More than two decades ago, our founders articulated a conservation ethic in the state of New Mexico aligned with our nation’s landmark Wilderness Act of 1964. Dedicated to the rights and the value of citizen involvement, this organization began listening to and amplifying that citizen voice to protect our increasingly rare wild places within our public lands.

To this day we remain exclusively dedicated to protecting Wilderness. We ask citizens to join us in this effort to preserve what is ours as a nation—that which should never be diminished by the desires of commerce or thoughtless action. We accomplish this goal by pursuing our ends through the democratic process.

We each live but a short time and we cannot forget these lands that others kept open for us. It is for this experience of full life on Earth we rededicate ourselves every day, trusting Wilderness will remain widely consecrated by citizens as theirs to conserve.

Beyond our human intentions lies the evidence that Wilderness belongs. The landscapes, both majestic and subtle, give home and sustenance to this earth’s unfathomable diversity. Within a human life span, it lives. And beyond a human life span, it lives, moving to its own timepiece, if we only allow it.

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.

CHECK US OUT ONLINE

facebook.com/nmwilderness
pinterest.com/newmexicowild
youtube.com/TheNMWA
instagram.com/nmwilderness
nmwild.org

Scan the QR code or visit www.nmwild.org to sign up for our eNews.
New Mexico WILD!
The Newsletter of the
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
SPRING/SUMMER 2015

Inside This Issue:
Message from the Director .......... 2-3
Victory for Columbine Hondo .......... 4
BLM Interview ............................... 5
Keeping the Gila Wild and Free .......... 6
Gila Support .................................. 7
Wild and Scenic Rivers .................. 8
Gila River Diversion ....................... 9
Legislative Recap ........................... 10
Celebrating the Pecos ..................... 11
Pecos Wilderness and Water .......... 12
Pecos Support ............................... 14
Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks .......... 15
Mexican Gray Wolves ................... 15
2014 Successes ............................. 16
Conference Recap .......................... 17
Wilderness Inventory ..................... 18
Remembering Chuck Bowden .......... 21
Announcements ............................ 21
Dave Foreman Tribute Fund .......... 22
UNM Wilderness Alliance ............... 22
Support Us .................................... 23

COVER: Horseshoe Lake in the Pecos Wilderness
Clint King lives and plays in the foothills of Colorado with
his wife and daughter, and is available for on-location
portrait sessions and freelance assignments across
north central Colorado. His love in photography is to
capture images that illustrate personalities, create
emotion, and tell a story of people’s connection to nature.
Blog: www.clintking.wordpress.com

COMMON GROUND:
New Mexicans Support Protecting Public Lands

By Mark Allison, Executive Director

Whether you are a loyal supporter or a first-time reader, thanks
for picking up this latest edition of our newsletter.

Every day, Americans are confronted with
a warped perception of reality—exemplified by Washington, D.C., and exacerbated by
our national media—that causes us to take
for granted as common wisdom that we are
a deeply divided and polarized country, at
profound odds with our neighbors over virtu-
ally everything. National public lands and
conservation issues certainly aren’t immune
to this impression.

I wonder, though, if reality is a bit differ-
et. After all, our experience in New Mexico
as demonstrated by recent campaigns from
Rio Grande del Norte in the north to Organ
Mountains-Desert Peaks in the south, is one
of overwhelming community agreement. This
shouldn’t go unnoticed—not by our elected
officials, nor by us. It is remarkable.

Supporters of Wilderness and our public
lands don’t necessarily have the same moti-
vations, nor must they. Regardless, though,
their support is deeply rooted in the values,
traditions and culture that make us proud
New Mexicans and Americans. At our best,
we honor wisdom and prudence and common
sense. We recognize an obligation to posterity.
We value family and cherish memories of time
spent together. We reflexively want balance
and fairness; we cringe at thoughtless waste,
destruction and despoliation. We grieve for
loss. We intuitively know that destroying our
few remaining wild places is irrevocable and
lessens us. We know deep down that it is im-
moral to destroy fully and forever that which
we didn’t create.

Public polling bears this out. One recent poll
of post-9/11 veterans living in Western states
found that a 75 percent majority favored the
federal government protecting public lands by designating them as national parks, monuments or Wilderness. Surprising, maybe, but perhaps it shouldn’t be. Take for example this nonsense over transferring our federal public lands to the state—this isn’t coming from a groundswell from everyday New Mexicans. It is cynically generated by out-of-state industry-funded front groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). They are well-heeled and sophisticated and do an increasingly good job of wrapping their rhetoric around freedom and access while the implications of what they want to do represent the very opposite.

And don’t be taken in by those who try to paint the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance as out of step. We aren’t anti-business or anti-industry. We simply and unapologetically believe there are certain places in New Mexico that are so special, so increasingly rare, so critical to biodiversity, so integral to who we are as a people, that they shouldn’t be sacrificed for short-sighted, for-profit extractive industry interests. We believe that surely we are rich enough as a country, generous enough in spirit, conservative enough in foresight, and prudent enough in temperament that certain places should be allowed to remain self-willed. With 98 percent of New Mexico’s land area not enjoying the protection of designated Wilderness, surely we can find literal and figurative common ground in identifying those special places that merit protection.

This newsletter highlights two of those places, both well-known and beloved by New Mexicans. The Gila Wilderness was our country’s—and the world’s—first administratively protected Wilderness and remains our state’s largest. There is a fierce battle underway to prevent the latest hare-brained, boondoggle scheme to divert the Gila River, which would degrade our state’s last free-flowing river. We also outline efforts to prevent that from happening as well as highlight one component of our larger vision of comprehensive and permanent protections for the river, the watersheds and the surrounding lands with Wilderness qualities.

We also highlight the Pecos Wilderness, our state’s most visited and well known, and conservation opportunities for adjacent lands, again focusing on watershed protections and preserving New Mexico’s cultural heritage and traditions.

There can be legitimate, respectful disagree-
VICTORY FOR THE
Columbine Hondo

45,000 Acres Protected As Wilderness
Thanks to New Mexico Delegation and Columbine Hondo Wilderness Coalition

By Tisha Broska

WITH PRESIDENT OBAMA’S SIGNATURE
on Dec. 19, 2014, Columbine Hondo became the first new federally designated Wilderness in New Mexico since the Sabinoos Wilderness was created in 2009. Columbine Hondo is crowned by 13 miles of high alpine ridges and peaks that tower above 11,000 feet, including its high point, Gold Hill at 12,711 feet. The pristine creeks and streams, lush forests, mountain meadows and fragile alpine tundra provide great wildlife habitat as well as vast recreational enjoyment. Columbine Hondo is home to Rocky Mountain wildlife such as mule deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, Rio Grande cutthroat trout and bighorn sheep.

A Broad Coalition
In 1980, Columbine Hondo was designated as a Wilderness Study Area by Congress. Although this was a great first step, it did not offer sufficient protection for this prized landscape. In 2009, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance helped form the Columbine Hondo Wilderness Coalition to garner support for Wilderness designation—the ultimate landscape protection status. Traditional communities, including land grant heirs, local graizing permittees and acequia members were crucial partners.

With the leadership of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, traditional community organizer John Olivas and many local conservation-minded individuals saw an opportunity to form a coalition of partners. They secured support from the town of Taos, Taos Chamber of Commerce, Taos Pueblo War Chief and Taos County Commission between 2010 and 2012.

The first introduction of legislation to protect Columbine Hondo (S. 2468) was by Sen. Jeff Bingaman in 2012. Other campaign milestones:
• In February 2013, Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich and Rep. Ben Ray Lujan held a community meeting in Taos County with all coalition members, which led to reintroduction of the Columbine Hondo Wilderness Act in the Senate (S 776) in April 2013 and in the House of Representatives (HR 1683) in May 2013.
• The following November, the act was unanimously approved and marked up by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.
• In December 2014, the Columbine Hondo Wilderness Act passed along with several other wilderness bills that protected almost 250,000 acres of wilderness in Colorado, Montana, Nevada and Washington.

Community support for safeguarding the Columbine Hondo has been broad and deep. The Columbine Hondo Wilderness Coalition includes business owners, ranchers, sportsmen, acqueia parciantes, local land grant heirs, mountain bikers, elected officials, conservationists and many others who have worked together for years to preserve this natural treasure. The Columbine Hondo coalition has been recognized as a model for getting conservation campaigns through Congress.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is honored to work with such a dedicated community coalition committed to preserving our lands, water and wildlife. Many thanks to everyone who volunteered time and support.

Protecting Water Sources
Columbine Hondo is a significant clean water source for the central Rio Grande corridor of New Mexico. One of the most important benefits that wilderness designation for Columbine Hondo achieved is the permanent protection of important headwaters of the Rio Hondo and Red River. Communities adjacent to this area rely heavily on these water sources for drinking and agriculture.

Wilderness areas are a major contributor to our nation’s clean and abundant water supplies. Though national forests cover only 8 percent of the land area in the contiguous 48 states, these lands typically include the headwaters of rivers, especially in New Mexico and the West, and are the source of a substantial portion of the nation’s water supply. Many large metropolitan areas, such as Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Las Cruces, receive a significant share of their drinking water from the Rio Grande, which has many tributaries and headwaters areas in designated wilderness.

Wilderness contributes to New Mexico’s water supply in many ways:
• Human activities, such as road construction and timber harvests, have the potential to degrade water quality primarily through sedimentation. Mining often affects water chemistry, as well as the physical and biological components of water quality.
• Wilderness areas often contain large, relatively intact watersheds that help to mitigate the effects of climate change on water by providing large areas for aquifer recharge and undisturbed vegetation, which offers shade to reduce increases to water temperature and evaporation.
MA: Can you describe your relationship to our federal public lands and how you became involved with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)?

AS: My personal and professional interests have always been tied to the land. I grew up on a farm in Chester, Montana. My grandfather instilled a love of the outdoors and a land ethic through our operation of the family farm and during the many camping, fishing and hiking trips we enjoyed throughout my childhood. My entire career has been spent with the BLM, over 31 years to date. I was selected to serve as the BLM New Mexico Associate State Director on July 2, 2012. Recently, upon the retirement of State Director Jesse Juen, I began serving as Acting New Mexico State Director, overseeing more than 13 million surface acres and 26 million acres of mineral estate.

In my spare time, I continue to enjoy hiking, camping and running on public lands with my family.

MA: As you know, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is submitting our lands with Wilderness Characteristics inventory data for the Carlsbad, Tri-County and Farmington BLM districts. How do you use this information and is it helpful?

AS: It is our responsibility to update the inventory of the public's resources, including wilderness characteristics. Our local offices are actively engaged in inventorying wilderness characteristics in support of Resource Management Plan revisions and other project work. The data we receive from the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and other groups helps to inform our inventory update by alerting us to conditions that we might not have been aware of.

MA: There are 57 BLM Wilderness Study Areas in New Mexico, WSAs do not enjoy permanent legislative protection. Can you discuss any threats or opportunities regarding these WSAs?

AS: One of the emerging threats that our WSAs experience is related to vehicle routes. WSAs are under consideration for Wilderness designation, and while under that consideration, pre-existing vehicle routes can continue to be used. When these informal routes get washed out, visitors often drive around the problem areas, creating new routes. These new routes are not consistent with the management of WSAs. Monitoring the routes in WSAs and taking appropriate action to prevent new routes from developing creates a considerable workload.

The routes most susceptible to resource degradation were worn in by the passage of vehicles without consideration of water drainage and soil stability needs. We are working with ranchers to identify routes to grandfathered grazing facilities, such as fences and stock tanks, which would be more compatible with safeguarding soils. This does not mean creating new roads, as the access needs to many facilities may be infrequent. The new route may never be visible as a two track on the ground, but is still suitable in providing needed access for facility repair.

WSAs are remarkable places! While waiting at a local train stop, a gentleman asked if I worked for the BLM. I said yes, and he responded by saying that he has hiked nearly every WSA in New Mexico and found them to be some of the most spectacular places he has ever seen. It pleased me to hear directly how much the public enjoys and appreciates our WSAs.

MA: There are approximately 96,000 acres of state land within the new Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. We'd like to see that land exchanged for more appropriate BLM land outside the monument to enhance the integrity and management of the monument. Can you give us a sense of how and when that might happen and if there are things the public can do to help?

AS: The BLM and the New Mexico State Land Office (SLO) have been working under a Memorandum of Understanding that sets forth the procedures to establish a comprehensive land exchange program. Since 2000, the BLM and the SLO have completed a variety of land exchanges, including the San Felipe Exchange, the Santo Domingo Exchange, the Ojito Exchange, the Bisti/Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Exchange and the Santa Teresa Exchange.

Consolidation of land holdings in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument is desired by the BLM. We intend to work with the new SLO administration in the next several months to discuss the possibility of initiating land exchanges that include this area. If any exchange progresses, we look forward to hearing thoughts from the public through the process.

MA: What do you think is the biggest misconception the public has about the Bureau of Land Management?

AS: The biggest misconception is that the BLM “got the land that nobody wanted—wasteland.” Today, I would argue that it is some of the best land in the West. Since 1976 and the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) by Congress, the BLM’s mission has been one of multiple use and sustained yield. FLPMA ushered in the development of local resource management plans to determine the best...
The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance has been busy working on many fronts in and around the Gila Wilderness, the birthplace of the wilderness protection movement and our state’s largest wilderness.

Together, these efforts represent two main objectives: 1) Comprehensive Wilderness defense and restoration of the Gila —“Keep the Gila Wild” and 2) Comprehensive wilderness protection.

These next four pages will highlight some of our ongoing activities with a particular focus on the most immediate and significant threat of diverting the country’s first wilderness river and the last free flowing one in New Mexico and one related component of our larger vision of increasing permanent protections in the greater Gila region, namely securing Wild and Scenic status for the Gila River.

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 has been called the “sister of the Wilderness Act” and we believe it is an important tool to a comprehensive conservation approach that would include the protection of the larger watersheds and surrounding lands with wilderness characteristics.

Beginning in summer 2013, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance began conducting citizen-based wilderness inventories throughout the Gila National Forest. We estimate there are more than one million acres of public lands eligible for wilderness designation or other protective measures in the Gila region.

Our goal is the permanent protection of these areas through the creation and expansion of Wilderness in the Gila region, together with designating the Gila River and other eligible streams as Wild and Scenic Rivers. As an example, we are proposing that the Upper Gila Box from Turkey Creek to Mogollon Box and the areas around the proposed river diversion be permanently and legislatively protected as designated Wilderness and a Wild and Scenic River. This represents 13,000 acres of currently unprotected National Forest and 8 threatened miles of the Gila River.

Threats to these core roadless areas include:

- River diversions
- Off-road vehicles
- Illegal user-created roads
- Mining claims
- Illegal grazing

What we have done so far
Core to our work in the Gila are more than 50 citizen scientists who are hiking and inventorying the forest. They have:

- Inventoried more than 250,000 acres
- Hiked more than 500 miles in the Gila National Forest
- Surveyed 100 miles of the Gila River and its tributaries for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system

As a part of our inventory efforts we have focused our documentation on naturalness of areas, opportunities for solitude and primitive forms of recreation, and to what degree these areas appear primarily influenced by the forces of nature. We also document human impacts and infrastructure, as well as the condition of certain U.S. Forest Service (USFS) roads that may be eligible for decommissioning.

Moving forward
Our inventory data will be used as a part of the upcoming Gila National Forest Land Use Plan Revision, scheduled to start in the spring of 2015—an opportunity for the public to influence and propose best management practices for the forest for the next 20-plus years.

The USFS planning process is scheduled to start in spring 2015—an opportunity to submit data and advocate that the agency recommended river segments be designated Wild and Scenic.

Collaborative partnerships

- Gila Resources Information Project (GRIP)
- Upper Gila Watershed Alliance (UGWA)
- Silver City chapter of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness
- Students from the Aldo Leopold Charter School and Western New Mexico University
- Center on Biological Diversity

A proposed site for diversion of the Gila River.
Southwestern New Mexico contains some of the last genuinely wild places in the lower 48 states. For a thousand reasons, we must preserve the precious few wild natural areas in our country. The plants and animals who live in the Gila Wilderness allotments have as much right to live and to thrive undisturbed as do we humans. They depend on us for their survival and I believe we are obliged to follow the dictum of “live and let live,” particularly since we have already done the opposite in over 90 percent of our country.

Expert analysis has shown that protecting the Gila River from damming and diversion would not be cost-effective in terms of water stored and diverted, and would also permanently and negatively alter a fragile, life-affirming, and dynamic ecological treasure. The projects being considered are truly billion-dollar boondoggles that would ruin the few at the expense of many. The treasures that would be destroyed are priceless.

I believe expanding Gila wilderness areas and formally designating the Gila as a Wild and Scenic River are solemn duties to present and future generations, not only for the benefit of humans but for all other living things. We are at a critical point in the history of these resources inasmuch as they are under direct, powerful threats to their integrity and preservation. Therefore, it is our responsibility to counter these threats effectively, with the force of laws that will be upheld in perpetuity.

—Richard Mahler, author, editor, publisher, and photographer

We speak a lot about the benefit to humans in the preservation of wilderness. Let us speak for all the wild creatures, waters, and foliage today. As we know, humans are not the only species on Earth. The Gila River, originating in America’s first designated wilderness area, deserves to stay wild and free as nature intended.

The Gila River and Wilderness are the heartbeat to my business, and the replenishment of my soul. I go out for a hike almost every day, and have for nearly 10 years, and rarely do I run into other people. Those moments with my spouse and dogs, interacting with nature, give me calm and perspective on the hectic life I live back in my restaurant.

—Rob Connelly, Owner of the Curious Kumquat in Silver City

I support the Gila Wilderness because the natural environment of the Gila provides a refuge for residents, a peaceful sanctuary, and it is essential to the ecosystems of southwest New Mexico. I support protecting the Gila River from damming and diversion because there are more efficient alternatives to provide water for the Southwest, it would ruin the ecosystem, it would destroy the last free flowing river in New Mexico, and it would change the Gila Wilderness forever. I feel like all of the Gila should be protected from industry, and it should be protected from human impact.

—Olivia M., 10th grade at Aldo Leopold Charter School

I support protecting the Gila Wilderness because I want to be able to say I helped save the Earth. I think everyone should want to say that and I want to open the door for people to say that!

—Charlee E., 9th grade at Aldo Leopold Charter School

“We speak a lot about the benefit to humans in the preservation of wilderness. Let us speak for all the wild creatures, waters, and foliage today. As we know, humans are not the only species on Earth. The Gila River, originating in America’s first designated wilderness area, deserves to stay wild and free as nature intended.

—Richard Mahler, author, editor, publisher, and photographer

“We support the Gila Wilderness because the natural environment of the Gila provides a refuge for residents, a peaceful sanctuary, and it is essential to the ecosystems of southwest New Mexico. I support protecting the Gila River from damming and diversion because there are more efficient alternatives to provide water for the Southwest, it would ruin the ecosystem, it would destroy the last free flowing river in New Mexico, and it would change the Gila Wilderness forever. I feel like all of the Gila should be protected from industry, and it should be protected from human impact.”

—Olivia M., 10th grade at Aldo Leopold Charter School

“I support protecting the Gila Wilderness because I want to be able to say I helped save the Earth. I think everyone should want to say that and I want to open the door for people to say that!”

—Charlee E., 9th grade at Aldo Leopold Charter School

Community Support for the Gila River
FAQs About Wild & Scenic Rivers

1. Why did Congress pass the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act?
Congress passed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act at the height of the modern dam-building era in order to ensure that the construction of new dams is balanced with the protection of select free-flowing rivers that possess nationally significant values. This landmark law is the highest form of protection for rivers in the United States. In the words of Congress: “It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.”

2. How does the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act protect rivers?
The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act protects rivers in five major ways:
- It bans the construction of new federally-licensed dams and other harmful water development projects;
- It ensures water quality is maintained and, where possible, enhanced;
- It creates a federally-reserved water right for the minimum amount of water necessary to maintain a river’s special values;
- It restricts activities that would harm a river’s special values;
- It requires the development of a Comprehensive River Management Plan (CRMP) to guide management along designated rivers for a period of 10-20 years.

3. Are there different classifications under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act that reflect the condition of a river at the time it is designated?
Designated rivers are classified in one of three categories depending upon the extent of development and accessibility along each section:
- **Wild** rivers are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive, and waters unpolluted.
- **Scenic** rivers are free of impoundments with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive, and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads. These segments are more developed than ‘wild’ rivers and less developed than ‘recreational’ rivers.
- **Recreational** rivers are readily accessible by road or railroad, may have some development along their shoreline, and may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

4. How many rivers are in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System?
As of September 2011, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System includes 203 river segments comprising 12,598 river miles. That translates to approximately 0.4 percent of the river miles in the United States. By comparison, more than 75,000 large dams have modified at least 600,000 miles of rivers across the country, or approximately 17 percent of the river miles in the United States.

5. Are there any Wild and Scenic Rivers in New Mexico?
New Mexico has approximately 108,000 miles of rivers, of which only 124 miles are designated as Wild and Scenic—or approximately 0.12 percent of the state’s river miles. These include sections of the Jemez, Pecos, Chama and the Rio Grande but not the Gila.

6. How are rivers added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System?
Typically, a river becomes Wild and Scenic first by being categorized as “eligible” for designation by the appropriate land management agency (Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, etc.), although Congress has designated rivers that were not previously found eligible for protection. Any section of river that is free-flowing and possesses one or more “outstandingly remarkable values” can be found eligible for Wild and Scenic protection. Rivers can be added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in one of two ways. The most common way is for Congress to pass Wild and Scenic legislation that is signed into law by the president. The less traditional way is for the governor of a state to petition the secretary of the interior to add a river to the system.

7. How does Wild and Scenic designation affect public access to rivers for fishing, hunting, camping and other forms of recreation?
Wild and Scenic designation neither limits the public from accessing public lands within designated river corridors nor opens private lands to public access. Designation has no effect on fishing and hunting, as those activities are regulated under state laws. Where hunting and fishing were allowed prior to designation, they may continue. In general, Wild and Scenic designation does not restrict boating access unless specific issues have been identified in the river management planning process.

8. Is livestock grazing allowed in Wild and Scenic river corridors?
Generally, livestock grazing and related infrastructure are not affected by Wild and Scenic designation, with the caveat that agricultural practices should be similar in nature and intensity to those present in the river corridor at the time of designation.

9. Does the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act restrict development on private lands within designated river corridors?
No. Under the act, the federal government has no authority to regulate or zone private lands. Land use controls on private lands are solely a matter of state and local zoning. Although the act includes provisions encouraging the protection of river values through state and local land use planning, there are no binding provisions on local governments. In the absence of state or local river protection provisions, the federal government may seek to protect values by providing technical assistance, entering into agreements with landowners and/or through the purchase of easements, exchanges or acquisition of private lands.

10. How does Wild and Scenic designation affect water rights?
Wild and Scenic designation has no effect on existing valid water rights or interstate water compacts. Existing irrigation systems and other water development facilities are not disturbed. Alterations to existing systems and new water projects that require a federal permit may be allowed as long as they don’t have an adverse effect on the values of the river.

From the National Park Service FAQ “Public Law 90-542 (as amended): The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.”
At the conclusion of a 10-year planning process geared toward developing water from New Mexico’s last wild river, no one was surprised last November when the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) voted unanimously to take the next step to divert water from the Gila River.

The nine-member commission agreed to notify the U.S. Interior Department secretary that New Mexico will move forward with planning for a Gila River diversion project under the Arizona Water Settlements Act (AWSA).

What was surprising was that there weren’t more questions asked and concerns raised by the commission, given the overwhelming evidence that a diversion project is infeasible and unaffordable, that it faces substantial public opposition, and that serious charges are pending of keeping critical information from the public in violation of the Open Meetings Act.

Conservationists from across the state have been calling on Gov. Susana Martinez to intervene and save New Mexico taxpayers and water users from this fiscally irresponsible and ecologically harmful proposal. They point out that, alternatively, non-diversion projects can be implemented with AWSA funding to meet southwestern New Mexico’s long-term water needs at less than a tenth of the cost of a diversion project.

In 2004, Congress passed the AWSA that authorized diversion from the Gila River if New Mexico agreed to buy water from Arizona to replace what our state takes out of the river. (The Gila originates in New Mexico and flows into Arizona.) About $100 million (in 2004 dollars) is made available to New Mexico under the act. Some $66 million of this non-reimbursable funding can be used to meet local water needs in southwestern New Mexico without diverting the Gila River.

In early 2014, former ISC Director Norm Gaume became involved in the Gila issue and brought to light important information and analyses that show a diversion project is fatally flawed and expensive. He concluded the project would cost more than $1 billion (for construction, exchange, operation, maintenance and replacement costs), be unaffordable and yield little to no water.

Additionally, a Gila River Flow Needs Assessment, representing a consensus among 50 scientists from a range of disciplines, concluded that a diversion would negatively impact the hydrology and ecology of the Gila, putting at serious risk seven threatened and endangered species dependent upon a healthy river system.

Over the past year, public opposition to the project from across the state has been strong and included many members of the public commenting against the diversion at ISC meetings (contrasted with very few supporters). There also have been numerous letters to the editor and editorials, many rallies and thousands of petition signatures, e-mail messages and letters to the ISC and the governor against the diversion. According to a poll conducted in 2013, 85%
By Judy Calman, Staff Attorney

Adding new protections to New Mexico’s federal public lands necessarily requires federal legislation or executive action. Our organizing efforts are therefore primarily focused on cultivating and mobilizing citizens and communities to demonstrate widespread support of place-based protections to our congressional delegation. Unfortunately, there are times when industry-backed politicians attack conservation and public lands through bad legislation at the state level, and we have to respond. New Mexico’s 2015 legislative session, which ended March 21, saw numerous attempts to weaken land protections and the guarantee that public lands will remain for generations to come.

With a full 60-day session and a Republican House for the first time in decades, we knew this would be a session of defense and that we would likely be unable to get good conservation legislation through. Fortunately, the conservation community was able to stop most of the legislation that would have damaged New Mexico’s public lands.

Most of our energy was spent fighting bills by Rep. Yvette Herrell, R-Alamogordo, and Sen. Bill Sharer, R-Farmington, to study the transfer of federal public land to the state. This was the fourth year in a row the bills did not pass, and we are very happy to report that for the fourth year in a row we stopped it!

Bills like these have been introduced all over the West during the last few years and are the result of modern legislation proposed by the Koch brothers-backed American Legislative Exchange Council. Its goal is to mobilize anti-federal government voters to ultimately force the transfer of America’s public lands to the states. Under state laws throughout the West, it is almost universally easier to lease, mine, drill and even sell off state land than federal land.

Despite the fact that this idea has been shown repeatedly over the last 150 years to be unconstitutional, impractical and undesirable, self-described Tea Party legislators continue to introduce these types of bills. Federal public lands belong to all Americans, and Americans overwhelmingly support leaving public land in public hands. America’s public lands are a legacy to future generations unmatched in the rest of the world, and while the federal government does have a big job on its hands with land management, the state of New Mexico cannot afford to take it on, even if it had the power to force a transfer.

Both the House and Senate versions of the bill made it through their first committee hearings, but were stopped in their second committees and did not advance to the floor for a full vote. We are sure to see similar bills again next year.

OTHER NOTABLE LEGISLATIVE ACTION
• A memorial introduced by Sen. Phil A. Griego, D-San Jose, would have opposed any additional wilderness in the Pecos area. Due to vociferous opposition from us and our conservation partners, Sen. Griego withdrew the memorial during its first committee hearing, eliminating it from consideration.
• We supported two pieces of positive legislation related to the Gila River. One was Senate Bill 461 (sponsored by Sen. Howie C. Morales, D-Silver City) which would have required non-diversion alternatives to be explored before considering Gila River diversion. This bill unfortunately did not pass through its first committee hearing. The other was Senate Bill 455, (sponsored by S. Cervantes (D-Las Cruces) which would have required the Interstate Stream Commission to provide financial reports to the Legislature. This bill passed the Senate Conservation Committee and was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee, but the session ended before it could be heard.
• Other notable legislation included a memorial by Sen. Bill Soules, D-Las Cruces, recognizing the importance of public lands, which passed the Senate Rules Committee but then was not heard again; an unsuccessful attempt by Rep. Herrell to call a constitutional convention regarding public lands; and a bill by Rep. Paul C. Bandy, R-Aztec, to restrict public access to waterways by limiting what waters are considered “navigable.” This bill unfortunately passed both the House and Senate and people in opposition are currently urging the governor to veto it.
• Rep. Jeff Steinborn, D-Las Cruces, sponsored successful legislation to create a commission to study the creation of a Rio Grande Trail, a hiking trail which will run the length of the state from Colorado to Texas. Gov. Susana Martinez signed the bill into law.
• Additionally, we joined our sportmen friends for a public lands rally day on Jan. 29 at the Roundhouse, demonstrating wide public support for public lands. The event was attended by more than 200 people and was a huge success!
• On Feb. 11, conservation organizations held a public lands lobby day, where approximately 30 groups, including the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, tabled in the Roundhouse. People were able to go to lobby trainings and speak to their legislators about the importance of public lands.

In a review of former U.S. Rep. Barney Frank’s new biography in the March 15 New York Times, Frank Bruni notes that Frank “writes that while the National Rifle Association wisely has its supporters flood lawmakers’ offices with letters and calls, [progressives] give foolishly short shrift to grass-roots organizing.”

We wholeheartedly agree with him on the importance of grass-roots organizing. We know from experience that this is not just effective, but absolutely essential. We were heartened to hear several state legislators during the session actually complain publically in a committee hearing about the deluge of calls and e-mails they were receiving opposing a very bad public lands bill. In that instance, the sponsor pulled the bill. He knew it was a loser and determined that in the face of such overwhelming public opposition, he would save his fellow legislators from the risk of being on record with their votes.

We sent out numerous action alerts asking you to call on a number of bills and you did–by the hundreds. This is how it works.

Thank you!
The Pecos Wilderness, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary, encompasses 223,637 acres spanning the Carson and Santa Fe national forests in northeastern New Mexico, and is the source of the Pecos, Mora, Rio Pueblo and Gallinas rivers. Its 150 miles of streams and more than 15 lakes are part of a watershed that is essential to surrounding communities and the acequia systems that irrigate the lands.

A landmark of New Mexican culture and tradition, the Pecos is of tremendous value to surrounding towns, neighboring tribal groups, acequia organizations, land grant communities, sportsmen, ranchers and outdoor enthusiasts.

The Wilderness straddles the Sangre de Cristo mountain range and is critical habitat for elk, deer, bear, turkey, cougar and one of America’s most robust herds of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. Its waters are home to rainbow and brown trout, and the state fish—the Rio Grande cutthroat trout.

While part of the Pecos is protected, there are surrounding forest lands without roads (known as roadless areas) that are threatened by unchecked development. These are areas that many of you no doubt know and love; perhaps you may have even thought they were already protected. Incorporating these roadless areas into the Pecos Wilderness or designating some areas as Special Management Areas would protect 120,000 acres of lands and waters that Santa Fe, San Miguel, Taos, Mora and Rio Arriba counties depend upon for clean air, fresh water and recreation. It would also protect critical habitat and a touchstone for New Mexican culture and tradition.

The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is proud to be a part of a broad and growing coalition—including sportsmen, elected officials, pueblo leaders, business owners, hikers and conservationists—that cares about these special places and wants to see them forever protected from roads and industry. We hope you’ll join us.

A Legacy of Conservation in the Pecos

In 1892, President Harrison proclaimed the upper Pecos a Timberland Reserve for watershed protection. In 1933, the chief of the Forest Service established the Pecos Primitive Area and on Sept. 3, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act, creating the Pecos Wilderness. In 1980, the New Mexico Wilderness Act added 55,000 acres to the Wilderness.
PECOS WILDERNESS

THE PECOS WILDERNESS &
WATER

ITS NAMESAKE IS WATER

*P’e’-a-ku’* was the Keresan word used by the Pecos Pueblo Indians to describe a “place where there is water.” When the Spanish arrived in the late 1500s, it sounded like “Pecos” and was adopted to refer to the town and the major river that runs through it.

Protecting our Prime Watersheds

- The Pecos Wilderness and the surrounding roadless areas are home to a maze of rivers, lakes and streams that contribute to the headwaters of the Pecos, Mora and Gallinas rivers.
- Human activities such as mining, drilling, fracturing, road construction and timber harvests have the potential to degrade water quality, affecting major watersheds like the Upper Pecos, the Rio Grande and the Gallinas.
- In addition to the diverse forest ecosystems that thrive in these watersheds, development could affect the water supply for the surrounding counties of Taos, Mora, Rio Arriba, San Miguel and Santa Fe.
- The upper 10,000 acres of the Santa Fe Watershed are in the Pecos Wilderness area. The watershed provides the municipal water supply for approximately 30,000 households and businesses.
- Many land grants and acequia associations in New Mexico receive a significant share of their agricultural acequia water from the Pecos River and its tributaries. Protecting the watersheds will help ensure a key source of irrigation.

Wilderness Areas and Clean Water

- In the 11 contiguous Western states, 50 percent of the water supply originates on national forests and grasslands. Of this 50 percent, forest lands that are protected under the Wilderness Act—which provides the strongest safeguards—tend to have the healthiest watersheds.
- Designated wilderness areas are “protected and managed so as to preserve (their) natural conditions.” As such, ground-disturbing activities like mining, drilling and motorized recreation are excluded.
- Wilderness areas help to mitigate the effects of climate change on water supplies by providing large areas for aquifer recharge and undisturbed vegetation.

What is a Watershed?

A watershed is a region of land that drains to a particular body of water such as a river or a lake. Rain or snow that falls anywhere in that watershed eventually flows to that water body. It may travel overland as surface water or flow underground as groundwater. The Upper Pecos Watershed is all the land from the top of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the valley bottoms that drain into the Pecos River, which starts in the Wilderness and flows for 926 miles through New Mexico, then Texas, before entering into the Rio Grande.
What about wildfires?
There is nothing about wilderness designation that prevents fire managers from taking necessary action to achieve fire management objectives. The Wilderness Act states that, “…such measures may be taken as may be necessary in the control of fire, insects, and diseases…” Furthermore, federal fire policy states, “firefighter and public safety is the first priority in every fire management activity.”

Will mountain biking be allowed?
While mountain biking is not allowed in Wilderness, designated Special Management Areas would afford stronger land protections while recognizing popular mountain bike trails near Santa Fe and Taos.

How about hunting and fishing?
Hunting and fishing in New Mexico are time-tested and sacred traditions. For centuries, sportsmen have been a leading part of the movement to conserve wildlife and wild lands. This tradition would continue in the incorporated roadless areas surrounding the existing Pecos Wilderness.

How will acequia communities be affected?
Several acequia associations in Northern New Mexico rely on clean water from the rivers and streams that originate in the existing Pecos Wilderness and its adjacent roadless areas. There are no acequias, headgates or other infrastructure located within the roadless areas adjacent to the Pecos Wilderness, so Wilderness and Special Management Area designations will not restrict access or limit maintenance to the irrigation infrastructure.
The Pecos Wilderness was seduced by me. I was falling in love. I knew that something important was happening, and I was falling in love.
ONE YEAR LATER:
Continuing Work on Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks

By Nathan Small

Nearing its one-year anniversary, the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument is blossoming into a locally treasured and nationally significant gem of natural, cultural and recreational heritage. Since its May 2014 designation, the monument has appeared in print and online publications reaching international audiences, from New Mexico Magazine and Outside Magazine to The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Weather Channel and many more. The monument now hosts new events like the first Las Cruces Climbing Festival and timeless traditions like the gathering of ceremonial plants by native tribes. Across every level and activity, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is working to safeguard and steward monument lands, especially the Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWCs).

Working with the monument’s diverse advocacy coalition, local U.S. Bureau of Land Management office and other stakeholders strengthens relationships built during the designation campaign. Together, we are helping build a strong management plan. The management plan will address motorized and mechanized travel in the monument, protection and interpretation of monument objects, core challenges like climate change adaptation, and many other issues. Currently, the BLM is in the pre-planning phase. New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is facilitating consistent communication and coordination with community stakeholders to ensure this phase is smooth and successful. We need citizens who can attend meetings, advocate through e-mail/phone and help spread the word that management planning is very important! Participate and learn more by contacting Nathan Small at nathansmall@nmwild.org and Judy Calman at judy@nmwild.org.

Wilderness Study Areas and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics are at the heart of New Mexico Wilderness Alliance’s mission to protect and steward wild lands. The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks contains eight WSAs, one of the highest concentrations in any New Mexico county. They were the national monument’s backbone and remain pristine highlights that deserve our highest level of recognition, stewardship and protection. Currently the BLM is inventorying LWCs in the monument. New Mexico Wilderness Alliance’s own inventory, recently updated, can always be improved by citizen teams doing fieldwork. If you are interested, please contact Nathan at nathansmall@nmwild.org.

In March, the Friends Rendezvous brought more than 200 people to Las Cruces. The 2016 Pecos Conference will draw more than 500 cultural resource specialists. Both groups chose Las Cruces because of the national monument. School groups from as far as North Carolina are visiting our monument. With all the new attention, we are committed to sharing our wealth of knowledge about this unique landscape and helping people get involved. Join us!  

CAMPAIGN UPDATE: Mexican gray wolves

By Judy Calman, Staff Attorney

We have been heavily involved with the revision the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been making to the Mexican wolf rule. For the past two years, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance has been attending public meetings and submitting extensive comments at every step of the process on the service’s proposed changes. The rule changes were finalized in January 2015 and are sadly not going to be a benefit to wolf recovery. Despite expansion of the wolves’ territory and the new ability for the service to release wolves directly into New Mexico, the new rule greatly expands the circumstances in which people can kill wolves and does not reconsider the wild population’s classification as “non-essential,” which prevents them from having critical protections.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance also continues its legal fight to overturn the U.S. Department of Justice’s (DOJ) so-called McKittrick policy, an internal agency policy that prevents the DOJ from prosecuting anyone for Endangered Species Act violations unless they can prove the person knew the exact biological identity of the species they were harming. This policy is counter to the act itself and to more than 20 years of case law. Additionally, the policy affects ALL endangered species and had led to an enormous decrease in Endangered Species Act prosecutions over the last 15 years since the policy was adopted.

This policy is especially troubling for Mexican wolves, though, because they number just over 100 in the wild and their highest cause of mortality is people. Since Mexican wolves were reintroduced, at least 55 wolves have been illegally shot. While the lawsuit is moving slowly, we did get a ruling in 2014 that will keep the case in Tucson where it was filed, rather than moving it to Washington, D.C., which the DOJ requested. We will keep our membership updated at every step in this process.

GET INVOLVED CONTACTS: nathansmall@nmwild.org 
judy@nmwild.org

>| Product Image of Mexican Wolf Conservation Stamp |

Order online at nmwild.org or use the order form on page 23 to mail order. This year’s stamp designed by artist Skie Bender.

www.nmwild.org
The Year 2014
HOWLS
With Success

We are very grateful to you—our members and fellow conservationists—for your steadfast passion for Wilderness protection in New Mexico. The past year added more accomplishments to New Mexico Wilderness Alliance’s proven track record of protecting hundreds of thousands of acres with citizen conservationists’ energy and vision backing us at each step. We thank you—our supporters.

1. Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks
After more than a decade of work by New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, the 496,000-acre Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument was designated by President Obama in May. The monument contains a rich diversity of Chihuahuan Desert wild lands and important historic, cultural and biological resources.

2. Columbine Hondo
The Columbine Hondo Wilderness Act was signed by President Obama on December 19, 2014, protecting 45,000 acres in Taos County. The act was introduced by Sen. Tom Udall, and co-sponsored by Sen. Martin Heinrich. A House companion bill was introduced by Rep. Ben Ray Luján and co-sponsored by Rep. Michelle Lujan-Grisham.

3. National Wilderness Conference
We co-hosted the 50th Anniversary National Wilderness Conference in October, welcoming more than 1,100 people from across the nation to Albuquerque for the largest concentration of wilderness advocates on the planet. We helped organize 100 volunteers, 20 field trips and the Get Wild Festival on Civic Plaza (attended by 1,500 people). Historian Douglas Brinkley announced, “New Mexico is now the headquarters of the wilderness protection movement.”

4. Otero Mesa
We held the line against oil and gas development on Otero Mesa. Our efforts to keep the last remaining wild Chihuahuan grassland free of industrial development successfully stopped new oil and gas leasing from happening there for the next five years.

5. Valles Caldera
Legislation to transition the Valles Caldera National Preserve to the National Park Service was signed by President Obama on December 19, 2014, increasing public access to the amazing Valles Caldera.

6. Citizen Engagement
Together, we sent 1,000 e-mails to decision makers to protect the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, Gila River and Cibola National Forest. We completed 6,900 hours of hikes and service projects (including nearly 900 hours with youth) and earned the trust and support of citizen conservationists in New Mexico and around the country.

Keep Updated with New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
For information about New Mexico Wilderness Alliance events, hikes, volunteer opportunities and news, visit www.nmwild.org
Looking Back:
50th Anniversary National Wilderness Conference

By Tisha Broska, Associate Director

In Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act, the National Wilderness Conference held Oct. 15-19, 2014, in Albuquerque was the first national gathering of wilderness advocates, stewards, educators, students and researchers in 25 years.

New Mexico was well represented and declared “ground-zero for the Wilderness movement” by author and keynote speaker Douglas Brinkley. In addition to New Mexico Wilderness Alliance staff and board members Mark Allison, Nathan Small, John Olivas and Dave Foreman, both New Mexico Sens. Martin Heinrich and Tom Udall gave keynote presentations.

Get Wild! Festival
In conjunction with the conference, the Get Wild Festival was held in Civic Plaza in downtown Albuquerque. The festival was coordinated by the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and a local committee made up of more than 15 local agency personnel and nonprofits and 100 volunteers. In addition to conference attendees, this collaboration attracted roughly 1,500 people (300-plus were children) from Albuquerque and surrounding communities.

This free festival hosted a wide variety of performers and exhibitors, including cross-cut saw demonstrations and pack animals from the Santa Fe National Forest, a backcountry cooking demonstration featuring recipes from the Wilderness Ranger Cookbook, various historic encampments, campfire sing-alongs and storytelling circles. Attendees participated in numerous activities that promoted responsible outdoor recreation and wilderness stewardship, including a wilderness passport scavenger hunt, Leave No Trace skills, wildlife identification, survival skills and much more.

A Wilderness Ranger Station was staffed by the National Park Service to provide prizes for completing the wilderness scavenger hunt.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Undersecretary Arthur “Butch” Blazer introduced keynote speakers Rue Mapp (founder of Outdoor Afro) and Juan Martinez (National Geographic Explorer and director of the Natural Leaders Network). There was also a variety of musical and dance performances.

Wilderness Inventory Work Provides Guidance on Agency Planning

By Judy Calman, Staff Attorney

FARMINGTON
The Farmington Field Office of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is currently undergoing an amendment to its Resource Management Plan, which will focus on completing an inventory for Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, and planning for oil and gas development within the Mancos Shale play.

We recently completed our own inventory of wilderness characteristics, which we submitted to the BLM for its consideration. We have also submitted scoping comments, attended all BLM public meetings and even hosted our own public meeting, which was attended by more than 100 people and 20 BLM employees, in Albuquerque last May. We are focusing our efforts in Farmington on ensuring the BLM does a comprehensive inventory for wilderness characteristics and that it considers protecting those areas. We are also committed to ensuring that BLM land within the viewshed of Chaco Culture National Historical Park is not marred by gas development. So far, the BLM has delayed making those areas available for leasing, although we will continue to watch this throughout the amendment process.

TRI-COUNTY/LAS CRUCES
The Las Cruces District Office is currently revising its Resource Management Plan for Otero, Sierra and Doña Ana counties. These counties hold some of the lands that New Mexico Wilderness Alliance has been working on for many years, including the newly designated Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument and Otero Mesa.

The BLM published a draft plan in 2013, but it had not completed the required inventory of Lands with Wilderness Characteristics and had not planned for future oil and gas development. The Las Cruces office agreed to prepare a supplement to the draft, in which it would complete analysis of both topics, and to pause the plan revision process until then. BLM has also made a commitment, at our request, not to lease any new areas within Otero and Sierra counties for oil and gas operations until after the revision process is complete. This was a significant victory for Otero Mesa.

In the meantime, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance has inventoried almost half a million acres of lands within those counties and found them to contain wilderness characteristics. We have submitted that data to the BLM and anticipate that the agency will consider it at the appropriate time in the revision process. We will advocate for those areas being managed for minimal or no impact in the plan.

Additionally, we look forward to working with the BLM on the upcoming process to create a management plan for Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks.

CARLSBAD
The Carlsbad Field Office is revising its Resource Management Plan as well. We are conducting an inventory of Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in that area, and we have also submitted proposals for the BLM to designate four Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), each of which will be evaluated in the draft plan, which we anticipate coming out this year. The four ACECs would protect the desert rivers south of Carlsbad (the Black, Pecos and Delaware rivers), a large grassland northwest of Carlsbad managed to protect habitat for birds of prey, a small area encompassing some heron nesting sites, and two salt playa areas that provide important bird habitat.

The BLM held four public workshops for Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in summer 2014, which we attended. We will be updating our membership about any public meetings that will occur with the publication of the draft and will host comment-writing workshops at that time.
uses for public lands. Another notable misconception about the BLM is how we go about planning for our multiple-use mission. We solicit and encourage substantive input from interest groups, industry, agencies and the general public, all of which is used to develop management alternatives that are analyzed for their impacts prior to a decision being made. The public's views and desires are an important and critical part of BLM's public land management.

MA: Many people are concerned about the possibility of new oil and gas development adjacent to the Chaco Culture National Historical Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Can you tell us where the BLM is in that process and any insights you may have about how it will conclude?

AS: We are currently deferring all leases for unleased BLM-administered parcels within 10 miles around Chaco Culture NHP. However, within that 10-mile circle, the BLM only administers roughly 19 percent of the mineral estate. The BLM will consider closing those BLM parcels to fluid minerals leasing as one of our alternatives in the Environmental Impact Statement for the Resource Management Plan Amendment that is currently under way. Additionally, for any federal undertaking that the BLM permits, we undergo extensive consultation with the state Historic Preservation Office, tribes, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and other interested parties to fully comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. This process involves identification of cultural resources eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. When we identify actions that may cause an adverse effect to one of these historic properties, through consultation, we develop plans to mitigate adverse effects, usually by avoidance.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs administers oil and gas leasing on the Indian Allotted Land around Chaco, which makes up about 80 percent of the mineral estate. We are unaware of any BIA proposal to lease lands adjacent to Chaco for oil and gas development.

MA: What would you like the public to know about BLM land management?

AS: BLM New Mexico manages over 13 million surface acres. Most of this public land is open for recreational use such as hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, horseback riding, OHVing (off-highway vehicles) and much more on landscapes that range from high deserts to rugged lava flows, from badlands to wild and scenic rivers, and from forests to deep canyons. We also manage National Conservation Lands, public lands with exceptional qualities. National Conservation Lands units are managed to conserve and protect nationally significant landscapes recognized for their outstanding cultural, ecological and scientific values. These special areas contain some of the state's most spectacular landscapes and include four national monuments, two national conservation areas, five wilderness areas and 57 wilderness study areas. We also co-manage three national historic trails and two wild and scenic rivers. The public lands also offer nationally significant energy and mineral resources, a great variety of wildlife, historic and prehistoric sites, wild horse and burro management areas, and numerous grazing allotments.


MA: With the designations of Rio Grande del Norte National Monument in 2013 and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in 2014, both on BLM managed land, what do you tell your colleagues when they ask why New Mexico has received so much attention lately?

AS: I tell them that New Mexico contains some of the most spectacular landscapes in the West. These designations are merely a reflection of the valuable public land resources present in these two areas and the importance placed upon them by the people of New Mexico. I also encourage them to come and visit the Land of Enchantment.

MA: Given HEYCO's recent successful flare test on Otero Mesa, are you concerned that pressure will once again be placed on Otero Mesa for gas development?

AS: Any future leasing will be analyzed in the Tri-County Resource Management Plans (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statements. Once RMP is completed and land allocation decisions are made, oil and gas leasing will be deferred and development can only occur on existing leases. A recent production test indicated the two existing gas wells were capable of production in paying quantities. With current gas prices and the lack of transportation infrastructure, I don't anticipate a lot of pressure for additional wells.

MA: What do you see as the biggest challenge facing BLM in the next 10 years?

AS: I see budget constraints as the biggest challenge facing the BLM. While our employees are skilled and anxious to manage, monitor and improve the health of our public lands, they are often stretched thin with less funding available to accomplish the necessary studies, research and other activities essential to successful management. One would think that since BLM activities make money for the American people (nationally, for every one dollar spent, the agency brings in about five dollars) appropriate funding would not be an issue. Adequate funding is essential to ensure that facilities such as our campgrounds and recreation areas, as well as our grasslands and watersheds, are in good condition and can be used and enjoyed by current visitors and future generations. Another challenge is the constant push to turn the public lands over to the states. It doesn't make sense to say that others could do a better job at managing public lands if the current caretakers are not provided the necessary resources to get the job done.

Another challenge is the technology boom that has Americans, especially youth, glued to screens. I worry the day may be coming when public lands are no longer appreciated, loved and supported by a majority of our citizens. This, of course, would further erode support for the agency and our mission.

LEARN MORE:
www.blm.gov/nm
www.facebook.com/BLMNewMexico
www.flickr.com/photos/blmnewmexico

www.nmwild.org 19
percent of New Mexicans surveyed, regardless of political party, are unwilling to pay for a diversion project and instead support non-diversion alternatives to meet our water needs.

Despite the facts and the opposition, only Commissioner Blane Sanchez voted against the ISC staff recommendation to move forward with the diversion project, explaining that he was concerned about how the high cost of the project was going to be financed and that he hadn’t heard from any local officials or legislators about their willingness and ability to pay for the project. Topper Thorpe, ISC commissioner from Gila, abstained from the vote given his conflict of interest, since he stands to personally gain from a diversion project that would supply water to irrigators in the Cliff-Gila Valley.

The ISC did allocate less than 10 percent of available AWSA funding to some of the non-diversion alternatives. However, moving forward with diversion means that AWSA funding that could have been used to fully fund these cost-effective water supply alternatives will instead be frittered away in coming years by paying for engineers and consultants who will continue developing designs and plans for a diversion project that would supply water to irrigators in the Cliff-Gila Valley.

Compounding the disappointment over the ISC’s decision are the significant questions raised about the legitimacy of the AWSA planning process, given charges of Open Meetings Act violations by the ISC as well as by the local Gila-San Francisco Water Commission. Former ISC Director Gaume brought a lawsuit against the ISC last fall, alleging numerous violations by the agency related to AWSA decisions made outside of public meetings. That case goes to trial in early April.

The Gila Conservation Coalition submitted a complaint to the New Mexico attorney general to investigate three Open Meetings Act violations by the Gila-San Francisco Water Commission. The commission took action on financing a Gila River diversion project, AWSA project prioritization and intervention in Gaume’s lawsuit outside of a public meeting. The Attorney General’s Office is now investigating.

WHAT’S NEXT?
The ISC decision was the first in a number of AWSA planning process milestones. New Mexico must now designate a NM CAP Entity and specify its responsibilities to design, construct, operate and maintain the NM Unit. This entity must execute the NM Unit Agreement with the Interior Department by Nov. 24, 2015. If that agreement is signed, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process will commence. A Record of Decision must be obtained by 2019.

The diversion project has significant regulatory hurdles to overcome during the NEPA process, in addition to enormous technical and financing challenges. As we move into a new phase under the AWSA, the Gila Conservation Coalition and its partners will draw on sound science and technical information as we continue our fight. As appropriate, we’ll use all legal means necessary to ensure that a diversion project is never built on the Gila River.

Deborah Dixon to direct the ISC, a position vacated by Estevan Lopez who now heads the federal Bureau of Reclamation. Bohannon Huston was paid more than $1 million by the ISC to develop the 10 percent design for the Gila River diversion, a plan that Gaume calls “fatally flawed.”
Upcoming River Trips

REGISTER AT NMWILD.ORG

Sunday April 19—Urban Reach Rio Grande Float trip
Join New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, Far Flung Adventures and Quiet Waters Paddling Adventures to explore the primitive aspects of the lifeline of New Mexico from Bernalillo to Alameda Bridge in Albuquerque (water level permitting). Our experienced guides and conservationists will provide history and discuss important issues about this highly managed, but gorgeous stretch of the Rio Grande River.
COST $75, including canoe, kayak, or inflatable kayak, gear, guides, and shuttle. 5-6 hours
Please bring your own lunch.

Saturday June 6—Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument/Taos Box One-Day River Rafting Trip
The Taos Box is the centerpiece of one of the U.S.’ first Wild and Scenic Rivers, and a premier Class IV whitewater rafting run. Between John Dunn Bridge, at the mouth of Arroyo Hondo, and Taos Junction Bridge, near Orilla Verde Recreation Area, are 17 miles of rafting excitement. Our guides offer two types of craft on the Class 4 section of the river. Experienced and in good shape paddlers may request the more exciting paddle boat. In case of low river flow, the trip may be modified to the Lower Gorge.
COST $120 per person, includes lunch.

Sunday July 26—Rio Chama One-Day Rafting Trip
The 10-mile Rio Chama river rafting trip begins near the tranquil setting of the Christ in the Desert Monastery and ends at Big Eddy. We meet at 9 a.m. at Ghost Ranch and we will be off the river at about 5 p.m. We welcome first-time rafters 6 years of age and older. You should be in normal good health. Our guides offer a choice of paddle raft or inflatable kayak on this Class 2 river.
COST $115 per person, includes lunch.

In Remembrance: Chuck Bowden
By Michael Berman, Board Member

MY FRIEND CHUCK BOWDEN DIED THIS FALL AS HE RECLINED IN A BACKYARD LAWN CHAIR, SETTLED INTO A DEEP AFTERNOON SLEEP and hailed by a skittering swarm of hummingbirds that he had indulged through an unlimited conversation of sugar water and wonder. And in that moment, gone forever was the singular, deep charm of that big man—his voice, a resonant growl that was always there to welcome a young, stray nameless pup of an artist to a finely cooked meal, glasses of red wine and 10-hour conversations that put the work and his talking at the center of the universe.
His was a voice that could make you believe—a voice that would exorcise both the good and the bad among us for our hypocrisies. Prophetic, he wrote with the beautiful poetry of an American, a language that spoke to our future. I’ll admit here that I had never read more than 10 consecutive pages of nature writing in my life. Yet I love to read. I spent a year of graduate school during which I was supposed to study photography instead reading the complete works of Herman Melville-Typee, Omoo and Mardi. I read Francis Parkman and James Fenimore Cooper, searching for a sense of the American frontier; Henry James to explore the American mind; and his brother and a half dozen other writers because there is something about Americans, a bastard mix of every race, creed and vision for what might be, that has allowed us to conceive of both a strip mall and the wilderness as the realm of the sacred.

And at the end of our third 10-hour conversation—when Chuck Bowden threw a thick manuscript at my feet and said, “I want to do a book with you,” I thought, “Shit—with me—the famous Mr. Bowden. Damn, I’ll actually have to read a nature writer.” And like any American fool who considered the exigencies of his career, with an empty bank account and no firm prospects, I was like, “What the hell, yeah, I’ll do a book with you.” And I took that manuscript home. Sat in a chair. Read it cover to cover and was converted. We joined the brilliant Mexican photographer Julian Cardona to do a trilogy titled “The History of the Future.” And I now realize that I stand in the shadows of one of the finest pieces of contemporary American literature; that Bowden’s three books had achieved a judder for the American mind that is so profound it breaches that same realm into which Melville chased his whale and got lost. For this is the true territory of Wilderness—a realm that is not bounded by maps, prescriptions or humanity but rather by the unfathomable darkness of our human desire to bring the white whale under our dominion.
Melville could not sell 500 copies of the first edition of “Moby Dick” because he so disturbed people who feared that a good writer had become an obsessed man and shied away from his beautiful story. If there is a future, as with Melville, people will find and read Charles Bowden and see the territory beyond.

Citizen Eyes & Ears Needed

Protecting New Mexico’s public land is a big job and we need your help!

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance does its best to ensure that federal agencies are managing our public lands in accordance with the law and to let them know when there are problems on the ground. You can help us by being our eyes and ears. When you see violations or abuse in New Mexico’s designated wilderness areas and other protected places, please let us know so we can report it to the responsible agency. Some common problems are:
• ATVs or mountain bikes in designated Wilderness areas
• Broken fences
• Illegal wood cutting
• Cows in rivers and streams

REPORT A VIOLATION
To report a violation, please visit nmwild.org/take-action/report-a-violation. Thanks for helping us keep the Wild West wild!
Dave Foreman Tribute Fund

The Dave Foreman Tribute Fund is dedicated to the achievement and protection of Wilderness throughout the state of New Mexico. A noted historian and contemporary teacher, Foreman clears the convoluted arguments of the day that co-opt our wild lands for short-sighted use or that promote the subtle, or not-so-subtle, hierarchical notion that humans have the right to whatever they wish—regardless of permanent effects on other species and the lands that support them. He has always been willing to call this thinking both ethically and morally bankrupt.

This organization’s job is to keep this citizen voice in action, alive now, and alive in another two decades and beyond. If we don’t, many a sterile, compromised land-use plan will prevail instead—influencing which entities benefit from our natural heritage to the detriment of wilderness and its diverse species. We wish it were not so—but history tells us differently and the future depends on us.

This tribute fund at New Mexico Wilderness Alliance in his honor will help our citizen-based work continue. Foreman is a wise man who asks you to be a courageous citizen, to give voice to your own wisdom, and to our shared ethical and moral stance that Wilderness belongs, as do its inhabitants.

Your gift to the Dave Foreman Tribute Fund (up to $250) will be matched dollar-for-dollar by generous conservationists who wish to encourage each one of us to support Wilderness! Foreman is one of North America’s most creative and effective conservation leaders, an outspoken proponent of protecting and restoring the earth’s wildness and a visionary thinker. Over the past 30 years, he has helped set direction for some of our most influential conservation organizations, served as editor and publisher of key conservation journals, and shared with readers his unique style and outlook in widely acclaimed books, including “Rewilding North America.” He was co-founder of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance in 1997 and in 2003 formed the Rewilding Institute.

GIVE ONLINE:
www.nmwild.org/support-us/dave-foreman-fund

Re-Igniting the Passion for Wilderness on Campus

UNM Wilderness Alliance Chapter Engages Albuquerque College Students

By Stephanie Mladinich, Co-President of UNM Wilderness Alliance

This semester, the UNM Wilderness Alliance has tried to re-establish bonds that were made years ago. The chapter was present and active on the university campus years ago, but as students graduated and interests fluctuated, the group disintegrated. Starting with five individuals with interest in supporting and advocating the cause of saving the wilderness and with a dedicated and inspiring faculty sponsor, we have rekindled the fire. Proud to be representing Edward Abbey’s alma mater, we spent the semester brainstorming ways to get more students involved. On a campus with a vast diversity of student interests and passion, we knew there were students who would be interested in the organization but were not yet involved.

We applied for a scholarship, spoke with former UNM Wilderness Alliance members, tabled at the Wilderness 50th Get Wild Festival and at Festival of the Cranes. We look forward to continuing to expand the group and its interests.

Writing weekly articles for the Daily Lobo and publishing a blog has been one of our most successful endeavors so far. With editorials on topics ranging from the endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow and water law to the Mexican gray wolves and state Legislature, we have kept our focus on informing the student population and trying to inspire further interest in New Mexico environmental issues.

The Telluride Mountainfilm Festival has been our main focus for the past several months. Working with the Southwest Film Center on the university campus, we strove to keep the interest geared toward the students. While several other film festivals are screened throughout Albuquerque off campus, we wanted to focus on inspiring the next generation to get involved with these issues and to recognize the power they have right on their campus. We thought that bringing Mountainfilm to the university would be a way for these students to connect with others who have similar interests to create some kind of change.

Mountainfilm is dedicated to educating, inspiring and motivating audiences about environments, cultures, issues and adventures. Mountainfilm presenter Henry Lystad introduced the films and engaged the audience in discussion following the films, which were screened in February. The future plans of the UNM Wilderness Alliance are concentrated on fostering a collaboration of all environmental groups on campus to raise awareness about environmental concerns and conservation. We would also like to include the art and ecology students, sustainability studies students and any other students or classes that would like to take part in the conservation of and education about our environment. We plan to achieve this awareness through different mediums of public engagement on campus. Each month we would like to choose a new topic pertaining to issues such as the Mexican gray wolf, water resources, energy and deforestation. We plan to have monthly art installations, dance performances, films, student engagement activities, speakers, presentations and other events that will educate the student body about the environment in New Mexico and at UNM.

The process of reviving the group on the university campus has been tedious, but rewarding. The interest, passion and potential for environmental concern and activism on the university campus is humbling, and the UNM Wilderness Alliance has a passionate team that hopes to carry the torch in directing those efforts.
Join-Annual Membership

Join New Mexico Wilderness Alliance today!
All New Mexico All The Time

☐ YES! Yes, I wish to purchase an annual membership to the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance!
☐ $15-Student/Senior  ☐ $25-Individual  ☐ $45-Household  ☐ $100-Premium*  ☐ $500-Lifetime

☐ Visa  ☐ Mastercard  ☐ Check (Please make checks payable to the NM Wilderness Alliance.)
Card #_________________________ Expiration _____________________________
Signature ________________________________________________________________________
Name ___________________________ Phone _____________________________
Address __________________________________________________________________________
Email ___________________________________________________

*You will receive a signed copy of The Great Conservation Divide, Dave Foreman, 2014 ($20 retail value.)

Give A Gift of Support

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
All New Mexico All The Time

YES! I will support Wilderness.

☐ $50  ☐ $100  ☐ $250  ☐ $500  ☐ $1,000  ☐ Other $__________

☐ I would like to become a monthly donor for ☐ $25  ☐ $50  ☐ Other $__________ Per month.

☐ Visa  ☐ Mastercard  ☐ Check (Please make checks payable to the NM Wilderness Alliance.)
Card #_________________________ Expiration _____________________________
Signature ________________________________________________________________________
Name ___________________________ Phone _____________________________
Address __________________________________________________________________________
Email ___________________________________________________

Mail your annual tax-deductible membership dues to:
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
PO Box 25464
Albuquerque, NM 87125
Questions? 505.843.8696

Support NM Wilderness Alliance

Support our work to protect New Mexico’s wild lands by becoming a member, giving a one-time donation, or purchasing gear. Your contributions will always stay in New Mexico.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance Merchandise Order Form

Please circle your merchandise choices, sizes & colors & indicate quantity. Prices include shipping.

Wilderness 50th anniversary t-shirts - $24
Women’s v-neck
Green: S # ____, M # ____, L # ____ , XL # ____
Brown: S # ____ , M # ____ , L # ____ , XL # ____

Men’s/Unisex
Green: S # ____, M # ____, L # ____ , XL # ____
Brown: S # ____ , M # ____ , L # ____ , XL # ____

Wilderness 50th anniversary caps - $24
Charcoal # ____, Chocolate # ____,

Wilderness 50th anniversary magnets - $5.50 # ____,

Wilderness 50th anniversary mugs - $14 # ____,

Mexican Wolf Conservation Stamp - $22
2011 # _____  2012 # _____  2013 # _____  2014 # _____

Wolves Belong Bumper Sticker - $6 # _____

Send forms to: PO Box 25464, Albuquerque NM 87125

Visa  Mastercard  Check
(Please make checks payable to NM Wilderness Alliance.)
Card #_________________________ Expiration _____________________________
Signature ________________________________________________________________________
Name ___________________________ Phone _____________________________
Email ___________________________________________________
Billing Address _____________________________________________________________
Shipping Address ____________________________________________________________

Mug
T-shirts
Cap
Get A Gift of Support
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
All New Mexico All The Time

Wilderness 50th anniversary t-shirts - $24
Women’s v-neck
Green: S # ____, M # ____, L # ____ , XL # ____
Brown: S # ____ , M # ____ , L # ____ , XL # ____

Men’s/Unisex
Green: S # ____, M # ____, L # ____ , XL # ____
Brown: S # ____ , M # ____ , L # ____ , XL # ____

Wilderness 50th anniversary caps - $24
Charcoal # ____, Chocolate # ____,

Wilderness 50th anniversary magnets - $5.50 # ____,

Wilderness 50th anniversary mugs - $14 # ____,

Mexican Wolf Conservation Stamp - $22
2011 # _____  2012 # _____  2013 # _____  2014 # _____

Wolves Belong Bumper Sticker - $6 # _____

Send forms to: PO Box 25464, Albuquerque NM 87125

Visa  Mastercard  Check
(Please make checks payable to NM Wilderness Alliance.)
Card #_________________________ Expiration _____________________________
Signature ________________________________________________________________________
Name ___________________________ Phone _____________________________
Email ___________________________________________________
Billing Address _____________________________________________________________
Shipping Address ____________________________________________________________

Support NM Wilderness Alliance

Support our work to protect New Mexico’s wild lands by becoming a member, giving a one-time donation, or purchasing gear. Your contributions will always stay in New Mexico.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance Merchandise Order Form

Please circle your merchandise choices, sizes & colors & indicate quantity. Prices include shipping.

Wilderness 50th anniversary t-shirts - $24
Women’s v-neck
Green: S # ____, M # ____, L # ____ , XL # ____
Brown: S # ____ , M # ____ , L # ____ , XL # ____

Men’s/Unisex
Green: S # ____, M # ____, L # ____ , XL # ____
Brown: S # ____ , M # ____ , L # ____ , XL # ____

Wilderness 50th anniversary caps - $24
Charcoal # ____, Chocolate # ____,

Wilderness 50th anniversary magnets - $5.50 # ____,

Wilderness 50th anniversary mugs - $14 # ____,

Mexican Wolf Conservation Stamp - $22
2011 # _____  2012 # _____  2013 # _____  2014 # _____

Wolves Belong Bumper Sticker - $6 # _____

Send forms to: PO Box 25464, Albuquerque NM 87125

Visa  Mastercard  Check
(Please make checks payable to NM Wilderness Alliance.)
Card #_________________________ Expiration _____________________________
Signature ________________________________________________________________________
Name ___________________________ Phone _____________________________
Email ___________________________________________________
Billing Address _____________________________________________________________
Shipping Address ____________________________________________________________

Support NM Wilderness Alliance

Support our work to protect New Mexico’s wild lands by becoming a member, giving a one-time donation, or purchasing gear. Your contributions will always stay in New Mexico.