We need you now, more than ever.

THE ENVIRONMENT
DIED NOVEMBER 2, 2004?
Notes from the Executive Director

With the final results of the election now complete, many of us are recovering from a very bad post-election hangover. The news on election night was not all bad: there were very positive results in Colorado and Montana, both in initiatives and elected positions for pro-environment candidates. But on the whole, it was a dark evening for the environment. In writing this newsletter introduction, my natural inclination is to be very positive and say something like “we can win this”, but I think the best thing I can do is level with all of you about what to expect.

Between the slow economy and the sputtering stock market, funding for conservation organizations is down considerably, at the very time it should be at its strongest. President Bush, emboldened by the election results, remains (along with our Senior Senator, ) determined to give oil and gas, nuclear and coal industries preference over our public lands and future generations. They are in a powerful position to pass legislation that gives billions to special interests and could have serious impacts on wild places like Otero Mesa, Valle Vidal and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The American people have cast their votes and no matter what the reasons, the environment will likely pay a price. The real question is whether or not Americans will stand by while wild places such as Otero Mesa and the Arctic are destroyed. I believe the answer will be no.

I also think people need to view the political landscape in two-year rather than four year cycles. Change or increased political support for the environment may only be two years away. In the interim, those politicians who care must be willing to filibuster, introduce pro-environmental legislation, defend existing legislation and take tough stands to preserve our wildest landscapes.

Finally, although we may view the next few years as tough environmental times, I think we may ultimately remember them as extraordinary times. I expect to see the best in people as we fight on the front lines together to make sure the value we call wilderness is preserved. One thing is clear—the dedicated staff of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is ready to fight for our wildest public lands, now more than ever.

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You CAN make a difference!
by Stephen Capra

It was a strange and foreboding feeling on election night. For the past four years conservation groups across the West have been making the case for protecting our wildest remaining public lands. Through extensive media, grassroots organizing and public education it seemed clear that the environment would have a say in this election. But in the end, a majority of Americans seemed unconcerned about the environment, even though issues of morality seemed to be the determining factor in this election.

So as the night wore on the picture became clearer. Our time in the next few years would not likely be the string of legislative protections for our wildest public lands we had envisioned. Gone also was the chance to stop saying "the sky is falling," and work to get permanent protection for Otero Mesa, Valle Vidal and so many places of value to those of us who call the West home. No, the reality of election 2004 was that we will, like never before, have to fight to save and maintain our way of life in the West. But underscore with yourself and friends that hope is alive and well. Our determination and hard work as citizens of the West will continue to keep the oil companies and other polluters at bay, even in these uncertain times.

Four years ago, when George Bush became President, he moved quickly to fill key positions and change the direction of Agencies that had developed more of a conservation ethic under the Clinton Administration. On his first day in office in 2001, President Bush suspended the implementation of the roadless rule. In the ensuing years as the positions were filled, a radical level of oil, gas and coal bed methane extraction began to spread like cancer across our public lands. Names like the Red Desert, the Rocky Mountain Front and Otero Mesa became the faces of this mindless development. As oil companies pushed the Administration for access, the Administration pushed the agencies to get these places opened; the pattern was set and the battle lines drawn.

With his reelection, the President is in an even more powerful position, both self-perceived and real. With his staff in place, the delays of his first term are gone. Many Environmental Impact Statements have been written or are close to final decisions. The reeducation of the agencies is complete and, even though the oil companies currently have thousands of leases they cannot begin to drill, they will push for thousands more to ensure another generation of drilling. Perhaps more insidious is the link between new leases and roadless lands. With increasing frequency across the West, agencies are leasing lands that up to now have been off-limits or respected for their roadless character. With Richard Pombo (R) of California now the head of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee and a close friend of our newly reelected Congressman Steve Pearce, wilderness and the protection of Endangered Species have become a nuisance and a delay to drilling, mining and logging in the West. In addition, there appears to be a coordinated effort to select roadless lands for oil and gas development as a means of eliminating their future wilderness potential.

Just what will the next four years of a Bush Administration mean for New Mexico’s wildest public lands, and for that matter America’s? While no one knows for sure, it seems safe to say that the President is unlikely to become environmentally progressive any time soon. Given the Administration’s track record of the past four years there are some potential threats:

First of all, look for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to be placed on the block. Going for one of America’s most cherished landscapes first will be the means to flex the most muscle and reward their base. It is also designed to break the spirit of the conservation community. With new majorities in the House and Senate, this is likely to occur without a massive outcry from other Representatives. That is unless they hear in a loud and determined voice that they have no mandate to destroy our public lands. New Mexico’s senior Senator Pete Domenici will play a major role in pushing this legislation, one that will most certainly include a heavy emphasis on oil and gas, coal and nuclear energy.

Here in New Mexico, it seems likely that Otero Mesa will be the first place to feel the newly emboldened Administration’s lust for short-term domestic energy production. The final Record of Decision will likely be out by the time this goes to press. Yates Petroleum and HEYCO, both large contributors to the Bush White House, will move quickly to drill more wells and begin construction of a pipeline from Texas into the heart of this wild grassland. However, litigation will slow and for a time stop their plans to move forward. Citizen action including non-violent protests and the distribution of over 500 videos statewide on Otero Mesa will be used to garner 250,000 letters to President Bush to stop this potential drilling. (See p. 13 to see how you can receive

continued next page
ORVs Big Threat to NM’s Wild Places
by Michael Scialdone

As can be seen from the growing number of scars around New Mexico, Off Road Vehicle (ORV) use has exploded in recent years. Nationally, ORV registration was at 5 million in 1972. It is now up to 36 million. Very well designed to tear things up, ORVs are harming public lands and Wilderness areas in many ways - habitat destruction; soil erosion; degradation to wetlands, meadows, and water quality; and damage to cultural and historic sites. Conflicts involving ORVs are rising even when ORV users are doing what is legal, managed, and planned for. Their noise and fumes are bringing to the backcountry what others are there to avoid. Despite their exponential rise, ORVs are still the minority user of public lands, while requiring the greatest level of management. This creates extraordinary challenges at a time when agency budgets are shrinking, law enforcement officers are few and enforceable laws are lacking.

ORV users often choose very scenic places to ride. Most who enjoy non-motorized outdoor activities don’t understand getting out to beautiful places and surrounding yourself with noise and fumes. This is because the scenery for the ORV user is nothing more than a backdrop to the ride itself. It is like going to a gourmet restaurant and ordering a burger.

Next to oil and gas development, NMWA sees ORV’s as the greatest threat to New Mexico’s wild places and is working in many ways to help alleviate the problem such as route closures (as written about in our last newsletter) and working with land management agencies to develop sensible and enforceable travel management plans. The most important part of these efforts is participation from concerned people like you. Being part of restoring projects and writing letters to land management agencies to make clear the interests of non-motorized users goes a long way towards keeping the ORV problem in check. There is a large industry that has a vested interest in making sure their machines are sold. Fortunately, public lands mean public processes to determine their management - make your voice heard.
Middle Fork Lake
Enjoy an Alpine Treasure While it is Closed to ATVs

by Michael Scialdone

For decades, Middle Fork was a place where motorized and non-motorized users could share a beautiful place. The recent rise in ATV use has caused severe erosion and, in June 2004, the Forest Service closed the road to motorized traffic because it had become a public safety hazard. Ron Thibedeau, Questa District Ranger, has stated the closure is "temporary".

It’s Labor Day Weekend and I’m having breakfast in Red River, NM. Given its popularity with ORVs, Red River is usually the last place I’d be on such a busy weekend, but this year I have chosen to investigate NM’s growing ORV problem by visiting people who are dealing with it first hand. The previous day I was shown where ATVs are heading in to the Pecos Wilderness. Here, in to the Middle Fork Road. His home in the Upper Red River Valley is adjacent to an ATV thoroughfare to the Carson NF. He knows the nuisance of this machine far better than most.

At the trailhead, we grab packs and head up. We all have our special places in the world, our place to return for rejuvenation. For Ted, Middle Fork Lake is his place and his unbridled enthusiasm is contagious as we hike along the river with its ever-changing sounds, cascades, and light reflections. The river gently pulls us up to what feels like a secret glacial lake that invites quiet contemplation as the ‘real world’ fades in to the background. Ted enchants me with the story of his first hike here, as he watched waterfalls tumble off the cliffs behind the lake.

Though we’d love to do nothing more than soak in the beauty, there is work to be done. Ted is comparing the erosion and overall quality of the road to what he found a year ago before its closure. I’ve spent 7 years documenting road conditions, yet what we see truly surprises me. At each hairpin turn we measure the depth of erosion with one of us holding yardsticks and the other taking photos. The yardstick is often shorter than the erosion being measured! When some hikers look strangely at what we are doing, I explain that we are documenting the damage from ATVs. They reply that hiking the trail is far better without them.

The road itself is an incredible motorized challenge. There are 21 very tight switchbacks in two miles. The proper way for an ORV to transverse this section is to proceed to a switchback, drive in reverse to the next switchback, then drive forward to the next, etc. I get chills as Ted describes this to me.

After so many decades, how did erosion like this happen in such a short amount of time? ATVs changed the nature of the motorized visit. Previously, most enjoyed a slow, but exhilarating ride in a jeep-like vehicle that usually ended with a hike and picnic/camping at the lake. Conversely, ATV-ers often head up and down the road several times in an afternoon. I joked with Ted that perhaps they are not sure what to do when they reach the end of the road.

ATVs are able to make the tight switchbacks without the forward/reverse motion described above. This rounded them out and made them more susceptible to erosion. With their low-pressure, spongy tires and comparatively large shock absorbers, ATVs are basically a big spring that can cover rough terrain faster than passenger vehicles. With speed comes slipping tires and more erosion. The road transformed into an ATV slalom course – cheap thrills for riders on expensive machines.

Further, since ATVs are designed for one person (that’s what the safety stickers on them say anyways,) it now takes four round trips to Middle Fork Lake compared to one in a jeep-like vehicle. The ride is the main interest to many ATV-ers. If each does 3 round trips, then a group of 4 will use the road twenty-four times more than a passenger vehicle. This exponential increase in use destroyed the road and made it such a public safety hazard that the Forest Service could no longer ignore it. What had been open to all for decades is now closed to motorized traffic.

Ted has put two boys through college, but still has no trouble hiking the trail. He has compassion for those less mobile than he and part of him would like to keep the road open to motorized (but not ATV) traffic. This would be nearly impossible to enforce, and the severity of the damage ATVs have done make it almost a non-issue. In his report Ted recommends that the Middle Fork Road be closed permanently to motorized vehicles. These recommendations are counter to the current Forest Service position on ORVs, but things can change even in government agencies.

For now, plan a trip to Middle Fork Trail when the snow pack is low enough to keep away the ATV’s winter cousin, the snowmobile, (which are still allowed,) and experience what Ted and I did where only the river broke the quiet and only the scent of earth and clean mountain air filled our lungs.
Protecting the Organ Mountains and Our Options for the Future—a Citizen’s Proposal

by Trisha London

Located in eastern Dona Ana County, about 10 miles east of Las Cruces, is the most spectacular and dramatic scenery to be found in southern New Mexico, the Organ Mountains. Long having been a source of civic pride for the people and communities of Dona Ana County, the mountains and lands immediately surrounding them have become threatened by urban sprawl. The fact that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) currently identifies much of the land adjacent to the mountains for disposal to developers has created much concern for local residents.

The BLM and the military administer the majority of this mountain range and its adjacent lands. Several BLM special management areas afford the area some protection. These include three Wilderness Study Areas: the Organ Mountains WSA, Organ Needles WSA, and Peña Blanca WSA. BLM also designated the Organ Mountains Scenic Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and the Organ/ Franklin Mountains ACEC which are designed to protect the biological, scenic, riparian, special status species and cultural values of the area. With the immediate threats from sprawl and BLM land disposal, there’s an urgent need to implement meaningful, long-term protection for this unique landscape. Many are recognizing that through wilderness designation, we protect our landscape’s long-term viability, thereby ensuring the greatest number of options for our future. Options like a community setting that provides for many activities in the outdoors and a more diversified, stable economy.

NMWA, along with other citizen groups, are proposing protection for this area through a Citizen’s Proposal for a National Conservation Area with a core of Wilderness for the Organ Mountains. The NM Chapter of National Wildlife Federation and local sportsman groups have endorsed the proposal.

In Las Cruces several groups have been working for some time towards “open space protection” to ward off sprawl, including the Citizen’s Task Force for Open Space Preservation. These efforts have laid the groundwork for NMWA’s proposal.

The Organs have considerable cultural, sociological, biological, recreational and economic significance. The mountain’s scenic resources alone are important to the vast majority of Las Cruces residents, most of which are of the opinion that they should be protected and preserved. The Organ Mountains, so named for their steep, needle-like spires which resemble the pipes of an organ, were also a beacon to the early pioneers as they traveled into the area. For infinitely longer, the majestic mountains kept their vigil over the living landscape of the Chihuahuan desert, sending life-giving storm runoff to the river to the west, the magnificent Rio Grande, via arroyos that cut across rolling mesas.

As long as 7,000 years ago, prehistoric people left traces of their culture in rock shelters here, including some of the earliest known cultivated corn in the US. Outstanding recreational opportunities in the Organs include hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, birding, nature photography and nationally renowned rock climbing. The presence of several perennial springs makes the area critically important to wildlife including golden eagles, hawks, owls, mule deer, Montezuma quail and mountain lions.

New Mexico still lags behind other western states in the amount of land currently in Wilderness protection, with less than 3% currently protected.

Although this citizen’s proposal will focus on the lands that comprise the Organ Mountains and surrounding foothills, it will also build on the foundation we have created in southern New Mexico working on wilderness issues and on our efforts to protect areas across the state. Strong support for protecting the Organs has been expressed by the Mayors of Las Cruces and the town of Mesilla, County commissioners, City Councilors and the overwhelming majority of residents.
Protegiendo las Montañas de los Organos Y Nuestras Opciones Para el Futuro —una Propuesta Ciudadana

by Alberto Zavala

Localizadas en el este del Condado de Doña Ana, como a 10 millas de este de Las Cruces, es el más espectacular y dramático escenario que se puede encontrar en el suroeste de Nuevo México, las Montañas de los Órganos. Por mucho tiempo ha sido una fuente de orgullo para la gente y las comunidades del Condado de Doña Ana, las montañas y las tierras que se encuentran a su alrededor han estado en peligro por el desarrollo urbano. El hecho de que el Buro de Manejo de las Tierras (Bureau of Land Management BLM) actualmente identifica mucha de la tierra adyacente a las montañas para venta a los urbanizadores, ha creado mucha preocupación a los residentes locales. El BLM y los militares administran mucho de este terreno montañoso y tierras adyacentes. Varias áreas de manejo especial del BLM proporcionan al área un poco de protección. Estas incluyen tres Areas de Estudio de Tierras Silvestres (AETS,) las Montañas de los Organos AETS, Agujas de los Organos AETS y Peña Blanca AETS. El BLM también designó las Montañas de los Organos como Área Eclesiística de Preocupación Ambiental Crítica (AEPAC) y las Montañas de los Organos y Franklin AEPAC las cuales son designadas para proteger los valores biológicos, escénicos, estado especial de especies y culturales del área. Con los peligros inmediatos de urbanización y las tierras de venta del BLM, es una urgente la necesidad de implementar una significativa protección a largo plazo para este paisaje único. Muchos han reconocido que a través de una designación de Tierras Silvestres protegeremos nuestros paisajes a largo plazo, y por medio de esto asegurar el gran numero de opciones para el futuro; opciones como una comunidad asentada que provee una diversidad de oportunidades al aire libre así como una diversa y estable economía. NMWA junto con otros grupos ciudadanos están propiciando la protección para esta área a través de un Propuesta Ciudadana como Área de Consevación Nacional con el núcleo de las Montañas de los Órganos como Tierra Silvestre. La sección de Nuevo México de la Federacion Nacional de Tierras Silvestres y grupos de deportistas locales han apoyado la propuesta. En Las Cruces algunos grupos han estado trabajando por algún tiempo hacia una “protección de espacio abierto” para preven la urbanización, incluyendo la Fuerza Operante Ciudadana para la Conservación de Espacios Abiertos. Estos esfuerzos han puesto la base para la propuesta de NMWA.

Los Órganos tienen un considerable significado cultural, sociológico, biológico y económico. Como agujas, las cuales asemejan los tubos de un órgano, fueron también la guía para los pioneros que viajaron en el área. Por tiempo indefinido, las majestuosas montañas han mantenido su vigilía sobre el viviente paisaje de Desierto Chihuahuense, dando vida y mandando derrames hacia el rio del oeste, el magnifico Rio Grande, atraves de arroyos que cortan a lo largo de las mesas rodantes. A lo largo de cuando menos 7,000 años, la gente prehistérica ha dejado huella de su cultura en esta área en rocas, incluyendo algunos de los primeros maizales cultivados conocidos en los Estados Unidos. Oportunidades sobresalientes de recreación en los Órganos incluyen caminatas, paseos en caballo, fotografía natural y con significado nacional el rapel de rocas. La presencia de algunas fuentes perenes hacen de el área una grave importancia para la vida salvaje incluyendo a las aguilas doradas, halcones, buhos, venado mulo, codorniz Montezuma y leones de montaña. Un estado especial de especies animales ocurren en los Órganos incluyendo el halcon peregrino, la endémica ardilla de las Montañas de los Órganos, y cuatro especies de moluscos endémicos. La diversa vida de plantas incluye praderas deserticas, ocotillo, yuccas, mesquite, zumaque, caoba de Montana, roble, piñon, enebro, pino ponderosa y más de un docena de plantas de estado especial incluyendo el cactus cerezo nochefloreciente y el primaveral atardecer de las Montañas de los Órganos.

Nuevo Mexico todavía se queda atras de otros estados del oeste en el monto de Tierras Silvestres actualmente protegidas, con solamente el 2.1%. Aunque esta propuesta ciudadana se enfoca en las tierras que comprenden las Montañas de los Órganos y las colonias de sus alrededores, también se continuará construyendo en la fundación que hemos creado en el sur de Nuevo Mexico trabajando en temas de tierras silvestres y en nuestros esfuerzos de proteger áreas a lo largo del estado. Un fuerte apoyo para proteger las Montañas de los Órganos ha sido expresado por los alcaldes de Las Cruces y Mesilla, comisionados del condado, consejeros de la ciudad y la inmensa mayoría de los residentes.
Paradise Lost?
Jim O’Donnell, Coordinator, Coalition for the Valle Vidal

The Texas oil and gas boys are out to destroy 100,000 acres of northern New Mexico wildlands for a paltry 11 hours of natural gas.

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

The Valle is a key wildlife corridor, linking the Wildernesses of Wheeler and Latir Peak with the Colombine-Hondo WSA, the wildlands of Vermejo Park and the Southern Rockies Ecosystem.

The Valle Vidal is also the life-blood of local recreation-based economies. It hosts outfitters, hunting and trekking guides, horseback riding and world-class fly-fishing.

The Valle Vidal defines The Land of Enchantment.

But the Valle Vidal is in danger. In 2002, El Paso Natural Gas petitioned the Forest Service to lease 40,000 acres of the Valle for coalbed methane development. In July, the Forest Service released its study predicting a relatively large amount of gas beneath the Valle, yet it’s only enough to supply the entire nation with 11 hours of gas. For that, we would see the elk’s calving grounds disrupted, displaced wildlife populations, poisoned waterways and the loss of a vital portion of the economies of north central New Mexico.

The Forest Service now moves to the development of an Amendment to the Forest Plan for the Carson National Forest. That process should take about a year and at the end, they could recommend opening the Valle for leasing.

The Coalition for the Valle Vidal is determined not to let this happen. We have formed a team that will participate in the forest plan amendment process. We have also initiated a vigorous public-awareness campaign to inform New Mexicans just how devastating the destruction of the Valle would be.

This is a vital moment for the Valle Vidal. Our Congressional Representatives must know that we want this land to be permanently protected from industrialization.

To that end, the Coalition has also initiated a letter writing campaign to Representatives Udall and Wilson on this issue. They need to hear our voice!

There is too much to lose by industrializing one of our treasured wildlands for 11 hours of natural gas. We cannot allow another out of state conglomerate to drill and run, leaving us with busted economies and a ruined landscape.

To find out more about the Coalition for the Valle Vidal and how you can help protect this wonder, please visit our web site at www.vallevidal.org or call Jim O’Donnell at 505-758-3874.

Oil and Gas Leases Threaten More Proposed Wilderness in New Mexico
by Tisha Broska

The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (NMWA,) along with Forest Guardians and the Southwest Environmental Center filed protests against 67 of 88 New Mexico parcels the BLM auctioned off for oil and gas leasing in late October. The protests were mainly for leases on important wildlife habitat and land adjacent to Carlsbad Caverns National Park and the Bisti Wilderness. Many of the parcels are habitat for the endangered Apolomado falcon and also the lesser prairie chicken. Other parcels are within the Guadalupe Escarpment and Rawhide Canyon Proposed Wilderness Areas in southern New Mexico and within the Split Lip Flats Proposed Wilderness in northwestern New Mexico.

The protests were effectively ignored, and 87 parcels were leased. In all, 40,639 acres of New Mexico’s BLM public lands were lost to development.

The BLM included a “no surface occupancy stipulation” on only two parcels of land to protect the habitat of the lesser prairie chicken and the sand dune lizard. Directional drilling from less sensitive lands would be required to develop resources on these parcels.

Below is a map of the Carlsbad Caverns National Park area. As you can see, most land adjacent to the park and Wilderness is leased for oil and gas. NMWA has identified several parcels in the surrounding area that still qualify for Wilderness protection. However, any oil and gas development of these wild public lands would prevent any future Wilderness status. NMWA and other environmental groups will continue to monitor any progress toward oil and gas development on these parcels.

We feel that the BLM has failed to fully look at the impact of oil and gas leasing and its effects on the land and wildlife of these parcels, violating the national environmental policy designed to protect wildlife habitat.
El Tigre! The Jaguar of the Borderlands
Paul J. Polechla Jr., Ph.D.
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The jaguar (Panthera onca) is one of the most elusive wildlife species of the Southwest. First of all, the southwest US is at the northern part of their range, so even historically they have never been very common. Second of all, as a top-level predator, their populations in the heart of their range further south are typically low for carnivores. The undeniable fact of the matter is that they are a native part of the Southwest’s fauna and that they are experiencing somewhat of a comeback.

For decades, biologist thought that the jaguar was extirpated or locally extinct in their former haunts of southern Arizona and New Mexico. All that remained was museum specimens and folklore. The jaguar was “rediscovered” by Warner Glenn and his daughter Kelly in the spring of 1996. They were out with their black and tan hounds for mountain lion hunting in the Peloncillo Mountains of the Arizona-New Mexico border when their dogs bayed an exotic quarry. Instead of reaching for a rifle like many ranchers might, he reached for his camera in his saddlebags. The rest is history. Their 1996 book on the experience with photos and text caused quite a stir in the conservation world as biologists struggled to gain more information.

Then in August of the same year, Jack Childs and Matt Colvin hunting in the Baboquivari Mountains of south-central Arizona trumped them one better by videotaping a jaguar in the top of an alligator juniper. They went on to form an organization called the Jaguar Conservation Team and decided to determine how to tell jaguar sign from that of other carnivores, notably the puma and other cats (also known as cougars, panthers, and mountain lions). So they headed south to where the jaguars are more plentiful…Matto Grosso do Sul, the Pantanal Region of western Brazil. There they tracked jaguars, pumas, ocelots, and jaguarondi, and set out to try and distinguish the tracks and sign of jaguars from the rest of the Neotropical cats. The result was a nice guide published in 1998. They found that the jaguar track is unique in that the trailing edge of the pad of the jaguar track is un-lobed or less pronounced. The puma, bobcat, and house cat have three lobes on the trailing edge of the pad. In addition the puma track he claimed is more angular, while with the jaguar these details of the track are rounded and more robust.

As recent as September 2004, Vladimir Dinets photographed a black jaguar in northern Mexico...the first ever recorded. Word has it that more jaguar photos have been taken, as recent as October 2004 in the southwest.

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish’s “Wildlife Notes” on the jaguar states: “One of the difficult tasks ahead is finding out more about this rare mammal’s history in New Mexico.”

So, stay tuned all you jaguar lovers, more is sure to come.

Peloncillo Mountains
Paul Polechla Jr., Ph.D.

My introduction to the Peloncillo Mountains of the southwestern New Mexico-southeastern Arizona border was on a warm October day in 2001. I was taking my Carnivore Ecology class down to the place where Warner and Kelly Glenn had bayed a jaguar in 1996 with their hounds. We were trying to bait a jaguar into the area to leave tracks. On that trip, we saw no jaguar tracks but we did make note of their exotic habitat.

These rugged little mountains impressed me from the get go. Geologists have described these mountains as a broken, faulted arch of extrusive and intrusive igneous rocks and sedimentary rocks overlain to the north and south by younger extrusive volcanic rocks. The extrusive molten magma forced the sedimentary rocks to cool into dikes and sills and formed the outcroppings and peaks. The result was a “devil’s playground” of giant boulders, rock formations, and a maze of canyons complex enough to tantalize geologists for eons.

This mountain range in middle of the Chihuahuan desert, acts as a cloud trap for moist air blowing off of the Gulf of California and the Pacific Ocean. As these moisture laden air masses are warmed on the desert floor, they ascend. As the air ascends it is cooled and precious water molecules contained in the air fall to the earth as precipitation. During the monsoons of late summer this phenomena can give regular rains to the Peloncillos. The winters here are mild as compared to the north. These two factors allow Neotropical flora and fauna to reach into southwestern U.S. making a giant “U” shape across the borderlands of northern Mexico and Texas.

Many of the plants in the Peloncillos are evergreen. Here the observant plant fancier will notice the Chihuahua pine. It looks similar to the Ponderosa pine only with three needles. Rocky hillsides can have the Palmer’s agave pollinated by the Mexican long-tongue bat and the Schott’s Yucca pollinated by the pronuba moth. The point-leaf manzanita puts out red fruits that are readily eaten by fat-storing fall black bears. Mexican pinyon is another endemnic conifer of the area that provides bears with seeds. Oaks abound in the mountains…shrub live oak, gray oak. While, the sharp thorns of the succulent plants ocotillo, cane cholla, Englemann’s prickly pear, and catclaw acacia remind one of the desert.

In this part of New Mexico it is possible to see the sign or the actual animal of all three members of the raccoon family: the raccoon, ringtail, and the Neotropical coati. We found dainty ringtail tracks and scats under a rocky ledge and raccoon tracks along a spring. We saw tracks and scats of Coye’s white-tailed deer as well as the majestic animals themselves. Monzteraza quill, wild turkey and western screech owl also frequent the Peloncillos. Other more elusive animals that we could have potentially seen include the neotropical eared trogon and the red and black Gila monster lizard.

The Peloncillos used to be the home of the extirpated Grizzly Bear. Here, a sign commemorates Jean Baptiste Charbonneau of the Mormon Battalion of 1846, observing 3 Grizzly bears. This was also the last stopmng grounds of the Mexican wolf, or lobo, until Arizona and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reintroduced them. Hopefully the Peloncillo Mountains of the New Mexico and Arizona borderlands will continue to harbor such a rich and unique flora and fauna.
In 2005, our wildlands face their biggest challenge in history. In light of this challenge, what will your legacy be?

by Nathan Newcomer

In light of the outcome of the recent elections it is clear that New Mexico’s wild lands and Wilderness areas will be under full assault from the Bush administration and industry allies. However, New Mexicans have demonstrated a strong commitment to preserving our natural heritage over the past four years, and during the next four years, we will all need to be just as vigilant in our efforts.

In the case of Otero Mesa, more than 50,000 letters, faxes, and emails calling for the protection of this Chihuahuan Desert grassland were submitted during the last public comment period, which ended in June 2004. This is an unprecedented amount of bi-partisan public support and involvement!

On the Ojito Wilderness Act, thousands of letters were written and phone calls made to our delegation urging them to pass New Mexico’s first Wilderness Bill in almost twenty years. Again, a bi-partisan group of New Mexicans worked together to introduce this legislation and our delegation is listening clearly and working to pass this legislation.

Perhaps most importantly though, is the strong, committed support of Governor Bill Richardson for Wilderness in New Mexico.

Governor Richardson has stood up for Otero Mesa, the Valle Vidal, Ojito and the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. And this is because New Mexicans are GETTING INVOLVED! and having their voices heard.

Now is the time for all those who care about our natural heritage—our Wilderness Areas, to stand tall and speak loud and clear. We must unite under one banner and not budge from our position. We must be vigilant in our efforts and not give an inch. We need to write Letters to the Editor of newspapers, set up meetings with our Congressional representatives, attend public hearings, make phone calls, write more letters, and demand protection of New Mexico’s wild lands and Wilderness Areas.

The following is a citizen’s guide to GETTING INVOLVED! To learn more about how you can help and make a difference, contact Grassroots Organizer’s Nathan Newcomer in Albuquerque (505-843-8696, nathan@nmwild.org) or Trisha London and Alberto Zavala in Las Cruces (505-527-9962, trishal@nmwild.org, aazavalam@hotmail.com)

INVOLUCRESE!

En vista del resultado de las elecciones recientes, está claro que la Tierras Silvestres de Nuevo México y las áreas de Tierras Silvestres estarán bajo un completo ataque por parte de la administración de Bush e industrias aliadas. De cualesquier manera los Nuevo Mexicanos han demostrado un fuerte compromiso para preservar su herencia natural en los últimos cuatro años, y durante los próximos cuatro tendremos la necesidad de ser justamente vigilantes en nuestros esfuerzos.

En el caso de Otero Mesa, más de 50,000 cartas, faxes y emails, pidiendo la protección de estas praderas de el Desierto Chihuahuense, fueron enviadas durante el último periodo de comentarios públicos, el cual finalizó en junio de 2004. Esta es una cantidad sin precedentes bi-partidaria de apoyo público y envolvimiento.

En el Acto Ojito como Tierra Silvestre, miles de cartas fueron escritas y llamadas telefónicas hechas a nuestra delegación, que los impulsaba a aprobar el primer Proyecto de Ley de Tierras Silvestres en Nuevo Mexico en casi veinte años. Otra vez un grupo bi-partidario de Nuevo Mexicanos trabajaron juntos para introducir esta Legislación, y nuestra delegación está escuchando claramente y trabajando para aprobar ésta Legislación.

Tal vez el más importante respaldo, es el fuerte y comprometido apoyo del Gobernador Bill Richardson para las tierras Silvestres de Nuevo Mexico.

El Gobernador Richardson ha estado de Pie para Otero Meso, Valle Vidal, Ojito y la Regla de Conservación de Areas sin Caminos, y esto es porque los Nuevo Mexicanos se ESTAN INVOLUCRANDO! Y haciendo que sus voces sean escuchadas.

Ahora es tiempo para todos aquellos que se preocupan acerca de nuestra herencia natural nuestras áreas de Tierras Silvestres, de ponerse en lo alto y hablar fuerte y claro. Debemos unirnos bajo un solo estandarte, y no ceder de nuestra posición. Debemos ser vigilantes en nuestros esfuerzos y no ceder ni una sola pulgada. Necesitamos escribir Cartas al Editor en los periódicos, establecer reuniones con nuestros representantes en el Congreso, atender audiencias públicas, hacer llamadas telefónicas, escribir más cartas, y demandar la protección de las Tierras Silvestres de Nuevo México y de las áreas de Tierras Silvestres.

La siguiente es una guía ciudadana para INVOLUCARSE! Para aprender más acerca de cómo puede ayudar a hacer la diferencia, contacte a los Organizadores Nathan Newcomer en Albuquerque (505-843-8696, nathan@nmwild.org) or Alberto Zavala in Las Cruces (505-527-9962, aazavalam@hotmail.com)
2005 Congressional Recess Schedule

Whether you’re able to travel to Washington D.C. and meet with New Mexico’s delegation or congressional staff, or if you can only meet with them at their local offices, both are very effective ways for you to speak out in support of Wilderness issues. When our members of congress are here in New Mexico on recess, it is a great opportunity for you and others with similar concerns to set up a group meeting with your Congress person. Meeting as a group not only helps gain access, but also demonstrates concern among a large portion of the member’s constituency.

Below are some suggestions to consider when planning to visit a congressional office, and dates when our delegation will be in recess and back in New Mexico.

Plan Your Visit Carefully: Be clear about what it is you want to achieve; determine in advance which member or staff person you need to meet with to achieve your purpose.

Make an Appointment: Contact the Appointment Secretary/Scheduler and explain your purpose and whom you want to meet with. You will have to write a letter to the Appointment Secretary explaining what topic(s) you wish to discuss. Always follow up your letter with phone calls to ensure that you will be seen.

Be Prompt and Patient: It is not uncommon for a Congressperson to be late, or have a meeting interrupted, due to their crowded schedule. If this occurs, be flexible. Don’t be offended if you meet only with the member’s staff. Members of congress rely heavily on their staff to keep them informed and help determine their position on issues.

Be Prepared: Bring information or materials supporting your position. In some instances, a member may lack important details of a particular issue. It is very helpful to share with the member information that demonstrates the impact of a particular issue or piece of legislation. Know your facts.

Make Connections to the State or District: Wherever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the member’s constituency.

Be Sure to Listen: You may learn the most by listening to what a member of their staff has to say about an issue. Listen to what they know, what their opinion is, and what concerns they have.

Be Responsive: Be prepared to answer questions. If you don’t know the answer—tell them you will follow up with them soon. Follow up the meeting with a thank you letter that outlines the different points covered in the meeting.

RECESS DATES

January 1-19
February 16 – 23
Senate March 15-19
House April 5-19
Senate April 12-19
May 24-31
June 28 – July 5
July 26 – September 6
October 1 is Target Adjournment for all of Congress

Horario Del 2005 Delreceso En El Congreso

Si usted puede viajar a Washington D.C. y reunirse con la delegación de Nuevo Mexico o personal del Congreso, o si usted solamente puede reunirse con ellos en sus oficinas locales, ambas son muy eficientes formas para usted de hablar acerca de el apoyo en temas de las Tierras Silvestres. Cuando nuestro miembros del congreso están aquí en Nuevo Mexico en receso, es una gran oportunidad para usted y otras personas con el mismo interés de tratar de establecer una reunión en grupo con su persona en el Congreso. Una reunión en grupo no solamente ayuda a asegurarla la reunión, sino que también demuestra el interés entre una gran porción de miembros del electorado.

Abaajo hay algunas sugerencias para considera cuando se planea una visita a la oficina del congreso, y fechas de cuando nuestra delegación estará en receso y regresara a Nuevo Mexico.

Planee su visita cuidadosamente: Sea claro acerca de que es lo que quiere llevar a cabo, determine por adelantado con cual miembro del personal necesita reunirse para llevar a cabo su propósito.

Haga una cita: Contacte a la Secretaria de Citas y expliquele su propósito y con quien quiere reunirse. Tendrá que escribir una carta a la secretaria de citas explicando el tema que desea discutir, Siempre debe seguir a su carta con llamadas telefónicas para asegurarse que sea recibido.

Se puntual y paciente: Es muy común us las personas del Congreso lleguen tarde o que su reunión sea interrumpida, debido a su horario tan apretado. Si esto ocurre sea flexible. No se ofenda si se reúne solamente con miembros del personal de las personas en el Congreso. Los miembros del congreso confian mucho en su personal para mantenerse informados y ayuden a determinar su posición en los diferentes temas.

Este preparado: Lleve información o materiales que apoyen su posición. En algunas instancias, un miembro podrá requerir de detalles importantes sobre un tema en particular. Es de mica ayuda compartir con los miembros la información que demuestre el impacto de un tema en particular o pieza de Legislación. Conozca los hechos.

Haga conexiones con el Estado o el Distrito: Como sea posible, demostrar laconexión entre lo que está solicitando y los intereses de los miembros del electorado.

Asegúrese de escuchar: Debe aprender lo más que se pueda cuando est 0 escuchando al miembro del personal, que es lo que tiene que decir acerca del tema. Escuche que es lo que sabe, cual es su opinión y que intereses tienen.

Responda: Este preparado para contestar preguntas. Si no sabe la respuesta diga que ese le dara seguimiento inmediatamente. Dele seguimiento a la reunión con una carta de agradecimiento en donde se describa un perfil de los diferentes puntos que se discutieron en la reunión.

Call Washington, D.C. toll-free. Capitol Switchboard Number: 800-839-5276
Just ask the operator to connect you to your New Mexico Senator or Congressman.

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

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

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

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

Congressman Tom Udall
502 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-6190
(202) 226-1331 fax

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

Most letters to Editor (LTE) that are published are between 125-250 words, although it is not uncommon for longer LTEs to be printed. Preference is given to letters that are fresh, brief, clear and that don’t require factual verification.

If you send a letter via snail mail, make sure you write on the outside of the envelope: “Attn: Letters to the Editor”. This will ensure that your letter gets to the editor in a timely fashion. Also you must include your address and phone number for verification. Most newspapers prefer an email LTE. That way they don’t have to re-type it. The more you help out a reporter or editor, the more likely they are to help you out and run your piece. Also, if you have access to a fax machine, fax your LTE as well as emailing it. Be sure to have a cover page when faxing and address it Attn: Letter to the Editor.

Furthermore, it’s a great idea to contact the person in charge of Letter’s to the Editor and see if they have received your letter. If you submitted your letter via email or fax, wait an hour or so before you call them. If they have received your letter, tell them why you think they should publish it, i.e. it’s a timely issue, it’s important people read this because…etc.

Below are the three main papers in New Mexico, with Letter’s to the Editor information.

**Cartas al Editor**

La mayoría de las Cartas al Editor que son publicadas contienen entre 125-250 palabras, aunque es poco común que se impriman Cartas al Editor más extensas. Se le da preferencia a las cartas que son frescas, breves claras y que no necesitan de verificación efectiva.

Si usted manda una carta por el correo tradicional, asegúrese de escribirla en el sobre: “Attn: Cartas al Editor”. Esto asegurará que su carta llegue al editor de una manera oportuna. También debe incluir su dirección y número de teléfono para la verificación. La mayoría de los periódicos prefieren las Cartas al Editor via email, de esta manera ellos no tienen que reescribirla. Cuanto más ayude a un reportero o editor, más probabilidades hay de que le ayuden a publicar su carta. También, si tiene acceso a una máquina de fax, envíe por fax su Carta al Editor así como por email. Asegúrese de tener una hoja de cubierta cuando mande el fax y diríjala a Attn: Cartas al Editor.

Además es una gran idea contactar a la persona encargada de las Cartas al Editor y ver si ya recibieron su carta. Si usted manda una carta atreviendo de email o fax, espere al menos una hora antes de llamados. Si ya recibieron su carta, digales porque piensa que deberían publicarla, que es un tema oportuno, es importante que la gente lea esto porque…etc

Abajo hay tres de los principales periódicos de Nuevo Mexico, con la información de Cartas al Editor.

**Concerned about oil and gas development on our public lands?**

write:

**Linda Rundell**
BLM State Director
PO. Box 27115
Santa Fe, NM 87502-0115

Laura, the twins and I love to go hiking in the clear-cuts.

---

**LTE CONTACTS**

- **Albuquerque Journal**
  PO Drawer J
  Albuquerque, NM 87103
  opinion@abqjournal.com
  Harry Moskos
  505-823-3837 – phone
  505-823-3994 – fax

- **Las Cruces Sun News**
  PO BOX 1749
  Las Cruces, NM 88004
  editorlcsn@zianet.com
  Jim Lawetz
  505-541-5498 - fax
  505-541-5438 – phone

- **Santa Fe New Mexican**
  202 E. Marcy St.
  Santa Fe, NM 87501
  letters@sfnmnewmexican.com
  Pat West-Barker
  505-996-3040 – fax
  505-995-3804 – phone

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**TAKING ACTION!**

NMWA is putting together road closures and other restoration projects for 2005. If you would like to be notified of the when these will be, call Michael Scialdone at the NMWA office in ABQ – (505) 843-8696 or drop him an email at scal@nmwild.org.

If you have hiked the Middle Fork Trail, and would like peace and quiet when you do so again, write the Questa Ranger District with a cc to the Supervisor’s office and let them know that this is a special place and you would prefer not to have the noise and fumes of ATVs as part of your experience (see article on page 5.)

**Ron Thibedeau,**
Questa District Ranger
POBox 110
Quest NM 87556

**Martin Chavez,**
Forest Supervisor
208 Cruz Alta Road
Taos NM 87571

New Mexico currently lacks any state regulations for ATVs and dirt bikes. Last year legislation was introduced, but never got passed in the Legislature. This year State Senator Feldman and Representative Gonzales are re-introducing legislation that will help to regulate Off Road Vehicles. This common-sense bill would promote responsible behavior, give tools to break the destructive cycle of ORV abuse, educate operators with safety courses, and require licensing. The bill would also provide funds for law enforcement, which is critical to the protection of Wilderness and wild lands. To learn more about the bill and to TAKE ACTION, visit www.supportatvregs.org and sign the online petition. By showing broad support, we can begin reigning in the menace of ATV abuse.
A Quarter Million Comments for Otero Mesa

Be a part of the largest letter writing campaign in New Mexico history! Join the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance in setting the bar by working to generate a quarter of a million letters in support of Otero Mesa to President George W. Bush.

We are producing 500 Otero Mesa DVD’s full of extraordinary footage of this wild grassland. Also included are interviews with Gov. Richardson and other prominent New Mexican figures, and a look at the devastating impacts of oil and gas development on public lands in southeastern New Mexico.

The purpose of this DVD is to share it with friends and family and get them to write letters, and then pass it on so that others can get involved in our efforts to generate a quarter of a million letters in support of Otero Mesa to President George W. Bush.

To reserve your copy of this DVD or to set up an Otero Mesa DVD party, contact Nathan Newcomer at the Albuquerque NMWA office (nathan@nmwild.org, 505-843-8696, ext. 107).

Letters to President Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
Comments: 202-456-1111
FAX: 202-456-2461

by Stephen Capra

Time to take the gloves off.

There comes a time in every campaign for the environment when one simply has to say NO to the idea of losing. For many of us, that concept came home in the late evening of election night. Otero Mesa is New Mexico’s wildest grassland and, unlike most of the southeastern part of our state, remains free of oil and gas development.

The idea that we would simply surrender and allow a few multi-million dollar oil companies to destroy this wild and beautiful landscape remains unconscionable. By the time this goes to press the Bureau of Land Management will have released its Record of Decision on Otero Mesa, the result likely to be the opening of this 1.2 million acre grassland to full-scale oil and gas development.

Of course, the BLM, under tremendous pressure from the Bush Administration, will portray this as a small footprint with strict environmental safeguards. This is the rhetoric of the oil and gas industry industry, thirsty for more profit, emboldened by the elections and unconcerned about New Mexicans or their future.

But let’s be clear about this battle, the fat lady has yet to sing… Our litigation team at Earth Justice feels very confident about our legal case. This could put a halt on development for the foreseeable future, perhaps forever. Governor Richardson remains solidly committed to our efforts and will do everything to prevent development in Otero Mesa. We are completing a 15-minute video on Otero Mesa designed to be shown to friends and other concerned citizens with the goal of generating 250,000 comments to President Bush.

The video (of which 500 copies are being made) is designed to show the need for protecting not only the wild nature of this landscape, but the priceless aquifer that lies beneath its surface. These videos will be available at our Christmas party on December 11th. They will be distributed nationally and to citizens willing to show them to friends and neighbors, getting them involved. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance continues to speak out across the state and will be organizing non-violent protests in the months ahead to keep the issue of Otero Mesa in the public’s eye.

We will continue to make clear to the oil and gas industry and politicians that we will never stop fighting to protect this important part of New Mexico’s wild heritage.

This past August, filmmaker Bob Willis and I went to Otero Mesa to film this wild grassland. Between May and August of 2004, the mesa had received more than 15 inches of rain, the highest amount since 1997. It was then that the power of this landscape became clear. Knee to waist high grasses as far as the eye could see, pronghorn in herds of 20-30 running swiftly across this unbroken prairie of black and blue grama. Afternoon thunderstorms that filled the skies, while coyotes peeked out of creosote bushes to watch prairie dog towns and night-hawks swooped around our heads searching for their next meal. This is the wild and special magic that is Otero Mesa. Does it make sense to simply allow such a place to be destroyed for a few days worth of oil and gas? How poor are we as a state or a nation if we allow such plunder?

The reality is that the fight is just now warming up. We must send a strong signal to the Bush Administration that democracy is alive and well in New Mexico and that the protection of our public lands remains a value that defines our quality of life in the West. The time is now! Your support is crucial. Call our offices or come lend your support. Request our video. Get involved!
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (NMWA) is blessed with hundreds of hours of volunteer work every year, donated by the dedicated folks who love the wild places of New Mexico. Common to all these volunteers is a desire to become better informed as citizens and more effective as activists when dealing with the complex issues of wilderness and conservation. Because of this, NMWA has hosted a series of conferences on wilderness and wilderness issues over the years. Our latest and greatest effort took place on Saturday, September 25th, 2004 at the La Posada Hotel in downtown Albuquerque.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance’s 2004 Wilderness Conference brought together speakers from all over the country and Mexico to share information, insight, and inspiration with over 100 attendees. The daylong event was filled with fun and facts and featured multiple workshops and speeches.

The Keynote speaker was Oscar Moctezuma, Executive Director of the Naturalia, one of the leading conservation organizations in Mexico. He presented information to a rapt audience on the jaguars of Mexico and the cross-border wild lands on which they depend.

Workshops included History of the Wilderness Movement hosted by Doug Scott, and Media/Grassroots: Creating a Citizen’s Toolbox for Action, with our own Stephen Capra and Nathan Newcomer. Dave Parson’s The Ecology of Wilderness was well attended, and Arturo Sandoval energetically hosted Broadening Our Base: Diversifying the Outreach of the Conservation Community. Sessions on the politics of wilderness, the intricacies of federal agencies, and how religion and ecology interact were also offered.

Attendees received more than just information with a lunch included, however. They met and spent a day with those who have a similar drive to do their part in protecting what remains of New Mexico’s threatened wild landscapes.

NMWA will hold the event again in 2005 and we look forward to seeing you there. In the meantime, thank you for your volunteer time, your tax-deductible gifts, and your commitment.

**Ed Abbey Still Alive in Memories, Hearts of Friends and Fans Alike**

On Saturday, September 25th, 2004 from 7-10PM, NMWA hosted an evening celebrating the famed southwest author Edward Abbey. Remembering Edward Abbey was held in the Kimo theatre in downtown Albuquerque. Hundreds of people came to listen to the personal stories, songs, and readings of 4 of Abbey’s close friends and to see rare films of the noted conservationist and author.

Dave Foreman, co-founder of the Rewilding Institute, the Wildlands Project, and Earth First! was emcee of the show, telling stories of Abbey’s days at the University of New Mexico and beyond.

Jack Loeffler read from his book Adventures with Ed: A Portrait of Abbey and shared some recorded interviews in which Abbey discussed the nature and limits of activism, the moral nature of conservation, and the ways governments will use crises to distract citizens from a longer-term vision of the world.

Bart Koehler, a.k.a. Johnny Sagebrush and another co-founder of Earth First!, lead the audience in song and told stories of his time with Ed in the conservation movement.

And no one there will forget the wonderful performance of Katie Lee with her heartfelt songs, touching stories, and hilarious vocabulary.

We thank all that turned out to make this event special and to help NMWA continue its work in protecting and restoring the wild places of New Mexico.

**Walk for Wilderness**

Walk for Wilderness was held on Saturday, October 23rd in celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, partnered with REI and the US Forest Service, held the event in Albuquerque at the Elena Gallegos Park in the foothills of the Sandia Mountains. The walk was a 4-mile interpretive hike, with trivia question and prizes, to raise awareness for Wilderness protection in New Mexico. Approximately 50 people participated in the event and helped raise money for a trail restoration project in the area.

**2004 Wilderness Conference Sponsors**

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**Volunteers**

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**40th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act 1964 – 2004**

Walk for Wilderness was held on Saturday, October 23rd in celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, partnered with REI and the US Forest Service, held the event in Albuquerque at the Elena Gallegos Park in the foothills of the Sandia Mountains. The walk was a 4-mile interpretive hike, with trivia question and prizes, to raise awareness for Wilderness protection in New Mexico. Approximately 50 people participated in the event and helped raise money for a trail restoration project in the area.

**THANK YOU!**

2004 Wilderness Conference Sponsors
Southern NM Hikes

Contact Trisha London in NMWA’s Las Cruces office for information on all the following hikes, including how to get there and back. You must RSVP for these hikes. You can reach her at 505-527-9962.

November 27
Robledo Mountains
Distance: 6 miles round trip
Time: Return: mid-afternoon
Elevation gain: 1000 feet
Difficulty: Moderate

This area is a BLM Wilderness Study Area (WSA) as well as being part of NMWA’s Robledos/Las Uvas WSA complex. We will hike from the West side of the mountains to the top of Lookout Peak where we’ll get very dramatic views of the Rio Grande Valley as well as numerous surrounding mountain ranges like the Organs, Caballos, Cooke’s Range and the Las Uvas and others. This site includes an old heliograph station for Fort Selden.

December 18-19
Big Hatchet Peak-Car Camp (optional climb to top)
Distance: 8 mile round trip
Time: 1 and ½ days
Elevation gain: 3000 feet
Difficulty for hike: Moderate
Difficulty for climb: Strenuous, for experienced hikers only

We’ll be hiking and camping in one of the most spectacular areas in New Mexico. This is a “sky island” with dramatic views into Arizona, New Mexico and northern Mexico. The Big Hatchets are located in the bootheel of NM, south of Hachita and adjacent to the Mexican border. This area was home to the Apaches and still is home to Bighorn Sheep and is rich in diversity of plant and animal species, some which are not common in other parts of New Mexico.

January 22
Rabbit Ear Canyon
Distance: 5 mile round trip
Time: 4 to 5 hours
Elevation gain: 500 feet
Difficulty: Easy to moderate

This is a morning hike into one of the prominent canyons in the Organ Mountains. You’ll get very nice views down to Las Cruces and across the west Mesa. As you climb the canyon, views of the massive Rabbit Ears outcroppings are outstanding.

February 12
Achenback Canyon
Distance: 5 mile round trip
Time: 5 to 6 hours
Elevation gain: 1200 feet
Difficulty: Moderate

The trail initially climbs a small canyon then follows a mild grade along a slope high above the canyon floor. The trail leads to the top of a dry waterfall, where the canyon becomes wider with a broad flat grassland filling the valley. The trail eventually leads through a broad valley to the ridgeline on the north perimeter of the Achenback watershed. We’ll follow the same route back to our vehicles.

March 12
Cooke’s Peak WSA Outing
Distance: “Minimal” hiking
Time: All day
Elevation gain: 500 feet
Difficulty: Easy

This is a “driving” outing with short hikes of 2 miles or less to look at historic Fort Cummings, some old cemeteries and a Mogollon petroglyph site of major significance. Cooke’s Peak has an elevation of 8400 feet and is located within the Cooke’s Range about 15 miles north of Deming, New Mexico. Cooke’s Range is truly a “sky island” with a diversity of habitats including Chihuahuan Desert Grasslands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, desert shrub communities with some Mandrane elements with evergreen oaks also occurring in the area. From the summit of Cooke’s Peak you can see most of the mountain ranges of southwestern New Mexico as well as a few peaks within Arizona.
Although David Diaz and his sister Amy Diaz have owned this small mountain shop for about 2 years, Mountains and Rivers has been at this same location since 1971 under different ownership. This hip little shop located on Central Avenue near UNM is one of the only small, locally owned shops in Albuquerque specializing in quality outdoor recreational equipment. David and his sister believe in carrying high quality equipment that leaves little to no impact on the environment. They promote a “leave no trace” ethic and carry the camping and mountaineering equipment to support it. They have a full line of climbing gear that includes clean climbing anchors that are completely removable and non-marring. They carry high-quality camping gear, footwear, custom-fit backpacks paddling gear, cross-country skis and snowshoes. Mountains and Rivers also rents climbing shoes, snowshoes and cross country skis.

Mountains and Rivers believes in being an active partner in the community. Last year they partnered with Stone-Age Climbing Gym to bring the Banff Mountain Film Festival to Albuquerque. Mountains and Rivers generously donated the proceeds of that event to the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. Mountains and Rivers is also a fairly active supporter of KNME, the local PBS station. They are currently underwriting two showings of “Touching the Void,” a documentary about mountaineers in the Peruvian Andes.

Wildlands Painted! 2004 was another great success, with 12 paintings selling in one weekend. A very impressive show of over 80 oil paintings and pastels draped the walls of the 500 Second Street Performance Space and Trevor Lucero Studio. Celebrating its second year, Wildlands Painted! 2004 Invitational Show partnered Denver 10-emerging artists from Colorado-with guest artists from Colorado and New Mexico to help in the preservation of New Mexico’s wild landscapes.

This year’s artists visited the Rio Chama, Valle Vidal and Columbine Hondo to paint en plein air the beautiful landscapes NMWA is working to protect. An impressive list of established guest artists participated in the show including: Kim English, Alyce Frank, Libby Hart, William Hook, Rod Hubble, Phyllis Kapp, Louisa McElwaine, Mark Nelson, Rich Nichols, Randy Pijoan, Mary Silverwood, Don Ward, Kevin Weckbach and Doug West. The group of up-and-coming artists, Denver10, included: Jane Bunegar, Michelle Chrisman, Steve DeOrio, Evelyn Martinez, Melinda Morrison, Marcy Nicholas, and Peggy Venable.

The sale of each painting will help the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance in preserving the beautiful landscapes of the Land of Enchantment. Please see the back page of this issue for two of the pastels from Wildlands Painted! 2004. High quality, archival prints were made of the original pastels and are now available for a limited time through New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. Please contact Tisha Broska if you have any questions about Wildlands Painted! at 505-843-8696 or e-mail: tisha@nmwild.org.

A heartily thanks! to our Wildlands Painted! 2004 Sponsors:

A hearty thanks! to our Wildlands Painted! 2004 Sponsors: Art is OK Gallery Medicine Man Gallery Joyce Robins Gallery Prairie Dog Pals Second to Sun Soltari Gila Hike and Bike Whole Foods Market La Montanita Food Co-op

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Quality without compromise. You always get the highest quality with Classic Artist Oils. Painstakingly manufactured from the finest materials in a small factory, Classic Artist Oils offer the serious artist extraordinary oil paint with extremely heavy pigmentation, buttery texture, and consistent premium quality.

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Roadless Rule Update

On November 15, 2004, the public comment period for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule came to an end. In just a little over four months, Americans from across the country submitted an unprecedented 1.75 million comments in opposition to the Bush Administration’s repel of the Roadless Rule. Here in New Mexico, over 18,000 roadless comments were submitted. It is clear that Americans want the last 30% of our National Forests left alone. The only question is will the Bush Administration listen to the public or will they continue to pay attention to industry companies and lobbyists?

Thankfully, New Mexico has a governor who does listen to his constituency. Governor Bill Richardson has come out in favor of protecting the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. He is working with other western Governors to pressure the Bush Administration into keeping the Roadless Rule intact, and not wasting taxpayer money on implementing an erroneous new roadless policy. In a recent press interview, Governor Richardson said the record-breaking number of comments make clear that the administration cannot claim a mandate to overturn National Forest protections.

Quick Facts on the Roadless Rule:

- The Roadless Area Conservation rule protects 58.5 million acres of national forest lands (including 1.6 million in New Mexico) from most commercial logging and road building, and is the most sweeping land conservation measures in a generation.

- Roadless areas are a source of recreation for nature lovers and sportsmen; critical habitat for fish and wildlife, including more than 1,600 threatened or endangered plants and animal species; and clean water which protects more than 2,000 public watersheds and contributes to public drinking water for 60 million Americans.

- This balanced policy would allow new roads to be constructed in order to fight fires, ensure public safety and allow brush clearing to protect forest health.

- America’s national forests are already covered with 386,000 miles of roads -- enough to circle the earth 15 times, and nationally there is a backlog of road repairs that amounts to $8.4 billion.

To learn more about the Roadless Rule and to stay up-to-date, visit www.nmwild.org or www.ourforests.org

Ojito Wilderness Act Passes the House, Senate Reaches 11th Hour Agreement!

Monday, October 5 was a momentous day in New Mexico; it was the day that the US House of Representatives unanimously passed the Ojito Wilderness Act. Unanimous approval capped months of effort by Congressman Tom Udall and Congresswoman Heather Wilson to win support for what may become New Mexico’s first new wilderness area in seventeen years. The bill seeks to protect well over 20,000 acres of land northwest of Albuquerque, over 11,000 of which would receive full wilderness status, the strongest level of protection for federal public lands. Passage of the act in the House is a testament to the work our representatives put into this legislation and also reflects the broad bi-partisan coalition pressing for the bill and enormous grassroots support from members of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and other environmental and conservationist groups.

However, for the Ojito Wilderness Act to become law it still needs to pass the Senate where it had been stalled because of concerns by Senator Domenici over water rights language. On Friday November 19, agreement over water language was announced in a joint press release from Senators Bingaman and Domenici. Domenici called the compromise a “win-win for our state” and Bingaman stated that “With just a few days left in the session, it’s unclear if we can get this legislation enacted this year. But now that we have an agreement, we are closer than ever to designating Ojo a wilderness area.”

It now looks like this agreement was reached too late to pass Ojito through both houses with the same language. However, with a public agreement in place, the legislation is poised to move quickly through both bodies early next year. Please call our delegation and thank them for their efforts on behalf of Ojito and urge swift passage in the 109th Congress. With New Mexico’s first new stand alone wilderness in seventeen years so close to becoming a reality, we can’t let up now.

Senator Domenici 202-224-6621
Senator Bingaman 202-224-5521
Representative Wilson 202-225-6316
Representative Udall 202-225-6190

New Mexico’s Wild Places Need Your Help.
Make a tax-deductable donation today!
Call Roxanne Pacheco @ 505-843-8696

Our Natural Resource is Our Business

It is all about the water here at Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs. Geothermal, pure, healing water... That’s why we invested in our new waste water management facility -- one of the most advanced private systems in the state of New Mexico -- to protect our resources, our community and our future. From honoring the sacred waters, to creating our own recycling program, to the utilization of geothermal energy for heat, to implementing a profit sharing plan for staff, Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs is dedicated to sustainability.

Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs
800.222.9162
www.ojocalientespa.com
Tablers Take Wilderness to the Streets

by Nathan Newcomer

This past summer, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance took an aggressive approach to educating New Mexicans about Wilderness on the streets of Albuquerque and Las Cruces. Ten Tablers joined the staff of NMWA in late August to spread the message that Wilderness and Wilderness preservation are core values for all Americans to enjoy and defend.

Within two months, our Tablers raised over $3,000 and signed on over 100 new members! More importantly, they gathered hundreds of signatures, letters, and began a long lasting community presence in New Mexico’s two largest cities.

From the many Festivals around the state, to the universities, grocery stores, outdoors shops, and beyond, the NMWA Tablers have been a great addition to the work of wilderness preservation in New Mexico. With their combined outreach abilities, we have spread the word of wilderness in New Mexico to many communities that may have never known of our work.

“It’s an interesting way to meet the public,” said Albuquerque Tabler, Pete Courtney, whose tabling efforts in the north valley have paid off big. “Over all it’s been a positive reaction from the general populace. I am just so happy to be involved. I wish that we could be everywhere!”

“There have been a few rough people,” said Nathan Small, whose tabling across the greater Albuquerque area has made a tremendous impact in getting dozens of new members to the NMWA. “One guy was a logger who opposed the Roadless Rule. He said more roads meant better management, but that doesn’t bother me. That just means we have to work that much harder. The idea of wilderness is supported by 95% of the folks I talk to—and a lot of them put their money (and time) where their mouth is.”

It’s never been a more exciting time to educate the public on wilderness issues and it’s never been more critical than it is now. Look for the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance to continue to spread the good word of Wilderness across Albuquerque and Las Cruces. But also keep your eyes open for us next spring and summer when we will be making a push to table in Santa Fe, Taos, Silver City, Alamogordo and many other towns across the state.

See you all on the streets…!

If you are interested in tabling with the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, or if you would like to donate space for tabling, contact Nathan Newcomer in Albuquerque (505-843-8696, nathan@nmwild.org) or Trisha London in Las Cruces (505-527-9962, trishal@nmwild.org) to see how you can help take Wilderness to the streets!

Hello everyone, my name is Alberto A. Zavala and I’m from Juárez, México. I’m a lawyer graduated from the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, since October 2003. I started to work for the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance in August 2004 as an Organizer of the Hispanic Community. It’s a privilege for me to serve this great organization, because I can inform my community of the wealth that exists in our lands.

Often the Hispanic Community, La Raza, does not become involved in issues that affect us. It is not because it does not interest us, but primarily because we do not have access to pertinent information. The main barrier to many communities that may not become involved was the language. Rarely are environmental issues presented in our own language.

It is for this reason that I consider my work to be a privilege, because informing my community about Wilderness is very important. It is very rewarding to me to present to people the benefits and values that are obtained from the Wilderness, because few people know that the water they drink every day comes from these public lands.

At the moment my efforts are focused on protecting and restoring the wilderness in New Mexico and I do this from the heart, because it is not just to benefit me, it is to benefit everybody.

I have found to the Hispanic Community’s ability to participate is the language. Rarely are environmental issues presented in our own language.

Thank you for letting me be part of this great organization!

I am very grateful for the chance to have been a part of this great organization. My name is Alberto Zavala.

En estos momentos mis esfuerzos están enfocados en proteger y restaurar las Tierras Silvestres de Nuevo México y lo hago de corazón, pues yo se que no es un beneficio solo para mi, sino que es un beneficio para todos, incluyendo mis hijos, nietos y generaciones futuras. El trabajar para esta organización se ha convertido en una de las cosas más importantes para mi en estos momentos, pues me ha hecho recordar cosas que había dejado en el olvido, pues en muchas ocasiones nos concentramos solamente en un otro tipo de cosas y dejamos atrás unas de las más importantes LA TIERRA, ya que es la tierra que nos da todo para vivir: agua, aire limpio, comida, etc. etc. etc.

Gracias por dejarme ser parte de esta gran organización.

Alberto Zavala
In Memory of

Mary Wiper

by Nathan Newcomer

I remember the last time I saw Mary Wiper. We were having lunch at the Flying Star Café in Nob Hill, discussing strategy for the Roadless Rule. Mary ordered a salad and was diligently taking notes, which once they filled up her piece of paper, spilled over onto a napkin.

As always, Mary was busy thinking not only about what we were meeting for, but also about the hundreds of other things she always seemed to be working on. But after we finished lunch, she let me know that she was finally going on a vacation. I felt so happy for her. For so many of us working in the conservation movement, the big “V” word seems to be as elusive as getting Wilderness movement, the big “V” word seems to be as elusive as getting Wilderness.

Mary truly was a passionate woman, not only with her work, but also in her life. Many refer to her personality as “bubbly” and I think that hits it right on the mark. She genuinely cared about others and their plight, and possessed a bright sense of hope and guidance. At the candlelight vigil in the hotel, Sonny Weahkee of the Sage Council sang a prayer and spoke of the power of the lightning that took Mary’s life. I find it very fitting that a favorite quote of Mary’s, by George Bernard Shaw, echoed what Sonny said.

“Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got a hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.” - George Bernard Shaw

Mary’s splendid torch burned as bright as the lightning that carried her spirit to the heavens, and it will always be present with us every step of the way.

Join New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

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

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

P.O. Box 25464, Albuquerque, NM 87125

Lifetime Membership Rates Will Increase in 2005: This is your last chance to become a permanent member of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance for $250. You can also join the Friends of Wilderness monthly giving program. Contact Roxanne at 505/843-8696 to get set up.

By the next Monday, the phone call came that Mary had been struck and killed by lightning, while hiking with friends in Breckenridge, Colorado. The news was unbelievable and shocking for those of us who knew and worked with Mary on a regular basis.

A few days later, a public memorial service was held downtown at the La Posada hotel, and the room was packed with friends, co-workers, and many others. One person got up and remembered something about Mary, and another person got up, and then another, and another. We could all relate to and remember all the beautiful things that were being shared in that room.

Wiper was fi nally going on a vacation. I gave her a hug and told her to have fun.

That was on a Tuesday.

I gave her a hug and told her to have fun.

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Your purchases will help NMWA save New Mexico’s wildest places!

Check out the great gear now available through NMWA!

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

Hey WILD! Folk:
You can make an BIG impact in New Mexico’s future!

Donate Stock: Avoid capital gains taxes by donating part of your stocks in the name of Wilderness protection. You can deduct the value of the stock at the time of your donation as a charitable contribution. Contact Roxanne at 505/843-8696 for more information.

Legacy Gifts: You can extend your commitment to Wilderness far beyond your own lifetime by including New Mexico Wilderness Alliance in your will or estate plans.

NMWA THERMAL MUG $12.00
This attractive mug keeps your beverages hot for the winter and cold in the summer.

Wildlands Painted!
2004 Prints By Evelyn Martinez (Dawn over the Rio Chama and Canyonlands at Dusk) $210 each, includes shipping and handling. Available for a limited time only.

NMWA TEES $15.00
The NEW NMWA TEE-SHIRTS are in! Celebrating 40 Years of New Mexico Wilderness, these shirts also feature the new NMWA logo on the breast. Available in (01)White & (02)Natural. Sizes M-L-XL-XXL

Get the goods today! Use the order form on page 19, or call 505-843-8696 M-F 10a-4p

Jan Bartelstone
This image was taken from the top of Cabezon peak. Jan Bartelstone and Eyes of New Mexico have generously donated this image to the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. A limited number of original 24 x 36 inch prints are available from NMWA at a cost of $300. The photographs will be dry mounted on acid-free foam core. Please call to order.

Wildlands Painted! 2004 Prints By Evelyn Martinez (Dawn over the Rio Chama and Canyonlands at Dusk) $210 each, includes shipping and handling. Available for a limited time only.

New Mexico's Wilderness Areas: the Complete Guide
Bob Julyan and Tom Till $26.50

Hiking New Mexico
Laurence Parent $16.50

Hiking New Mexico's Gila Wilderness
Bill Cunningham and Polly Burke $21.50

Best Easy Day Hikes- Santa Fe
Linda & Katie Regnier $8.00

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Craig Martin $18.50

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2005 Enchanting New Mexico Calendar $12
12 Beautiful New Mexico landscapes by Artist Mary Silverwood.

Tins pecosas sagradas or sacred stones

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