When looking at the issues surrounding our National Forests, it is important to understand them from the perspective of wilderness. New Mexico, and more specifically the Gila, is often referred to as the birthplace of wilderness. It was in this magic range of forests, deep canyons, trout, wolves and (not so long ago) grizzlies, that Aldo Leopold found the inspiration to push the Forest Service for the creation of the nation’s first primitive area in 1924. This was the precursor to our modern wilderness areas. When President Johnson signed the Wilderness Act in 1964, 438,360 acres of the Gila National Forest became the first wilderness area of our current Wilderness Preservation System. Today the Gila Wilderness has been expanded to 559,324 acres. This area, along with the 207,208 acre Aldo Leopold Wilderness and thousands of acres of unprotected National Forest, is the vast tract of roadless land once described by Leopold as the “cream of creation.”

New Mexico as a whole contains some 9.3 million acres of National Forest land divided into 5 forests. They are the Carson, Santa Fe, Cibola, Gila, Lincoln and the Coronado. What comes as a surprise to many is that New Mexico’s National Forests have three times the amount of roads in them than the rest of New Mexico. Despite this statistic, there still remains as much as a 1.6

Aldo Leopold’s Imprint on American Wilderness Lives On

by Stephen Capra

THE BIRTHPLACE OF WILDERNESS

NEW MEXICO's NATIONAL FORESTS:

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW MEXICO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE

• NMWA Wildlands Conference - See Back Page
• Yard Sale Benefits NMWA - See Back Page
• Spanish Summaries in selected articles

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By Dave Foreman

In my 35 years as a conservationist, I have never beheld such a bleak and depressing situation as I see today. The evidence for my despair falls into three categories: the state of Nature, the power of anticonservationists, and appeasement and weakness within the conservation and environmental movements. I fear that on some level we must recognize that this state of affairs may be inevitable and impossible to turn around. That is the coward’s way out, though. The bleakness we face is all the more reason to stand tall for our values and to not flinch in the good fight. It is important for us to understand the parts and pieces of our predicament, so we might find ways to do better.

The State of Nature

I’ve just authored a book, *Rewilding North America*, which goes into considerable detail describing and trying to understand the Seven Ecological Wounds that drive the Sixth Great Extinction, which is the fundamental fact and problem in the world today. Around the world, direct killing of wildlife, habitat destruction, habitat fragmentation, loss of ecological processes, invasion by exotic species and diseases, ecosystem pollution, and catastrophic climate change are worsening. We six-and-a-half-billion too-clever apes are solely to blame. Despite impressive successes here and there, the overall state of Nature continues to decline. This is simple reality, despite the scolding we hear not to be doom-and-gloomers.

Power of the Anticonservationists

In the United States, the federal government has become the sworn enemy of conservation.

Not only has the radical-right Presidency and Congress stopped any progress in the conservation and restoration of Nature, they are dedicated to overthrowing the twentieth century’s legacy of conservation and environmental policy and programs. They are unabashedly trying to go back to the unfettered, uncaring era of the robber barons in the late nineteenth century. This revolution is both philosophical and practical. Bad as this is, the radical-right is also dedicated to shredding science, particularly biology, and time-traveling back to before the Enlightenment.

While the United States is an extraordinary political case, elsewhere some of the supposedly most civilized nations on the planet, such as Canada, Norway, and Japan, are again waging nineteenth-century crusades against wild Nature: frontier-forest mining, slaughter of troublesome animals (such as seals, wolves, bears), and commercial whaling, just for starters. Japanese, European, Chinese, and American businesses are looting the last wild places for timber, pulp, wildlife, minerals, and oil, opening up such places to further habitat destruction and bushmeat hunting by local people.

Although the radical-right control of the U.S. Presidency and Congress was gained by a very small margin in 2004 (no mandate), it is backed by powerful and popular forces and by a shocking descent into prescientific irrationality by large sections of the public.

Appeasement and Weakness in the Conservation and Environmental Movements

The efforts to protect wild Nature and to clean up pollution face internal subversion from the right and left that leads to deep compromises not only on issues but also on fundamental principles. We can stuff these calls to compromise into several boxes, including sustainable
development, resourcism, Nature deconstruction, politically correct progressivism, and anthropocentric environmentalism.

First, some brief definitions: conservation is the movement to protect and restore wildlands and wildlife (Nature for its own sake); resourcism or resource conservation is the resource extraction ideology of the U.S. Forest Service and other agencies (multiple-use/sustained yield); environmentalism is the campaign to clean up pollution for human health and make cities livable.

The radical right has been disciplined about thinking and acting for the long term; we have failed in part because we do not have a long-term strategy for which we stick.

Internationally since the 1980s, conservation efforts to protect wildlands and habitat by means of national parks, game reserves, and other protected areas have been severely compromised as financial-agency interests and even some top international conservation groups have shifted to promoting so-called sustainable development and community-based conservation. Although these approaches are sometimes sound conservation tactics, in practice they have elbowed Nature into second place. This establishment undercutting of Nature conservation has been joined by the leftist passion of some anthropologists and other social engineers to reject protected areas in favor of indigenous extractive reserves. Shockingly, sustainable development is coming close to dominating the pages even of publications about conservation biology, and gains more and more adherents in resource management graduate schools and large “conservation” schools and large “conservation” programs.

We can also see a shift in the United States from conservation to resourcism among several prominent and influential entities. Once the preeminent conserver of biological diversity, the Nature Conservancy has been steadily moving toward a resourcist approach. They talk now of “working landscapes,” a fancy euphemism for logging and livestock grazing, and demand that their employees talk about people instead of Nature. High County News, once a feisty voice for grassroots conservationists in the West, has steadily turned into a voice for resourcism: not the preservation of wilderness but the preservation of happy little resource-extraction communities, and for negotiated settlements between conservationists and resource-extraction industries, which usually favor industry.

Some consultants, foundations, and political realists are urging grassroots wilderness groups to compromise in order to pass wilderness legislation that may or may not adequately protect existing wilderness. This encouragement of appeasement is based on a desire to pass bills, and an overreaction to the narrow victory of the radical right in the 2004 election. Another source for this push to compromise is the fuzzyheaded wish that if people only talk together, everything can be worked out.

Several bright young men have gained a disturbing amount of attention with their recent speeches about the “death” of environmentalism. Insofar as they consider Nature protection at all, they demand that conservationists drop their priorities to focus on social justice and other anthropocentric progressive causes. Overall, they call on environmental organizations to essentially go out of business and just become part of the progressive wing within the Democratic Party. The overwhelming identification of environmentalism with the progressive movement and the Democratic Party is a key reason that it lacks credibility with much of the American public.

Just as there has been a disturbing shift in attitudes among large segments of the American public, so have there been problematic changes among members of the conservation public. To be blunt, many of the employees and activists with conservation groups are ignorant of our history and have not read the classic books of conservation. There is an appalling lack of intellectual curiosity in the movement. On the whole, the radical right and grassroots anticonservationists both read and think more than do conservationists and environmentalists. As far as outdoor recreation goes, young people, who once would have been hikers and backpackers, now seek thrills on mountain bikes and thus cut themselves off from experiencing Nature and from having self-interest in protecting roadless areas. I don’t see kids out messing around in little wild patches; they’re inside, plugged in to a virtual reality.

These are trends. Of course there are exceptions. Dwelling on the exceptions, though, keeps us from doing something about the real problems. I’m not doing “nuance” here. This sober, unapologetic cataloging of the array of problems Nature conservationists face is, I am convinced, the first step in development.

We also need to recognize that there is a dearth of births and that developed nations face economic collapse because of fewer young people. We are essentially silent in response to this conumopia madness. Similarly, the conservation and environmental movements in general shy away from acknowledging the reality of human-caused mass extinction. If we don’t even clearly state the problem, how can we do anything about it?
The Blue Range Wilderness

The Blue Range Wilderness is located entirely within the State of New Mexico in the Blue Range Mountains approximately 65 miles northwest of Silver City in the Gila National Forest.

The apparently small size of the Blue Range Wilderness is deceptive. It may appear dwarfed in comparison to the 559,324 acre Gila Wilderness nearby, but at 29,646 acres it still is larger than fourteen other New Mexico Wilderness areas. More importantly, it’s an integral appendage of the 179,906 acre Blue Range Primitive Area across the border in Arizona’s Apache National Forest. Indeed, the New Mexico portion of the Blue Range wasn’t formally designated wilderness until 1980 with the New Mexico Wilderness Act. Taken together, the primitive area and the wilderness constitute a wild area of 209,652 acres, slightly larger than the vast Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

This “appendage” quality also helps explain why the Blue Range wilderness complex is far less well known in New Mexico than in Arizona, even among New Mexico hikers. Here, the Blue Range Wilderness is usually overshadowed by the nearby Gila Wilderness, despite the two being similar in character: forested mountains and hills etched by numerous drainages and deep canyons. But the Blue Range Wilderness has the distinction of including, in its southwest section, the Mogollon (pronounced muggle-YONE) Rim, the important escarpment made famous as the Tonto Rim in the western novels of Zane Grey. The Blue Range Wilderness, like the Gila Wilderness, is good habitat for deer, elk, black bear, and mountain lions. Prehistoric humans found it appealing country as well and likely drew few distinctions between the two areas. In both areas they left reminders of their presence in the form of abandoned pit houses and pueblos. The Blue Range, however, has fewer trails and is more primitive than the Gila Wilderness.

The primary access to the Blue Range Wilderness is Forest Road 232, a graded dirt road heading west from Highway 180 southwest of Reserve and south of Luna. The road skirts the northern boundary of the wilderness. Most visitor activity in the Blue Range Wilderness begins at Pueblo Park Campground, 5.6 miles from Highway 180. Situated beneath tall ponderosa pines, the campground is open free of charge April through November 30. Although Pueblo Creek is nearby, it’s often dry, and there’s no potable water at the campground. The campground does have privies, however, built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The campground attracts rockhounds because of nearby deposits of bytownite, a semi-precious stone used in jewelry.

But while the Blue Range Wilderness has largely been ignored or overlooked by hikers and campers, the reintroduction of Mexican wolves into the Blue Range Primitive Area just over the border in Arizona may change things. If you’re lucky you might hear the howl of wolves in the Blue Range, the ultimate cachet of wilderness.

Also at the campground you’ll find a 1.5-mile interpretive trail whose loop includes historic and prehistoric settlement sites. While the Blue Range certainly was visited by hunter-gatherers thousands of years ago, more permanent settlements occurred 1,500 years ago when people of the Mogollon Culture began building pit houses. Later, they used stone and mortar to build their dwellings above ground. If you’re planning to hike in the Blue Range Wilderness, take time to walk the interpretive trail because it will sensitize you to the kind of artifacts you’re likely to encounter in the back country.

The Pueblo Park Campground is the trailhead for the WS Mountain Trail, which bisects the wilderness and is the main trunk for other wilderness trails. Dependable, potable water is lacking along the route; your chance of encountering other hikers is small.

The Fast FACTS

- **Size:** 29,646 acres  **Established in:** 1939
- **Elevations:** 5,000 to 8,827 feet at Whiterocks Mountain
- **Miles of trails:** 30
- **Ecosystems:** Ponderosa Pine, pinon-juniper, oak, willow, and riparian vegetation
- **Best Season:** Spring, fall
The air was cool; the soil wet, and the desert alive with radiant flowers, billowing clouds and an inescapable breath of peaceful solitude. Yucca forests, scattered and dense, waving pink and white brushes atop prickly heads, stood mightily on the desert floor like an army of unwavering defenders. In the distance, the volcanic Correnudas Mountains sparked on the horizon and invited the curious to search their rugged flanks and discover untold stories from generations long past. This was the essence of Spring 2005 in New Mexico’s Otero Mesa.

Traveling from Taos, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Alamogordo, Silver City and Las Cruces, a group of 60 New Mexicans descended on Otero Mesa to witness and experience the awe inspiring beauty and magic of this wild Chihuahuan Desert grassland.

For the first time ever, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance lead a petroglyph documentation effort in Otero Mesa. Many of the thousands of rock art petroglyph sites on Alamo Mountain were thoroughly documented using the system developed by the Rock Art Field School of the Archaeological Society of New Mexico. Groups of four to five people explored the western slopes of Alamo Mountain, searching for petroglyph panels. Upon discovering a panel, the group proceeded through three important steps:

1) The petroglyphs coordinates were mapped using a GPS unit to ensure the proper location of the site.

2) A description of the rock art, including their height and width, and the condition of each petroglyph were written down.

3) Multiple photographs were taken of each individual petroglyph, and then a rough sketch of the panel was drawn on the Photograph Data Sheet.

Combined, these three steps fulfill the Archaeological Society of New Mexico’s requirements for documentation and submission into the state archives, where upon the sites can be monitored and protected.

Throughout the course of one day, five groups documented 60 different petroglyph sites, many of which contained 10 to 20 individual drawings.

Many of the illustrations found on Alamo Mountain belong to the Mogollon people who lived in the area between about 900 and 1400 AD. A lot of the petroglyphs were very abstract, perhaps indicating maps, but there were also many glyphs that resembled people, animals, and religious symbols.

The petroglyph documentation was a tremendous success and is only the beginning of our efforts to document and record more of the archeological and cultural sites in Otero Mesa. Stay tuned for more outings of this nature in the future.

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance Leads First Ever Petroglyph Outing to Otero Mesa

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance Guía Excursión en busca de Geroglíficos en Otero Mesa.

El aire estaba fresco y el desierto vivo con flores radiantes, y el ineludible aliento de pazica soledad, un grupo de alrededor de 60 Nuevo Mexicanos de atraves del Estado, decendieron a Otero Mesa para atestiguar y experi mentar la magia del asombro de este prado salvaje del Desierto Chihuahuense. Este fue la primer documentación de geroglíficos guiada por New Mexico Wilderness Alliance para registrar los millares de arte en las rocas en la Montaña Alamo. 60 diversos sitios del geroglíficos fueron documentados, muchos que contenían de 10 a 20 dibujos individuales. La documentación detallada incluyó localizar el lugar en un mapa las coordenadas del geroglífico con una unidad GPS, fotografías múltiples y el bosquejo áspero de cada geroglífico. Estos pasos satisficieron los requerimientos de la Sociedad Arqueológica de Nuevo México para la entrada en los archi vos del estado, permitiendo que ahora estos sitios sean protegidos y supervisados. Muchas de las ilustraciones pertenecen a la gente de Mogollon que vivió probablemente en el area entre los años 900 y 1400 DC. La documen tación fue un enorme éxito y es solamente el principio de nuestros esfuerzos de documen tar y de registrar más de los sitios arqueológicos y culturales en Otero Mesa.
GOVERNOR RICHARDSON SIGNS OFF-ROAD VEHICLE BILL!

The New Mexico Off-highway Motor Vehicle Act was signed into law on April 7, 2005 after a long, hard-fought battle. It took two years to pass this common-sense bill that will finally begin to address the exploding ORV problem we have here in New Mexico and throughout the West. Growing concerns over safety, harm and nuisance to wildlife and private property, and loss of quiet hiking areas brought together a coalition of physicians, property advocates, conservationists. This coalition worked persistently to pass a bill despite opposition from ORV groups lead by the NM Off-highway Vehicle Association.

To use public roads, ORV users will now be required to register their vehicles and pay an annual fee. The fees generated will be used for safety training programs, development of designated ORV courses on state lands, and for law enforcement. Parents must supervise users under 18. Those under 18 will be required to take the safety course and to wear a helmet and eye protection; those under age 10 must use an age/size appropriate machine. Property owners are protected from lawsuits from renegades who hurt themselves on their land. Hunting and retrieving game is no longer allowed.

Public lands agencies are expected to adopt the state’s new law. Non-motorized users of public lands will be happy to know it is now illegal for ORVs to go over 10 mph within 200 feet of any hiker, bicyclist, equestrian, or occupied dwelling. The new rule also requires ORVs to have spark arresters. Another part of the rule states that ORVs may not exceed 96 decibels of noise. Unfortunately, this threshold is still too high.

Critical to the future of this bill is its creation of a 24-member board that will develop guidelines for the safety-training program and enforcement. NMWA will stay involved in this issue to help ensure the board does the right thing when it comes to protecting wild lands. Equally important is involvement from you. When you encounter problems with ORVs on public lands, contact the local land management agency and let them know. Or contact us here at NMWA and we will see what we can do. Only through persistence will the menace of ORVs be brought under proper control.

To see the bill in its final form, visit www.supportatregs.org.

An Lorenzo Canyon is located west of I-25 along the southern boundary of the Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge about 10 miles north of Socorro. It is part of the Polvadera Mountain unit that NMWA identified in our BLM Wilderness Inventory. During the Inventory we documented numerous off-road vehicle (ORV) abuses and offered to help BLM manage this area. San Lorenzo Canyon is an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), designated as such for its archeological, historical, and scenic values. Vehicles are limited to existing roads and ORVs clearly were creating new routes and compromising the values of the ACEC. Mike Bilbo of the Socorro BLM office agreed to work with us on the ORV problem. We scouted the area, developed a plan, and set April 9th as the project date.

Over the past year, NMWA has connected with Volunteers for the Outdoors and the Albuquerque Wildlife Federation. With a mutual goal of working at the ground level to improve our public lands, it was a natural union. The volunteers that came on behalf of VFO and AWF were critical to making the San Lorenzo project a success. A total of 30 volunteers were involved.

Using rakes, rocks, and natural debris, ORV offshoots were blocked and masked. The previous year BLM had done some canyon restoration by cutting down tamarisk (salt cedar). The dead trees and limbs were hauled to the ORV abuse sites and scattered along trails to make them look less ‘route-like’. In some places, pipe was cemented or pounded in to block travel in arroyos.

No violation of our work has been noted in follow-up monitoring. Mike Bilbo is working with the ORV community to educate them about where they can go and what areas are off limits because of resource issues. This is a sensible approach to working with those that choose ORV recreation. Projects like this help reinforce his efforts.

Volunteer projects are a fun and rewarding way to get involved in public lands protection. See page 13 for a list of projects we will be working on through October. For more information, contact Michael Scialdone at 843-8696 or scial@nmvfo.org. You can check out projects that VFO is working on at www.nmvfo.org.

VOLUNTEERS WORK TO PROTECT SAN LORENZO CANYON!

Volunteers work to protect San Lorenzo Canyon.

For more information, contact Michael Scialdone at 843-8696 or scial@nmvfo.org.
You have heard it promised over the last year: Governor Richardson will do everything in his power to protect Otero Mesa from oil and gas drilling. This past Earth Day, at the UNM campus in Albuquerque, the Governor fulfilled his promise by filing a lawsuit against the Federal Government to protect Otero Mesa. The Governor once again is providing the leadership on conservation issues that is so sorely lacking in the West and is crucial given the current Administration. He has promised us to never back down on Otero Mesa and will use all his powers to prevent reckless development of the grasslands.

“I am going to do everything I can to put rules in place to adversely affect their development -- everything the state can possibly do to slow this down,” said Richardson. “There are many treasures at Otero Mesa, but we are absolutely concerned about the contamination of groundwater.”

The State’s lawsuit asks the court to stop the BLM’s plan to open the entire Otero Mesa area to oil and gas drilling. If successful, the lawsuit could force the agency to accept Richardson’s proposal, which would allow some drilling but make 75 percent of the mesa off-limits to exploration and create a 640,000-acre National Conservation Area.

State Attorney General, Patricia Madrid announced the lawsuit by saying, “I can’t think of a more appropriate day to file a lawsuit against the Bush administration and the Bureau of Land Management.”

The lawsuit, which was filed in U.S. District Court in Santa Fe, was first assigned to Senior U.S. District Judge James A. Parker, the same judge who in 2002 ruled in favor of environmentalists in a landmark case over protections for the endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow. But in mid-May the Judge recused himself from the case due to relationships his family has with the oil and gas industry.

Nonetheless, it was a good day for Otero Mesa and we are one step closer to stopping the destruction of this wild grassland.

“We are going to win to protect this land,” the governor said. “We can do better at managing federal lands. We can do better at protecting the state’s interests and better at meeting our energy needs.”

In the coming weeks, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and a coalition of other groups will follow the Governor and file another lawsuit to stop oil and gas development from occurring on this internationally significant grassland. The bottom line remains, we will never stop fighting to protect America’s wildest grassland.

Where does the distinction between a red (Republican) and a blue (Democrat) state end, and common ground begin? After four weeks on the road I believe the answer lies within the ground itself. Woody Guthrie put it best, singing the classic song “This land is your land, this land is my land.” He should’ve written the Bureau of Land Management’s manual. He understood the essential concept behind America’s public lands: equal ownership by all. Woody would be a welcome voice at BLM headquarters in Washington these days, where some continue to sing the stale song of “drill, drill, drill” as the only way to solve America’s energy problems.

Until now, Otero Mesa has been strictly a New Mexico issue. Local ranchers advocating for its protection trace their roots to a time when New Mexico was still a territory. Its huge drinking water aquifer is important to all New Mexicans. Accordingly, New Mexicans, led by Governor Richardson, have rallied against full-scale oil and gas development of this wild country.

It’s status as public land however, combined with the fact that irresponsible oil and gas policies throughout the West continue to push Americans further from energy security, make Otero Mesa a national issue.

For these reasons, we took Otero Mesa on the road. Through a series of presentations stretched across seven states, I showed the Otero Mesa DVD, presented the campaign for this grassland, and even gave folks a taste of New Mexico with salsa from Sadie’s Restaurant in Albuquerque.

Attendees saw pronghorn thigh high in native black gramma grass, discussed Otero Mesa’s huge water resource, and saw first hand the drilling industry’s dirty side. Waste pits, corroded storage tanks, and mile after mile of oil derrick brought strong reactions. “You mean that kind of stuff actually happens”, one man asked after seeing the ground turned black by leaking “product”.

I visited Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. All but Maryland and Pennsylvania voted for George Bush in the last election. Judging from the reaction they gave the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, signing our petition, purchasing DVD’s and becoming members, there are many who do not support his record of promoting poorly regulated oil and gas drilling.
Native Plants Lend More Than Beauty to the Landscape

By Trisha London

In April, three chapters of the New Mexico Native Plant Society joined NMWA at Otero Mesa to enjoy the spectacle of life and beauty brought forth by high rainfall in the desert landscape. Wildflowers sweeping the grasslands along the northern route into Otero Mesa, were brilliant blue, yellow and salmon! The Native Plant Society group from the Gila, El Paso and Otero Chapters came to explore the grasslands of Otero Mesa, a place they have heard so much about, but never visited. Upon arriving, some commented on the expansiveness of the large landscape. Reflecting upon what it meant to keep this wildness in our world, many wrote their thoughts in a journal to be submitted to our congressional delegation.

Donna Stevens, President of the Gila Chapter of the Native Plant Society said, "In about 4 hours, several of us saw and recorded forty species of plants. There were at least twenty species we couldn’t identify. I’ve never seen such an open landscape, so unpopulated, so beautiful."

In discovering which plants make Otero Mesa home, it was interesting to find several "medicinal" plants. Though modern science views plant medicine as unsophisticated, knowing and using wild plant foods and medicines has been our historical reality far longer than modern medicine. One plant we found is in the Barberry family, Mahonia algerita. According to herbalist Michael Moore, barberry is one of the most beneficial medicinal plants of the West—used for lowering fevers, inflammatory conditions, as an antibacterial skin wash, and as a liver stimulant and blood purifier.

More interesting still, is seeing how wild plants are "medicine" for the entire ecosystem. According to herbalist Stephen Buhner, in The Lost Language of Plants, "plants exist not for themselves alone; they create and maintain the community of life on Earth." On example of this is how insect pollinators interact with wild plants.

In Otero Mesa we see the symbiotic relationship between the Soapweed yucca (Yucca elata) and the yucca moths (Tegeticula yuccasella). The pollination of the yucca flowers and development of the fruit are the result of an insect collecting pollen with a mouth modified by nature for the task. In turn the yucca produce seed and the moth progeny have food upon hatching. The hundred or so seeds not consumed by the larvae continue to ripen, enough to guarantee the existence of the yucca. Since most yucca flowers are incapable of self-pollination as the anthers and stigma would never touch, without the intervention of this particular moth the plants would have perished eons ago.

It's here, at this unseen, microscopic level that wildness sustains itself and a complexity of relationships continue to make nature the wild, beautiful and mysterious place it is. The open spaces and wild character of Otero Mesa are reason enough to protect it. As the diversity of native flora and fauna reveal, wild nature still flourishes in this desert grassland, and makes it even more critical to fight for!

Because groups like the Native Plant Society enhance our awareness of plants in special places, we can more fully appreciate what irreplaceable treasures they are. From desert grasslands to Arctic Tundra, all landscapes lend crucial significance to our lives. With Otero Mesa, the Arctic Wildlife Refuge, Valle Vidal and other still-wild places, we have a chance to recover some ancient wisdom, meaning and wild mystery for ourselves and for those who follow. To stand for these last wild places while we still can, go to www.oteromesa.org or www.nmwild.org.

Las Plantas Nativas dejan mas que Belleza a lo Prados

En Abril, las subdivisiónes de Gila, El Paso y Otero de la Sociedad de Plantas Nativas de Nuevo Mexico se unieron a NMWA en Otero Mesa para disfrutar el espectáculo de vida resultante de la lluvia en los prados desérticos. El grupo registro 40 especies de plantas nativas en la Montaña Alamo, incluyendo algunas "medicinales". Las Sociedades de Plantas Nativas realizan nuestra apreciación de los tesoros irremplazables que hay en nuestro prados silvestres. Desde los prados deserticos hasta la Tundra del Artico, todos los prados dejan un significado crucial a nuestras vidas, y con Otero Mesa, el Refugio Artico y Valle Vidal, tenemos una oportunidad de recuperar algún sentido y misteio salvaje para nosotros mismos y aquellos que siguen—Para tener una postura poer estos ultimos lugares, vaya a www.oteromesa.org.
million acres of roadless lands that await protection.

During the Clinton Administration an effort was made to protect the remaining roadless lands in our National Forests nationwide. The so-called "Roadless Rule" was three years in the making, and subject to millions of comments and over 600 nationwide public hearings. The comments reflected a strong desire to protect the nation's remaining 58.5 million acres of roadless lands, preserving crucial headwaters, wildlife, hunting and recreational values. The comments also made the plea to stop the incredible taxpayer waste associated with logging on public lands and to eliminate the backlog of maintenance to National Forest roads (currently estimated at $10 billion).

Today, the Bush Administration continues their efforts to crush the conservation movement and reward multinational corporations that profit from clear-cutting ancient forests, strangling free-flowing rivers and wild salmon and destroying some of the last strongholds of the grizzly bear. This modern day extirpation is being conducted by Mark Rey, the former Vice-President of Forest Resources for the American Forest and Paper Association and the one time chief lobbyist for pro-logging Senator Larry Craig of Idaho. Mr. Rey, a long-time proponent for maximum timber harvests, now controls the Forest Service. He is just one of a long list of Bush appointees who use their position to push the right wing, anti-environmental crusade, leaving the bipartisanism of past conservation issues in the dust.

RARE

Back in the early 1970's a few years after the creation of the Wilderness Act, many conservationists were busy looking to include new lands into the Wilderness System. Because the Wilderness Act did not require the Forest Service to inventory lands for wilderness consideration (other than extant Primitive Areas and adjacent lands) nothing was stopping the creation of additional Forest Service wilderness. Nothing except the old school Forest Service mentality that forests were a resource and wilderness an impediment to personal advancement in the agency.

Things began to change when Clif Merritt and Cecil Garland (a hardware store owner from Lincoln, Montana) began fighting a proposal to log Montana's Lincoln-Scapegoat area. While there was some agency support to protect the area, the bottom line was "develop it." But with a strong grassroots effort, the Lincoln-Scapegoat was protected in 1972 as the first de facto wilderness after the passage of the Wilderness Act. This opened the door to more wilderness across the country.

With citizens and so-called "wildcat wilderness proposals" from environmentalists proposing new wilderness areas, the Forest Service felt the only way to gain control of the issue was to initiate their own inventory of wilderness quality lands. This, plus President Nixon's desire to protect our nation's wilderness values, created the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) in 1971-72. But as the Forest Service moved forward it was clear that the inventory they were undertaking was both poorly conceived and, to an extent, dishonest. The process was to evaluate roadless lands as potential wilderness using what was referred to as a Quality Index (QI) rating system. One of the most important qualifications was that the larger the roadless area, the higher the QI rating and thus the more likely it would be recommended for wilderness protection. However, the Forest Service often divided large contiguous roadless units into smaller separate units, thus lowering their QI rating.

In New Mexico, areas such as Chama Canyon and San Francisco Canyon were never inventoried. Out of 56 million acres surveyed, only 12.3 million--mostly rock and ice acres--were recommended for further study. The rest would be open to logging. Due in part to legal challenges brought by the Sierra Club (Sierra Club v. Butz), RARE faded and ultimately failed.

RARE II

By 1977, the Forest Service was under increasing pressure to protect our National Forests. Conservationists had gone to Congress with the Endangered American Wilderness Act in 1976 and political pressure increased when President Jimmy Carter took office in 1977. Once again the Forest Service turned to a forest inventory, this time referred to as RARE II. While the inventory process was better, the results were once again skewed and biased against wilderness. Conservationists were hoping to see 80 million acres of roadless National Forest protected.

In the end, the agency only saw fit to recommend 15 million acres. By 1979, the Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club realized that the RARE II Final Environmental Impact Statement was inadequate and thereby open to a court challenge, but they were concerned about potential political repercussions. In the meantime, the state of California stepped in and sued to prevent development in a select list of roadless areas in California. The Federal District Court agreed with California and prohibited the Forest Service from destroying the wilderness values of the cited roadless areas without an adequate environmental impact statement. Earth First and the Oregon Natural Resources Council sued the Forest Service in 1983 on identical grounds to protect Oregon's North Kalmiopsis roadless area. That suit extended the California decision to all RARE II areas nationally.

In New Mexico, of 2,137,776 acres considered in RARE II, little more than 609,000 acres protected, there remains a clear bias towards development and extraction at the expense of conservation. Some activities in our forests are clearly more sustainable than others. In the past four years, vast tracts of once pristine areas of the Carson National Forest have been opened to full-scale oil and gas development. In the Coronado, illegal immigration has cut new trails and left trash in wild country shared by jaguars. In the Gila, the Forest Service continues to look at new

New Mexico National Forests

From the high alpine country of Wheeler Peak, to the urban interface wilderness of the Sandias, from the wild and remote Blue Range to what Dave Forman refers to as the Center of his Universe, (McKenna Park in the Gila Wilderness) New Mexico's National Forests cover a diverse landscape. They also provide crucial habitat for wildlife, water for communities, medicinal plants, clean air, recreational opportunities, firewood, oil and gas, and grazing for cattle. Such multiple use is at the core of the Forest Service's mission. Yet, with 9.3 million acres in the New Mexico portion of the system and only 609,000 acres protected, there remains a clear bias towards development and extraction at the expense of conservation. Some activities in our forests are clearly more sustainable than others. In the past four years, vast tracts of once pristine areas of the Carson National Forest have been opened to full-scale oil and gas development. In the Coronado, illegal immigration has cut new trails and left trash in wild country shared by jaguars. In the Gila, the Forest Service continues to look at new

continued on next page
logging opportunities. In 1997, logging in New Mexico forests cost taxpayers some $717,000 and represented just 0.3% of all jobs in our state.

### Off-Road Vehicles

In all areas of our National Forests the cancer of off-road vehicle abuse continues to degrade landscapes, cause serious erosion problems, terrorize wildlife and degrade water quality. In April 2003, Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth identified unmanaged off-road vehicles (ORV) use as one of the four greatest threats to America’s National Forests, along with fire, invasive species and habitat fragmentation. Since then the Forest Service has proposed new national regulations governing the appropriate use of dirt bikes, all-terrain vehicles (ATV’s) and other off-road vehicles within the entire National Forest system, including National Grasslands. In many National Forests, off-road vehicles are allowed to go anywhere. In the case of the Lewis and Clark National Forest in Montana, more than one thousand unplanned roads have been created by off-road enthusiasts, covering almost 650 miles. The Forest Service reports that more than 273,000 miles of roads and other routes are open to off-road vehicles. In some areas literally millions of acres are open to these vehicles. ORV use has been allowed to dominate the landscape at the expense of every other activity. This level of access is stealing perhaps the forest’s most precious gift—solitude.

The proposed rules governing ORV use in our forests would prohibit cross-country motorized travel across entire forests and limit ATV and dirt bike use to existing roads and specifically designated routes. In this process, the Forest Service will not have to consider any unauthorized renegade routes prior to implementing the new ORV rules. While the Forest Service has made a positive first step in calling for these actions, the fact remains that the proposed rules do not include a time frame for completing the process or for studying and designating roads and routes for ATVs. Perhaps the most glaring problem is that there are simply not enough people on the ground in the forests to monitor and enforce any new regulations.

### Current Roadless Rule

Within hours of being sworn into office, President Bush put a freeze on President Clinton’s “Roadless Rule.” This rule generated over 1.7 million comments, five times more than any other in the federal rule making process. Since that time, the Administration has carefully and methodically slowed the process down and opened a new round of comments aimed at repealing the Roadless Rule. While the second round of comments only confirmed the public’s desire to protect our unroaded forests, the comments were completely ignored. Now vast tracts of the country’s 58.5 million roadless acres are in question.

The question is painfully evident in Idaho and Alaska, where the largest roadless areas exist. In the case of Alaska, the Tongass is the largest National Forest in the system with 17 million acres and almost 9 million roadless acres. Today, over 4,650 miles of roads criss-cross its borders. Taxpayers are currently forking over $33 million a year to subsidize logging of this incredible temperate rain forest, where 400-year old trees are sold on the open market for as little as five dollars an acre. This in a landscape where the densest populations of grizzly bears, wolves, bald eagles and Stika deer still roam freely. With the existing infrastructure of roads in the Tongass, logging companies already have access to more than 10 billion board feet of timber—enough to fill 222 million logging trucks. Placed back to back, they could line up from the earth to the moon and back four times. Yet for George Bush, Mark Rey and their friends at Boise Cascade, it’s simply not enough.

With the abandonment of the Roadless Rule the Administration has come up with a new formula to protect the remaining lands. At least in theory. It is called a state petition process. It will be costly and complex, with the burden on the state government not the federal government. The Governor of any state with National Forest inventoried roadless areas can petition the Secretary of Agriculture to adopt regulations for management of roadless areas in the state. Petitions must be submitted within 18 months after the rule is finalized. Second, if the Secretary accepts the Governor’s petition, the Forest Service would initiate a state-specific rule making. Clearly, such a process guarantees no protection. The petition could simply be rejected. Even if it is accepted, the outcome of the final rule making is still in the hands of the current Administration. In the case of New Mexico, Governor Richardson will fight hard to protect every single acre of roadless National Forest. NMWA will continue to work with the Governor on this issue and continue to inventory our National Forests to make sure every possible acre is protected.

We’ve come a long way from the days when Aldo Leopold put the concept of wilderness into the American psyche. We’ve come from 1964 and the signing of the Wilderness Act. From a time when wildlife and land had real meaning to politicians, who worked together to embrace the concept of preservation. From a time when conservationists were mostly volunteers, with a personal connection to place, determination and a strong sense that our mission was just. A time before focus groups, polling and experts that “keep us on message.” Fortunately, some of our National Forests have changed very little from those times. Some have lost more trees, or wolves, but a few are more mature and wildlife is coming home. The forests still draw us in and refresh our spirit, cool us on a hot summer day and warm us with an evening fire. Wildlife still makes us feel young and wildflowers still turn a spring meadow into magic. There is so much we are blessed with. But as fate would have it, we have been dealt an Administration and a President that ignore history and cannot see or feel the beauty that is found in our National Forests.

We have a lot to lose in New Mexico and across the West if we stay quiet, if we refuse to fight. Jaguars cannot protest, nor can 400 year old trees vote. We can—and we must! Our forests are our future; our agenda is their protection. NMWA is committed to the protection of every roadless acre in our National Forests and the proactive creation of wilderness for these areas. Leopold Called the Gila “The Cream of Creation.” It remains our responsibility to see that future Leopolds can continue to rejoice in the wonder of our forests, and perhaps one day soon, we can welcome the grizzly back to its New Mexico home.
New Mexico's National Forests

Legend

- Interstate Highways

National Forest Boundary - 10,480,576, Including National Grasslands
Designated Wilderness - 1,627,827; 1,389,089 on National Forest Land
Wilderness Study Areas - 109,420
RARE II - 1,705,423
Unroaded Areas* - 1,705,423

*NM GIS Analysis of roadless areas greater than 5,000 acres. Based on roads information from each National Forest District. Excludes Coronado National Forest.
Tools of An Effective Advocate

by Jeff Steinborn

If you are reading this article right now, my guess is you are a person who is actively seeking change, or policies or programs that create a better world for us all to live in. While many of us want change on some level, we often don’t know how as individuals to achieve this, and be effective.

Having spent my adult life as an advocate, advisor to two Members of Congress, and now as the Southern Director for NMWA, I have developed several tools and techniques into my advocacy that have been vital to the success of my work. Many times I have been the sole advocate for an issue, and was able to create, modify, and raise the profile of an important program. You can too!

Here are some of the vital tools of an effective advocate. Utilize all of them, and you will be a force to be reckoned with.

1. Do your research and learn your stuff – If it’s one lesson I’ve learned, its to do the necessary research to know the real facts and details of an issue as well or better than the people you will have to work with to change the problem. Knowing any less will allow you to get sidetracked (usually by a decision maker who opposes your goal) or miss finding a real solution to the problem. This research often includes contacting the key decision makers who would make such decisions and ask them as many questions as needed to help you understand what is really happening and what is possible. This is the first thing you should do.

2. Be able to summarize the problem and draft a concise solution on 2 pages or less – Policymakers don’t want a manifesto to wade through to understand a problem or the solution, and they don’t like long meetings. Make it clear and concise, and you will be more effective.

3. Coalition building – It’s easy for a politician, governmental employee, or decision maker to “blow-off” an individual, but they cannot ignore a coalition of people or organizations. It’s the old adage, strength in numbers. Seek out like-minded people and organizations, and work together.

4. Work with the system – As advocates, we sometimes just want to bash the “system” to achieve change. While there can be a place for this, it should only be used as a final option, if at all. Meet with the head officials and decision makers involved. Try to establish a good relationship, use coalition pressure and well researched positions, and be professional. This is far more effective. To ignore the decision makers and their process is to be on the outside looking in.

5. Anticipate Objections and Roadblocks - I assure you that you’ll run into at least one person in the loop who’s against your idea. Don’t let the naysayers, and apathetic throw you off track, because you will always find it, sometimes at the top. Gain their support or find a way around them.

6. Persistence – If advocacy were baseball, you have to be willing to play the game through the 9th inning and overtime. Advocacy is often a war of attrition. Government and change sometimes moves slowly. Achieving change through 1000 small steps forward still achieves large change. When one door shuts, you need to think it through and work to open others. Doors will shut, you will encounter apathy. You must be the persistent champion, and do everything necessary to drive on until you have succeeded.

7. Media – Good press is a formidable tool in educating people about a problem and putting pressure on policy makers to take action. Many media events have changed and created policy. When you get press, be forceful yet professional.

8. Be professional - It is very important that you “look” and “sound” professional. Show up to your meetings with officials in a tie or a nice suit. When you combine a professional demeanor with the other 7 steps listed here, they will take you very seriously. As you know from your own experiences, we do not take people seriously who do not appear to be serious or professional.

If you are willing to research your issue, concisely state the problem and goal to decision makers, build a coalition if possible, work within the system, anticipate and work through roadblocks, be unflinchingly persistent, get press on your issue, and conduct yourself as a professional, there is absolutely nothing you cannot accomplish.

Jeff Steinborn comes to the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance with a wealth of experience in and out of government. Jeff previously served as an advisor to both U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman and then Congressman Bill Richardson. In these capacities, Jeff has extensively studied the Otero Mesa, and issues involving oil and gas development in New Mexico. He has also worked on diverse range of issues important to New Mexico such as our military bases, our economic development, the protection of our water resources and restoration of our natural habitats, forestry issues, border security, and veterans affairs.

Statewide, Jeff is also known as a leader in the recycling field, having developed Las Cruces’s curbside recycling program, founded the NM Recycled Roads Initiative with the State Department of Transportation using recycled materials in road construction projects, and authored federal legislation for Senator Jeff Bingaman called the Recycled Roads Act of 2003.

As Senator Bingaman’s former advisor to the Otero Mesa, Jeff was a strong proponent of protecting this key resource, and played a vital role in helping to guide strategy.

Jeff was born and raised in Las Cruces, New Mexico, and attended New Mexico Military Institute in Roswell for high school, graduating on the Dean’s academic list. He is also a former Congressional and State Representative candidate, and the current Chair of the Dona Ana County Democratic Party.
Ojito Wilderness Act Emerges From Committee
Your Calls Are Needed!

By Martin Heinrich

Last year Ojito nearly became New Mexico’s first brand new wilderness area in over seventeen years (in fairness Sen. Domenici worked to add acreage connecting the Bisti and De-Na-Zin areas in 1996). In fact the Ojito bill actually passed the House and Senate, but too late in the session to reconcile the slightly differing versions. Despite not making it to the President’s desk, those last minute negotiations have led to a version of the bill agreed to by all of our state’s House and Senate members.

Now the Ojito Wilderness Act has been reintroduced and is already making good progress in the House and Senate. The Ojito bill emerged several months ago from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and is now waiting to be scheduled for a floor vote by the full Senate. Then on May 18, the House companion bill was moved out of committee. Now the House bill is also awaiting action by the full body. That puts us 3 steps away from the Ojito bill becoming law, a House vote, a Senate vote, and the signature of the President.

In mid-June several tireless wilderness advocates will be joined by representatives of Pueblo of Zia on a trip to Washington DC aimed at moving the bill successfully through these last few steps. Every bill, no matter how broadly supported, has a way of becoming ever more controversial and ever more politically embroiled the closer you get to the end of a Congressional session. Consequently, we hope to see the Ojito Wilderness pass both the House and Senate and move on to the President’s desk as early as possible in the 109th Congress.

Governor Teofilo Pino of Zia, Tribal Administrator Peter Pino of Zia, Coalition for New Mexico Wilderness Director Martin Heinrich, and Wilderness Support Center Deputy Director Melyssa Watson will all be visiting our New Mexico delegation to ensure this legislation remains a high priority and to be sure we are providing them the kind of support they need.

To make their job easier, please call our delegation (contact information is listed on Page 112). Thank them all for working together on the Ojito Wilderness Act and ask them to move the bill through the House and Senate as expeditiously as possible.

The Ojito Wilderness Act of 2005 will permanently protect over 20,000 acres, 11,000 of which will be designated as wilderness, the highest level of federal land protection.

Volunteer Projects
give you an opportunity to do something for the Land of Enchantment

Whether digging postholes for barriers to stop ATV abuse, performing trail clean up and maintenance, or helping with the logistics of set-up and food, NMWA Volunteer Projects offer something for all ages and abilities. Please RSVP so we can plan for food, car-pooling, and other logistics. For each weekend project listed below we plan to camp out Friday & Saturday evenings, conduct the project on Saturday, and go for a hike on Sunday. We will give you directions and further project information when you call or email Michael Scialdone at 505/843-8696, scial@nmwild.org.

June 4th 2005
Pecos Wilderness north side

June 4th is NATIONAL TRAILS DAY and we will participate by working on a trail in the north side of the Pecos Wilderness that ATVs have been illegally using. Our main task will be to block access to motorized use while allowing others to continue. We will also do some trail clean up and maintenance. We will need around 25 people.

Distance: about 2 ½ hours north/northeast of ABQ

June 18th, 2005—Cebolla Canyon, El Malpais National Monument

Closer to ABQ, Albuquerque Wildlife Federation is doing spring restoration in this beautiful canyon adjacent to El Malpais.

Distance: about 1.5 hours west of ABQ

July 15th weekend, 2005—Valle Vidal Stream Restoration

We are joining with Albuquerque Wildlife Federation to do plantings and exclosures along Comanche Creek in the Valle Vidal.

Distance: about 4.5 hours north/northeast of ABQ

August 20th weekend, 2005—Anchor Mine Project

Once again, we are joining with Amigos Bravos to help in Red River Watershed restoration. We will close off and mask an old logging road now being illegally used to access the Valle Vidal. We will need 15 – 20 people.

Distance: about 3 hours north/northeast of ABQ

October 1st weekend, 2005—Columbine – Hondo WSA

Preventing ATV access on a single-track trail. We will need around 15 people.

Distance: about 3 ½ hours north of ABQ.
Ken Stinnett Photography

By Trisha London

Ken Stinnett has been taking pictures of the natural world for a long time. Thanks to Ken, NMWA has stunning photographs of the Organ Mountains to use in our soon to be completed brochure. Ken is on the board of directors of the Southwest Environmental Center and has participated in numerous volunteer projects. He has donated his photographs to several non-profit environmental organizations, including World Wildlife Fund, Citizen’s Task Force for Open Space Preservation in Las Cruces, Sky Islands Alliance, Forest Guardians, Southwest Environmental Center, Audubon, and Trust for Public Lands.

It was high school biology that got Ken interested in photographing the natural world. He would give reports in class and show slides of the plants and animals he found. “I’ve always been interested in being outside. Our poor, fragile little desert, its microhabitats, its arroyos and canyons which are the ‘veins and arteries’ of the desert, start disappearing as grand numbers of people come here and aren’t conscientious of their impacts on the land. Not enough people are thinking about what will happen to the desert, to the places they love, when the water runs out”.

I asked Ken what motivates him to do this work. “That’s where my soul is. My soul is in the outdoors—that’s why I’m always down on the ground shooting tiny little plants and creatures that you’d normally miss seeing altogether. Right now, I’m acutely aware of the fragility of our ecosystems. I’m afraid of what we’ll be left with in 30 or 40 years. I want my kids to know what wilderness is. I want everybody’s kids to know what it’s about.”

You can see Ken’s photographs of the Organ Mountains and other works at his charming photo gallery located at 311 North Down town Mall in Las Cruces. You can also contact Ken by email at ken@k enstinnettphotography.com

For Rent:

Cabin and vintage trailers at Blue River Wilderness Retreat. Cool off and relax @ 6,400ft. Situated among pines and cottonwoods on the Blue River, bordered by the Apache/Sitgreaves National Forest, near the Blue Range Primitive Area. Abundant hiking and fishing opportunities along perennial streams. Located on the Arizona/New Mexico border, near Alpine, AZ. Reasonable rates! Group or individual accommodations. Rent by the week or month. www.blueriverretreat.com

Call: 928-339-4426
Email: j.hoffman@frontiernet.net

WE NEED YOUR OPINION.

We’re working hard to serve New Mexico’s Wilderness Community, but we need your help. Download and complete our survey, located at NMWild.org to help shape the future of wilderness!
Spring 2005
Albuquerque Area Hikes

Please RSVP by 5:00 on Thursday before the hike is scheduled. We meet at the parking lot for our office at Central and Broadway at 8:00am. We’ll figure out the car pool situation at that time (if you’re willing to drive, it is greatly appreciated). We’ll have you back to our office by 6:30pm, likely much earlier, and driving time is less than 1½ hours each way unless noted otherwise. Bring your own water, snacks, and lunch, and be prepared for all types of weather. Call Nathan Newcomer or Michael Scialdone at the ABQ office at 505/843-8696 for more info.

June 18
Mt. Taylor
A hardy 1,800 feet of elevation gain in only 2.5 miles leads to the top of this extinct volcano just north of Grants, NM. The hike starts in pine forest and finishes with steep grassy slopes leading to the peak. Hopefully the rains will keep the forests open – last year’s attempt had to be moved to El Malpais.

Contact: Michael Scialdone, 843-8696, scial@nmwild.org
Distance: 10 miles round-trip
Time: 2 to 4 hours round-trip plus driving time
Elevation Range: 5,100’-11,301’
Difficulty: Moderate to Strenuous

July 9
Manzano Mountain Wilderness, Red Canyon / Spruce Spring Loop
This loop trail begins at Red Canyon Campground and ascends through a drainage full of trees and cliff faces. It travels along a streambed for about 1.5 miles. Last year, this streambed was a nicely flowing river, complete with waterfalls. After leaving the canyon the trail pops onto a sloping plateau through large pine, fir, and eventually aspens. Great views are abundant at the top of Red Canyon Trail at Ocha Peak. The trail then travels northeast along the crest of the Manzano’s and then descends down Spruce Canyon. Long vistas are visible when going down the gentle slope of Spruce Canyon, which eventually brings you back to Red Canyon Campground.

Contact: Nathan Newcomer at 843-8696 for more info.
Distance: 7.5 miles round-trip
Time: 4 to 6 hours round-trip plus driving time
Elevation Range: 9,500’-10,003’
Difficulty: Easy, on trail

August 13
Sandia Mountains Wilderness, Domingo Baca Canyon Trail
Arguably one of the most pleasant hikes in the Sandia Wilderness, the Domingo Baca Canyon Trail offers a well-maintained trail which will take us through open grasslands, then a narrow canyon, and on through deep forested areas with lush streams and tiny waterfalls. Just on the outskirts of Albuquerque, the Domingo Baca Canyon Trail presents an enjoyable dayhike that won’t take all day.

Contact: Rick Hurley, 299-8401, sirsrusrious@aol.com
Distance: 8-9 miles round trip
Hike Time: 5 hours
Drive Time: about 2 hours each way
Special Notes: Late Return Likely/Dinner Stop Optional/Bring Raingear
Elevation: 9,500’-10,200’
Difficulty: Easy, on trail

Spring 2005
Southern NM Area Hikes

Contact Alberto Zavala in NMWA’s Las Cruces office for information on all the following hikes. You can reach him at 505-527-9962 or send an email to alberto@nmwild.org

June 18
Achenback Canyon
Distance: 5 miles
Low point: 5,100 feet
High point: 5,835 feet
Difficulty: Moderate

July 23
San Pedro Parks Wilderness
The Parks (just North of Cuba, NM) aren’t really known for dramatic peaks or expansive views, but their charm lies in rambling meadows dotted with spruce, aspen groves, stands of wildflowers and wildlife. Most folks haven’t visited this wilderness before, so the route picked will give a good introduction. We’ll start up high so the walking is easy and the elevation gain isn’t too steep. Monsoons (thunderstorms) can catch us in July, so bring at least a poncho and dress in layers.

Contact: Rick Hurley, 299-8401, sirsrusrious@aol.com
Distance: 4.5 miles round-trip
Time: 3 to 5 hours round-trip plus driving time
Elevation Range: 6,200’-7,500’ feet
Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

August 20
Pine Tree National Recreation Trail
Distance: 4.5 miles
Low point: 5,675 feet
High point: 7,000 feet
Difficulty: Moderate

This trail is a loop trail and can be hiked in either direction. This trail is easily followed, taking one around the edge of a “bowl” created by Anvil and Sotol Creeks. The trail tops out near the base of the tremendous cliffs of the Needles.

September 24
Dona Ana Peak
Distance: 8 miles
Low point: 4,335 feet
High point: 5,835 feet
Difficulty: Moderate

The view from Dona Ana Peak is spectacular; at least ten other mountain ranges can be seen from this vantage point at the southern end of the Jornada del Muerto. We will watch for Yellow Bell on this hike. It is a unique, small shrub with beautiful yellow blossoms in the summer.
...Love You Too, Ray!

This month readers spout off to the President about our energy policy and Ray gives us spiritual direction.

Dear President Bush,
We must not press forward with ill conceived plans to drill with abandon on our pristine western lands. There is more value in wilderness and flora nd fauna habitat that is in the ground. Have some foresight please. Don’t let greed destroy our heritage.

Thank you, Steven Bremner Major, US Airforce

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us; your aerial perspective of the west has no doubt contributed to your opinion. SkyTruth.org is a great place for the rest of us to have a look.

NMWA-
Go to hell and take the Sierra Club with you.

Thank you, Ray B.

Being a small organization with limited funding, we must insist that the Sierra Club pay for their own transportation.

Dear Mr. Bush,

Petroleum technology is a hundred years old. Step up and lead by encouraging and supporting solar, wind, and other alternative energies.

Help wean USA from oil and gas dependency.

Sincerely,

David C. Ulmer, Jr.
So True, David. But you’ve forgotten one of the largest untapped renewable resources: the methane bubble trapped under Capitol Dome in Washington DC. webdirectory.com/Science/Energy/Alternative_Energy/ has a good list of alternate energy resources.

President Bush,

You can’t take from the earth forever. When we run our of fossil fuel, the atmosphere will be to full of CO2 and we’ll have to find other energies, but it will be too late. We’ll never be able to get the CO2 levels down in a thousand years and the earth will be warm to freeze snow and ice so the sea levels will rise. Don’t be short sighted and ruin this world. I wish you would start drinking again and ruin your liver, if you want to destroy something.

Dennis

P.S. I love my country but I fear my government.

Interesting take, Dennis. We’ll forward these suggestions to G.W.–I’m sure he’ll be very receptive to them. To aid your cause, we’re enclosing a 5th of J.D. and one of those “Hooked On Phonics” tapes.

Dear NMWA,

I feel very unhappy about the situation that the Otero Mesa is facing. I have watched your television ads and I empathize completely with your wholehearted efforts. ... You should not have to shoulder the entire responsibility in this... and what possible good is drilling Otero Mesa ...? Make our (energy) bill a few dollars less—I’d rather freeze!

Ketra Bock

We agree Ketra, but if Washington would get with the program, not only would we not freeze, we would add hundreds of thousands of new, earth-friendly jobs to our economy.

My family and I believe the real value in places like Otero Mesa lie in their undisturbed natural beauty. God surely reveres all creatures and has put them in our hands. The natural world is more fragile than we realize as we pursue our ever-increasing levels of comport. I am learning to be content with less because I love this country and our planet...

Raymond Finck

Las Vegas, NM

Very nice thought. I always figured God for a Greenie myself. Renew, reuse and recycle, Raymond.

Dear Mr. President and all who have Legislative and Corporate Positions,

It is extremely difficult to feel that further intrusion on the environment is justifiable by any standard of wisdom when emphasis on population control (birth control) development of alternative energy for transportation and other needs and environmental protection is so under emphasized, encouraged or promoted. Who does this serve? How can anyone with a conscience let this happen? Who will stand up and say, now is the day when we must stop and shift our direction? Must we all, and this beautiful planet too, die because no one would say now is the hour, now is the day? Stop the Wilderness Invasion, Stop invasion for Oil!

-Anonymous

President Bush:

Our treasures are being taken away by your policies as you seek oil! It is time for alternative sources of energy to be explored—not the destruction of sacred places and wildlife.

Rebecca Christman

Jemez Springs, NM

Please don’t malign those sweet little oil and gas companies. They’re doing their best for all mankind, and suffering horribly through record profits!

NATURE’S CRISIS

continued from page 3

ing a more effective strategy.

In December of 1776, the American Revolution was in its darkest hour. In response, Tom Paine wrote his first “Crisis” paper:

These are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.

General Washington had the paper read to his miserable, disheartened troops in their frozen winter camps. There was no sur-
Many people are surprised to learn that the use of steel jawed leg-hold traps along with lethal snares is still legal in New Mexico. Even so, no one knows how many traps are set out annually. Around 1500 people buy a license to trap, but they may also use it to hunt furbearing predators using other methods. But since no license is required at all to set traps for coyotes or skunks, and since coyotes are the most frequently sold pelt in NM, there could be many more trappers than the NM Department of Game and Fish realizes. Moreover, there are no limits to how many traps a single trapper may set in place. It can number in the hundreds and they can stay in the same place for months. On public land, where anyone can be, the only limits are that they be a mere 25 yards from a developed trail or annually maintained road and ¼ mile from a developed campground. There are no bag limits for any furbearing species. A single trapper can kill as many bobcats, foxes, raccoons, ringtails, badgers, weasels and of course coyotes as he likes. Other states require that trappers turn in a log of what they have killed and where. In New Mexico, this is not required. Trappers don’t like to turn in a record of their kills because it could have tax implications. They trap to sell the fur and selling fur is largely a cash proposition.

There is no requirement that trappers report the non-target animals that were captured either. There is no record of how many dogs, squirrels, porcupines, birds and other animals are also trapped and discarded by trappers—often injured or dead. In gathering comments for the game commission last summer on this appalling situation, we were surprised to find so many people with personal trap stories. We learned of people being unable to remove a trap from their dog and having to seek out help. They incurred vet bills and even an emergency room visit for dog bites sustained by the human trying to get the trap off a pain-crazed dog. We learned of people finding traps with wildlife in them. The animal was sometimes dead of exposure or killed by another predator while unable to escape. We learned of half chewed off paws and exposed bones. We learned of animals that pulled the trap chain out and were later seen with the trap still attached. These unfortunate animals were starving and the trapped limb had blackened from necrosis.

There is very little scientific data on the ecological effect of this unrestrained activity. It is not unlike drift netting the forest for whatever can be caught. But there is no environmental assessment, public scoping or agency review. Trappers operate without oversight, little regulation and even less enforcement.

That they would call this wildlife management is laughable.

Additionally, consider this: A US Fish and Wildlife Survey concluded that 449,000 NM residents participate in wildlife watching and that 387,000 non-residents come here for that purpose annually. This activity generates $384 million dollars to the NM economy (which exceeds the $369 million generated by hunting and fishing combined. Trapping revenue is so miniscule it isn’t included in that figure.) Given that Arizona and Colorado both prohibit traps on public land, isn’t it clear that New Mexico is woefully out of step. In the 1980’s, the last time pelt prices were high; the population of New Mexico was 25% smaller than it is today. As more people come here to enjoy our beautiful outdoors, it is increasingly apparent that traps are incompatible with the economic benefit of tourism.

These devices do not belong on public land where they may be encountered by anyone or any animal. They are indiscriminate and inhumane for animals and people. Please write to notraps@gilanet.com for more information and what can be done. If you have a trap story, we sincerely regret it happened, but we welcome it too.

by Mary Katherine Ray
Wilderness Goes to the University of New Mexico

By Nathan Newcomer

This past April, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (NMWA) and a hand-full of dedicated students, successfully chartered the first chapter of NMWA on the University of New Mexico (UNM) campus in Albuquerque! Over 150 students at UNM are now members of the official UNM Wilderness Alliance, and the list continues to grow. This is a tremendous accomplishment for furthering the protection of New Mexico’s Wilderness.

The purpose of the UNM Wilderness Alliance parallels that of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, in that the groups are both dedicated to the protection, restoration and continued enjoyment of New Mexico’s wildlands and Wilderness areas. The mission of the student chapter is to educate the students of UNM about Wilderness and develop and sustain a constituency in support of Wilderness issues.

In addition to educating students and engaging in campus activities, the UNM Wilderness Alliance plans to organize multiple wilderness hikes and outings. These opportunities will give students the ability to meet and bond with other like-minded wilderness advocates and develop their connection to the wildlands of New Mexico. In the Fall, the chapter plans to conduct letter-writing and phone campaigns to our congressional representatives. The group will also be tabling frequently within the UNM community and working with UNM faculty to promote wilderness issues.

The UNM Chapter got off to a great start by taking part in two major wilderness events on campus. The first event was on Earth Day when Governor Richardson and Attorney General Madrid made an announcement to sue the federal government over Otero Mesa (see Page 7). Officers of the UNM Wilderness Alliance, working with staff of NMWA, organized students to attend this ground breaking event and brought together more than 200 people. Secondly, the UNM Wilderness Alliance organized a film showing of the documentary “Being Caribou,” which records one couple’s travels with the porcupine caribou herd in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Approximately 25 people came to watch the film and participate in a discussion on how we can help protect America’s last great wilderness, the Arctic Refuge, from oil and gas development.

The benefits of having a chapter of the Wilderness Alliance on the UNM campus are countless. Just for starters, the student chapter will now be able to participate in and organize within all campus activities—absolutely free of charge! The group will be able to table on campus at all locations; have access to campus meeting space and equipment; and publish articles in the “Daily Lobo,” UNM’s student newspaper. Yet, perhaps the most beneficial and understated advantage of the group will be wilderness education and outreach to a new generation of New Mexicans who may have never focused on the importance of wilderness designation and protection.

This is a very exciting moment in New Mexico Wilderness history and it is vital that we not only encourage and champion the UNM Wilderness Alliance but also that we nurture and provide insight to this young Wilderness group. A big thanks is in order to the officers of the UNM Wilderness Alliance for all of their hard work, determination and leadership in making this group a reality. THANK YOU Natalie Dawson, Willa Hafich, Patrick Mullen, Daniel Mirrel, and Leah Vermont. Have a great summer and let’s continue the momentum of Wilderness outreach on UNM campus!

While the bulk of the UNM Wilderness Alliance is made up of students and faculty, anyone in the community is welcome to participate. Members of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance will be notified of the UNM chapter’s activities and are encouraged to be involved. For more information, please contact unwild@unm.edu.

Young Student Applies Pressure Towards Saving Arctic

By Trisha London

Help Save the Arctic Refuge through conservation! Join the ‘Pump Em Up’ Campaign!

If you learned that we could save as much oil and gas as we’d get from drilling our last wild landscapes with a just little extra effort, would you choose conservation over development? That’s exactly what Savannah Walters did after she studied the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and its environment in 2nd grade. Upon learning of the threat to the Refuge and its wildlife from oil and gas drilling, Savannah got busy. She learned that the Energy Department found in 1995 that under-inflated tires wasted about 4 million gallons of gas per day in America. This meant that the U.S could save as much oil as would be produced by drilling the Arctic Refuge if drivers simply pumped up their car tires to proper inflation levels!

Savannah is soliciting the help of volunteers and friends to help organize a campaign to “pump up” awareness of the power of proper tire pressure and fuel conservation. Classrooms in Florida, California, New York, Rhode Island, Washington, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas have already joined her effort.

Students and teachers who want to get involved, can go to the "Pump Em Up" website, www.pumpemup.org for an activity sheet and flyers they can print out and distribute to get others involved. Just click on the activity sheet and it’s ready to print out for kids to take home to make sure that the family vehicle is not wasting gas because of under-inflated tires. It’s easy! It’s fun! And you’ll be part of a huge and exciting effort to help save the Arctic Refuge from unnecessary development! Savannah’s efforts show how one person can make a huge difference—if you know of others doing projects to conserve energy to save our last wild lands, we want to know! Contact Trisha at trishal@nmwild.org

If you need more information on the Pump Em Up Campaign, you can call 813-732-6611 or email savannahrose@pumpemup.org
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
P.O. Box 25464, Albuquerque, NM 87125

Order Form

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Join the Friends of Wilderness monthly giving program. Contact Roxanne at 505/843-8696 to get set up.

By Tripp Killin

Inspiration is a strange thing. It is sometimes absent and at other times a powerful, uplifting force that motivates us to embrace that which is truly important.

In these tough conservation times, inspiration is a precious thing to the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. Therefore, we always love it when Christianne comes to the office.

Christianne has lived in New Mexico since 1984. She runs her own tile design and installation business, and first learned about the Alliance in 2001 while improving the kitchen of Executive Director Stephen Capra. Impressed by the organization, she became a member and began volunteering regularly.

Christianne helps us on a variety of projects. Recently, she worked at the Protect Our Public Lands Rally on February 5th, 2005. She took tickets, handed out programs and answered questions.

“I also got to meet Ken Madsen of Caribou Commons, which was great for me”, says Christianne. “He is a person who always enjoyed the outdoors, and had an epiphany that he’d have to work hard – sometimes very hard – to protect what he loved. I get so inspired by meeting people like that. It reminds me what I can do to make a difference.”

And in turn you inspire us, Christianne, with your dedication, humor and compassion. Thanks again from the entire organization!

Christianne has also worked to form the Arctic Refuge Working Group, bringing people in New Mexico together that care about the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. For more information about this working group, please contact Nathan Newcomer at 505/843-8696 or send your letters of support for protecting the Arctic to your congress persons (see contact information on Page 12).

Mail your Tax Deductible Donations to:

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
PO Box 25464
Albuquerque, NM 87125-0464

Questions? 505/843-8696

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

June 18th Yard Sale

IN ALBUQUERQUE:  
1102 Princeton Avenue SE, in the UNM Area

Please consider donating any items you may have to help raise money for New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. Items can be dropped off at our office starting through June 17th. We will be conducting a local pick up of goods June 13th to 17th in Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

Contact Tripp at 505-843-8696, or tripp@nmwild.org
For More Information

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Check out the great gear now available through NMWA!

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

Oil On Ice DVD
Highlighting the controversies surrounding the pursuit of oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
Cost $20

Best Easy Day Hikes- Santa Fe
Linda & Katie Regnier $21.50

Day Hikes and Nature Walks in the Las Cruces-El Paso Area
Greg Magee $10.00

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

100 Hikes in New Mexico
Craig Martin $18.50

100 Hikes in New Mexico
Craig Martin $18.50

Field Guide to the Sandia Mountains
Bob Jolyan and Mar Blauer $23 with shipping

Sandia Mountains Hiking Guide
Mike Golin $23 with shipping

Day Hikes and Nature Walks in the Sandia Mountains
Mike Golin $23 with shipping

Hiking New Mexico’s Sandia Mountains
Mike Golin $23 with shipping

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Wildlands Conference
de Santa Fe

October 8th
El Dorado Hotel
309 West San Francisco Street
Santa Fe, NM
9 am to 4 pm

The conference will focus on the current issues impacting New Mexico Wilderness, including the Valle Vidal and Otero Mesa.

Space is limited, so please register early.
Registration: $40 includes lunch.

Please email Tisha Broska today at tisha@nmwild.org to reserve your space or go to www.nmwild.org for on-line registration.

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

Get the goods today!
Use the order form on page 19, or call 505-843-8696
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