The Evolving Wilderness Community
I was honored earlier this year when the Board of Directors entrusted me with Chair of a great grassroots conservation organization. As a brief introduction to those of you whom I have not met, my primary focus in both my professional and voluntary lives is 1) to ensure that Wilderness, wildlands and biodiversity continue and 2) to enjoy and appreciate them every day. I know that you share these goals, so we have a lot in common. I am always open to new ideas and suggestions as to how we can accomplish our mission, so please feel free to contact me. As I assumed Chairmanship, I was given the task of helping find a replacement for Edward Sullivan who will be leaving NMWA later this summer. Edward decided to take a year or so to explore international conservation issues and is headed to South America. When he told me his plans, I said go for it, you will not have any regrets and will learn so much—but I said this with a heavy heart. I will miss his friendship and his superb leadership. Edward has done an amazing job of taking the vision and commitment of a volunteer board of directors and building it into one of the largest conservation organizations in New Mexico. His energies and creativity have been tapped deeply, they are the foundation upon which NMWA is built and growing. Thank you Edward, you will be missed. Starting in June, Jessica Pope comes on board as our new Executive Director. Jess comes from Arizona and brings to our organization strong managerial skills, a grassroots background, and experience in passing legislation. Most importantly, she posses a strong passion for wilderness and wildlands. When we offered her the position, she was sitting on a raft in the San Juan River (she was on a satellite phone if you are wondering). Edward committed to staying with NMWA and working with Jess to show her the ropes until late July. He will be introducing her to the New Mexico conservation community and NMWA members.

Recently, there are days when many of us feel that our efforts are overwhelmed by a stronger force that does not appear to share our love and respect for all that is wild. That other vision seems so short-term and not respectful of the abundance of life that enriches our world. These are, however, the very times when we must persevere, endure and reaffirm our convictions to make a difference—and NMWA is doing just that! Your support and enthusiasm keep us moving forward toward accomplishments that we can all celebrate. During these times, I often refer to a quote from the anthropologist Margaret Mead, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Thank you for helping make a difference—and never underestimate the importance of even the smallest step you take in protecting wildlands. Always take time to enjoy the natural beauty and wildlife that we share in New Mexico—it will refresh your spirit and reaffirm your commitment. 

—Randall Gray
Chair of the NMWA Board of Directors

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

—Margaret Mead
anthropologist

Notes from the Chair
Edward Sullivan Hands Over the Reins

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You’re Making a Difference

The fight to preserve this vast tract of Chihuahuan Desert grassland continues on many fronts. What remains clear is that your letters to our Senators and the BLM are having a positive effect. The permitting process has been delayed, and now officials in Washington understand more clearly that New Mexicans are not willing to roll over and allow our wild landscapes to be destroyed to fill the pockets of a few wealthy oil and gas executives.

The coming months will be crucial—we must continue to make the case for alternative energy production. Remember, New Mexico and much of the West are the Saudi Arabia of Wind. Yet, New Mexico lags far behind other western states in wind production. Today, only one commercial windmill near Clovis. Recently, a Las Cruces business owner said to me that it was important to save Otero Mesa, “If for no other reason than to force the government to begin investing in alternative energy sources.” Early in the last century, trains were facing competition from a new source—the airplane. The train barons used all their political power to maintain control. In the end, the plane triumphed. Today we face a similar situation—the oil and gas industry is fighting to maintain control of the energy industry. To do this, they will drill the last wild landscapes, destroy Native cultures, force America into wars on foreign shores, and continue to blanket the landscapes with propaganda—and in the end, leave our public lands degraded and our country less secure. Otero Mesa, like so many other wild places in the West, is a symbol of why such arrogance must be stopped.

Please keep the letters coming, and sign-on to our activist alert on the Otero Mesa web site (www.otom masa.org) to stay up to date on breaking developments on this issue.

—by Stephen Capa
NMWA Communications Coordinator

Grassroots Team Documents
Broad Support for Wilderness

Inventory

When our original inventory was completed, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance came up with a figure of 460,000 acres of potential Wilderness in Otero Mesa. Some of the large expanses of blue and black gramma grasslands were left out of the inventory, however, due to roads and time constraints.

In the past two months, we have received over 50,000 letters. Another 50,000 acres of roadless land have been confirmed, bringing our total in the Greater Otero Mesa Area to 510,000 acres.

Making New Mexico Businesses Part of the Coalition

Currently, some 100 New Mexico businesses have signed up as sponsors of the Greater Otero Mesa Area. Such support is crucial to the protection of this wild landscape. We hope to have 300 businesses on board by July 2002.

If your business is not signed-on, please call us at 505/527-9962 for directions. Your business is making a difference.

Politics

In early May 2002, gubernatorial candidate Bill Richardson, the former Congressman and Energy Secretary, announced that he was opposed to any oil and gas development in the Greater Otero Mesa Area. Before him, Las Cruces Mayor Rubin Smith also took the pledge to protect this wild and important part of New Mexico’s conservation heritage. And on 30 May 2002, US. Senator candidate Gloria Tristani called for the Bureau of Land Management to re-inventory the Wilderness potential of New Mexico’s Otero Mesa.

In spite of these important political gains, the opposition has garnered more than its share of support for developing Otero Mesa. All of the Republicans and the other Democrat running for retiring Congressman Joe Skeen’s seat have pledged to open Otero Mesa to full-scale oil and gas development. A lot of serious grassroots work remains to be done on this issue!

Grassroots Outreach Team Documents

Broad Support for Wilderness

A

April 2002 was a visible month for the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. The Grassroots Outreach Team working on the Cabezon Campaign seemed to be at an event every week—some of which are listed below. NMWA participated in the Sierra Student Coalition Conference at the Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge and Research Station 12-14 April. The Conference is a student-organized activist training seminar for the young environmental advocates of today and tomorrow. Students from 15-25 years of age were present from New Mexico and Arizona, including several students from the Hopi tribe in Arizona who are fighting the Peabody Coal Company in a widely publicized battle to protect their land and water from ruin. NMWA Executive Director Edward Sullivan gave the keynote address to kick off the event, and Grassroots Organizer Sean Saville led a training session on Wilderness.

NMWA’s Albuquerque Grassroots Team—Garrett Deetzl, Sean Saville and Jonathan Klar—participated in five separate Earth Day events raising public awareness of Wilderness issues, collecting public support, and moving the Wilderness dialogue into the spotlight in New Mexico. We were at the Santa Fe Earth Day event on the 20th, the LNM and La Montanita Co-op Earth Day events on the 21st, and the Cabezon Brewery Beer Tasting at Wild Oats on the 20th. Also on Earth Day, Monday the 22nd, Sean Saville was invited to give a slide show presentation to about 250 9-12th graders at Santa Fe Prep. Altogether in two weeks in April, the grassroots staff and volunteers collected about 450 letters of support and numerous petition signatures for the Cabezon Campaign. Thank you to all who showed your support.

In the midst of all of these activities, the newest member to the Grassroots team, Arturo San доволь at Voces, Inc., has been traveling extensively around northern New Mexico spreading the good word about Wilderness. With the help of local Wilderness guides and ranchers from the north, Arturo has been setting up meetings with local elected officials to let them know about the cultural and economic benefits of Wilderness designation. Arturo’s style is one of full disclosure, and his personal integrity is one of integrity, so it is not wonder why people have found it very hard not to be interested in what he is saying.

With all of these elements combined, we at the Alliance have grown ever more encouraged by what we see in the people we meet and speak with on a daily basis. It is obvious to us that people not only want to see more Wilderness in New Mexico, but that they want to see it for a broad diversity of reasons, informed by a deep sense of passion.

—by Sean Saville
NMWA Grassroots Organizer

Your Letters Are Making a Difference for Otero Mesa

In the past few months, work to protect Otero Mesa has moved at a rapid rate. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, in conjunction with the Otero Mesa Coalition, has traveled the state speaking to groups as diverse as the Rotary Club, senior centers, conservancy groups, colleges and elected officials. In addition, we have generated a steady stream of media—from newspapers across the State, to radio and television. Clearly these efforts have made a difference.

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Over the years I have taken every opportunity to spend time in Big Canyon, the southernmost canyon in the Guadalupe Mountains before entering Texas. Being just north of the well known and well traveled McKittrick Canyon in Guadalupe Mountains National Park, and having no easy access, have resulted in Big Canyon being poorly known and visited only rarely. While I hope this article doesn’t cause an influx of people to this special place, I do hope it will bring a bit of awareness to a true gem in a wonderful mountain range. I have hiked over much of the Guadalupes (but never enough), and Big Canyon is far and away my favorite place. It tops McKittrick and the others that get all the attention.

In 1980, I was hired as a sub-contractor on a Peregrine Falcon nesting study. At the time, there was a nesting site attended to by only a single male, and I was to check on the bird density in the area of the eyrie. That was my initiation into the soul of the Guadalupes, Big Canyon, and perhaps to my own soul and the reason why we are even here.

I fell in love with the canyon the first time I set foot there. Over the years, numerous experiences from the canyon have enriched me and have made me a better person. I know that we usually attribute such growth to people who have had an impact on our lives—but why can’t the solitude of a canyon, away from the clutter of our society, do the same? I know it has for me.

White-throated Swifts shoot away from the clutter of our society, why can’t the solitude of a canyon, have had an impact on our lives—but attribute such growth to people who have enriched me and have made me a better person. I know that we usually attribute such growth to people who have had an impact on our lives—but I had never been lucky enough to find more than their elytra. The elytra is the hard covering present on the back of the beetle that provides protection for the membranous flying wings and abdomen underneath. The elytra of both species is a remarkable green, with that of Plusiotis wood being a soft, lime green. The other species, P. gloriosa fits its name well. The elytra is a rich green with broad indentations called striae. The striae in P. gloriosa are a rich silver in color and contrast gloriously with the adjacent rich green. As I walked through a young stand of Mexican Walnut, I noticed a large greenish beetle fly by. I knew that there were two species of Plusiotis, a type of scarab beetle, present in the canyon, but I had never been lucky enough to find more than their elytra. The elytra is the hard covering present on the back of the beetle that provides protection for the membranous flying wings and abdomen underneath. The elytra of both species is a remarkable green, with that of Plusiotis wood being a soft, lime green. The other species, P. gloriosa fits its name well. The elytra is a rich green with broad indentations called striae. The striae in P. gloriosa are a rich silver in color and contrast gloriously with the adjacent rich green.

As this large beetle flew by through the Mexican Walnut, I stretched out my right palm and held it still. I never knew why I did that, but the beetle must have seen the motion, because it turned and headed straight for my hand. I didn’t really think of the possibility of it being a P. gloriosa—I just wanted to see what would happen. The beetle made a sleek landing on the end of my hand. (With six legs, a sixpoint landing would be expected.) Here it was, a P. gloriosa sitting on my hand facing me. I couldn’t believe my good fortune at that unique moment. We faced each other for a few seconds, and it turned as if to launch from the end of my hand.

Suddenly, from the side came another sound, that of a hummingbird. As the beetle perched at the end of my hand, a beautiful male Blue-throated Hummingbird flew to the end of my hand, hovering back and forth, first looking at the beetle and then at me and then at the beetle. Blue-throated hummingbirds are the largest hummingbirds in the United States, about the size of a standard warbler, with a wingspan of eight inches. Big Canyon is one of the few places in the State to find this species—and even there, it is very rare.

For a few glorious seconds, the three of us were transfixed. The hummingbird gave the beetle, then me, one last look and peeled away. The beetle followed suit, careening through the Mexican Walnut. I lowered my hand and stood there, not wanting to take another step. I don’t know what the beetle’s or hummingbird’s intent was in all of this, or what they got out of it. But I know that as I stood there, my life was enriched and I cared in a way that cannot be measured.

The rest of that day in the field was an afterglow of that moment, as my thoughts constantly went back to it. A moment on a hot, late July afternoon in the bottom of a white, rodent canyon. A moment in a lifetime of experiences.

Why must we have Wilderness? Because our lives are enriched by it, even by just knowing it is there. By the possibility that we can see real meaning and learn what is important by watching a bug and a bird—and be touched by the moment. That won’t happen at a shopping center or driving down the highway at 70 mph.

I know that, each time I have driven to the mouth of the canyon or dropped down from the top, I have swum upon returning, “I won’t be going there again. It’s too rough and I’m getting too fat and old to keep doing this.” But though I continue to get older, and none of the joints work as well as they did when I first stormed in there, I know I will always be going back. And I’ll be looking for another beetle and hummingbird, or whatever treasure Big Canyon decides to share with me.

—by Steve West
NMWA Board Member
A Witness to Change—A Photographer Looks Within

As a photographer, I have been fortunate. I believe that being interested in photography is another way of saying that I am interested in what goes on around me at all times. The camera has been an instrumental tool in teaching me awareness and empathy. Seeing things change and reflecting on how I feel in light of change, has allowed me to formulate opinions and become comfortable with change. I now feel that this type of awareness, garnered from photography, is more a commitment to the process of change; thus I feel I have become less of a photographer and more a witness.

With this in mind, I would like to describe my experience with the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and how volunteerism is my newfound commitment to change.

I have found volunteering to be a very rewarding experience. The minute I decided to volunteer, the small amount of free time that I have, the process of change began to work its magic in me. Being able to make this decision means that I am interested in something (this is always a good feeling). It also means that my interest in something could lead to meeting people and discovering precious time for the benefit of others. Finally, once I decided to volunteer, I invited the element of change into my life.

As one takes on the vow of a volunteer, change is expressed first in one’s own life. Committing the hours to this activity is big. An example can be found in my love for climbing and the decision a volunteer must make. My best opportunity to climb comes on the weekend or when I get off work. A couple of weeks ago, I was presented with the decision of either climbing or staying committed to an earlier choice to volunteer. I chose to volunteer. Volunteering doesn’t mean that I will stop climbing, but I feel that my decision was rewarded. I drove to the NMWA office and had a great time talking with the other volunteers. As we talked, we did the odd jobs that NMWA needed help with. It was then that I realized that my commitment was facilitating another change with bigger goals.

NMWA has a voice that I can actively participate in. The Wilderness Alliance seems like a living-breathing organism that consists of people whom I’ve been fortunate enough to meet in the short time that I’ve been volunteering. My opportunity to meet these people and understand what they do is enlightening. Experiencing how I fit into this organization and the changes that are put in motion because of NMWA is something in which I take personal pride. I have participated in a process that asks questions and allows me to generate my own answers.

I celebrate my love of photography and the heightened awareness that result in my deepened commitment to the Wilderness and the people who care passionately to protect it. These commitments make all of us a witness to change.

—by Joshua Willis
NMWA Volunteer

After You “Look”, You “See” Them—Painting a Picture of My Beautiful Organ Mountains

A friend of mine who is a nature photographer in Florida asked me to pick a day and describe the Organ Mountains to him. This is what I told him. I hope you enjoy it.

How do I find the words to describe what I see? My beautiful Organ Mountains, surrounded by 300 yards of wilderness, are the desert’s crown jewel. The desert floor is so full of life. Every few yards a mesquite or a cactus lays claim to its little piece of earth and provides food and homes for the desert’s creatures. The mesquite are covered with slender emerald green leaves that gently dance in the ever-present desert breeze that seems to whisper, “Be one with the earth.” Between the mesquite are sprawling prickly pear cactus covered in buds ready to burst into bloom. The ocotillo is tipped with red plumes. It often reminds me of seaweed in an ocean current with slender emerald green leaves that gently dance in the ever-present desert breeze that seems to whisper, “Be one with the earth.”

The ocotillo is tipped with red plumes. It often reminds me of seaweed in an ocean current. The camera has been an instrumental tool in teaching me awareness and empathy. Seeing things change and reflecting on how I feel in light of change, has allowed me to formulate opinions and become comfortable with change. I now feel that this type of awareness, garnered from photography, is more a commitment to the process of change; thus I feel I have become less of a photographer and more a witness.

The ocotillo is tipped with red plumes. It often reminds me of seaweed in an ocean current. It’s so quiet you can almost hear the echoes of the herds of wild horses that once thundered through the larger canyons buried deep in the mountains.

Nurture Nature.

—by Mary E. Kenny
NMWA Volunteer
With our current administration's list to open up public lands to oil and gas development under the guise of "national security," many of the areas that NMWA is fighting to protect as Wilderness have come under direct and immediate threat. The Robledos Mountains—Sierra de las Uvas, a 200,000-acre unit near Las Cruces is the latest Chihuahuan Desert gem to come under the oil and gas industry's fire.

NMWA is using the Wilderness Inventory Handbook (WIH), a manual prepared by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), to try and get the agency to do another on-the-ground inventory of Robledos Mountain—Sierra de las Uvas. The WIH is a manual that guides BLM personnel in conducting on-the-ground inventories to determine if an area has Wilderness character. The key to forming an area as Wilderness is providing BLM with significant new information that shows that the agency should reconsider its Wilderness inventory findings published in its 1980 document, New Mexico Wilderness Study Area (WSA) Decisions. We feel that, if BLM did another inventory under the protocol laid out in WIH, it would find that the areas we are recommending would indeed have Wilderness character.

Back in 1979-1980, BLM conducted an inventory of its lands to determine which lands it deemed suitable for further Wilderness study. The lands that the agency found to have Wilderness character became Wilderness Study Areas (WSA). A WSA is required to be managed in a manner that preserves its Wilderness character, until Congress makes a final decision as to whether or not the area should become part of the Wilderness Preservation System.

In the 22 years that have passed since BLM conducted its inventory, much has changed on the ground. NMWA has been conducting a Wilderness inventory of BLM lands from 1999 until now, and our surveys show that many of the roads that disqualified all or parts of an area for further Wilderness study, according to the BLM, are now faint tracks, barely noticeable on the ground. Using the definitions for Wilderness character given in the WIH, we put together a write-up for this area that shows it meets the BLM's criteria for Wilderness. The criteria used are those found in the Wilderness Act of 1964—size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation (see box). The NMWA Proposal also lists:

• BLM's reasons for dropping all or parts of an area,
• followed by NMWA's arguments why BLM's reasons are no longer valid. These arguments are backed with photo-documentation from our recent inventory.

For a particularly large and complicated area like Robledos Mountains—Sierra de las Uvas, the write-up ended up being more than 40 pages! We are now preparing WIH write-ups for all 23 units in Otero Mesa (see call of the wild Spring 2002) and will continue as needed.

—by Michael Scialdone
NMWA Northern Field Coordinator

The Robledos Mountains—Sierra de las Uvas Wilderness Characteristics

Robledos Mountains—Sierra de las Uvas is located in northwestern Dona Ana County adjacent to the Rio Grande, just northwest of Las Cruces and just south of Hatch, New Mexico. The unit provides critical wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors for animals moving between the various desert mountain ranges in the area and the riparian zone along the river. Elevations within the unit range from a low of approximately 4,000 feet to over 6,000 feet. This elevation range, coupled with the varied geology in the area, provides for a diverse range of landscape forms and habitat types—juniper-dotted mountains; dramatic limestone; igneous and volcanic cliffs; remote grass-covered mesas and buttes; coves; deep and rugged box canyons with riparian habitats; gentle alluvial fan slopes covered with grasses and shrubs; expansive desert grassland swales; and creosote-dominated lowlands are all encompassed in this exceptional Wilderness complex.

Unit Size—The Citizen’s Wilderness Proposal for the Robledos Mountains—Sierra de las Uvas unit encompasses 154,152 acres of land managed by the BLM. The addition of 43,481 acres of state trust lands within the proposed boundaries brings the total Wilderness unit to 197,913 acres.

Naturalness—Though relatively close to Las Cruces, the nature and degree of human impacts in the Robledos Mountains—Sierra de las Uvas unit are quite minimal. Affected primarily by the forces of nature, the landscape here has retained its wild character.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude—While the high peaks and ridges in the unit provide outstanding vistas, a true sense of solitude can best be found in the numerous canyons. Rugged terrain and large size also contribute to outstanding opportunities for solitude. Many places within the unit are miles away from any significant road, and visitor use is light in most of the area throughout the year, ensuring that one will find solitude here.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation—Opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation in the unit include:

• geological sight-seeing in the varied volcanic, igneous, and sedimentary outcrops,
• mountain climbing, rock climbing, and day hiking;

• backpacking and horseback riding in the open terrain leading to lonely mesas;

• outstanding outdoor photography due to the high quality of southern New Mexico sunlight, particularly at sunrise and sunset.

Supplemental Values—The Robledos Mountains—Sierra de las Uvas unit have many supplemental Wilderness characteristics that include scenic, ecological, historical and archeological values. Expansive vistas of the wild landscape are afforded from the mountaintops and ridges, while dramatic cliffs, box canyons, and other impressive geologic features can be found throughout the unit.

A wide diversity of vegetation types is represented in the unit—from juniper woodland and savannah in the higher elevations to desert cactus in the lower elevations, the grasses in the desert flats, and the lush riparian zone along the Rio Grande. The Robledos Mountains support an unusually high diversity of flora, including state-endangered plant species.

The wide range of vegetation types translates into a diversity of wildlife habitat types—yet another ecological value. Pronghorn, mule deer, mountain lion, coyote, bats, rock squirrels and other rodents, quail and numerous other birds are found here. The abundance of cliffs provides nesting and perching sites for many raptors, including bald and golden eagles, various hawks and owls, and the federally listed endangered peregrine falcon. Reptile diversity is also high—banded rock rattlers, Madrean alligator lizards, and Trans-Pecos rat snakes are all found here, as are other reptiles that reach the northern or western limits of their range.

History and Archaeology—At least 20 historic and prehistoric sites are known to occur within or adjacent to the Robledos Mountains WSA, including some of the earliest known prehistoric habitation sites in southern New Mexico. The area also several undisturbed pasthan villages, small caves, two Lithic Indian sites in Horse Canyon, and at least two excellent petroglyph sites in the Sierra de las Uvas. In terms of historic resources, Lookout Peak in the Robledos Mountains was the site of a telegraph station during the early 1880s, used by explorers to communicate with similar stations elsewhere about Apache activities. The historic Butterfield Trail also runs through the southern portion of the unit.
New Mexico—The Volcano State

When it comes to volcanoes, New Mexico has some of the best examples on the North American continent. Many of these areas are Proposed Wilderness Areas or designated Wilderness.

Appropriately, each of the southwestern states has a geologic specialty. Arizona is the Big Canyon State, Utah is the Mesozoic Fauna State, and Colorado is the big snow-capped Rocky Mountains State. Then what is New Mexico? We need only look out their windows for the answer—New Mexico is the Volcano State.

New Mexico has one of the greatest concentrations of young, well exposed, and uneroded volcanoes on the continent. And as a bonus, it is also the Rift Valley State; it has one of only four or five big continental rifts in the world—East Africa being one others. The fact is, New Mexico is one of the best places to study the natural history of volcanoes. Here are just a few facts to consider:

Twenty percent (20%) of the U.S. national parks and monuments based on volcanic themes are in New Mexico. There are more here than Arizona, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington combined.

The type example and one of the largest young calderas in the world—Valles Caldera—is in New Mexico. Yellowstone is a caldera but it is a less visually obvious example of this type of volcanic landform.

Two of the largest young basaltic lava flows in the world—Canisaro and McCartys—are in New Mexico. Some of the geological terms for surface features on lava flows were first defined here in New Mexico, not in Hawaii.

One of the greatest concentrations of young volcanic steam explosion craters—referred to as “maars” by geologists—occur in New Mexico. Zuni Salt Lake Crater and Kibbouine Hole Crater are two examples. New Mexico, often used as type examples in textbooks. The remains of maars literally fill White Rock Canyon, and they pepper the surfaces of many of the other volcanic fields, like the Mount Taylor and Petroglyph fields. They are more abundant, better preserved and more diversely exposed than those in the type area—Eifel district of Germany. European geologists come here to learn about maars.

New Mexico encompasses several of the largest concentrations of young cinder cones—exemplified by the Raton-Clayton, Zuni-Bandera and Petroglyph fields, for starters.

The greatest concentration and best exposed examples of young volcanic necks in the world are in New Mexico—in the Rio Puerco valley (see box).

The greatest diversity of young volcanic rock types and classic suites of volcanic phenomena—for example, the Mount Taylor and the Raton-Clayton volcanic fields—occur in New Mexico.

The Datil-Mogollon region of New Mexico is one of the largest concentrations of resurgent calderas. These are more eroded than the Valles Caldera, but they are in the same state of exposure as the San Juan Mountains of Colorado, another collection of mid-Tertiary resurgent calderas. You would have to go to the Sierra Madre of Mexico, the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes in Alaska, or even Armenia to see something similar.

Volcanism in New Mexico is not “extinct,” but is dormant. The record of volcanism in New Mexico is continuous over tens of millions of years, and there is no reason to think it stopped magically 3,000 years ago with the eruption of several cubic kilometers of basalt (what we know as McCarty’s Lava flow, El Malpais). New Mexico has one of the largest mid-ocean rift active magma bodies (under Socorro) in the continent. The others are Long Valley, California, Yellowstone, and Wyoming.) The Socorro area is one of the few areas where there is a dearth of young volcanoes, so perhaps the Rift is working on filling out its volcanic landform.

There is no place else on the continent where people live in major metropolitan areas (Las Cruces, Santa Fe, Albuquerque) and have so many different types of volcanoes in only a few hours drive. In most parts of the world, people are far removed from any volcano that they must travel many days or fly in and out at great cost. In New Mexico, we can get up in the morning, eat breakfast at the kitchen table, put on our field clothes, and be standing on a world-class example of some volcanic phenomena by early morning. Or we need only look out the window to see at least one of those world-class examples on the horizon. Or in only a few minutes, we can go stand on one of the best young examples of a fissure eruption (Albuquerque Volcanoes), a cluster of maar craters (Potrillo), or the largest young caldera in the world (Valles Caldera).

The climate of New Mexico favors preservation of volcanicologic features. Whereas most other volcanic areas on the continent are extensively “water-damaged”, New Mexico is a giant air-conditioned museum of volcanic phenomena preserved. Even the volcanoes that are eroded are really only deeply cut, not weathered, and the surface features are still intact for examination. In New Mexico, we can truly walk through the interior of many volcanoes and still examine their relatively uneroded surface features. Every major type of volcanic landform—composite volcanoes, shield volcanoes, volcanic calderas, major ash-flows, pahoehoe and aa lava, maar crater, fissure eruptions, cinder cones—occurs in New Mexico.

Volcanic phenomena tend to concentrate in two of the three types of plate boundaries—subduction zones, transform boundaries, and rifting boundaries. Transform boundaries, such as Southern California, tend not to have volcanoes. Subduction zones are the site of the big, explosive composite volcanoes, such as those around the Pacific Ring of Fire. Rifting boundaries, such as the mid-ocean ridges, Iceland and East Africa, rarely occur on dry land—New Mexico is one of those rare places.

Kilauea may be more spectacular than Mount Taylor, and Hawaii may be more active today than New Mexico—but those are just particularly big, hard-to-miss and isolated, examples of volcanoes. In the final analysis, it is uniqueness and diversity that is really New Mexico’s specialty, certainly in culture, but also in natural history. “Big” is not necessarily the point, nor is it always the best reference example.

The bottom line is that volcanoes are so much more concentrated in one place in New Mexico—a museum—with exotic southwestern mesas and landscapes thrown in for visual relief. So it is no surprise that New Mexico’s volcanoes are at one and the same time unique, abundant, and diverse. When it comes to the natural history of volcanic phenomena, you do not have to make any excuses for New Mexico’s collection.

—by Dr. Larry Crumpler
The New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science

Will there be another eruption? Probably. When? Geologically soon.

The Volcanic Beauty of the Rio Puerco

Often, we sense that some place is special even though we may not know why. If knowledge of geological processes were more widespread, then there would be a more widespread appreciation of why the Rio Puerco valley is special.

Although much has been said about the natural beauty of the Rio Puerco valley, one point that is often lost is the fact that the volcanic necks, of which Cabazon is one, make this area unique. Simply put, there is no other place on Earth where the interiors of young volcanoes are so well exposed as in the Rio Puerco volcanic necks. It is a geological resource beyond comparison—but poorly studied at this site. Such a study must be done.

Cabazon is one of many massive, dark peaks known as volcanic necks that are scattered throughout the Rio Puerco valley between Mesa Chivato and Mesa Prieta on the west and east, and San Luis and I-40 on the north and south. Together with Mesas Chivato and Prieta, the necks are part of the Mount Taylor volcanic field, a cluster of several hundred small volcanoes that were active between 3 million and 1.5 million years ago. A few volcanic necks, including Corro Aksana, occur on the west side of Mesa Chivato.

Unlike many isolated sandstone buttes and peaks in the Southwest, such as those in Monument Valley, the rocks of the Rio Puerco volcanic necks were formed dynamically in volcanic eruptions. What makes them unique? They are all near-surface interiors of small, geologically young volcanoes that were deeply dissected when the Rio Puerco cut through the Mount Taylor volcanic field. Erosion has exposed the complex interiors of many of the small volcanoes.

Exploring them is all the more exciting, since one can see violent events recorded in their complex structure. The eruptions were similar to those that form small scoria cones, such as Capulin and Bandera volcanoes, and in some cases, similar to the eruption that formed Zuni Salt Lake and Kibbouine Hole.
The Evolving Wilderness Community Builds on the Strength of Social Diversity

One thing we have learned at the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance over the past four years is the importance of collaboration and broad coalitions. Not only does the diversity of New Mexico demand it, but it has a great value unto itself. Diverse partnerships strengthen our collective voice and provide us with new ideas and perspectives.

Through being open to these new alliances, we have found that hunters, ranchers, wildlife advocates, tribes and landowners often share a common interest in protecting the land. The only impediment to building these new relationships is often our own inability or unwillingness to listen and sometimes learn a new perspective.

Ask any Politician what really drives public policy, and s/he will say, “It’s the economy, stupid!” Although that reality is often hard to accept, it is never more true than today when businesses large and small are struggling in the post-September 11th economy. Politicians listen to business leaders, and often ask “How will this effect local business?” before acting on contentious policy issues.

We have found this to be true throughout the history of the public-lands debate in the West. Politicians often color the debate as “critters vs. jobs”—here in New Mexico, it’s “minnows and owls vs. people.” What is often not said, is that there are literally thousands of businesses that depend, not on developing our natural resources, but on protecting them. These small, often family-owned outfits rely on a high quality of life here in New Mexico and vast wild landscapes. They struggle when our wildlands are plowed under in the name of big business and corporate profits.

Craig Gerhard, owner of Riverdancer Retreats and B&B in Jemez Springs, says, “People come up here for the scenic beauty—if there weren’t protected areas like Wilderness nearby, people wouldn’t come by.”

Similarly, Mike Compton, owner of Taos Creek Cabins, shares that view, “Everyone coming out here wants to be in the Wilderness setting. The nearby Wilderness areas definitely help our business here.”

Also, by protecting our natural landscapes, New Mexico gains a better reputation among high-dollar industries like software companies that are looking to open new offices. These businesses depend on being in areas with a high quality of life to attract a talented workforce.

There is a misconception that the economy of the West is driven by resource extraction. In fact, the vast majority of people work in industries that benefit directly or indirectly from Wilderness protection. These are all of us working in retail, service, technology, and many other blue- and white-collar industries.

That is why we are continually heartened by the response that both NMWA and the Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness are having in finding supporters within the small-business community. Over the past year, more than 155 businesses have lent their name and their support to the cause of protecting Wilderness. From local restaurants, motels and shops, to outfitters, guides and outdoor supply stores, there is a growing industry that depends on high quality outdoor experiences for the general public.

On page 13, you will find the most up-to-date list of organizational and business supporters in the Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness. Please patronize these businesses. They are on the front end of a growing progressive business culture. With stronger pro-Wilderness businesses, we will be able to make a stronger case for Wilderness protection.

—The Staff of the NMWA
Natural Allies Are Outgrowing Legacy of Misunderstanding

T

here's something new happening in the New Mexico Wilderness movement. For the first time in decades, conservation groups dedicated to protecting areas as Wilderness are working together with New Mexico Pueblos and Tribes in a joint effort to protect special places. While this cooperation makes perfect sense, it is long overdue.

This trend, while relatively new to the Wilderness movement, is not new to New Mexico. In the very recent past, we have seen impressive collaborative projects—most notably, the broad-based collaborative efforts to protect critical areas such as the Petroglyph National Monument and the Zuni Salt Lake.

These efforts have opened many eyes to the importance of engaging the entire New Mexican community in our attempts to protect areas that have cross-cultural importance. In the spirit of furthering this collaborative approach, the New Mexico Wilderness movement is likewise reaching out to tribal communities in an effort to protect, as Wilderness, places that are critically important to all New Mexicans.

This new partnership is a logical step toward protecting every acre of potential Wilderness in New Mexico. Typically, Wilderness organizations focus solely on the Wilderness characteristics of federal lands. The reason for this is obvious. The Wilderness Act of 1964, the federal statute that allows for designating Wilderness (see masthead, page 2), applies only to federal lands.

Certainly in consideration of landscape conservation biology principles, we look at lands other than just federal lands [i.e., partnerships with private

landowners]. The primary focus, however, is on federal lands.

To date, conservation groups in New Mexico have done very little work with Tribes and Pueblos to create protected areas within reservation boundaries. There are some pretty strong historical reasons for this lack of cooperation—some result from different views regarding the uses of Wilderness, some arise from a lack of understanding and unfair biases on both sides.

Another area where the conservation community and Tribes have historically had problems working together is in non-federal lands where Tribes have historic attachment and where there are numerous cultural and religious sites. This is extremely important, because many existing Wilderness Areas and other areas with potential for designation as Wilderness have extensive cultural significance to Tribes.

These areas are filled with innumerable sacred and cultural sites to which Tribes and Pueblos require access, often in seclusion, to perform activities crucial to the continued vitality of their religion and society.

Here, again, the impasse that has historically precluded cooperation between Tribes and conservation groups has stemmed in part from distrust arising from divergent viewpoints as to the purposes of preservation and the meaning of Wilderness, as well as largely unjustified cultural biases. With

more and more land that is important to both Tribes and conservation groups coming under threat of development, we are beginning to bridge the gaps that historically have kept us from working together to protect precious places.

To this end, the NMWA and the Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness have been working hand in hand with the Pueblo of Zia for the designation of the Ojito Wilderness Area. The proposed Ojito Wilderness Area is made up of approximately 12,000 acres in Sandoval County that is adjacent to the Pueblo of Zia and was designated as Wilderness by the federal government.

The proposed Ojito Wilderness Area would provide for a land transfer to the Pueblo of Zia. The area would be federally designated Wilderness, subject to the protective provision of the Wilderness Act while simultaneously protecting important traditional Zia rights in the area.

The proposed “Ojito Wilderness and Land Transfer Act of 2002” also provides for a land transfer to the Pueblo of Zia. The land transfer would include approximately 13,000 acres of BLM land having great religious and cultural significance to the Pueblo of Zia. The lands would be put into trust for the Tribe with the added provisions that the lands are to be maintained and managed in open space with an emphasis on preserving the natural, wild, and undeveloped character of the area.

In addition, the Act would protect traditional Zia uses in the area, while providing continued access for recreation and scientific research to members of the public. All in all, the proposal goes a long way in recognizing the importance of preserving these special areas through the protections of the Wilderness Act, while respecting and recognizing historic rights and uses of the area on the part of the Pueblo of Zia and the general public.

Similarly, as has been widely publicized, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and other conservation groups, such as The Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club, have been working closely with the Pueblo of Sandia and the New Mexico congressional delegation to foster a settlement in the dispute arising out to the Pueblo of Sandia’s land claim to the west face of Sandia Mountain (see Call of the Wild Spring 2002).

The Pueblo of Sandia’s land claim has been a matter of public controversy for a number of years. The claim arose out of a dispute over the location of the eastern boundary of the 1748 Spanish land grant to the Pueblo of Sandia. The Pueblo contends that an 1859 survey conducted by federal government established the boundary along the top of a foothill on the western slope of the mountain rather than on the true crest, as provided in the grant from the Spanish government.

Despite a 1998 federal district court opinion stating that the government survey was indeed incorrect and granting the Pueblo’s request for a re-survey—some opinion that recognized the legitimacy of the Pueblo of Sandia land claim—the claim is still a highly contentious issue.

In an effort to resolve this matter, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance has been working very closely with the Pueblo of Sandia to put in place a settlement that would, like the “Ojito Wilderness and Land Transfer Act of 2002,” provide for continued application of the protective provisions of the Wilderness Act while recognizing and ensuring the continued right of the Pueblo of Sandia to use the land for cultural and religious purposes.

This collaborative approach to working with the Pueblos of Zia and Sandia is just the beginning of the NMWA’s work to develop enduring relationships with tribes and Pueblos throughout New Mexico. These relationships are in their early stages and will take time and continued effort to overcome unfortunate remnants of historical distrust.

We are, however, firmly committed to pursuing these relationships. We are extremely proud of the progress we have made in a very short period of time and look forward to the possibility of building similar relationships with every tribe or Pueblo in the State. If these efforts prove successful, which we are confident they will, the future for a broad-based New Mexico Wilderness movement that provides for the protection of all lands that are precious to New Mexicans, both Native and non-Native, seems extremely bright.

—by Michael Robinson
NMWA Wilderness Protection Coordinator

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Summer 2002

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Wilderness News

Wilderness Conference 2002 Spans National Boundaries

On May 3-5, 2002 what has traditionally been a "Northwestern" Wilderness Conference debuted as a "North American" Wilderness Conference—a change that illustrates a growing trend in transboundary collaboration on conservation initiatives. The theme of “people working together, across national, administrative and cultural boundaries to preserve North American wild lands and waters,” attracted renowned conservationists from the United States, Canada, Mexico and Tribal Nations to learn how to work more effectively across political and cultural boundaries. Three NMWA staff members, board members Bob Howard and Dave Foreman, and Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness chair Jim Scarantino attended.

The conference fielded the idea that “Different countries, different agencies, and different cultures look at Wilderness and manage Wilderness within their jurisdictions in a variety of ways. Understanding these differences can result in more cooperation across the political and cultural boundaries—and can result in a habitat better suited to maintaining nature’s ecological balance, which recognizes no boundaries.” First Nations nations from the Northwest gave valuable insights on treaty rights, the tie between land and culture, and their participation in conservation and restoration efforts.

Mike Harcourt, former Premier of British Columbia endorsed the inspiring concept, proposed by Dave Foreman and The Wildlands Project, to create protected wildlands networks and a “North American Wilderness Strategy Within 20 Years”. Researchers and author Dorothy Zbicz gave examples of trans-boundary conservation efforts around the world and the elements necessary to make them successful. Jim Scarantino called for a truly conservative energy policy that will provide ample energy, national security and environmental protection.

—by Matt Clark
NMWA Inventory Assistant

Catastrophe Looming in Energy Conference Committee

Aside from homeland security and anti-terrorism measures, energy legislation has dominated the headlines more than any other DC issue in recent months. The House passed an abysmal bill (H.R. 4) in August 2001 that was a carbon copy of the Bush/Enron Energy Plan; in April 2002, the Senate passed more sensible legislation (S. 517). As both houses craft compromise legislation, the Senate must hold firm to save the West from Bush.

The cornerstone of the President’s Energy Plan and the House bill was opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling. The Senate voted the measure down handily in April (54-46). This vote came as the result of thousands of phone calls from across the United States to the Senate offices in the final days and hours.

Now the House and Senate have passed their own disparate energy bills, the real fun begins—in Conference Committee, the two bodies must reach a compromise that they can send back to both bodies for final approval and then on to the President.

Since the House and Senate Energy Bills are so different, conservationists across the country are very concerned about the final conference report. Key provisions for which House conferences are expected to push hard are:

• opening the Arctic to drilling, and the so-called “Public Lands Title”, since Senate opposition to opening the Arctic to drilling is solid, the House is very likely to push for its Public Lands Title as a compromise. Passage of the Public Lands Title in the final conference report would be a calamity for the intermountain West.

While the whole country fixated on the very public Arctic fight, the House devoted a number of policies to systematically undermine protections for our public lands throughout the West. These policies:

• disable local managers’ authority to deny applications to drill, and
• essentially void old management plans that restricted leasing and drilling.

This “under the radar” attack on our public lands cannot go unopposed. New Mexican conservationists will be especially important as the conferences begin their deliberations in the coming weeks. Senator Bingaman (NM-D) is chairing the committee on behalf of the Senate and is in a position to ensure that the bad provisions of the House Public Lands Title never see the light of day in the final conference report. Your calls can make a difference!

Please call or write Senator Bingaman and ask him to protect the West’s public lands by upholding our existing protections against unchecked oil and gas exploration and by keeping the Public Lands Title out of the final conference report. For contact information, see page 12.

—by Edward Sullivan
NMWA Executive Director

NMWA Testifies in Support of Sandia Settlement

In April 2002, Edward Sullivan and Staff Attorney Michael Robinson traveled to Washington, DC to testify in front of the Senate Appropriations and Energy and Natural Resources Committees on Senator Bingaman’s Sandia Settlement legislation (S. 518).

While largely supportive of the settlement agreement, Sullivan and Robinson voiced opposition to “county consent” provisions in Bingaman’s bill that would give Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties “veto power” over new leases that the Forest Service might propose in the Wilderness area. This new veto power would set a dangerous precedent and give countywrights activists in the Robledos Mountains and Cibola and Valencia counties fodder for their effort to take control of federal land.

At the hearing, Senator Domenici said queried whether, if the county consent provisions were not removed, “all the Wilderness folks would come out of the bushes on this one.” Edward replied, “Yes, Senator, we certainly spend a lot of time in the bushes.”

NMWA with Zia Pueblo for Joint Proposal

In March 2002, NMWA Executive Director Edward Sullivan joined representatives of the Zia Pueblo, former Governor Bruce King, and Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness Chair Jim Scarantino to lobby Congress on the joint proposal to protect the Ojo/Puni Wilderness and transfer a parcel of BLM land to the Zia Pueblo. The delegation that went back to lobby was assembled after months of deliberations between the Coalition and the Zia Pueblo on the proposal (see page 12). Interest among our Senators and Congressmen in the proposal was very high. Both Senator Domenici and Congressman Udall expressed interest in seeking legislation in this Congress. Next steps for the proposal are:

• to present suggested legislative language to the delegation, and
• to build support among the appropriate committees in both Houses of Congress.

Oil/Gas from the Robledos?

In April 2002, at the Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale, the BLM offered up 12,477 acres of land in the heart of our Robledos Mountains-Sierra de las Uvas Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal. If the BLM actually issues leases there, the land would be tied up and arguably disqualified as potential Wilderness for the next 10 years. New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (NMWA) has issued a formal protest to stop the sale. The Robledos Mountains-Sierra de las Uvas is not typically associated with oil and gas development. The area is comprised primarily of volcanic geologic structures that do not typically contain oil and gas deposits. For this reason, the industry has, historically, shown very little interest in the area.

Due, however, to the expanding interest in oil and gas development in the West, urged on by the Bush Administration’s pro-drilling agenda, this new interest is not entirely a surprise. We fully expect to see similar interest in other areas, such as Otero Mesa, where applications have no historic development. The NMWA is paying particularly close attention to oil and gas issues. We will continue to fight to stop any oil or gas development in the Robledos Mountains—Sierra de las Uvas Citizens’ Wilderness Proposal as well as other sensitive areas throughout the State.

—by Michael Robinson
NMWA Wilderness Protection Coordinator

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
Griffith’s Saltbush Survives on the Margins of Playas

The proposed Lordsburg Playas Wilderness is found in extreme southwestern New Mexico adjacent to the Peloncillo Mountains just north of Interstate 10. During wet and rainy periods, ephemeral shallow lakes in the playas provide important habitat for migrating birds and other wildlife. Along the margins of the playas, Griffith’s saltbush provides vital vegetative cover and food for wildlife in the area.

Playa ecosystems are not well studied, but different playas possess different soil characteristics and unique plant and animal associations. Each playa is likely to have its own rare species that may or may not be found elsewhere. Around the perimeter of the Lordsburg Playas is found the little known Griffith’s saltbush, a small perennial shrub. Like four-wing saltbush, both are members of the plant family Chenopodiaceae. Although four-wing saltbush is common, Griffith’s saltbush is rare. Like many of the members of this family, this saltbush is gray-green in color and may reach up to a meter in height. The novelty can easily confuse the two shrubs, but the unique appearance of the seeds (or fruits) on female plants is a key to identification. Four-wing saltbush, as its name implies, has fruit with four well-developed wings, while fruit of Griffith’s saltbush are flat and frequently heart-shaped. Four-wing saltbush grows abundantly in a wide variety of soils, but Griffith’s saltbush seems limited to the saline margins of playas where the plants are not submerged for long periods of time. For some time, this plant was known to occur only at the Lordsburg Playas in New Mexico and with Co Playa in southeastern Arizona. More recently, a small population was discovered at some Barrow pits near Deming, although these plants do not appear to be well established.

Once described as the dominant plant on the perimeter of the Lordsburg Playas, more recent observations indicate that the plant is fairly common but certainly not dominant. It appears to act as a serial species in disturbed areas. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considers it a “species of concern,” endangered in a portion of its range. The New Mexico Rare Plants Technical Committee describes it as rare outside the State of New Mexico. Threats to the plant are not known with certainty, it is tolerant of light grazing pressures, but severe pressure, such as has been observed in parts of the Lordsburg Playas area, is likely damaging to individual plants. Any form of significant surface disturbance would certainly be detrimental to existing plants. A more recent concern is the invasion of Lehmann love grass in the Willcox Playa. This exotic grass is known to out-compete and replace native species.

The very limited geographic area where this plant is known to occur, and its restricted distribution at the perimeter of playas, is an example of the uniqueness of the playa ecosystems. These unique features offer important opportunities for scientific study—an excellent justification for the inclusion of Lordsburg Playas and other playa ecosystems in our Wilderness system.

—by Tom Wootten NMWA Member

Prairie Dogs are a Misunderstood Keystone Species

Prairie dogs are what conservationists refer to as a Keystone Species. This means that Prairie dogs help other species live, and if they were to become extinct, other animals could also disappear. Keystone Species such as prairie dog help support ecosystems, entire communities of life, of which they are a part.

Some 200 species of wildlife have been associated with prairie dog towns. Some prey on prairie dog themselves, such as golden eagles, swift foxes, coyotes, ferocious hawks, burrowing owls, badgers, and black-footed ferrets. Prairie dogs burrows also provide habitat for Burrowing Owls—who don’t dig their own burrows, but move into abandoned prairie dog burrows and live as neighbors.

Prairie dogs are very social animals that live in family groups called coterie. A coterie usually contains an adult male, one or more adult females, and their young. As young male prairie dogs grow up, they move out of their home coterie in order to find or create new coterie. These coterie or neighborhoods cluster together creating larger towns or colonies, which create more protection from the above mentioned predators. Prairie dogs from the same coterie tend to get along well, communicating with complex verbal sounds, often standing on their hind legs and emitting a two-note call. They also have a variety of pitched warning calls to alert the coterie to potential predators. While a given coterie live together in harmony, relations with other prairie dog coterie can often be hostile. Generally, disputes involve territory and aggressive behavior.

Prairie dog towns can be quite elaborate and extensive networks of underground tunnels and burrows. Some have chambers for sleeping, storing food, rearing young and even areas to dispose of waste. The openings to these tunnels are large mounds of dirt, which serve to protect against predators and weather. Prairie dogs spend much of their time above ground in the daylight, but retreat underground with nightfall.

Prairie dogs remain very endangered, often being shot or poisoned, partly because of misconceptions and a lack of understanding cultivated by many old myths. In 1900, an estimated five billion prairie dogs lived in North America. Since then, the prairie dog population has plunged by 98% in North America. The Mexican prairie dog is endangered, and the Utah prairie dog is threatened. The black-tailed prairie dog is currently under review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Prairie Dog reintroduction efforts, however, have already begun on private and throughout New Mexico. On the Gray Ranch in the extreme southwest corner of New Mexico, a research project involving three reintroduced black-tailed Prairie Dog (Cynomys ludovicianus) populations in areas that are actively grazed by cattle has found that there is a positive interaction between prairie dogs and ranching. According to early findings of the Gray Ranch project, the prairie dogs have successfully increased vegetation biomass (Brown 2002). This leads to increased amounts of rich forage for cattle—and works toward increasing diversity on rangeland.

The Gunnison Prairie Dog (Cynomys gunnisoni) has also lost much of its habitat in New Mexico. In Albuquerque, Prairie Dog Pals (a nonprofit organization) helps care for prairie dogs trapped on public lands in the City. The organization provides relocation and sometimes supplemental feeding in barren areas to prevent starvation. For more information on Prairie Dog Pals, see their web site (www.prairiedogpals.homestead.com).
The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is currently working with the Zia Pueblo on an agreement that would give federal Wilderness designation to the Ojito WSA (Wilderness Study Area), which lies within our greater Cabezon Country proposal. The agreement would also support the transfer of approximately 13,000 acres of public land into Zia Trust Land. This Trust Land would remain open to the public for respectful use and would further be managed by the Zia for the purposes of conservation and protection of sites that are sacred to the Zia Pueblo. A lobbying team went to Washington, DC in April 2002 to introduce this agreement to the NM delegation. The team was comprised of:
- NMWA Executive Director Edward Sullivan,
- Chairman of the Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness Jim Scaranino,
- former NM Governor Bruce King, and
- leaders of the Zia Pueblo including Peter Pino.

Please take a few minutes to write a letter to your elected officials in support of Wilderness designation for the Ojito WSA. We must show that our broad base of support is from all over the State. We at the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance are willing to fight for Wilderness—but in order to win, we need every one of you to stand behind us. Thank you for your support!

Wait! Do I need to write to all these people? The answer is “No”. Send your letter to your representa-tive—you have just one—and both NM senators. If you live in the Albuquerque area, Heather Wilson is your representative. If you live in Santa Fe, Taos, Los Alamos or other northern parts of New Mexico, Tom Udall is your representative. In the south, just write to your senators.

Senator Jeff Bingaman
703 Hart Senate Office Building
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510
bingaman@bingaman.senate.gov
In Santa Fe—505/988-6647
In Washington, DC—202/224-5521

Senator Pete Domenici
328 Hart Senate Office Building
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510
domenici@domenici.senate.gov
In Santa Fe—505/988-6511
In Washington, DC—202/224-6621

Representative Heather Wilson
318 Cannon House Office Building
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
heather@mail.house.gov
In Albuquerque—505/346-6781
In Washington, DC—202/225-6316

Representative Tom Udall
502 Cannon House Office Building
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
tom.udall@mail.house.gov
In Santa Fe—505/988-8550
In Washington, DC—202/224-6190

Letters Needed for the Gila

Off-road vehicle (ORV) use is wreaking havoc on the Gila National Forest. Off-road vehicles, especially irresponsible and illegal activity—cross-country travel and users creating their own trails—cause soil erosion and stream sedimentation, disturb wildlife and vegetation, and create user conflicts. The evidence is clear in the Gila, and an effective policy needs to be implemented in order to reduce the impacts. The “Closed UnlessPosted Open Policy” remedies any doubt whether a trail—is open or closed. This policy was written during the Carter Administration but has not been implemented, because agency heads and forest supervisors have not heard enough from the grassroots.

We are asking you to write a letter to:
- Marcia Andre, Forest Supervisor Gila National Forest
- 3005 E. Camino del Bosque
- Silver City, NM 88061
- Phone: 505/388-6201

Letters Needed for the Gila

I wonder if my dreams are real or just mirage...
Land of the Jaguar

—by Christophe Olson

Please take a few minutes and write a couple of letters in support of this agreement. Send the letters to your Congressional Representative and your two Senators (see boxes).

What To Say

Please use the sample letters provided below as a guide when writing your own letter. There is no better way to communicate with your elected officials than with a short, personal letter. Include a sentence or two about why this issue is important to you or add a personal anecdote or other information about yourself. If you have any personal experience directly related to the subject, use that.

Keep it short. Your letter should be no more than a page. Two or three paragraphs are plenty.

Be sure to include your name and mailing address on the letter.

Please Send Us a Copy!

It’s a huge help if we know that our members of Congress are hearing from you. Please mail, email or fax us a copy of your letter.[P.O. Box 25446, Albuquerque, NM 87125; 505/843-8697; fax 505/843-8697; nmwa@nmwild.org].

If you receive a response from any congressional office, please pass that along, too.

—by Sean Saville
NMWA Grassroots Organizer

Sample Letter

Dear Senator Bingaman
(or Pete Domenici),

I write to encourage you to support the efforts of the Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness and the Zia Pueblo to protect the Ojito or “Tu-F” area as Wilderness and for the Zia’s acquisition of surrounding public lands.

The Ojito Wilderness Study Area was recommended by the BLM for Wilderness designation more than two decades ago. It is time to permanently protect this special place. The Zia Pueblo would allow continued respectful public access to the acquired land, and no ranchers would be displaced. This agreement would do much to increase positive relations between the northern NM pueblos and the conservation community as well as the NM delegation.

[Add any relevant personal anecdote or experience...]

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Your Name

[or Pete Domenici],

I write to encourage you to support the efforts of the Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness and the Zia Pueblo to protect the Ojito or “Tu-F” area as Wilderness and for the Zia’s acquisition of surrounding public lands.

The Ojito Wilderness Study Area was recommended by the BLM for Wilderness designation more than two decades ago. It is time to permanently protect this special place. The Zia Pueblo would allow continued respectful public access to the acquired land, and no ranchers would be displaced. This agreement would do much to increase positive relations between the northern NM pueblos and the conservation community as well as the NM delegation.

[Add any relevant personal anecdote or experience...]

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Your Name

[or Pete Domenici],

I write to encourage you to support the efforts of the Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness and the Zia Pueblo to protect the Ojito or “Tu-F” area as Wilderness and for the Zia’s acquisition of surrounding public lands.

The Ojito Wilderness Study Area was recommended by the BLM for Wilderness designation more than two decades ago. It is time to permanently protect this special place. The Zia Pueblo would allow continued respectful public access to the acquired land, and no ranchers would be displaced. This agreement would do much to increase positive relations between the northern NM pueblos and the conservation community as well as the NM delegation.

[Add any relevant personal anecdote or experience...]

Thank you for your support.

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Your Name
Wilderness—“Kind of Recalibrates Everything”

It was my first backpacking trip into the Grand Canyon, and three days out I still was trying to get my mind around the sheer immensity of it all. One of my companions on the trip, Bill Stone, outdoor photographer and Grand Canyon veteran, must have sensed this, because as I stood gazing awe-struck at the spectacle, he came to me and remarked, “Kind of recalibrates everything, doesn’t it?”

Yes, I thought, that was exactly what was happening. Recalibration. All my inner benchmarks were being revised, raised. Certainly my perceptions of space and time would never be the same. For the first time I not only acknowledged but also felt the brevity and transience of human presence here on Earth. The trail we’d been following—the forces and the time that had carved the Grand Canyon—seemed to glide the trail like a smudge on a window. Pretty humbling. But any sense of insignificance I felt was overwritten by an overwhelming sense of awe and wonder. I looked through the smudge of my ordinary perceptions and saw beyond, as I never had before, the extraordinary grandeur. What a gift!

But upon reflection, I realized that all Wilderness, each Wilderness, performs a similar recalibration upon us. Here’s an example. Recall the first, or even the most recent, time that you came to a Wilderness beneath a clear, moonless sky. Stars beyond counting, like diamond dust. The Milky Way an overarching majesty. And a deep sense of the vastness of the universe. Yet, absent such a Wilderness experience, we often forget that the celestial wonder even exists.

Nor is the Grand Canyon alone in recalibrating our sense of time. I think of El Malpais National Monument. Standing at the Sandstone Butte Overlook and gazing at thebasalt flows below, I realize that ancestors of modern Indian peoples doubtless saw the seemingly immutable landscape when it was a moving moving river of the.

Their impressions have been preserved in the oral traditions of people still living. The unsettling recentness of that volcanic event etched a fine line into my inner measure of time.

And so did seeing fossil cones on a recent trip to the Wilderness of the Gila National Forest. As the trail and our trailhead, saw their intricate details, faultily preserved, I easily could imagine those pines plucked last week from a bare red somewhere, but these ones were almost 400 million years old, and huisci ancestors then were lumbering, liming neighbors. No oral traditions these—Wilderness will recalibrate our memory of quiet. Max silence; for those who have been here, whose imagination can take in the unmoving, otherwise unheard sounds of nature—a breeze whispering through the pines, or just the quietness, a small stream flowing over gravel, the chirp of unseen birds. Sadly, in our normal lives a sound must roar a small bomb to gain our attention. We drive the freeways and rarely even notice the incessant, smothering noise, unless a trucker happens to hit the jack brake right beside us...

If we’re very open and fortunate, Wilderness will recalibrate our sense of peace. For me, my everyday benchmark is the peace that I experience an unexpected, captivatingly quiet one in my favorite coffee shop. I think John Muir had something deeper in mind when he wrote: “Nature’s peace will flow into you as the sunshine flows into trees. Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadow.”

—by Bob Julyan

NMWA Member

Cabezon Outing a Success

In the last weekend of April 2002, NMWA took about 25 members and activists out to the Cabezon Country in New Mexico. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance believes in providing people with a Wilderness experience to aid in understanding the importance of protecting these special places. This type of educational activity is at the root of what motivates people to get involved with our organization and what keeps our membership coming back on these Wilderness adventures with us.

A handful of folks and staff camped out Friday and Saturday nights in the area, despite the heavy winds. On Saturday, we did a tour of the area, highlighting the diversity of landscapes within the Cabezon Country. The Cabezon Country Wilderness Proposal Area includes:

• high-desert grasslands,
• dramatic volcanic formations,
• mesas containing old growth ponderosa pine ecosystems and endless red rock canyons filled with petroglyphs and ruins, and
• evidence of the many cultures and civilizations that have called this area home.

The tour ended with a very inspiring talk by Peter Pino, the Tribal Administrator for the Zia Pueblo. Peter spoke to the importance of the Zia and significance of this area to the Zia. As one of our guests commented later, “It was the best classroom I have ever been in.” Peter briefly spoke in favor of the agreement between NMWA and the Zia that will designate an area as Wilderness and also place land in trust for the Zia Pueblo.

On Sunday, we took a hike up Cabezon Tapia in the Chama/Banco Breaks WSA (Wilderness Study Area). The canyon was formed by the Rio Puerco, and much of the hike was actually in the dry bed of one of tributaries to the Puerco. The canyon is characterized by steep sandstone cliffs in many areas covered by petroglyphs and a dry valley floor with many cholla and salt cedars (both indicative of overgrazing). With the exception of a couple of natural springs in the area, the canyon is very arid.

We explored and documented several ancient ruins that have apparently been renovated by the BLM and residents. At one point, two of us were admiring some of the well preserved petroglyphs—and got up close and admiring some of the well preserved petroglyphs—and got up close and

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Summer 2002
In the Presence of Fear

In the past 20 years, there have been many voices that speak to the idea of conservation. Wilderness and the protection of wild places is a philosophy that has inspired many of the great voices that have been directed toward Wendell Berry. What makes Berry's voice so distinctive is that the traditional conservation themes are con-stantly espouse (Wilderness, wildlife, National parks) have not been the constant of his verse. Rather, Berry has consistently written and spoken on behalf of a land ethic. For Berry, the importance of the earth as a whole: “What leads to peace is not violence but peaceableness, which is not passivity, but an alert, informed, practiced an active state of being. We should recognize that while we have almost totally subsidized the means of war, we have almost totally neglected the ways of peaceableness. We have, for example several national military academies, but not one peace academy.”

The second chapter of this refreshing book looks at the folly of the so-called “global economy,” and Berry’s version of a real land ethic—the importance of buying locally and really living our lives with the morality needed to protect wild lands and wildlife. “The folly at the root of this foolish economy began with the idea that a corporation should be regarded, legally, as a person. But the limitless destructiveness of this economy comes about precisely because a corporation is not a person.” Given the current climate we live in, with oil and gas development threaten-ing wildlands everywhere, where per-sonal freedoms are being undermined, and where our country remains shocked and fearful as a result of the events of September 11th, Berry chal-lenges us to understand the bigger picture of these disturbing events and their genius.

In his latest work, a mere three chap-ters put together by the Orion Society following the September 11th tragedy, Wendell Berry takes on the events of September 11th and distills them into his own version of a new declaration of purpose for America. In contrast to the personal freedoms are being undermined, and where our country remains shocked and fearful as a result of the events of September 11th, Berry chal-lenges us to understand the bigger picture of these disturbing events and their genius.

makes the case for peace and the im-portance of the earth as a whole: “What leads to peace is not violence but peaceableness, which is not passivity, but an alert, informed, practiced an active state of being. We should recognize that while we have almost totally subsidized the means of war, we have almost totally neglected the ways of peaceableness. We have, for example several national military academies, but not one peace academy.”

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In the final chapter, “In Distrust of Movements,” Berry explores the limits of movements. The often one-dimen-sional aspect of groups dedicated to protecting the environment or working toward social justice. “What we must do above all, I think, is try to see the problem in its full size and difficulty. Industrialism, which is the name of our economy, and which is now virtually the only economy in the world, has been from its beginnings in a state of fear.” These are the writings of a person connected to the land and community, like a tree is to the forest. This small book should be read by all elected officials, for it instills a humility and a sense of wholeness and respect that our modern world is so often lacking, espe-cially in the political arena. Berry crafts his insight in few pages, but leaves us with a vision that is solid and secure. As a result, his words provide comfort and moral focus for a world so suddenly changed.

—by Stephen Capra
NMWA Communications Coordinator

Coalition for NM Wilderness Keeps On Ticking

The Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness is an association of businesses and organizations that support Wilderness protection. The Coalition has nearly 100 members around the State (see box), including a rural county economic development council, a trucking company, retail stores, outfitters, and environmental organizations such as The Wilderness Society, the Center for Biological Diversity, the Sierra Club, and the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. The Coalition has been working closely with NMWA on gathering support for the Ojito Wilderness proposal. Recently, the board of the Coalition met and set a goal of tripling its membership and providing regular communications to members. The Coalition is also striv-ing to increase opportunities for particip-ation by its member businesses and organizations. Sean Saville of NMWA, and Mellyssa Watson of The Wilderness Society’s Wilderness Support Center, deserve much of the credit for the accomplish-ments of the Coalition to date. Membership in the Coalition is free. If you own or work for a business that appreciates the benefits of Wilderness for New Mexico’s culture, economy, quality of life and natural environment, and want information on becoming a member, please contact Jim Scarantino (528-0947, jscarantino@yahoo.com).

You can show your support for New Mexico Wilderness by patronizing pro-Wilderness businesses.

Organizations and Businesses Support the Work of the Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness

A ll, Albuquerque, NM • American Lands, Washington, DC • American Planning Association, New Mexico Chapter, Albu-querque, NM • Animal Protection of New Mexico, Inc., Albuquerque, NM • Anodyne, Albuquerque, NM • Audubon Society of New Mexico, Santa Fe, NM • Beep, Albuquerque, NM • Bike Coop, Albuquerque, NM • Bird’s Eye View (GIS Services), Albuquerque, NM • Blue Dragon Coffeehouse, Albuquerque, NM • Blue Mesa Café, Albuquerque, NM • Bosque Accounting & Taxes, Bernalejo, NM • Bowl-Mow Record, Albuquerque, NM • Butter’s 66 Coffee, Albuquerque, NM • Carson Forest Watch, Llano, NM • Celebro Natural Fiber Clothing, Albuquerque, NM • Center for National Diversity, Tucson, AZ • Chalk Farm Gallery, Santa Fe, NM • Chihuahuan Desert Conservation Alliance, Carted, NM • Citizens for a Rational Water Policy, Albuquerque, NM • Clark Truck Equipment, Albuquerque, NM • Committee of Wilderness Supporters, Cortaro, AZ • Cottonwood Golly Foundation, Albuquerque, NM • Coyote Moon, Santa Fe, NM • Defenders of Wild-life, Albuquerque, NM • Desert Moon Nursery, Verquita, NM • Earth Tones, Santa Fe, NM • Endangered Species Coalition, Washington, DC • Fourth World Cottage Industries, Santa Fe, NM • Fran Lee Video, Albuquerque, NM • Friends of Albuquerque’s Environmental Story, Albuquerque, NM • 4 Wheelers for Wilderness, South Weber, UT • Glass Creations, Rio Rancho, NM • Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Escalante, UT • Guadalupel Mini Rubber Stamps, Santa Fe, NM • Hand Maiden, Santa Fe, NM • In-Crowd, Albuquerque, NM • La Montana Food Coop, Albuquerque, NM • Laughing Lizard Cafe, Jemez Springs, NM • Lauren’s Experience, Albuquerque, NM • Magenesis Studio, Rio Rancho, NM • Manfish’s Busy Bar, Inc., Albuquerque, NM • Mountains & Rivers, Albuquerque, NM • National BLM Wilderness Campaign, Salt Lake City, UT • National Environmental Trusts, Santa Fe, NM • National Parks and Conservation Association, Albuquerque, NM • Native Spirits, Santa Fe, NM • Natural Sound, Albuquerque, NM • Naturaescapes, Las Cruces, NM • New Grounds Print Workshop & Gallery, Albuquerque, NM • New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, Board, Albuquerque, NM • Ocean Waves Natural Healing, Albuquerque, NM • Parsons Biological Consulting, Albuquerque, NM • Pulse Nightclub, Albuquerque, NM • R.B. Warnings, Albuquerque, NM • Raised by Wolves, Inc., Thoreau, NM • Rimblin Café, Santa Fe, NM • Republicans for Environmental Protection, Board, Albuquerque, NM • Rio Grande Restoration, El Prado, NM • Rio Mountain Sport, Albuquerque, NM • Santa Fe Mountain Sports, Santa Fe, NM • Sauce/ Raw/ Liquid Lounge, Albuquerque, NM • Schonberg Optician, Los Alemos, NM • Sierra Club, Basque, Albuquerque, NM • Rio Grande Chapter, Board, Albuquerque, NM • Sierra County Economic Development Organization, Truth or Consequences, NM • Silorado Cafe and Coffee, Albuquerque, NM • Snaps, Boulder, CO • Skeleton Art Gallery, Santa Fe, NM • Sky Island Alliance, Board, Albuquerque, NM • Southern Ute Wilderness Alliance, Salt Lake City, UT • Southwest Environmental Center, Las Cruces, NM • Southwest Forest Alliance, Flagstaff, NM • Southwest Origins, Albuquerque, NM • Stone Mountain Biodiversity Group, Albuquerque, NM • T.S.E. Inc., Cortaro, AZ • Tiera Firma, Albuquerque, NM • The A Store, Albuquerque, NM • The Wilderness Society, Board, Denver, CO • The Wildlands Project, Tucson, AZ • The Wildlife Land Trust, Washington, DC • Tierra Wood Stoves, Taos, NM • Trust for Public Land, Santa Fe, NM • Turtle Mountain Brewing Co., Rio Rancho, NM • Village Pizza, Corrales, NM • Voice’s Inc., Albuquerque, NM • Weekdays, Albuquerque, NM • White Mountain Conservation League, Pinetop, AZ • Wilderness Watch, Missoula, MT • Wild Birds Unlimited, Santa Fe, NM • Wild Earth Llama Adventures, Taos, NM • Wild Mountain Outfitters, Santa Fe, NM •...
On April 10, 2002, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance reached out to a new audience of potential Wilderness supporters by sponsoring a benefit concert with the David Grisman Quintet. Even though sponsoring a concert was a new endeavor for NMWA, we produced a wonderful event with many benefits for the Alliance. These benefits ranged from income to increased membership, as well as an evening of inspiring music to rejuvenate us all for the awakening Spring. But for many of us, the largest incentive of all was the potential to inform a captive audience of 650 New Mexicans about our efforts to protect wild lands throughout New Mexico, and to gain letters of support to our delegation for the protection of Cabezon Country and Otero Mesa.

In this issue of Call of the Wild, we talk about different Wilderness advocates throughout New Mexico that we traditionally overlook when seeking allies. In the process of organizing this event, we have all learned first hand that new and innovative ways of outreach to diverse communities is an extremely important way to successfully protect Wilderness here in New Mexico.

NMWA would like to offer special thanks to our concert sponsors:
- Apple Mountain Music,
- Laura Rose Boyle, Massage Therapist (Tierra Madre),
- Ed Cohen,
- the Vaughan Company Realtors,
- the Klar Family,
- Elliott Marks Photography,
- La Montanita Co-op,
- La Posada de Albuquerque,
- Martha’s Body/Bueno Shop,
- Odwalla,
- Quickbeam Systems, Inc.,
- Robertson & Sons Violin Shop,
- Wild Oats, and

We would also especially like to thank Stewart Dawson, lighting designer and light board operator, for donating his services; Mimi Peavy for assisting Stewart and the KMT Theatre Staff. Also, thanks to the following for the loan of items:
- Mesa Azul Gallery Café (formerly Blue Mesa Café),
- Morningstar Antiques and Christy Marvin,
- Albuquerque Little Theatre.

—Jonathan Klar
NMWA Intern

Welcome, Greta Balderama!
NMWA’s New Southern Grassroots Organizer

A Call for Photography!
The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance would like to call on all of you photographers out there to donate your time, talents and images! We are looking for high-quality landscape photos for the following units in our statewide Wilderness proposal: Colorado Plateau Units—Alamito Wash, Ranger Cabin, Split Lip Flats.

Central Highlands Units—Alexander Mountain, Cerro Pomo, Red Hill, Magdalena Mountain Expansions, Mariano Mesa, Mesa Gallina, Monte Seco, Pecosita Pinta, Point of Rocks Canyon, Polvadera Mountain, Tejana Mesa, Volcano Hill, Wahoo Mountain.

Headwaters Units—Cerrada de la Olla, Rincon del Cuerno.


Chihuahuan Desert Units—Chupadera Wilderness Addition, Eagle’s Nest, Malpais Ridge, Luna Mesa, San Luis Lake, Camby, Providence Cone South (SE), Adam Lava Flow, East Patritos, Massacre Peak, Good Sight Mountains, Good Sight Peak, Sleepy Lady Hills, Aschenbach Canyon, Redhouse Mountain, Redhouse Mountain Notch, Cup Canyon South, La Paloma Canyon, Crooked Canyon, Buzzard Canyon, South of Texas Hill Canyon, Lonesome Ridge, McKrackin Canyon, Devils Den, Antelope-South, La Montonera, Presilla SE, Sierra de la Cruz, Big Yucca–North, Peritas Canyon, Peritas Peak, Rim Rock Canyon, Otero Mesa South.

Before heading out to take photos of these wild areas, please contact Matt Clark (505/893-8816) for directions and tips, and also so we can keep track of which areas are being documented by whom.

NOMA Intern Staff/Volunteer Profiles

Wilderness Advocates Build Community Through Music

Staff/Volunteer Profiles

Wilderness Advocates Build Community Through Music

Farewell—For Now

Sometimes it amazes me to look back and see how this organization has come since we “got down to business” more than three years ago. We have grown and succeeded because we have the most dedicated Board of Directors, staff, membership and coalition partners I’ve ever encountered, and because we are working to protect some of the widest and most beautiful Wilderness areas I’ve ever hiked. That is why it is so hard to announce that, at the end of this summer, I will be leaving the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance.

As a part of this Wilderness family, you share the same ideal and vision that drives the rest of us—that someday what remains of wild New Mexico will be protected, and that other areas currently degraded will be restored. It sounds simple enough, but this work is long-term. It takes commitment, not only on the behalf of individuals, but as an organization.

While we each make an incredible impact in this organization in our own way, I firmly believe this organization is bigger than any one of us. I know it’s certainly a lot bigger than me. That is why I can leave the organization this summer with great confidence that our streak of success and growth will continue for years to come.

Another reason I am leaving confidently is because I believe we have found the best person possible to take over the position of Executive Director. Jessica Pope shares our passion and vision for a wild New Mexico. When she speaks of her experiences in the Big Outside, it is like she is shining a light upon you from the depths of her soul. She also has the skills and ability to run what has become quite a complex business. I hope you will welcome her as you have welcomed and supported me over these past three and a half years.

Although I am leaving New Mexico for the time being, I am leaving my heart and my future here. I am not giving up the fight we all have dedicated so much time to—I am just making room for new energy and new ideas to take us even further. In the meantime, I will be exploring and learning throughout South America for a few years. I hope to come back to New Mexico someday with new ideas and perspectives that will enhance the great work we are already doing.

Thank you so much for believing in me, but more importantly for believing in NMWA. Sometimes I think I am crazy for leaving such a loving and caring family, but I know in my heart that I am not leaving this family or this place for good—just for a little while.

So next time you’re on Turkey Feather Pass, tell the old pines I say hello. Or if you are ever in the Columbine-Hondo, pick a few wildflowers for me. And as you gaze across the vast expanse of Otero Mesa, watch the pronghorn run for me. Farewell, friends—for now.

—Edward Sullivan
NMWA Executive Director
The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance would like to thank Alice Peden for her dedication to preserving New Mexico’s Wilderness through her artwork. Alice has donated more than 15 of her watercolor paintings to the Alliance to pretty up the pages of Call of the Wild. She also recently sent paintings of Otero Mesa to our Representatives with a personal note of why Otero Mesa is important to her and why it should be protected for everyone.