time, oil prices shot up. Later the Arabs cut production another 25%. By February of 1974, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, unveiled Project Independence, a plan to make the US energy independent. It’s clear how far that project went.

In 1976, Jimmy Carter came into the White House and energy independence was a major part of his thinking. Carter referred to the energy crisis as “the moral equivalent of war.” He also termed our country “the most wasteful nation on earth.”

Perhaps most famously Carter is remembered for wearing a cardigan sweater and asking Americans to turn down the thermostat. Carter, in his time, faced a combination of economic problems, failed policies of his predecessors, and an Iranian revolution that cut access to some Middle-Eastern oil. Before Carter, America was getting about 20% of its electricity from oil generation. During and in the years that followed the Carter Administration it was reduced to 3%. Carter insisted that US automakers build more fuel-efficient vehicles, with a goal of 27.5 miles per gallon over the next ten years, a requirement passed under Gerald Ford, but put into force by Carter. Carter spearheaded the creation of a cabinet-level Department of Energy, a position that would eventually be held by Governor Richardson during the Clinton Administration. He put in place a Windfall Profits Tax on the oil companies. Carter also began spending millions on alternative sources of energy, including solar. He created tax cuts for solar. But Carter also pushed for oil shale development, which created an initial boom, then bust, but is now resurgent and very environmentally destructive.

Carter had solar panels installed on the White House and working with other
consumption by more than 1.8 million barrels a day and opened the door to energy efficiency and alternative energy solutions.

But the oil companies would not have any of this. Think tanks were created, and soon Americans were hearing there was no energy problem. The birth of the right-wing media appeared during this time. Within two years, James Bath (US representative for Saudi oil baron Salem bin Laden) would funnel cash into the failing business of the son of the former director of the CIA. This money would keep George H.W. Bush’s failing Arbusto Oil Company afloat, and insure that Bush would be in the pocket of the bin Laden and Saudi’s interests for the rest of his life.

After a convincing victory against Carter in 1980, Reagan’s first move as President was to remove the solar panels from the White House. In the weeks that followed, with much bravado, Reagan slashed the funding for most of Carter’s energy initiatives, including cutting more than $100 million from the solar program. Also, the push to reinvent Detroit was over, and the auto industry relished the chance to build a new breed of automobiles—SUVs and bigger, stronger trucks. Fuel-efficiency, which had increased 70% from 1975-1987, was going backwards. Detroit and Reagan were bullish on a vision of a tough and retro America and the Saudi’s could not have been happier.

Today, fuel standards are at their lowest level in 20 years and the US spends about $13 billion per hour on foreign oil. Imports of Saudi oil that had been reduced greatly during the Carter years began to steadily increase as the Saudi’s increased production. Reagan’s hostility towards the environment was highlighted by the appointment of James Watt to Interior Secretary. The Reagan Presidency was the key moment when America’s chance at energy independence was lost. Reagan’s stupidity on energy issues and arrogance about America’s strength led to a new spending habit on foreign oil.

Reagan was also helped by an unlikely source—some of Congress’ most liberal representatives. In 1990, Richard Byran, a Nevada Democrat, teamed up with Slade Gordon, Republican of Washington and proposed lifting fuel standards again over the next decade. Amid the furious debate that followed, with Detroit automakers leading the way, liberal Democrats from automaking states, like Carl Levin from Michigan, joined conservative Republicans like Jesse Helms of North Carolina to block new standards. In total Senators that voted for clean air, Representative Edward Markey’s (D-Mass) attempts to raise fuel-efficiency standards in 2001, 2003 and 2005 went nowhere because the big three in Detroit would have none of it. Today, like a self-fulfilling prophecy, they cannot give cars away while their more fuel-efficient Japanese counterparts are building on their market share of the American and global auto market.

Since 2003, foreign oil suppliers have spent in excess of $13.3 million lobbying the US, with the Saudi’s spending more than $6.6 million. The Saudi’s goals are: to ensure that America remains addicted to oil, that US oil companies continue to get government subsides, and that efforts to promote alternative energy are crushed. Recently, the Bush Administration, referred to by Thomas Friedman as our “addict-in-chief,” was able to assure Exxon, BP, Shell, and other oil companies control over oil fields in Iraq with no-bid contracts. Such access and control of oil fields in our current climate is considered unprecedented. Despite such blatant corruption, Congress continues the push to open our wildest public lands in America, because these federal lands allow the oil industry to gain their greatest profits.

The reality in America remains the same. We have only 3% of the world’s reserves of oil and gas. We cannot drill our way to energy independence. Oil drilling is a filthy, messy process that causes major environmental impacts to the land, groundwater and our oceans. It is an outdated form of energy. Drilling the Arctic Refuge or Otero Mesa will never solve our energy needs, but will degrade our quality of life and destroy invaluable lands and wildlife.

Detroit automakers are finally seeing the light. Production of F-150 trucks is being dramatically cut, sales of new cars are at their lowest level in 15 years, and trucks and big cars are rotting on the lots. Since American carmakers are not as mobile as their Japanese counterparts they have not been able to adjust quickly to the changing demand. Many fear the big automakers could face a real cash crunch, because they bet on trucks and bigger cars, while Honda and Toyota cannot keep their hybrids in stock. In fact next year the Toyota Prius, will unveil their new model that will include solar panels on the roof to power the heat and air conditioning units. GM is now placing their bets on the development of the Chevy Volt. The Volt is scheduled to be released in late 2010. It will go 40 miles on a charge and then be a very fuel-efficient vehicle. You will simply plug it in when you go home. However, challenges for this new technology remain and a battery capable of maintaining the charge and staying cool is still under development. Perhaps it would help if Congress would steer $6 billion towards battery development, rather than hand it out to Shell, Exxon and BP while they rake in record profits.

Perhaps, we will get serious about alternative energy development and put real money into it, rather than pouring billions into nuclear and clean coal alternatives that come with serious environmental consequences, just ask those that mined Uranium and the contamination to groundwater that resulted. Perhaps we will soon give average people subsidies to insulate their homes or buy hybrid cars, rather than continue pouring money into the hands of companies dedicated to keeping prices high and our country addicted to oil.

It’s July and the Porcupine caribou are moving back into the mountains after spending critical weeks on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic coast. They have traveled this route for thousands of years, ensuring that mothers and newborn calves grow strong on the nutritious plants and grasses. It remains a miracle of sorts, tens of thousands of animals congregating on a narrow strip of land, soon to be joined by wolves and grizzly bears raising pups and cubs. They will pass by moose, bands of Dall sheep, musk ox, and millions of birds nesting. A recent study by the federal government’s Energy Information Administration estimated that under the best case scenario, opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would reduce prices by $1.44 a barrel by 2027, if recoverable amounts are truly found. Drilling the continental United States would not affect prices until 2030. So when people tell you alternatives are still years away, remind them that domestic drilling will have no affect for generations to come at the pump.

On Otero Mesa the pronghorn run across the vast grassland, defying the heat. The prairie dogs tend to their young and the raptors search for prey.

The cycle of life continues.

In Washington, our President and the Republican Congress continue to be in lock step with Big Oil. Just last week they introduced yet another bill that screams drill, drill, drill and is framed as working for families and energy independence. This President, who had more than eight years to make us energy independent, instead made us prisoners of the oil industry. He even squandered the chance to use National Security as a means of energy independence. We are all paying dearly for his self-interest and lack of vision. He has enriched his friends as the Vice-President has done with Halliburton. Therefore, in the months ahead, despite the pain we all feel at the pump, we must stay resolute and break the stranglehold Big Oil has over our Congress and our country. We must make sure that the next leader of this country, Democrat or Republican, is a President that will have the strategic vision to make energy independence their number one goal for America.

Many will argue that we must drill, many will use this as a formula to be elected—saying we must drill for the sake of our families or for America. They should be told to stop the lies; we simply must demand a responsible course for America’s energy future. We should use our New Mexico National Labs and lead the way to the world’s energy future. We are already very late in the game, there is no more time for false promises, we must act and act now—oil is simply not our future. Alternative energy and conservation are the future. Our economy depends on it; our wildlands depend on it. The result will be a stronger America with cleaner air, water, and land. Perhaps then, we can enjoy Saudi figs instead of oil, and we will feel the pride and honor in having saved our last great wilderness. Perhaps then, the bear and the caribou can share the land that we all love, in peace.
New Mexico’s Game & Fish Department

By Michael Scialdone

"Wilderness without wildlife is just scenery" – Lois Criler

One of the primary goals of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is to add lands to the National Wilderness Preservation System, giving them the strong protections that come with the 1964 Wilderness Act. For this reason, we spend a lot of time working with (and against) federal land management agencies like the Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the BLM. These agencies manage the habitat on which wildlife depends.

Wildlife management in New Mexico falls under the jurisdiction of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMG&F). The roots of this system, where the state owns and manages the wildlife regardless of land ownership, go back to the feudal system of the Middle Ages. This system was adopted by the early United States. Today, each state has some sort of Game & Fish Department that is responsible for wildlife management, law enforcement, hunting and fishing licenses, trapping licenses, nuisance animals, and management of threatened and endangered species. Here in our state, the exceptions to NMG&F management are the Wolf Reintroduction Program, Wildlife Refuges, and some endangered species which are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

NMG&F has four regional offices around the state and a central office in Santa Fe. Each office has its own director, enforcement officers, and its own budget. Over the years, each office has developed programs to meet the specific needs of the region they oversee. Though each regional office is fairly autonomous, they must contact the Santa Fe office before engaging in a wildlife kill. When farmers, ranchers, or other property owners call to complain about “nuisance animals” that are damaging their property, NMG&F is required to respond. To its credit, NMG&F is looking more frequently to non-lethal solutions like fencing or relocation, but the landowner must agree to the solution. (See page 16 about the Jennings Law and the worst-case scenario it caused.)

The Santa Fe office has a statewide scope and is generally where politics meets wildlife management. They are the contact between the State Game Commission and the regional offices. The Commission is the top tier of authority for NMG&F. It has seven members that are appointed by the governor and it has several public meetings per year to discuss and vote on wildlife issues. The fact that members are appointed through a political process makes the commission subject to great fluctuations. The federal Wolf Reintroduction Program was developed during the reign of Governor Gary Johnson. The Commission he appointed was openly hostile to the program and this lead to some of the arcane state rules that are now stifling the federal program. The Commission under Governor Richardson has been credited with being much more balanced in its approach to wildlife.

In theory, a state’s wildlife belongs to all the people of the state. When a person calls the NMG&F office, their concerns are to be given equal weight regardless of their background (hunter, fisher, bird watcher, concerned citizen, property owner, etc.). In practice, though, any government agency is subject to a mix of politics, science, budget, and citizen involvement. The NMG&F budget comes almost entirely from license fees, especially hunting and fishing. Hunting and fishing are, of course, legitimate uses and it is important that these activities are licensed and managed. Given the dominance these activities have on NMG&F budget, it is often perceived that decisions reflect these interests even at the expense of sound biology or other “non-consumptive” uses of wildlife (such as bird and nature watching). Though their focus is changing, this bias explains past efforts to introduce non-native species like oryx and barbary sheep to increase hunting opportunities. Other states, including our neighbor to the north Colorado, have made strides to change past behaviors. But they are not without controversy. Sometimes they are strangled by politics (see the Jennings Law article). Trapping continues even in places like the Ojito Wilderness, where a trap is as likely to get someone’s pet dog as it is a target species. Even when laws, Commissions, and public sentiments change, as they have here in New Mexico, bureaucracies are resistant to change. In the end, NMG&F will always work on the boundary between the public’s evolving attitude towards nature and what that actually means on the ground.

Like any government agency, trying to sum up the role of NMG&F in a one page article is difficult. The NMG&F is hugely important to the long-term ecosystem health of New Mexico and they are making strides to change past behaviors. But they are not without controversy. Sometimes they are strangled by politics (see the Jennings Law article). Trapping continues even in places like the Ojito Wilderness, where a trap is as likely to get someone’s pet dog as it is a target species. Even when laws, Commissions, and public sentiments change, as they have here in New Mexico, bureaucracies are resistant to change. In the end, NMG&F will always work on the boundary between the public’s evolving attitude towards nature and what that actually means on the ground.

For more information, visit the NMG&F website at http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/index.htm.
Jennings Law Used as a Tool to Extort Public Subsidies

By Jeremy Vesbach

This spring, rancher Neal Trujillo used an ATV and a shotgun to chase down and kill or maim 39 pronghorn antelope on his newly acquired property near Cimarron. The local media gained access to video showing wounded animals that were left behind for the State Game and Fish Department officers to put down. The ensuing outrage spread across the state renewing calls to overturn a statute known as the Jennings Law, named after Roswell senator Tim Jennings. The Jennings Law, passed 11 years ago, allows landowners to kill game animals that they think might be about to damage their crops.

Few defended Trujillo’s actions, but his motives seemed clear from his statements to the press. He claimed the antelope were harming his livelihood as a farmer and he wasn’t getting help from the Game and Fish Department so he took matters into his own hands.

It’s a familiar refrain with the series of massive big-game kills by a handful of angry ranchers over the last decade since the Jennings Law legalized these types of incidents. A closer look, however, reveals that incidents like this are almost never about crop damage but are instead aimed squarely at harvesting more subsidies from our state wildlife agency.

“Every time an antelope takes a bite out of my field, he’s taking money out of my pocket,” Trujillo told the Albuquerque Journal. However a quick review of the facts shows that Trujillo receives subsidies that dwarf the small amount of grazing he faced by an antelope herd.

According to State Game and Fish Department rules, Trujillo was supposed to provide an accounting of how much immediate economic loss he faced. He has never done so. Records show that Trujillo has accepted public crop subsidies of over $176,000 over the last few years. In 2007 alone, he received an additional form of subsidy through private hunting license authorizations that allow him to sell tags that are also good on elk licenses. (Unit wide licenses are over $35,000 just for the pronghorn licenses he received—and he likely made much more from 29 elk licenses on his several properties just last year. In contrast, calculations based on current grazing rates for cattle show that Trujillo was likely facing a maximum impact of between $176 to $640 during the period he was filing complaints with the State Department of Game and Fish—and the actual impact was certainly much lower because Game and Fish conservation officers were hazing the antelope herd away from his fields.

It gets even more nonsensical. Trujillo was offered economic and labor assistance from the State Game and Fish Department to improve the fence around his newly acquired fields and keep antelope out. He declined the offer of fencing assistance. The State Game and Fish Department offered to bring in licensed public hunters to reduce the antelope herd in a special hunt, where he would receive complete liability shield under state statute. He declined this offer as well.

In all, the State Game and Fish Department contacted Trujillo 24 times over a 36-day period with numerous offers of public assistance. It would be easy to conclude that he was simply being unreasonable and irrational, except for one final fact. The 11-year old Jennings Law also imposed a fee on all people who buy New Mexico hunting licenses, creating a fund to assist landowners in wildlife-proof fences and other subsidies. Trujillo wanted the Game and Fish to build and maintain a massively expensive elk-proof fence on his new property from this fund. (Keep in mind that New Mexico is a fence-out state where landowners are responsible for keeping other people’s cattle off their property.) Just asking clearly wasn’t working to get this subsidy so he tried upstream the ante and crossed the line of decency in pursuing the publicly built and financed fence by starting to kill wildlife. Unfortunately, this strategy of killing big game until you get a better offer does often work.

In May 2003, ranch manager David Sanchez started shooting elk for eating grass on his property, killing 20 and threatening to kill more until the Department of Game and Fish offered to build an elk proof fence around his property and pay him $5,000.

In 2000, rancher Narcisco Baca requested nearly 10 times as many private elk licenses to sell as the Department of Game and Fish deemed to be sustainable or reasonable. He killed 64 elk, declined offers to build a fence and keep elk out of his property, but kept pushing for more permits to sell.

Currently, landowner Brad Latham near Grants, New Mexico claims he has killed over 100 elk, although the Department of Game and Fish can confirm only a fraction of the kills he has claimed. Despite Latham’s claim that he has too many elk, he has refused to allow public hunters on his property to reduce the herd. He has refused offers of public subsidies to improve his fence. Why is he refusing offers of public assistance? In statements to the Game Commission last summer he complained that he was not getting enough “unit wide” elk licenses to sell. (Unit wide licenses allow him to sell tags that are also good on public land).

It may sound strange to call these massive big game killings “negotiations,” but that is exactly what they are. The subsidies that can be gained from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish are so massive and so attractive sometimes the lines of decency get crossed in pursuing them.

There are a few bad apples in every bunch and the massive kill-offs of wildlife by a few ranchers do not represent ranchers as a whole. However, it is incumbent upon ranchers as a whole to remind their peers that they all owe something back to the public after accepting public assistance in terms of reduced grazing fees on public lands, crop subsidies from the farm bill, or hunting permits to sell on the open market to non-residents at the expense of resident hunting opportunity. All these forms of assistance come at a cost to the public, and it is not unreasonable to expect a sense of responsibility towards publicly owned wildlife in return for these subsidies we provide. The most obvious way to display that sense of public responsibility is for ranchers themselves to support reform of the Jennings Law, as many already have.

To make a difference on this issue, call your legislator and ask them to reform the Jennings Law and call the State Department of Game and Fish and ask them to keep up their recent progress in making sure that the subsidies they offer landowners do not accidentally encourage wildlife conflicts.
For many, one of the great sights on Otero Mesa is the small, scattered towns of black-tailed prairie dogs. Once numbering in the hundreds of millions, the species has suffered a 95% decline and is now extirpated from Arizona. Currently found from southern Canada to northern Mexico, the species occurs generally in small and scattered populations.

The Otero Mesa area has more than a dozen towns, but now may have less. Our staff and volunteers have found a decrease in the activity at the towns in recent months. One colony west of Alamo Mountain has not shown any prairie dog activity in months and rumors are that it was poisoned. Another colony north of Alamo showed little activity on a recent visit.

A group of students and teachers from Carlsbad visited these two towns as part of a science summer program. Again, nothing was found at the first. At the second town only a single young prairie dog was seen running from burrow to burrow and finally entering one. It seemed odd that the young prairie dog would be out alone at that time of day and also that it was going to several different burrow entrances. The students investigated further to find out why. Numerous burrows were filled in with dirt and mixed in with the dirt were broken beer bottles. Further examination also uncovered many spent rifle shells (and at least one live round).

It is obvious what is happening. Someone or more likely, several people, have taken it upon themselves to kill off the few remaining prairie dogs on the mesa. Sadly, this is not illegal but it is wrong on many other levels.

Over 170 other vertebrate species depend on prairie dogs to one degree or another, either as a source of food, or using the burrows and the landscape that prairie dogs modify. But most important, prairie dogs have a right to live and this is being violated with guns, beer bottles and probably poison. While many ranchers would hate to see the species listed as endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, others have taken it upon themselves to kill the species in their area, in case that happens. Listing the species as endangered or threatened might restrict some ranching activities. Some are being proactive and destroying prairie dog towns before that happens, and as a result, greatly increasing the chances for it to be listed as endangered.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) which manages much of this land needs to take action. Bill Childress is the new manager of the Las Cruces office and should be contacted on this issue. He can be reached by mail at:

Bill Childress, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Las Cruces District Office
1800 Marquess Street
Las Cruces, NM 88005-3370

Or by phone at: (575) 525-4300
Or by email at: bill_childress@nm.blm.gov
George Bush's controversial No Child Left Behind is panned by almost anyone who knows a thing about it. Many Senators and Representatives voted for it, fully believing it was the best thing to move American kids forward. Even critics however, admit that for the most part, most of the people pushing for the program were pushing for it for the right reasons. Whether ultimately it fails or not, many people bet their lives and reputations on it because they honestly believed it was what public education needed.

But what about the oil and gas program of "leave no teacher behind!" The program is called the Center for Energy Education and is run in Artesia, and sponsored by Yates Petroleum Corporation and Mack Energy Corporation. Yates/Mack has run this summer school for a number of years designed for teachers in New Mexico to come to Artesia, spend a week and learn about the energy business. Well, the oil and gas business anyway. The program that they developed was based on a similar (and more balanced) one run from the Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colorado.

The plan is to invite teachers to apply and then accept about 50 of them from around the state but mostly from the east and southeast. The teachers were paid $100 per day to attend the classes which were made up of classroom lectures and a one-day field trip. At the end of the class they were required to prepare a lesson plan regarding oil and gas. That minor fact was left out. Otero Mesa? Teachers were asked who had been there. No one raised their hand. Then a photo was shown of dry grassland of Otero Mesa and people were asked who really thought the area was really worth saving. Knowing only the oil and gas side of the issue and being shown a photo of dry grassland, it is doubtful many people there would think Otero Mesa was worth bothering about.

Sadly, some of the teachers came with the same ideas that Yates/Mack was trying to foist on them and agreed with whatever drivel was put out. Others who knew the other side were made to feel very uncomfortable and kept quiet. Not the intended plan.

There was of course, no discussion of alternate energy except to talk about how it wouldn't work—the technology wasn't there, it would be more expensive, etc. Environmental concerns were also pooh-poohed. There is no global warming, no destruction of the rainforest, etc. And the environmentalists who were pushing for clean air, oil and gas restrictions, and better health for people! Well, these people were just trouble-makers who either had a hidden agenda behind all their trouble-making ways or were just a bunch of idiots with too much time on their hands. Otero Mesa? Teachers therefore it is renewable just like solar and wind. In fact, the process would take hundreds of thousands, millions of year to make new deposits of oil and gas. That minor fact was left out.

Teachers who are teaching the youth of New Mexico, many of whom had a very limited background in science, left the workshop thinking that there would always be oil and gas resources.

So what does Yates/Mack get out of all of this? From their standpoint hopefully a bunch of teachers who will go back to the classroom and spout off the same "facts" to impressionable students. A pamphlet from the Independent Petroleum Association of New Mexico was touted as a great summary of the issue. The problem with all this is not that Yates/Mack is presenting the side of the oil and gas industry. The problem is that the negative side of oil and gas was glossed over and the downsides of alternate energy sources were extremely hyped. The pamphlet, New Mexico Oil and Gas Facts provides numerous examples.

An example of how problems with oil and gas are glossed over dealt with water contamination. A long discussion was provided about sources of natural contamination and minimal mention of what the industry has done to aquifers. They even state "Oil and natural gas producers have grown accustomed to occasionally taking blame for damage not of their doing." While society will need a mosaic of energy sources, reading the pamphlet one would think that the only choice would by hydrocarbons.

We face perhaps the biggest challenge in the history of civilization in trying to continue having adequate energy supplies. Over the years we have become dependent on oil and gas. Even oilman and President George W. Bush has said we are "addicted to oil." Hard decisions are going to have to be made and this nation and others are going to have to devote resources to developing alternate energy forms as we cannot drill our way to energy independence. Our current plan only makes us more dependent. But industry, in this case Yates and Mack, are only adding to the problem by presenting a program that doesn't tell all the sides, ignores accepted facts and views this opportunity as a way to propagandize and not educate. And in the process, this makes our nation and our wild places ever more vulnerable.
Solar Inspiration

By Jean Eisenhower

I’ve used a solar oven now for two decades, and there was one year of my life when a solar oven was the only real way I had to cook my food. I could have used my fireplace, but even in the winter, the fireplace wasn’t nearly as easy.

I’m back in the city now, but when I moved to the country in 1994 and began using my solar oven every day, I realized I loved to go outside to turn the oven. I worked at my computer all day and watched nature through my windows, and if it weren’t for that oven, the habits of a lifetime could have kept that window between nature and me. But solar cooking saved me. It “forced” me outside, and so I went.

First, I noticed the clouds. Were they moving this way and might slow down my cooking? Or would they pass me by? And look at that raven flying with the hawks!

I noticed the heat, I noticed the wind – powerful where I was on the western bajada of the Chiricahua Mountains. Time to set a chair beside the oven so a dust devil doesn’t try to tip it over. The vultures are rising this morning. And phoebes are making their nests again in the eaves. The day, the sunshine feels wonderful. So different from standing before a stove!

The solar oven forced me to take regular small breaks in my workday – something I’d known for years I needed to do, had been counseled about, but just couldn’t do. My German work ethic was too strong to allow such “decadent” behavior. What hundreds of dollars of therapy couldn’t accomplish, my solar oven did: it attracted me with its practicality, then drew me outside so the day could whisper its seductions: Isn’t the sunshine lovely on the skin? Wouldn’t it be nice to sit for a spell in the sun and close your eyes? Just a moment… And I did. Then I returned to my work, peaceful, satisfied, knowing that life is good, Nature cares for us, and I’m even learning how to care for myself a little better.

They cook! They save money! Food never burns, and it often tastes better. And the ovens inspire us to quietly sit for precious moments in the sun.

Jean Eisenhower puts on free solar oven workshops around New Mexico about once a month. Her website is www.SolarInspiration.net.

SWEET POTATO DESSERT

Easy dessert sweet potato (for one or two): one medium sweet potato – sliced, 2-3 dates – chopped, and a few pecans, all tossed together and drizzled with light oil. Place all in covered cookware appropriate for either campfire or solar oven. Bake/stew until potato is soft. Enjoy!

Jean Eisenhower

WILD RECIPES WANTED

Please send us your favorite backpacking or camping recipes to be considered for the 2009 Wild Guide.

Email recipes to Craig@NMWild.org

DEADLINE: August 15, 2008

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Profits support third world alternatives to deforestation

Contact Jean Eisenhower, PO Box 1873, Silver City, NM 88082 575-534-0123

NM State Park Events

Rockhound Music in the Park - Saturday, July 19, 06:00 PM - 08:00 PM
Come and kick up your heels to some great entertainment sponsored by the Friends of Rockhound State Park. Bring your lawn chairs and join us in the fun. Popcorn and light beverages are for sale at a small price.

Fees: No Entrance Fee
Contact: Visitor Center (575) 546-6182

Living Desert Full Moon Walk - Saturday, August 16, 07:45 PM - 08:15 PM
Although the entrance time is limited to a half-hour, visitors stroll through the zoo by the light of the full moon. This is a beautiful time to experience the park.

Fees: Regular Entrance Fee
Contact: Kathryn Jones (575) 887-5516

Bottomless Bubble Fest - Saturday, August 30-Monday, September 1 08:00 AM - 05:00 PM
This event is designed for and around scuba divers and their families. Activities include: a “dive poker” contest, underwater games, snorkeling, swimming, beach volleyball, nature hikes, Ranger talks and more. Reservations for camping are recommended.

Fees: Regular Entrance Fee
Contact: Steve Patterson 575-624-6058
Southwesterners Are Wild About Wolves!

New Mexico and Arizona residents overwhelmingly support having Mexican gray wolves back in the wilds of their state, with 69 percent of New Mexico respondents and 77 percent of Arizona respondents supporting the reintroduction of Mexican gray wolves into their public lands, according to a new poll released on June 16. The poll was commissioned by 19 conservation and wildlife organizations, including the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance.

The poll, conducted by Research and Polling, Inc., reveals important values behind support for the wolf reintroduction program. People think wolves are beautiful, wild animals. When asked to choose between two statements, 64 percent of NM respondents and 76 percent of AZ respondents chose “the wolf is a benefit to the West and helps maintain a balance of nature,” compared to 11 percent in NM and 13 percent in AZ who opted for “the wolf kills too many elk, deer and livestock and does more harm than good.”

Mexican wolves roamed the Southwest freely until a federal predator-control program wiped them out about 80 years ago. Mexican wolves were given protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1976, and their return to their wild homeland began with the release of three family groups of lobos in 1998. Wildlife biologists set a goal of at least 100 wolves, which they predicted would include 18 breeding pairs, by 2006.

The removal and killing of wolves that come into conflict with livestock has resulted in a population decline in three of the last four years. As of the latest population survey, in early 2008, only 52 wolves and three breeding pairs were alive in the wilds of the Southwest. Wildlife biologists and conservationists have urged the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to change the way it manages wolves to better prioritize wolf recovery.

The poll shows that the public also supports the recommended changes. Southwest voters favor more protection for wolves under the Endangered Species Act; they think the government should do what it takes to keep wolves alive versus the current focus on killing and removing wolves that prey on livestock; they think ranchers should be responsible for removing or rendering inedible cattle that die of non-wolf causes on public lands so wolves are not attracted to nearby live cattle; and they support providing funds to compensate willing public lands grazing permitees for the permanent retirement of public grazing allotments in high conflict areas on public lands. There are a number of ways to solve this problem, but continuing the status quo, with a focus on killing and removing wolves, is not an option.

Clearly, it is important for agency decision-makers and elected officials to understand the views of voters in New Mexico and Arizona. A copy of the survey is available at www.rpinc.com.

New Mexico Game and Fish Commissioners - All
http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/commission/index.htm

Dr. Benjamin Tuggle
Southwest Regional Director
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM 87103-1306
RDTuggle@fws.gov

Congressman Tom Udall
1410 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20215
http://www.tomudall.house.gov

Senator Jeff Bingaman
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
senator_bingaman@bingaman.senate.gov

Tom Arvas, Chairman
New Mexico Game and Fish Commission
7905 Spain, NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109

New Mexico Game and Fish
http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/commission/index.htm

On April 23, the Senate of the Associated Students of the University of New Mexico passed a resolution, drafted by UNM Wilderness Alliance, that affirms the importance of the school’s adopted mascot, the lobo.

This event represents another step in UNM Wilderness Alliance’s mission to build a long-delinquent coalition of support for its mascot. Any students, staff, faculty, or alumni who would like to help in this effort, please contact unmwild@unm.edu.

It is not too late to recognize the values of courage and leadership that the wild lobo has represented for almost ninety years in the history and heritage of New Mexico.

--Phil Carter
President, UNM Wilderness Alliance

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President, UNM Wilderness Alliance
**SERVICE PROJECTS**

**July 18, 19, 20, 2008—Valle Vidal Service Project**

**THE PLACE:** Valle Vidal is a place of high mountain meadows, slopes filled with aspen and fir, ponderosa covered mesas, and clear flowing streams. Wildlife is abundant here, including New Mexico’s largest elk herd. Most people learned of the Valle Vidal when the looming threat of coal bed methane development raised its profile. A high-pitched grassroots effort lead to protection for the area through a legislative mineral withdrawal, keeping the drill rigs at bay.

**THE PROJECT:** Building exclosures at Comanche Creek to protect vegetation.

**MEALS:** Bring all you own.

**Contact:** Glenda Muirhead at 505-281-2925, g.muirhead@usfamily.net, for more info.

**Driving distance:** 4 hours north of ABQ; 1 hour north of Taos.

**August 2, 3, 4, 2008—Jemez River Service Project**

**THE PLACE:** The Jemez River is the main drainage out of the Valles Caldera in the heart of the Jemez Mountains.

**THE PROJECT:** Due to its popularity, keeping the Jemez River Canyon from showing the signs of overuse is quite the task for the Forest Service. We will assist them in their work by cleaning up and naturalizing the numerous campsites along the river. These campsites are too close to the river and are impairing its riparian qualities. We will camp near the worksite.

**MEALS:** Provided except for lunch.

**Contact:** Michael Scialdone at 505-843-8696, scial@nmwild.org for more info.

**Driving distance:** 2 hours north of ABQ; 2 hours west of Santa Fe.

**August 15, 16, 17, 2008—Valles Caldera Service Project**

**THE PLACE:** Back to the Jemez Mountains! The Valles Caldera National Preserve was established in 2000 after the federal government purchased the Baca Ranch. It is managed by the Valles Caldera Trust. The Trust is required by law to allow cattle ranching to continue. They highly encourage scientific research and monitoring that will guide management in the future.

**THE PROJECT:** This project is being run by Albuquerque Wildlife Federation. Bill Zeedyk of AWF has fostered a good relationship with the Trust, making this project possible. Though open to the public, access to the preserve is strictly controlled and fees can be steep. Coming on this project is a great opportunity to stay on the preserve without charge and access areas much of the public does not get to see.

**MEALS:** Provided except for lunch.

**Contact:** Carrie Levin, Carson National Forest staff archaeologist, will lead a tour of cultural sites on Sunday.

**Driving distance:** 2 hours north of ABQ; 2 hours west of Santa Fe.

**August 15, 16, 17, 2008—Valle Vidal Archeology Service Project**

**THE PLACE:** The Valle Vidal covers 100,000 acres of high mountains, forested mesas, streams, and meadows in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains north of Taos.

**THE PROJECT:** Many of the historical structures on the Valle Vidal are in need of stabilization. The Forest Service will make a priority list and we assist in this preservation effort. Carrie Levin, Carson National Forest staff archaeologist, will lead a tour of cultural sites on Sunday.

**MEALS:** Provided, except for lunch.

**Contact:** John Olivas at 505-751-7309, john@nmwild.org for more info.

**Driving distance:** 2 hours north of ABQ; 2 hours west of Santa Fe.

**August 22, 23, 24, 2008—Red River Watershed Service Project**

**THE PLACE:** This watershed is in northern New Mexico in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. We have partnered with Amigos Bravos who are working to restore it from historical abuses.

**THE PROJECT:** Past projects have included closing off illegal ATV routes and fencing off riparian areas. The Forest Service is still prioritizing projects for this summer.

**MEALS:** Provided (with the possible exception of lunch).

**Contact:** Rachel Conn at 505-758-3874, rconn@amigosbravos.org for more info.

**Driving distance:** 3 hours north of ABQ, 1 hour north of Taos.

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**Action Needed on BLM Management Plan Revision.**

The Rio Puerco Field Office (RPFO) of the BLM is based in Albuquerque. They are responsible for public lands along the I-40 corridor and up the Rio Puerco valley to Cuba. Earlier this year, the RPFO initiated their Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision. The RMP is their guiding document from which management decisions are made. They are revised about every 20 years and set the tone for everything from oil & gas development to off-road vehicle issues to conservation and restoration.

This is a great opportunity for you to be involved in the protection of our public lands. Write the RPFO a letter or an email stating:

- You would like to be kept informed of the RMP process as it develops
- You support protection of Citizen’s Wilderness Inventory Units as submitted by the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
- You support protection of proposed ACEC’s (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern) as proposed by the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
- Add any personal knowledge of BLM lands in their district you may have and why they should be protected.

Letters need to be sent by the end of September and can be emailed to nm_rpfo_comment@blm.gov or mailed to 435 Montañito NE, ABQ NM 87107. Joe Blackmon is head of the RMP Revision process and can be reached at 505-761-8918.

To see maps and learn more about the RMP Revision process, go to: http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/fo/Rio_Puerco_Field_Office/rpfo_rmp_revision.htm

Or you can call or email Michael Scialdone at our ABQ office at 843-8696 x1010, scial@nmwild.org.
This highly practical and empowering training is a synergy derived from profound ancient skills and the best of modern methodology. It is based on decades of real-world experience out in the field in rugged wilderness areas and intense international arenas, and also draws upon professional Medical Qigong and Chinese/Western herbology studies.

People from various walks of life express much enthusiastic feedback about the cutting-edge awareness and wilderness thrival workshops, and even highly experienced wilderness explorers and martial artists have been amazed at how much they have learned through personalized instruction:

“I have a lifetime of immersion with Nature, and years of studies with the Inner Technologies of Huna, energy work with Qigong, and Wilderness Awareness Teachings with Tom Brown Jr. But this year I had the opportunity to enter the wilderness and experience some real Magic.” DG ~CA

Watch for the two Workshops at the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance Annual Conference in October: Basic Energetics of Wilderness Awareness and Solar, Celestial and Energetic Navigational Skills. These will introduce you to unique practical tools leading to increased sightings of wildlife, enhanced safety, and a deeper level of Fusion with all that is around you. For further information about life-empowering training now available in your area visit

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You can make Wilderness a part of your legacy too.

“\textbf{I included New Mexico Wilderness Alliance in my Estate Plan because I feel a responsibility to Wilderness. Young people should enjoy the same places that have touched my life.}”
- Bob Howard

To find out how, contact David Ehrman
(505) 216-9719 or david@nmwild.org

\textbf{SEE YOU SOON}

from Tripp Killin

While some people don’t like long good-byes, I’m not a fan of good-byes in general. That’s one of the reasons that, even though I’m leaving my position as Associate Director of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance in July, I won’t be saying goodbye.

It’s been four years since I came on board to manage the fund-raising for the Alliance. In that time I’ve been amazed by our growth: in our membership, in our financial stability & reporting, and, most importantly, in our effectiveness.

And we’ve been incredibly effective! The Ojito Wilderness in 2005, the Valle Vidal in 2006, the historic opportunities in Taos and Doña Ana Counties that ramped up in 2007, and the Sabinoso Wilderness passing the U.S. House of Representatives just last week (to name just a few). I doubt any conservation group could boast a more comprehensive or consistent record.

While I’d love to take credit for all this, it is our campaign staff, our board, and critically, our membership that make these successes possible.

We are now one of the largest state-based wilderness organizations in the West. With over 5,400 members we are a powerful force for protecting the wild places of our spectacular state. From Carlsbad to Aztec and from Silver City to Raton, people are engaged and involved in protecting the wild public lands that belong to us all. From outside the state, it’s been my honor to write thank you notes to supporters in California, Texas, Washington (both the state and DC), Illinois, Florida and Oklahoma, all of who love New Mexico deeply, even if it is not their current home.

And this is why, even though I will no longer be an employee, I won’t say goodbye. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance will always hold a special place in my heart, and I’ll remain a dedicated member, volunteer and donor.

The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is an amazing organization. It is a wonderful group of staff, board and membership who have come together to save the best, forever.

Who could say goodbye to that?

\begin{itemize}
\item [\textbullet] $25 – Individual
\item [\textbullet] $100 – Contributing
\item [\textbullet] Other $__________
\item [\textbullet] $30 – Family
\item [\textbullet] $500 – Lifetime
\item [\textbullet] THIS IS A GIFT MEMBERSHIP FROM \__________
\item [\textbullet] $50 – Supporting
\item [\textbullet] $10 – Student/Senior
\end{itemize}

Join \textbf{New Mexico Wilderness Alliance} Today! You’ll not only help preserve New Mexico’s Wild Places for your own enjoyment… but you’ll help ensure that future generations may enjoy them too.

\textbf{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.

Mail your Tax Deductible Donations to:
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
PO Box 25464
Albuquerque, NM 87125-0464

Questions?
505/843-8696
THE 2008 NEW MEXICO WILDERNESS CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 11
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TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS
CITIZEN WRITER, NATURALIST

WILDERNESS WORKSHOPS:

- Creative Nature Writing by Mary Beath
- Basic Energetics of Wilderness Awareness by Robert Bawol
- Birds of New Mexico by Roberta Salazar
- Solar, Celestial and Energetic Navigational Skills by Robert Bawol
- Building Community: Land Grants & Acequias and more.

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OR CALL 505-843-8696

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Albuquerque: October – 24 & 25, 7pm at the KIMO THEATER
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Tickets per evening – $15/adult, $5/youth or $25 both evenings per adult.
KIMO tickets, call Ticketmaster: 883-7800
Film schedule – http://www.riversandbirds.org • photo by: Geraint Smith

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chamber@questavecindad.org • 575-586-9100
questavecindad.org

Come to the Grand Opening of NMWA’s Conservation Library
Monday, August 18th 8:30am at our Albuquerque office Enjoy free wi-fi, coffee, tea, and morning snacks. The library and conference room will be remain open daily to our members (except Tuesday mornings) for free coffee and wi-fi.

Do you need to renew? Check your membership expiration date located above your name and address.

Photo: Cheryl Himmelstein
Mary Beath
Author, Illustrator, Naturalist
Linda Rundell
BLM State Director

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