

From the Director: Chaco Canyon: An Ancient Treasure at Risk



Pueblo Bonito from the top of the cliff behind it, Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Image credit: National Register of Historic Places / CC BY-SA 3.0.

Picture yourself standing on the edge of a high golden mesa, looking down on the ruins of a great city. Chaco Canyon once was home to one of the greatest civilized settlements of its time, a center of culture, religion, and commerce. Today it is a sacred and beautiful place of mystery, which has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is part of our National Park system. It remains an important cultural icon for the many native peoples with ancestral ties to the region.

You attempt to take in the pervasive silence, broken only by wind sighing through sagebrush and the occasional hawk's call. You try, but your desire to commune with the peace of Chaco is disrupted by the constant chugging motors of oil derricks. You turn to view the distant horizon, but the sight is marred by the dusty rooster tails of trucks racing along dirt roads that scar the landscape for miles between scraped dirt well pads, leaving a persistent ugly haze.

When the sun sets, Chaco's magic as a center of ancient astronomy should surround you. However, its once-pristine dark night skies are now illuminated by thousands of gas flares and high-intensity sodium lights, scattered across the landscape like a terrible new constellation that mocks the real stars. Due to rampant extractive development on its doorstep, Chaco's night sky will never be truly dark again.

This frightening scenario is already underway and could become a reality in the very near future if something isn't done to protect the values of this irreplaceable archaeological treasure. Every year, extractive industry moves closer to the borders of Chaco Culture National Historical Park. The area around the park has some of the highest density of oil and gas development in the entire state.

At New Mexico Wild, we picture a different, better future for Chaco Canyon. We believe it must be preserved for future generations as intact as possible, without the degradation that is inevitable whenever extractive industry runs unchecked. We want to protect Chaco's night skies and ensure that native people will be respected in their desire for this sacred ancestral place to maintain its peace and majesty. We want to see a landscape where wildlife can range safely and undisturbed. And we are not alone in this vision of a better future for Chaco Canyon.

In May, the "Chaco Protection Act" was introduced by Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich. This legislation would create a permanent mineral withdrawal for Bureau of Land Management lands totaling 909,000 acres extending roughly ten miles beyond Chaco Culture National Historical Park. We are one hundred percent supportive of this legislation. Indeed, we have been advocating for such a bill and working toward this for many years.

This bill represents a historic step forward to permanently protecting the area's rich cultural heritage, world-class archaeological resources, and sensitive natural landscape. New Mexico Wild is proud to stand in solidarity with the All Pueblo Council of Governors (representing 19 sovereign Pueblo nations) and the Navajo Nation supporting this legislation. And we are profoundly thankful to Senators Udall and Heinrich for their leadership.

Sincerely,

Mark Allison, Executive Director



Wilderness Ranger Program Grows in 2018

It's that time of year again! Last year around this time, *New Mexico Wild* welcomed six seasonal wilderness rangers to our staff. After a successful and fun field season, we are happy to announce our program is growing in 2018, thanks to a continuing partnership with the Forest Service Southwestern Region.

This summer, ten wilderness rangers will be working in wilderness areas across the Cibola, Santa Fe, Carson and Lincoln National Forests. Their work will include wilderness character monitoring, trail assessments, trail clearing, campsite rehabilitation, public outreach and wilderness education.

We are thrilled to have another excellent and enthusiastic crew this season. Atieno Ouma, Wilderness Ranger in the Pecos Wilderness on the Santa Fe National Forest says, "As an outdoorswoman of color, I have never felt so supported and included as I do working for *New Mexico Wild*. I can't believe it is my job to protect and serve our great state's wild places."

Volunteer engagement is an integral aspect of this partnership. Volunteering is a great way to contribute to wilderness stewardship,

learn about our Wilderness Ranger Program, and get outside! If you would like to volunteer, contact info@nmwild.org. And, if you see our rangers on the trail, take a moment to say hello!



New Mexico Wild's new Wilderness Rangers show off their patches and their can-do attitudes! From left to right: Becky Fitzpatrick, Lincoln NF; David Greene, Santa Fe NF; Ben Mortensen, Carson NF; Andrew Reville, Cibola NF; Will Ribbans, Cibola NF; Ezra Sage, Santa Fe NF; Atieno Ouma, Santa Fe NF; April Fuentes, Lincoln NF; Rhett Spencer, Carson NF; Zack Bumgarner, Santa Fe NF. Photo: Joelle Marier.

New Mexico Wild

What We Do

Each day, you and resourceful New Mexico Wild staff members fight for your wild public lands. We...

- Monitor New Mexico's federal public lands and Wilderness Areas to hold management agencies accountable for following the law and minimizing abuses
- Conduct field research to identify and document lands with wilderness characteristics that are currently unprotected and under threat from off-road vehicles, oil and gas, timber harvesting and development
- Train and coordinate volunteers for service projects on public lands
- Build broad community support for wilderness protection and cultivate new stewards through education, outreach and service projects
- Advocate for the permanent protection of our dwindling special wild places in New Mexico by building grassroots campaigns and working with our federal congressional delegation and the executive branch



New Mexico Wild

Gifts of any amount are greatly appreciated!

I want to join the Wild Ones as a monthly donor.

Bill my credit card for the amount selected below.

- Protector \$10 monthly (\$120 Annual)
 Advocate \$20 monthly (\$240 Annual)
 Defender \$40 monthly (\$480 Annual)
 Wilderness Warrior \$83 monthly (\$1,000 Annual)
 Other amount _____

I want to give a single gift:

- \$25 \$100 \$1,000
 \$35 \$250 Other amount _____
 \$50 \$500

Yes! I want to support Wilderness in New Mexico Join at a higher level and enjoy these great gifts!

Give \$100 or more to receive a Wolf Stamp from our collectible series.

Give \$240 or more to receive a Wolf Stamp and a copy of our book *Wild Guide: Passport to New Mexico Wilderness*.

Give \$480 or more to receive a Wolf Stamp, a *Wild Guide*, a hat with our New Mexico Wild logo, AND a color logo water bottle!

Give \$1,000 or more to receive a *Wild Guide*, a hat with our New Mexico Wild logo, AND a color logo water bottle!

YES! My donation amount qualifies me to receive a gift. Please send it.

PAYMENT OPTIONS: Enclosed is my check payable to New Mexico Wild. Please charge my credit card.

Card #: _____ Exp. Date: _____ CVV: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Donate easily online at www.nmwild.org



A hiker enjoys the Mogollon Box in the Gila Wilderness. Photo: Nathan Newcomer

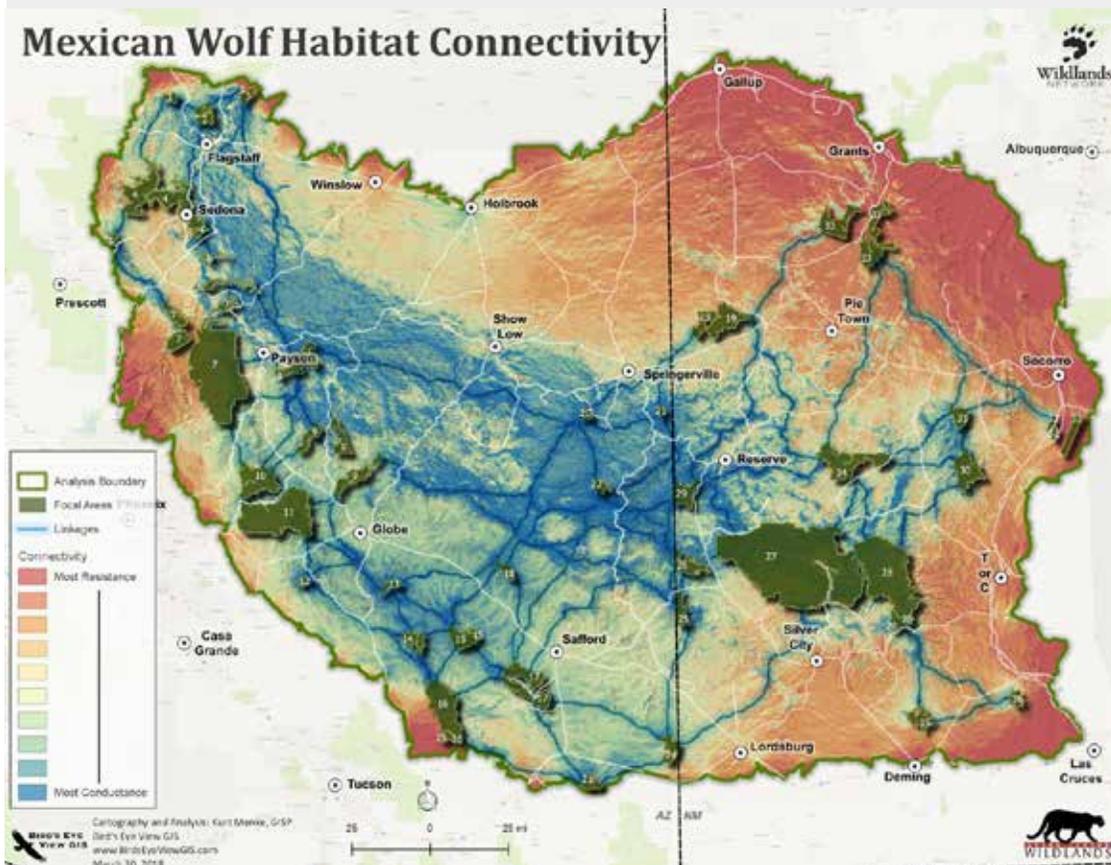
The past few months in the Gila have been very productive and busy for the staff and volunteers of *New Mexico Wild*. In late March, we submitted to the Gila National Forest our full Wilderness Inventory and Evaluation, along with our Wild and Scenic Rivers Inventory. This Citizens' Proposal detailed sixteen proposed wilderness and special management areas totaling more than 400,000 acres and twenty-nine proposed wild and scenic river segments totaling 460 miles. None of this work could have been accomplished without the tireless dedication and commitment of our countless volunteers and contributors, who spent over 15,000 hours on the ground conducting fieldwork and surveys in some of the most remote and spectacular places found throughout the Gila National Forest. Overall, we

Story continued on page 6.

Maps Show National Forest Lands Critical to Mexican Wolf Recovery

Groundbreaking new maps conclusively demonstrate the importance of maintaining landscape connectivity between Northern Arizona and the Gila National Forest for Mexican wolf recovery. The maps were developed using sophisticated connectivity analysis software to assess the lands within and immediately surrounding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's designated Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA) for wolf dispersal.

The analysis assumes existing Wilderness areas offer the best home range habitat for Mexican wolves. Using these areas as "focal points" for wolf habitat, data such as terrain ruggedness and human development was then analyzed to determine likely movement patterns for wolves based on known behavior patterns. The findings suggest public lands, especially national forest lands, in Arizona and New Mexico offer some of the best habitat for wolves trying to disperse across the MWEPA from the initial reintroduction area in the Blue Range region.



"This report underscores the vital importance of unfragmented and roadless public lands to Mexican gray wolf recovery," said Executive Director Mark Allison. "Everyone concerned about restoring this iconic species to the land should make their voices heard in the ongoing Forest Service planning processes. Much critical habitat and wilderness quality lands remain unprotected, and we call on the Forest Service to see they are conserved."

You can read the entire press release about the project on the New Mexico Wild website at www.nmwild.org/news

Cerros del Norte Conservation Act Introduced

New Mexico Wild joined a broad coalition in April applauding the introduction of the Cerros del Norte Conservation Act in the House of Representatives. The legislation would provide extra protection for special areas contained within the Río Grande del Norte National Monument by designating two wilderness areas – Ute Mountain (Cerro del Yuta) and San Antonio Mountain (Río San Antonio). Congressman Ben Ray Lujan introduced the bill. Congresswoman Lujan-Grisham quickly agreed to co-sponsor. An identical bill introduced by Sens. Martin Heinrich and Tom Udall passed the Senate in December.

A poll conducted in 2016 found that 93 percent of registered voters in Taos County expressed that wilderness is important to them. 95 percent of those surveyed believe it is important for public lands to be preserved for future generations.

Designated in 2013, Río Grande del Norte National Monument continues to enjoy overwhelming community support, including the backing of business owners, sportsmen, tribal leaders, land grant heirs, local elected officials, and grazing permittees.

The proposed wilderness areas within the national monument serve

as one of the world's great avian migratory routes. It is also home to wildlife, including bear, pronghorn and elk. The legislation would also safeguard world-class recreation opportunities already enjoyed within the national monument, such as hiking, hunting, and fishing. The two proposed wilderness areas in the Cerros del Norte Conservation Act will comprise 21,420 acres of the 243,140-acre national monument northwest of Taos.



Ute Mountain. Photo: Stuart Wilde

Wilderness...It's for Everyone

“Just as freedom is every American's birthright, so too is Wilderness. We know they are inseparable. We hold this truth dearly as we preserve Wilderness from generation to generation for us, for all species and for its own sake.” —an excerpt from New Mexico Wild's Values Statement.

“What exactly do you do?” I hear this question repeatedly from family members. It is a question I have a hard time answering, perhaps in part because the term Wilderness is nearly impossible to convey with a single word in Spanish. It may also be difficult to answer because many Hispanics, including my family, are unaccustomed to the role of serving as formal or outspoken stewards of the land, while they nevertheless respect it and see it as untamed. In my brief career as a spokesperson for the conservation of wild natural areas, I have learned that it is easiest to explain why I do this work through direct experience. I have had the privilege of taking family members to national parks, national forests, and wilderness areas. There, standing in the middle of these wild places, is when they begin to understand my work. Being there provides them with a holistic experience: the water, the earth, the plants and wildlife, and the ties to our culture weave together into a seamless whole.

Wilderness is for everyone, even those who may not be exposed to it through their early family ties. I have experienced firsthand how wild places can forever change a young Hispanic woman's life. Growing up in a colonia in southern New Mexico, I didn't think about the natural areas around us as recreational areas, ecological gems, cultural fortresses, or a source of spiritual enlightenment. But given the opportunity to visit an iconic national park and hike through what is now Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument were the seeds of educational experiences that gave me

an overwhelming desire to protect and show others these wild places. I now recognize that it is crucial to introduce as many under-represented citizens as possible to New Mexico's wild natural areas.

In 2014, I worked with minority and at-risk youth crews in southern New Mexico. New Mexico Wild gave us the opportunity to join the effort to designate Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. That was my introduction to New Mexico Wild's important advocacy work. These experiences solidified my passion to connect minority youth to New Mexico's public lands. I am excited to trailblaze along with New Mexico Wild toward the inclusion of minorities and young people—not only in grassroots conservation efforts, but also by encouraging them to take on leadership roles to protect the wild essence of our great state.

Editor's note: We welcome Grecia Nuñez, New Mexico Wild's Public Lands Fellow, who recently joined the staff of our Southern New Mexico office.

Grecia Nuñez



Grecia and niece Alahni at Lake Roberts. Photo: Itzel Nuñez

Wildology Notes

I recently came across this quote from author Doris Lessing: "There is only one real sin, and that is to persuade oneself that the second best is anything but the second best." It concerns me that too many people do not understand the power of excellence, and are willing to accept mediocre as good enough. The board and staff of New Mexico Wild have excellence built into their DNA and this is demonstrated every day in the work that is being done.

The physical attributes of New Mexico and other western states are what make them special. The mountains, deserts, rivers and skies are the framework for the life patterns here, beginning with the ancients and continuing with we who live here now and going on with those who follow us. We are privileged to live in this environment, but with privilege comes responsibility, the responsibility to preserve the beauty that is ours to enjoy so that it is intact for those who are yet to come. I look at what is going on in one of our neighboring states, where Senator Hatch (R-Utah) and his nest-mates are busily fouling their nest. May they be pleased with their legacy, such as it is, but I want my legacy to be built on preserving the natural habitat around me. It is the particular role of New Mexico Wild to protect this heritage, and it is my particular source of pride that I have been able to contribute to the effort.

A particular challenge is to engage young people in this effort, to help them be informed about the values of our natural environment and provide them opportunity to be the leaders of the future. New Mexico Wild is leading the way, and it is truly satisfying to know that the commitment of young champions has already had an impact on getting access to the Sabinoso Wilderness and protecting the Gila region. I am hopeful that these are not anecdotal results, but are really paving stones towards a big time involve-



Executive Director Mark Allison (left) presents Ken Cole with a photograph of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument by Wayne Suggs.

ment of the next generation in preserving the landscapes of New Mexico.

I have been a committed birdwatcher for many years. At this writing I have seen about 75% of the bird species on the planet, and have traveled to a great number of special and ridiculous places in the process. In doing this I have observed not just the birds, but also the habitats to which they have adapted. Too often these are habitats that have been badly treated by humans, sometimes in order to eke out a subsistence way of life, but often for enrichment by greedily eating up natural resources. I have vivid memories of huge logging trucks carting off "grandfather" trunks from prime forests, of wetlands sullied by chemical discharges, of tropical mountainsides denuded of vegetation, and so on.

It was these observations that made it essential to me to be engaged in efforts to preserve the valuable habitats that remain. When I came to New Mexico in 2004 I was looking for ways to do this, and after a while came to know the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, aka New Mexico Wild. One thing led to another and for six years I was entrusted with being its Chairperson, a period of significant transformation for the organization. Now I can look back on this period and can confirm that excellence is indeed in the DNA of New Mexico Wild, and can look forward to many future successes in all the undertakings that entail preserving the natural heritage of the state.

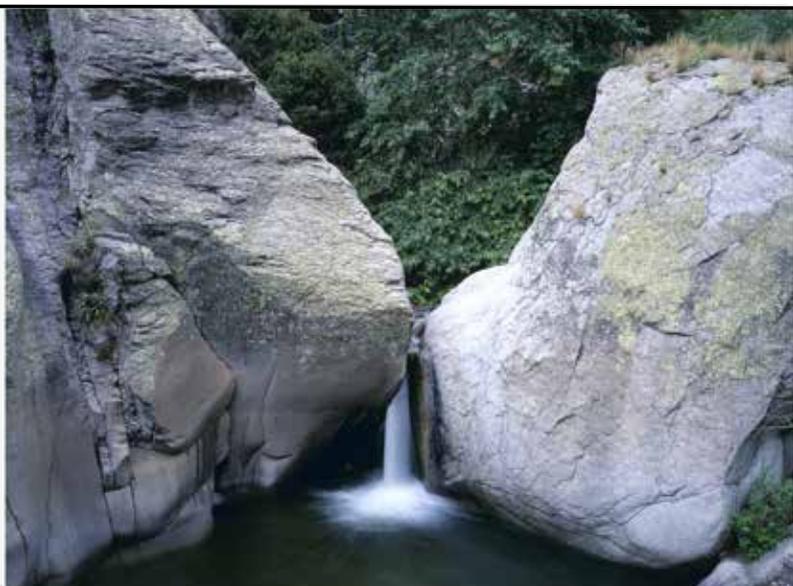
Editor's note: In July of 2018, Kenneth Cole stepped down as Chair of New Mexico Wild, after six years in that role. He remains on the board and recently reflected on the work of New Mexico Wild and its role in conservation in our state. Thank you, Ken, for your years of service and commitment to New Mexico's wild places!

Ken Cole

CONSIDER A LASTING COMMITMENT TO NEW MEXICO'S LANDS AND WATERS.

Your legacy gift to New Mexico Wild will help us protect our public lands far into the future. Making this donation through your will, trust, retirement plan, or life insurance policy assures your direction for its use are followed.

You can learn more about estate gifts at:
<http://www.nmwild.org/support-us/legacy-giving>
or by contacting Tisha Broska at tisha@nmwild.org,
505-321-6131.



identified approximately 1.8 million acres for possible inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

We will continue to engage in the Gila National Forest Plan Revision and will work to diligently ensure that our Citizens' Proposed Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers makes it into the agency document. Opportunities for the public to engage and submit comments will continue to play a vital role in moving these landscape protection efforts forward.

In late May we organized two overflights with Ecoflight to showcase two of our priority landscapes and river segments for local elected officials and other leaders in the community. We toured both the Gila Middle Box proposed Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River, and Mogollon Box proposed Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River.

Finally, much of our current work in the Gila is focused on securing introduction of legislation for Wild and Scenic Rivers this year. Working with our conservation partners, we have been gathering letters of support from organizations, businesses, faith leaders, sportsmen, farmers, ranchers, elected officials, veterans, and many others. Our goal is to have legislation introduced that applies to the following river segments:

1. Wild and Scenic designation for all sections of the Gila River, to include the West, Middle and East Forks and the Main Stem through the Gila Wilderness.
2. Wild and Scenic designation for all sections of the Gila River from the Wilderness boundary to the Arizona state line that flow through federal public lands, including those administered by the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. This includes the "Upper" or Mogollon Box, Gila Middle Box, and the Lower Gila Box.
3. Wild and Scenic designation for all major tributaries of the Gila River, including Apache, Black, Beaver, Di-

amond, Gilita, Iron, Little, Mineral, Mogollon, Pine, Sapillo, Taylor and Turkey Creeks.

4. Wild and Scenic designation for the San Francisco River where it flows through federal public lands administered by the US Forest Service.

With your continued support and dedication, we believe that we can once and for all permanently protect the Gila River – America's First Wilderness River.

Nathan Newcomer

Elizabeth Bell



New Mexico Wild would like to recognize the legacy contribution of Elizabeth "Betsy" Bell who died in May 2017 from complications related to her long battle with cancer. Betsy was a volunteer with New Mexico Wild for several years helping stuff envelopes, lick stamps and write letters. Her colorful personality and

large-brimmed hats were a wonderful addition to our office as were her stories about her beloved herd of llamas.

Thank you Betsy for the many hours you dedicated as a volunteer and for leaving a legacy for Wilderness in New Mexico.

Her family shared with us that Betsy often said that being out in nature was her form of church and that she appreciated and valued the work of New Mexico Wild. Her gift will allow us to enhance our capacity to advance our top campaign priorities to protect wilderness, wildlife and water and further engage the community (and youth) in stewardship. It will help us to continue to defend our National Monuments and public lands from current threats and strengthen our ability to advance permanent protections like designation of the Gila River as Wild & Scenic.



EVENTS: You are invited! Go to [nmwild/events](https://www.nmwild.org/events) for more details

August 4 • Rio Chama Full Day Rafting

The Rio Chama in Northern New Mexico is America's Newest Wild and Scenic River. This 8 mile stretch begins beneath a secluded Benedictine Abbey and ends just above Abiquiu Reservoir, where this silty desert river rolls to a halt among the rainbow cliffs of this remote four-corners location.



August 22 • Gila Wilderness Pack Mule Trip

New Mexico Wild and Gila Backcountry Services is leading a pack mule trip into the headwaters of the Gila Wilderness along the Middle Fork of the Gila River. We will base camp along the Middle Fork of the Gila River, and spend our days exploring some of the wildest lands in the heart of Mexican grey wolf habitat in the Gila Wilderness. Expect to encounter outstanding scenery, geology, wildlife and cultural values.



September 13 • San Juan River Trip, SE Utah

Join us this September as we explore 86 miles of the San Juan River in Southeast Utah. Along the way we will visit Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings and pictographs, splash our way along the gentle river, and enjoy the tales of this storied place with award-winning author and historian Andrew Gulliford.