by Jim Walters

Most people are surprised to learn that the U.S. National Park Service has never been a great fan of wilderness. During the congressional hearings leading up to the passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act, the Park Service testified numerous times that it should not be included within the Wilderness Act since its national park lands were “already wilderness.” However, both the environmental community and Congress were keenly aware of the Park Service’s propensity to develop national parks in order to provide for the public’s “use and enjoyment.” Much of this development took the form of roads being built in pristine areas of the parks, the construction of large visitor centers and administrative buildings, and even larger concession complexes being built to provide for visitor comfort, convenience, and amusement. So, bit by bit, parks like Yosemite Valley, Yellowstone, Death Valley, and the Grand Canyon were filled with hotels, restaurants, railroad stations, gas stations, shops, golf courses, and the houses and utilities needed to house both the Park Service and concession staffs manning these tourist complexes.

It became obvious to Congress from observing these developments that the National Park Service, in spite of its contention that it was protecting natural resources, was oftentimes the instigator of developments which threatened the very resources it was supposed to protect. Accordingly, Congress specifi-
Being a wilderness organization means constantly working to protect lands and to place them into permanent wilderness protection. Most people don’t think of national park lands as being a priority for such designation. But this issue is designed to look at the importance of putting national park lands into wilderness protection and to launch our National Parks Wilderness Campaign. This campaign is designed to put more than one million acres into the wilderness preservation system! For the first time, our organization is also looking outside our New Mexico borders and is including two Texas national parks, Guadalupe and Big Bend. We made this decision because frankly, the Trans-Pecos region of Texas is as close to New Mexico (landscape-wise) as you are likely to find, and the importance of these two national parks and the lands of this part of west Texas cannot be overstated.

Threats to our national parks continue, from new roads, large developed concession areas, helicopter tours, snowmobiles, and jet skis to cell phone towers, giant RV campgrounds, and trails for off-road vehicles. The list is endless. The wildness of these parks is slowly being sucked out in an attempt to provide comfort for the record millions who are loving the parks to death. Another important issue is the people who commit their lives to managing these crown jewels of our country. They are the rangers, interpreters, researchers, and the many other employees that keep the parks functioning despite the constant budgetary cutbacks and political winds that seemingly undercut the Park Service’s ability to manage their boundaries and maintain the high standards associated with our national park system.

This issue also reveals the surprising tendency of the National Park Service to avoid creating wilderness in the very lands most people consider real wilderness, or following the rules when it comes to parklands with wilderness designation. It is a strange contradiction, one that begs for park management and Congress to evolve their thinking regarding the very protection the parks were designed for. Such safeguards will promote the sustainable long-term protection that wilderness affords our parks and other public lands across the country.

The state of our national parks has perhaps never been more in jeopardy. The Bush administration, under the leadership of Interior Secretary Gail Norton, has ignored sound science as it pertains to our national parks. Despite constant scientific findings concerning snowmobiles and the damage they are causing to Yellowstone and its wildlife, they continue to rumble throughout the park. Grizzly reintroduction scheduled north of the park was stopped by the administration despite strong local support. With every new decision, the President continues to say more money than ever is going to the parks, but the reality continues to be that staffing is being reduced or outsourced, maintenance cannot keep up, and new park acquisition is virtually dead. Perhaps worse is the morale of Park Service employees. In a recent poll, more than two thirds of them stated that they believe the National Park Service is moving in the wrong direction. Even worse, more than 88% of them felt decisions in the parks were being influenced by politics. It’s a sad commentary on our country’s most beautiful and culturally unique landscapes.
Let’s turn One Million National Park Acres into Wilderness!

With this issue, the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance launches its 1,075,191 acre proposal for wilderness in our New Mexico and Trans-Pecos National Parks. Many people have asked why wilderness in National Parks? This issue is devoted to answering some of those questions and hopefully inspires you to become more involved in the protection of our National Parks. Through on-the-ground surveys and GIS analysis, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance found over 1 million road free acres in the seven National Park lands that lie in our two state region. These include: Chaco Canyon National Historic Park, Bandelier National Park, El Malpais National Monument, White Sands National Monument, Big Bend National Park, Guadalupe Mountains National Park and Carlsbad Caverns National Park.

Putting these lands into the National Wilderness Preservation System protects them forever from the changes in Administrations that we clearly see can impact our wildest public lands. Threats come from power lines, cell towers and off-road vehicles. The list is long and the protection of these lands is urgent. Wilderness groups have worked for years on National Park Wilderness, but as the opportunities arose to protect Forest Service and BLM lands in the 80’s and 90’s attention moved away from the Parks due to limited resources. But today, the Parks face many threats and it’s crucial that we take the lead in ensuring that these crown jewels enjoy the permanent protection that most Americans assume they already have.

Many of the Parks are just beginning the scoping phase and soliciting your comments concerning the fate of these important lands. Please contact them today and let them know wilderness is your priority. Also, in these very tough political times, it is imperative that our elected officials get the strong message that our parks need more funding and less political interference. Finally, help the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance in its effort to protect these magnificent National Park Lands. Please visit our website for more information or make a contribution today, to NMWA’s National Park fund.

What is Wilderness?
The Wilderness Act of 1964 established the National Wilderness Preservation System to preserve the last remaining wildlands in America. The Wilderness Act, as federal policy, secures “an enduring resource of wilderness” for the people. Wilderness is defined as an area that has primarily been affected by the forces of nature with the imprint of humans substantially unnoticeable. It is an area that offers outstanding opportunity for solitude or a primitive or unconfined type of recreation, and an area that contains ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.
by Wesley Leonard

Securing wilderness designation for the Guadalupe Escarpment region of southeast New Mexico and west Texas has been a high priority for conservationists since the early 1970’s. Then the New Mexico Wilderness Study Committee (the predecessor to NMWA) proposed a 150,000 acre unified wilderness that would encompass the backcountry of Carlsbad Caverns National Park and Guadalupe Mountains National Park, as well as portions of the Lincoln National Forest between the two parks.

National parks are established to protect only the “crown jewels” of the nation’s natural heritage. The fact that there are two national parks in such close proximity is testimony to the ecological and geological significance of the Guadalupe Escarpment. Although Wilderness designation has not yet been attained for the entire escarpment, legislation was passed in 1978 that established Wilderness areas in the backcountry of the two parks, and a Wilderness Study Area of 20,000 acres in the Lincoln National Forest. The legislation, “the Endangered American Wilderness Act,” established a 33,125 acre Wilderness in Carlsbad Caverns National Park (out of a total of 46,775 acres) and a 46,850 acre Wilderness in Guadalupe Mountains National Park (out of a total of 86,415 acres).

While Guadalupe Mountains National Park is known for McKittrick Canyon and the many hiking trails that traverse its backcountry, Carlsbad Caverns National Park is obviously most famous for the caverns, which draw visitors from all over the world. Almost completely unknown, however, is the Wilderness in Carlsbad’s backcountry, which provides some of the best primitive hiking opportunities in New Mexico. If you do venture onto the backcountry trails, the chances are great that you will have the area to yourself. There are approximately 50 miles of backcountry trails, most of which are semi-primitive and require some degree of route-finding capability.

Elevations range from 3600-feet to 6350-feet in a rugged maze of ridges and canyons that are home to 740 species of plants, 273 species of resident and transient birds, 44 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 59 mammalian species. One of the more unique aspects of hiking in Carlsbad's backcountry are the wild caves you are likely to encounter. Some are shown on maps, while 62-180, turn north on the marked county road and follow the signs to the park.

An excellent dayhike into the backcountry is via the Yucca Canyon Trail which is located on a spur road about 2 miles west of the main road near the Slaughter Canyon Cave parking lot. The trail climbs 1500-feet to the escarpment in just 2.5 miles. The view from the escarpment makes the steep climb worthwhile and another mile or so will bring you to the rim of west Slaughter Canyon and the seldom-running Longview Spring. The views into the canyon from this spot are stunning.

The 7-mile hike from the mouth of Slaughter Canyon to the Guadalupe Ridge is a good choice for an overnight backpack. The trail starts at the Slaughter Canyon Cave parking lot and goes north for about 3 miles before starting up the ridge between the middle and north forks of the canyon. It then climbs steeply 1800 feet over 4 miles ending at the junction with the Guadalupe Ridge trail. There are many scenic vistas along the route, including an unusual view into the huge entrance to Goat Cave. Route finding skills are a must for this hike.

The hike along the Guadalupe Ridge trail from Walnut Canyon to the Park's western boundary is another great over-night backpack. The trail is actually a very rough, unmaintained jeep trail that climbs to and runs along the top of the Guadalupe Ridge for 9-miles to the Park's boundary. The trail then continues into the Lincoln National Forest as trail 201 and runs the ridge all the way to a point where it connects with trails going into Guadalupe Mountains National Park. The hike along the ridge in Carlsbad Caverns National Park can be done overnight, but to continue to Guadalupe Mountains National Park would require additional days and logistical support.

The 3 hikes described above represent only a very small sample of what’s available. Other options can be discovered with the Park Rangers at the Visitor’s Center where the required permits can be obtained. The best times to hike in Carlsbad Cavern’s NP are the cool months, with winter being best. The summers are brutal with temperatures soaring well above 100 degrees much of the time. Early fall and late spring can be very uncomfortable, as well. All water must be carried with 1 gallon per person per day as the recommended minimum. Route finding skills are a must because of the primitive nature of most of the trails. A Trails Illustrated map of the park can be obtained at the Visitor’s Center.

The effort to secure full wilderness protection for the entire region continues as a priority for NMWA. At the present, NMWA is working with the staff at Guadalupe Mountains National Park on a plan to establish 30,000 additional acres of Wilderness in the Park. Once that is accomplished, attention will be directed towards the Lincoln National Forest portion to secure the protection this section deserves.

Hiking in the backcountry is certainly not for everyone. But, for experienced desert hikers, Carlsbad's backcountry offers an exceptional wilderness experience well worth the many challenges required.
Otero Mesa Update

by Nathan Newcomer

Otero Mesa—Overview

At over 1.2 million acres, New Mexico’s Otero Mesa is America’s largest and wildest grassland left on public lands. Otero Mesa is home to more than 1,000 native wildlife species and several ranching families, and has archeological sites dating back 5,000 years.

In 1997, Harvey E. Yates Company (HEYCO) drilled two test wells that found natural gas but, by many estimates, not a significant amount. Since then, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has had a mandate from the Bush administration to open this fragile desert grassland to full-scale oil and gas development. Since that time, a bipartisan coalition of ranchers, hunters, conservationists, business owners, religious leaders, and Governor Bill Richardson have fought to protect this wild Chihuahuan Desert grassland, making this an issue of national importance.

Update

BLM: “We Have No Idea”

Lawyers for Gov. Bill Richardson, Attorney General Patricia Madrid, and a coalition of environmental groups, including the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, squared off against the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in a three-hour hearing before U.S. District Judge Bruce Black in Albuquerque on January 24.

At the hearing, Judge Black asked the BLM’s attorney how oil and gas drilling would occur in the fragile grasslands. The response: They have no idea. No idea? The oil and gas industry, while enjoying record profits and a windfall of leases all across our public lands, claims that they can drill Otero Mesa in an environmentally sound manner, yet the agency in charge of enforcing regulations and monitoring this industry has absolutely no idea how development will occur in the area!

Judge Black further questioned the BLM about how it would deal with fragmentation of Otero Mesa, and again, the BLM responded by saying they don’t have a plan for where drilling will occur.

It is evident that the BLM’s case is relying heavily on a “Just Trust Us” attitude, but it is even clearer that we cannot trust the BLM to protect Otero Mesa’s wild grasslands or its fresh water aquifer.

Judge Black indicated that, at the earliest, he would make a decision in the Otero Mesa litigation by mid-March. For now, it is up to the courts to determine whether or not the BLM is guilty of hoodwinking the public, illegally trying to implement an unbalanced land use plan, and having no clear goal of how oil and gas drilling will occur in Otero Mesa, if at all.

The debate over drilling in Otero Mesa has reached a point where the governor, the attorney general, and members of the public ranging from ranchers and conservationists to business owners and religious leaders believe this natural treasure and its large freshwater aquifer should be protected.

Yet, leaders in Washington, D.C. and the local Bureau of Land Management have continued to charge ahead with a blatantly pro-industry plan, while admitting they have no clue how drilling will occur. If implemented, this combination of full-scale drilling and administrative ignorance spells certain doom for the desert grasslands and freshwater resources of Otero Mesa.

Recently, BLM state director Linda Rundell alleged that critics of the agency’s plan to drill in Otero Mesa are endangering our national security. Moreover, the BLM claims time and again that drilling in Otero Mesa can be done in an environmentally sound manner, that BLM’s management plan is the most restrictive ever developed, and that environmentalists are feeding the public misinformation.

These arguments are inconsistent with the facts, misleading, and have begun to sound like a broken record that should be taken off the player.

According to the Energy Information Agency, the United States only possesses three percent of the world’s total oil reserves, while Middle Eastern countries control roughly 64 percent. It is apparent that we can never drill our way to energy independence. Director Rundell has repeatedly called the oil and gas resources of Otero Mesa “small potatoes.” Small potatoes will never increase national security or reduce our heating bills.

The BLM and the oil and gas industry’s rationale for drilling Otero Mesa has too many holes to plug, thus they must resort to fear tactics in an attempt to sway public opinion.

In 2001, the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department found that out of 734 cases of soil and groundwater contamination, oil and gas operations were responsible for 444, almost 60 percent. Moreover, the Oil Conservation Division recently published a report on its web site, which documents more than 1,400 additional cases of groundwater contamination due to oil and gas operations.

BLM assurances that modern drilling practices are environmentally sound fall on understandably skeptical ears. Other disturbing aspects of the BLM’s plan include:

- relying on an unproven eye-in-the-sky pilot program to monitor Otero Mesa drilling from outer space;
- not having the manpower on the ground to enforce regulations;
- not considering geophysical/seismic activities “surface disturbing,” even though such activities use heavy machinery and dynamite blasting;
- and having no clear definition for restoration and using nonnative Otero Mesa species to reclaim disturbed areas.

When all of the pieces to this disturbing puzzle come together, the clear picture that emerges is one of recklessness, deception, and a flagrant lack of concern for the people of New Mexico and our quality of life.

Otero Mesa’s wild grasslands and freshwater aquifer mean far more to the citizens of the Land of Enchantment than a few small potatoes worth of oil and gas.

© Stephen Capra

SEE PAGE 19

New Mexico WILD!
Doña Ana Wilderness Update

by Nathan Newcomer

Efforts to protect over 400,000 acres in Dona Ana County gaining significant momentum

In late January, the Doña Ana County Commission voted unanimously to support the protection of 330,000 acres in the county as wilderness. The areas included in the commission’s resolution include the West Portrillos, Mt. Riley, Aden Lava Flow, Organ Mountains, Organ Needle, Peña Blanca, Robledo Mountains and Sierra de las Uvas Wilderness Study Areas (WSA), as well as the East Portrillos and Broad Canyon. Additionally, the commissioners voted unanimously to support the preservation of 100,000 acres of the Organ Mountains as a National Conservation Area (NCA). In essence, the NCA would surround the Organ Mountains wilderness while providing the opportunity for construction of trails for motorized and mechanized vehicles only within the NCA.

Following on the heels of the Commission’s resolution, the City Council of Las Cruces voted unanimously to support the same vision as outlined by the commissioners. Though Las Cruces Mayor William Mattice was initially expected to vote against the resolution, dozens of local citizens came to the council hearing to voice their support for the proposal. This overwhelming citizen involvement and public comment brought Mayor Mattice to vote along with the entire city council in adopting the resolution.

The communities of Mesilla, Sunland Park, and Hatch also passed their own resolutions supporting the protection of Wilderness in Doña Ana County. Now every incorporated community in Doña Ana County has passed a “Public Lands Resolution” requesting that our recommended areas become Wilderness in addition to the Organ Mountains NCA.

Furthermore, the Las Cruces Homebuilders Association has endorsed our proposal of wilderness designation, and their incoming president was quoted in a local newspaper as saying the association supports a wilderness vision for the city.

Senator Pete Domenici has expressed interest in introducing legislation in Congress to protect the Organ Mountains as an NCA and designate wilderness in the county. The Senator’s willingness to introduce legislation is greatly appreciated and will certainly ensure that with his leadership, this legislation can be moved quickly to passage.

However, Sen. Domenici’s draft legislation does not protect one new acre of currently unprotected land. Instead, it focuses only on existing Wilderness Study Areas, not including the wilderness quality acreage around these WSA’s and additional areas like Broad Canyon, the East Portrillos, and the Organ Foothills. Likewise, the Senator’s proposed NCA for the Organ Mountains would only designate 35,000 acres, instead of the 100,000 acres being proposed by local lawmakers, and a bipartisan coalition of activists. Perhaps the most controversial component of the Senator’s draft bill is “public land disposal.” This portion of the bill has drawn great concern and criticism from the local community. Even the Las Cruces Homebuilders Association objects to the idea of selling vast amounts of public land, which could invite multinational companies to purchase large tracts of Las Cruces and balloon the city out of control. It is clear that the Senator still needs to hear the strong opposition from the community against any public land sales component in the legislation.

Yet, through the support of local lawmakers and our strong advocacy outreach, Senator Domenici has pledged to work with the community before any introduction of a bill occurs. Given Senator Domenici’s history and leadership in designating vast amounts of wilderness in New Mexico, we look forward to working with the Senator and his staff on creating new wilderness in Doña Ana County.

The type of forward-thinking vision displayed by the Doña Ana County Commission, Las Cruces City Council, and the other communities through the region demonstrates the local lawmaker’s understanding that the people of Doña Ana County want large tracts of wildlands protected, while still providing the public the opportunity to access and enjoy these natural treasures.
By William M. Brown

New Mexico’s Valle Vidal is important for many reasons, but it is not important as an energy source. It offers no energy solutions for our nation. This is why more than 360 local governments, chambers of commerce, private businesses, and organizations throughout the political spectrum – together with countless individuals across New Mexico and the USA – oppose destroying a magnificent piece of land for nonessential purposes. In 2005, both Senator Jeff Bingaman and Congressman Tom Udall introduced legislation in the U.S. Congress to permanently protect the Valle Vidal from industrialization. As well, the State of New Mexico recently designated Valle Vidal surface waters as Outstanding National Resource Waters, a move that will help ensure the ecological and economic health of the region. These actions confirm that protecting the Valle Vidal has nothing to do with energy and everything to do with demanding the resources and values – water, land, and legacy – that are truly essential and sustainable.

Natural gas is rapidly becoming a leading global commodity for the 21st century. Prior to the early 2000s, the natural gas market was considered to be a regional one due to difficulties in exporting and importing natural gas across the world’s oceans. For decades, the United States has received the bulk of its natural gas supplies via pipelines from Canada, scattered gas fields in the Gulf of Mexico and places like New Mexico’s San Juan and Permian basins. The problem for the USA is that its natural gas reserves are exceedingly limited compared to consumption. Currently, the USA holds about 3 percent of the world’s proven natural gas reserves, and consumes about 24 percent of the world’s natural gas production. In 2004-2005 the USA exhausted about 10 percent of its natural gas to meet economic demand, and, at that rate, will quickly deplete its reserves. North America has very nearly run out of indigenous natural gas.

To compensate, transnational petroleum companies, in concert with natural gas exporting and importing countries, are rapidly building a massive infrastructure to distribute natural gas in much the same way oil is handled today. The buildup in the USA is facilitated by provisions of the national energy bill passed in 2005. This infrastructure relies on export terminals in the few countries that possess the bulk of the world’s natural gas resources. Russia, Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates together possess about 67 percent of the world’s proven natural gas reserves. For example, Qatar holds reserves of about 900 trillion cubic feet (Tcf), much of which is targeted for the USA thanks to a $10 billion investment by Exxon Mobil. This compares with reserves of about 50 Tcf in the San Juan Basin of New Mexico and Colorado, where the flow to market is about 1 Tcf per year.

At export terminals, natural gas is converted to its liquid form – liquefied natural gas or LNG. It is then loaded into giant LNG tanker ships for transport to terminals on the coastlines of the major natural gas-consuming countries. These include the United States, China, Japan, South Korea, and India. At these terminals, LNG is converted to a gas for transport via conventional pipeline systems. As of January 4, 2006, North America had 6 operating LNG terminals, 19 approved or under construction, and 20 more proposed. Perhaps 12 or so of these ultimately will be built. We will soon see the western USA getting its natural gas from places like Australia and Russia’s Sakhalin Island via LNG terminals along the coast of southern California.

The Energy Information Administration expects LNG imports into the USA to rise at an average of 16 percent per year between 2002 and 2025 as North American reserves are depleted. This means that the USA will rely on natural gas imports just as it now relies on oil imports. Natural gas provides significant energy used for electricity, home heating, and agriculture and industry demands. Drilling all of the Rocky Mountains, Alaska, Arkansas and Alabama is not going to meet these demands nor offer meaningful energy solutions. Nor will such drilling alter the momentum of the global business of exporting and importing natural gas.

The Valle Vidal of New Mexico, with estimated reserves of about 0.05 Tcf is less than trivial in the context of the USA’s natural gas future. Gas from the Valle Vidal will not affect prices. It will not bring us ‘energy security’. Citizens need to recognize this essential fact, and support the Bingaman and Udall legislative efforts to protect the Valle Vidal for its most important values – for what the Valle Vidal is rather than what it is not.

William M. Brown is a retired federal earth scientist who tracks and interprets energy-related scientific, economic, and political issues for the Coalition for the Valle Vidal and others. He can be reached at wmb3@zianet.com
Get Involved To Keep Forest Service Travel Management Rule Moving Forward

by Michael Scialdone

When the Forest Service finally released its long awaited Travel Management rule on November 2, 2005, they set in motion a process to designate which routes will be open to motorized use. Each National Forest and Grassland office is required to engage the public in this process, which is expected to be completed in four years.

It is important for the conservation-minded public to get involved. Though the Forest Service is moving in the right direction with these new regulations, public input is needed on each National Forest and Grassland to ensure route designation is done in a timely fashion, is sensible, and that the most ecologically damaging roads are closed to motorized use. One of the positive aspects of the rule is that designated roads and trails shall be identified on a motor vehicle use map. These maps will be open to motorized use.

One of the positive aspects of the rule is that designated roads and trails shall be identified on a motor vehicle use map. These maps will also specify what type of motorized vehicle a trail is open to and, if needed, seasonal restrictions. It will be up to motorized users to acquire and know this map, much like hunters and fishers are expected to know the regulations of an area, regardless of signage. Lack of signs (often ripped down by the users themselves) will no longer be an excuse for renegade off-road vehicle use!

NMWA and many of our conservation friends around the state are meeting with the Forest Service to learn what criteria will be used in route designation and how we can engage our members. An important aspect of this process is letting the Forest Service know you want to be involved.

SEND YOUR LETTERS!

Pick the office that manages your local National Forest, write them, and ask to be put on the list for public notification for their route designation process under their new Travel Management rule. It’s easy – a sample letter is below. Send one letter to the Supervisor’s office of the National Forest you are interested in (feel free to pick more than one). Also send a letter to the District Ranger’s office if you have a specific district that you are interested in. The Supervisor’s office will make the final decision, but each Ranger District will develop its own plan. Below is a list of addresses for all the National Forest and Grasslands in New Mexico.

SAMPLE

Dear [Supervisor (or District Ranger)]:

The Travel Management rule released on November 2, 2005 directs each National Forest to designate routes for motorized travel. This is an important step in reigning in ORV abuse and I am interested in being involved. I request to be kept informed as the process develops and when there are meetings for the public to attend.

I can be emailed at _________.

OR

My mailing address is _________.

Thanks,

(your name)

US FOREST SERVICE REGIONAL CONTACTS

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Thanks,

(your name)
Taking a stand against special interests is never easy—but sometimes it is necessary. In order to preserve the foundation of America’s conservation ethic and to uphold protections for the last 30 percent of America’s Roadless National Forests, the states of New Mexico, California, Oregon, and most recently, Washington, have joined in a lawsuit to overturn the Bush administration’s gutting of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

The Bush administration’s roadless policy seeks to strip protection for 58.5 million acres of America’s National Forests. These wild forests provide a myriad of opportunities to the public, ranging from hiking, camping, and hunting to picnics, classroom outings, and retreats. Under the proposed changes by the Bush administration, these last undeveloped national forests could be given away to the logging, mining, and national forests could be given away to the logging, mining, and oil and gas industries. With more of America’s public lands being auctioned off to the highest bidder, our natural environment is not only feeling the stress of degradation but is poised to be taken away from the public domain. This is an outrage beyond reason, and the lawsuit filed by New Mexico, California, Oregon, and Washington is not only warranted, but imperative.

February 7, 2006 marked the closing date for signatures on the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Petition drive for the Roadless Rule. The APA Petition allows citizens to request the government issue, amend, or revoke federal rules—in this case, the Bush administration’s changes to the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

This petition was circulated throughout the United States and hundreds of thousands of citizens signed on expressing their support for repeal of the Bush changes, with over 20,000 New Mexicans voicing their support.

As the great American poet and humanist Walt Whitman once wrote: “Without enough wilderness America will change. Democracy, with its myriad personalities and increasing sophistication, must be fibred and vitalized by the regular contact with outdoor growths—animals, trees, sun warmth, and free skies—or it will dwindle and pale.”

Call and write Governor Richardson and thank him for his work on the Roadless Rule!

### Quick Facts on the Roadless Rule

- 192 Million—Total national forest acres in the United States
- 58.5 Million—Total roadless national forest acres in the United States
- 70%—Percentage of America’s national forest open to development
- 30%—Percentage of America’s national forests that are roadless
- 440,000—Miles of roads contained in the America’s National Forest System
- 17—Times you could circle the Earth with the miles of roads in America’s National Forest System

### New Mexico Roadless Facts

- 9.3 Million—Total national forest acres in New Mexico
- 1.6 Million—Total roadless national forest acres in New Mexico
- 82%—Percentage of New Mexico’s national forests open to development
- 18%—Percentage of New Mexico’s national forests that are roadless
- 9.5 Million—Number of Americans in 2003 visiting New Mexico for leisure activities
- 4.25 Million—Number of Americans in 2003 visiting New Mexico strictly for outdoor recreational activities

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### SPECIES ACT ENDANGERED

by Lisa Hummon

Not long ago, the gray wolf was but a ghost roaming the crests and valleys of Yellowstone. Humpback whales were vanishing from the deep. Even our national symbolic, the bald eagle was slipping through our grasp. But with rising awareness and a growing social environmental ethic, Congress passed the Endangered Species Act in 1973, forever changing the fate of these species.

Since the Act was passed, only 9 of the over 1800 species listed have been declared extinct. This success has been achieved because the Act is not just a law, but something that gives individuals, communities, businesses, and government the tools they need to play a key role in the recovery of imperiled plants and animals. Along the Florida coast, people are dimming their lights to help endangered baby sea turtles make it safely to the ocean, farmers and ranchers are implementing species-friendly practices on their land, and across the country volunteers are monitoring nest sites for threatened bald eagles.

But this past September, the U.S. House passed a dangerous bill that threatens to unravel the past three decades of success. The legislation, H.R. 3824, sponsored by Richard Pombo (R-CA) would undermine the ESA’s ability to conserve habitat for species recovery. It would set a dangerous precedent by requiring taxpayers to pay developers not to harm endangered species. It would exempt all pesticide decisions from compliance with the ESA. And the list goes on. Of New Mexico’s three Representatives, Tom Udall was the only one to vote against Pombo’s destructive legislation. Now we must turn to the Senate to stop it from becoming law.

The time for action is now. Our Senators need to see that the environmental ethic that brought a wave of landmark environmental laws in the 1970’s is not dead, and is in fact deeply embedded in our culture. We must show them that we’re not going to give up the fight. That we want to be able to tell our grandchildren a story of how we did everything we could to stop extinction and protect the quality of their environment. And tell them how we won.

Visit www.saveESA.org.

Lisa Hummon
New Mexico Outreach Representative, Defenders of Wildlife

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**Roadless Rule Update**

by Nathan Newcomer
**Arctic Refuge Workshop**

April 15th 9am to 12pm (preceding the 1pm Public Lands Rally)

Kimo Theater in Albuquerque

*Presented by Erik Dumont of the Alaskan Wilderness League*

Please contact Nathan Newcomer to Register
505.843-8696 or nathan@nmwild.org

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**Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour**

April 4th, 2006, at 7:00pm

*Kimo Theatre • 423 Central NW*

The Banff Mountain Film Festival makes its way to Albuquerque again. The best short films about mountain cultures and mountain sports from their annual contest are on the road and will be shown at the Kimo Theatre on April 4th.

Local sponsors are Mountains and Rivers and Stone Age Climbing Gym. They have generously chosen New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, New Mexico Climbing Resources & Advocacy Group (NM CRAG) and The Access Fund as recipients for proceeds raised through the event. By going, you not only get to see world-class mountain films, you also get to support Wilderness!

General admission tickets are $10 in advance, $12 at the show. Students are $10 in advance or at the show. Tickets are available at Mountains & Rivers, Stone Age Climbing Gym, the Kimo Theatre, or Ticketmaster.

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**“Alaska”**

Rich men take the land
Crush what stands in their way
The beauty may forever die.
One minute it’s here
And then it is gone
Their promises all turn to lies.

Well these are the mountains
And they are my home
They shelter the elk and the deer.
With dollars in your eyes
And some developer’s disguise,
Your money is not welcome here...

Now listen you miners and lumbermen too
Listen you men that build roads
My grandfather spoke of a time before fences

Of endless forests and trees.
We’ve got to have wilderness
If we want to be free...

Be careful Alaska
What they did down in the states
Surely they will do here.

@Copyright 1978 Thomas Nisbett

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**IF WE DO NOTHING, THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE WILL BE DESTROYED. CALL OUR SENATORS TODAY!**
Book Reviews

Cougar Management Guidelines

Cougar Management Guidelines is a rather prosaic title for the most important book on cougar natural history and management to come along since Logan and Sweanor’s Desert Puma (2001). The book’s 13 authors—called the Cougar Management Guidelines Working Group—are a veritable who’s who of large carnivore researchers. Their collective effort proves that something good can indeed be done—and done well—by committee.

The text is organized, succinct, incisive, and accessible to professional and layperson alike. Each chapter covers a pertinent subject area: cougar-prey relationships, habitat, assessing populations, depredation, sport hunting, strategies to manage cougar-human conflicts, and cougar research and management needs. At only 137 pages, Cougar Management Guidelines is a compact, up-to-date, and easy-to-use reference. Points of emphasis are highlighted in bold throughout.

The critical importance of habitat to both conservation and management is consistently emphasized. These big cats wander enormous and diverse landscapes, and effective management begins with understanding the habitat in which they dwell. How and why critical habitat can be identified is discussed, but there is little mention about how state wildlife agencies can affect land management policy to benefit cougars.

Depredation is covered, as is sport hunting. These two areas of cougar management were the primary elements of cougar management in the past. However, the authors point out how changing human attitudes are changing management approaches, such as the banning of cougar hunting in California in 1990. The authors point out that hunters and ranchers are not the only stakeholders to be considered in cougar management. They also emphasize the importance of educating stakeholders, especially when addressing cougar-human conflicts, the most controversial facet of cougar management.

The authors consistently advocate an adaptive management approach. They define this as continual monitoring of indicators that measure progress toward management goals, and changing management practices as new information indicates better alternatives. While this sounds good in theory, I doubt state wildlife agency ability to embrace a concept requiring such flexibility in approach.

Cougar Management Guidelines does an excellent job of showing what needs to be done to bridge the difficult gap between cougar research and cougar management. We live in an age where politics and economics drive wildlife management much more than science. Even the best science is of little value if it is ignored in management decisions. Cougar Management Guidelines provides a clear road map to cougar conservation. It remains to be seen whether wildlife managers will follow it.

Kevin Hansen, Education Director
Southwest Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Foundation
Author of Cougar: The American Lion

NMWA CHAIRMAN RECOGNIZED AS WILDERNESS HERO

For more than three decades, Wesley Leonard has helped inspire and lead the movement to protect wilderness in the southwest. Aided by his ability to eloquently articulate the values of wilderness, knowledge of the land earned from countless hours spent in wild country (he spent 100 days on the trail in 2005), and an enthusiasm for getting out on the ground. But what most impresses people about Wesley Leonard is not his past, but his plans for the future. He has a super-sized vision for wilderness in the southwest, along with the patience, passion, and perseverance to see it realized. The Campaign for America’s Wilderness has recognize our Wesley Leonard as the Wilderness Hero of the Month!
Wildlands Art!
Exhibit and Fundraiser to benefit New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Come out to support Wilderness and local artists at this juried art show honoring Wilderness and wildlife of New Mexico. Showing work by local emerging and established artists featuring original paintings, photography, printmaking, sculpture and more.

Show open throughout March!
NMWA Reception and Silent Auction
March 18th
at the Arts Alliance Gallery
1100 San Mateo Suite 10, Albuquerque in the Courtyard Shopping Center
at San Mateo and Lomas
Open M-F, 9-5pm or by appointment and every Thursday night.

Schedule of Events
March 3- Reception
Opening 5 - 9 pm
March 9 Slideshow
Mogollon Rock Art
Anthony Howell 6:30 pm
March 16 Presentation
Arctic Refuge, Stephen Capra 7pm
March 18- NMWA Reception
Meet the Artists 3-8 pm
March 23- Slideshow
New Mexico Then & Now
William Stone 6:30 pm
March 30 Presentation
Doña Ana Wild! 6:30 pm

A portion of all sales will go directly to the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance and our efforts to protect Wilderness in New Mexico.

For more information call 505.843.8696

Guest Artists
Mary Silverwood
Ruth Tatter
Betty Carlson
Louisa McElwain
Michelle Chrisman
Lezle Williams
Evelyn Martinez
Melinda Morrison
Steve DiOrio
Jane Bunegar
Casandra Cole
Scott Altenbach
Jan Bartelstone
Anthony Howell
William Stone

Artists
Adam Schallau
Andrew Rising
Ann Ahlander
Brian Cobble
Carol Chamberland
Carole Devillers
Carolyn Hutchinson
Caryl McHarney
Cathy Haight
Claire Long
Clarence Cruz
Cynthia Brinigh-Langols
Dave Lamb
Deborah Jojola
Diane Lea
Emily Young
Erika Osborne
George Bajszar
George Pearce
Geraint Smith
Harriet Greene
James Hemphill
Jess Dunn
Jo Moore
John Parish
Margaret Berrier
Margi Lucena
Marilyn Drake
Mary Sweet
Mary Thompson
Michelle Dwor
Monika Steinhoff
N Khandn
Nan Simpson
Patricia Ryan
Peggy Zuris
RC Dub
Roark Griffin
Robert Benjamin
Sandra Place
Sara Maestas
Tara Zalewsky
Tim McCarthy
Service Projects

A rewarding way to get involved in Wilderness and wild lands preservation is through service projects. Stream restoration, road closures, fencing, and surveying are some of the activities we engage in to help protect our wild places.

We need everyone! There is a full range of activities on each service project from slugging posthole diggers to helping with logistics and kitchen set-up. There is something for everyone!

We provide meals, starting with Friday dinner and ending with Sunday lunch. Work for the project is done on Saturday after breakfast. On Sunday, we usually go for a short hike before heading home.

We have partnered with Albuquerque Wildlife Federation (AWF), Amigos Bravos, Sky Island Alliance, and Upper Gila Watershed Alliance to help each other with logistics and to increase volunteer turnout. AWF 2006 Service Projects are listed here.

To sign up or get more information, contact the person listed.

April 7, 8, 9, 2006—Southern NM Service Project

This will be a joint Service Project with Sky Island Alliance and the Upper Gila Watershed Alliance in the Silver City / Lordsburg region. Details still being worked on, but will likely be streambed restoration in the Burro Mts or possibly roads survey work for the Gila NF Travel Management Plan the Forest Service is working on. Maximum participants: 35

Contact: Michael Scialdone at 505-843-8696, scial@nmwild.org for more info.

Driving distance: 6 hours from ABQ, 2.5 hours from Las Cruces

May 19, 20, 21, 2006—Ute Mountain—Service Project

We will be working with the Bureau of Land Management on this recently acquired 14,000-acre gem in northern NM. Ute Mountain is located north of Taos along the Colorado border and the Rio Grande Gorge. Towering above the surrounding sage plain at 10,093 feet, Ute Mountain is now the highest point on BLM lands in NM. Our project will be to help BLM with signs and maintenance as the area becomes open to the public. We will mask unneeded and redundant roads to help keep motorized traffic on the sensible network of routes that BLM would like to leave open. On Sunday, we will take the opportunity to enjoy the area by climbing to the top of the mountain or hiking down to the Rio Grande Gorge to check out petroglyphs.

Maximum participants: 35

Contact: Michael Scialdone at 505-843-8696, scial@nmwild.org for more info.

Driving distance: Approximately 3 hours north of ABQ

Difficulty: Moderate

June 2, 3, 4, 2006—National Trails Day Service Project, Pecos Wilderness

We will be working with Karen Cook of the Carson National Forest to prevent illegal motorized use from occurring in the Pecos Wilderness. The project will entail installing barriers at the Trampas Lakes trailhead, which is in the northwest portion of the Wilderness. We will be staying at a Forest Service campground, but will still need to bring our own drinking water. On Sunday, we will take the opportunity to enjoy the area by hiking up the trail as far as time allows, stopping to admire the work we did the day before.

Maximum participants: 35

Contact: Michael Scialdone at 505-843-8696, scial@nmwild.org for more info.

Driving time: Approximately 2.5 hours drive north of ABQ

Difficulty: Moderate

For information on upcoming hikes, please visit our website: www.nmwild.org

Warning:

Outdoor recreational activities like hiking and backpacking are by their very nature potentially hazardous. Weather can change drastically and unexpectedly and there are many places where a loss of footing can lead to injury or death. Each person participating in the outings and service projects described in this newsletter must ensure that he/she understands the risks involved, obtains the necessary training and takes any necessary precautions. By offering these outings and service projects, NMWA employees and representatives do not intend to hold themselves out as expert guides. Should you choose to take part in the outings or service projects set forth in this newsletter, you must assume the risks inherent in such activities.

The information in this newsletter does not replace your own sound judgment and good decision-making skills. It is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of all the potential hazards and risks involved. NMWA makes no representation as to the safety of any trail or route described because trails can and often do change. While this newsletter has offered suggestions about what to bring, what to wear and what skill level is required for each hike, every participant should do his or her own research and bring whatever is necessary for his/her own safety and comfort. Learn as much as possible about the activities in which you participate, be responsible about your skill level, prepare for the unexpected, and be cautious. It is your responsibility to determine whether you have the skills and experience required.

Children under the age of 16 are welcome on outings, but only if they are supervised at all times by their parent or guardian. Children under the age of 16 may not participate in service projects.

Should you undertake any of the above hikes or service projects set forth in this newsletter, NMWA does not assume responsibility for any accidents, injuries or deaths which may result. All participants must agree that they are entirely responsible for their own safety during the activity and during travel to and from the activity. While NMWA encourages participants to carpool, participants must coordinate carpools on their own. Furthermore, participants must undertake to ensure that their driver is properly insured and a safe driver.

Be safe and have fun!

AWF Project List for March—July ’06

March 18

Cuba: Willow Planting along the Rio Puerco in conjunction with the Rio Puerco Management Committee. Contact Gene Tatum, 255-1960, gtatum3@msn.com

April 1-2

Tijeras Canyon: Cedro Creek Restoration in conjunction with the Quivira Coalition Contact Glenda Muirhead, 281-2925, gmuirhead1@msn.com

June 9-11

El Malpais National Monument: Cebolla Canyon Wetland Restoration Contact Gene Tatum, 255-1960, gtatum3@msn.com

July 14-16

Valle Vidal: Comanche Creek Restoration in conjunction with the Quivira Coalition Contact Glenda Muirhead, 281-2925, gmuirhead1@msn.com

NMWA 2006 HIKING GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE!

This handy guide to all of NMWA’s 2006 hikes across New Mexico’s wildest, most beautiful country can help you plan your nature treks for the entire year! Includes color photos and hike descriptions.

only $5.00

and, all proceeds benefit NMWA!
National Park Service & Wilderness Don’t Mix

continued from page 1

cally, and very pointedly, included the National Park Service under the authority of the Wilderness Act. It was only after it became clear that Congress was going to do this that the agency modified its continued verbal opposition to wilderness.

Since the passage of the Wilderness Act 42 years ago, and like a truculent teenager who is forced to do something they really don’t want to do, the National Park Service has done all it can to avoid and/or ignore the fact that it is supposed to provide special protection to parklands included in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Since 1964, the Park Service has conducted a façade of a wilderness program with committees, meetings, memos, white papers, public statements, etc., which actually provides little or no protection to NPS wilderness resources and values.

The American public should be asking the National Park Service simple questions about what the agency has actually done to preserve wilderness resources and values over the past 42 years. In doing so, they will find that, beyond the rhetoric, the Park Service can offer very little physical evidence proving that it is doing what the Wilderness Act says that it is supposed to “do” to preserve wilderness.

The failure of the National Park Service in preserving wilderness includes:

- a failure to complete the basic Wilderness Act requirement to inventory all NPS lands qualifying for wilderness and generating the necessary recommendations to the President for listing in the National Wilderness Preservation System;

- a failure to provide legal descriptions of wilderness lands in order to clearly distinguish these areas from other parklands (Normally, the legislation establishing wilderness requires the responsible federal agency to submit a legal description for the wilderness within a year or two.);

- a failure to provide for the protection of wilderness lands by completing required Wilderness Stewardship (Management) Plans. These plans should identify where the wilderness boundaries are, establish management standards, identify who in the park organization is responsible for wilderness, and establish “minimum requirement” protocols; all of which is intended to provide for the day-to-day and long-term protection of wilderness resources and values (When I retired from the Park Service in 2003, less than 15% of parks with wilderness resources had wilderness stewardship (management) plans.);

- a failure to establish an internal mechanism to monitor the accountability and effectiveness of the agency’s wilderness management program;

- and a failure to ensure that the Wilderness Act is being administered by persons familiar with the requirements of the act. (A knowledge of the Wilderness Act and its implications on NPS lands is not considered to be a basic requirement for the selection of superintendent positions for parks having wilderness resources.)

Most wilderness advocates consider the “4 (c )” statement to be the heart of the Wilderness Act since it establishes specific prohibitions against roads and the use of motorized equipment, mechanical transport, aircraft landings, structures, and installations. The critical element of this statement is “necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act.”

It can be argued that the lack of approved Wilderness Stewardship Plans, and especially the need to establish an effective “minimum requirement” protocol, is probably the most significant shortfall in the NPS wilderness program. Section 4 (c ) of the Wilderness Act states:

“Except as specifically provided for in this Act, and subject to existing private rights, there shall be no commercial enterprise and no permanent road within any wilderness area designated by this Act and except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area.”

Many park managers focus on the “for the administration of the area” aspect and ignore the critical requirement that all actions affecting wilderness must be “for the purposes of this Act.” Ironically, many superintendents actually interpret the 4 (c ) statement to infer that it is an “escape clause” from the
requirements of the Wilderness Act. The rationale is “if I’m administering the area, I can go ahead and use the prohibited equipment.” Thus, the National Park Service has one of the worst reputations for abusing wilderness through the misuse of helicopters, motorized equipment, and installations.

The Park Service’s continued failure to implement an effective wilderness program has resulted in much more that just an affront to the spirit of the Wilderness Act. The agency’s historic inability to manage the wilderness at Cumberland Island National Seashore resulted in recent legislation, which eliminated areas of designated and potential wilderness and divided the remaining park wilderness into four smaller units. This was done to accommodate the continued use (both authorized and unauthorized) of motor vehicles within the wilderness. In short, decades of the Park Service’s failure to effectively manage the park wilderness resulted in motor vehicles being permitted to drive over many areas where they were previously restricted, a net loss for wilderness.

In 2005, the park staff at Olympic National Park attempted to helicopter prebuilt replicas of historic trail shelters into the park’s wilderness. This project was halted only after several environmental groups filed a lawsuit challenging both the propriety of replacing the shelters and the use of a helicopter to install these artificial structures within the wilderness. The federal judge hearing the case easily ruled against the Park Service and scolded the agency for its lack of attention to the requirements of wilderness in the national park.

Similarly, the Park Service’s failure to effectively manage the commercial motorized river tour operations at Grand Canyon National Park over the past 50 years has now resulted in the possible (and probable) removal of the Colorado River Corridor within the park from its current “potential wilderness” status. The commercial river tour operators have essentially taken over the management of the Colorado River within the park and want to maintain the profits resulting from hauling large numbers of people down the river in large, motorized rafts. The river concession management problem has grown far beyond the Park Service’s feeble efforts to actually protect the river corridor.

The best the Park Service could do in its recent Colorado River Management Plan is suggest that the issue of motorized river craft in the (potential) wilderness river corridor needed to be addressed through federal legislation. What the Park Service is really saying is the concession tour operations at the Grand Canyon have gotten so far out of its control that Congress now needs to decide whether it wants to: (a) preserve the river corridor as wilderness and discontinue motorized float trips; (b) provide a special dispensation, which would allow for the continued use of motorized water craft within the wilderness; or (c) continue the current level of motorized tour operations and remove the wilderness status along the river.

Of course, the current administration will undoubtedly be glad to remove the potential wilderness designation from the river corridor for the sake of the river tour operators. They will use the pretense that the large tour boats accommodate more people and increase “public access.” If the worst happens, the removal of the Colorado River Corridor from wilderness designation will serve as yet another sad reflection on the National Park Service’s inability to preserve this world-class wilderness resource.

It would be comforting to suggest that the above instances are only isolated cases of improper management of wilderness by the National Park Service and, in fact, there are examples of individual park managers doing their very best to try to protect wilderness. Unfortunately, after observing the NPS from the inside as one of the few full-time wilderness program coordinators for the past 15 years, I can only say that these examples are not rare instances of bad wilderness management, and it is unlikely that this situation will change without considerable pressure for improvement from the public. Since it is equally unlikely that wilderness preservation is going to improve under the Bush administration, it is important that groups and individuals from the environmental community be vigilant about all NPS programs affecting wilderness. They also need to be willing to reasonably challenge the park staff about these programs.

One of the most effective tools the public has in ensuring that the Park Service is properly protecting wilderness is the fact that this agency, like most federal agencies, does not like to be publicly embarrassed, either in the press or in the courts. Public scrutiny is especially effective with the Park Service since it prides itself in being one of the world’s outstanding resource stewardship agencies (and, in certain instances, it is). Today the environmental community plays a critical role in protecting wilderness by staying engaged in Park Service management programs and reminding park managers that you expect that wilderness will be managed in keeping with the letter and spirit of the Wilderness Act.

Jim Walters was the former National Parks Service Wilderness Program Coordinator and Wilderness Coordinator for the Intermountain Region.
by Stephen Capra

Where does one begin to talk about the magic that is our national parks? From Gates of the Arctic to the Everglades, from Big Bend to Boundary Waters, from the Dry Tortugas to Haleakala, these lands, perhaps our country’s greatest idea, represent but a fraction of America’s total land mass. But within their borders lies the magic of earth, sky, wind, and water. The spirit and physical awe of bears, pronghorn, mountain lions, bighorn sheep, rattlesnakes, turtles, sharks, and manatees and, perhaps our biggest heartbeat, the bison. But while nature has given us this tremendous gift, man and the present administration seem hell-bent on degrading or destroying this precious source of life and spiritual renewal.

The national park idea took awhile to take hold. America had to outgrow its fear of wild nature. This fear combined with the concept of Manifest Destiny would allow destruction on a massive scale not only to lands such as the great midwestern prairie, but to wildlife in an unconscionable manner. In many ways, the protection of land and wildlife would be a maturing of the American ideal and with the dawn of the industrial age, its time had finally arrived.

The birth of the national park concept can be traced to several pivotal moments. The first was the protection of Yosemite. This would occur before John Muir would ever visit this hallowed ground. Like the Native Americans before them, the first settlers considered the Yosemite Valley a very special place. On June 30, 1864, Abraham Lincoln signed the Yosemite Grant. This grant was the foundation upon which national and state parks were later to be established. The grant deeded Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias to the state of California. Next would come the fabled tale of Yellowstone.

Yellowstone’s beginning as a national park started with the Corps of Discovery, led by Lewis and Clark, and amongst that group was the celebrated woodsman John Coulter. Coulter would return to Yellowstone and trap. Upon his return to civilization, he would tell “tales” so unbelievable that no author or mapmaker would publish for fear of ridicule. In 1871, the head of the U.S. Geological Survey, Dr. Ferdinand Hayden, lead a scientific party of geologists, zoologists, botanists, and others, including photographer William H. Jackson and artist Thomas Moran to explore the Yellowstone country. In a time when many thought of mining, logging, farming, or trophy hunting on western lands, this group of men would recommend that Congress set aside this vast tract of wilderness to become our nation’s first official national park. In March of 1872, President Ulysses Grant signed into law an act creating Yellowstone National Park.

The next phase in the creation of a national park system came with the passing of the Antiquities Act of 1906. This legislation passed mostly out of concerns about protecting prehistoric Indian ruins and artifacts—also known as “antiquities” on federal lands. From these lands and the enthusiasm of President Theodore Roosevelt, the government began the building blocks of a collection of national monuments, including New Mexico’s El Morro in 1906, Chaco Canyon in 1907 and in 1908 the designation of more than 800,000 acres of the Grand Canyon. By 1916, it was clear that the protection of our public lands was of national interest and with the passing of the Organic Act, the Department of Interior and the National Park Service were created. Many lands such as the Grand Canyon would ultimately become some of our nation’s first national parks.

Stephen Mather was the genius founding director of the National Park Service. Interestingly, in 1914, Mather observed that the parks of that time were in deteriorating conditions, and he wrote a letter to Washington to protest. He received a reply from then Interior Secretary Franklin Lane saying, “if you don’t like the way they are being run, come to Washington and run them yourself.” Mather did come and became first assistant secretary, then in 1916, became the first director. Though illness would cause him to resign in 1929, it was Mather who had the vision and the drive, often putting his own money into efforts to protect National Park lands.

Another key figure was Horace Albright. Albright was the confidential secretary to Interior Secretary Franklin Lane. He would become acting director of the Park Service from 1917 to 1919 when Mather had one of many cases of illness. He would later become superintendent of Yellowstone National Park from 1919 to 1929, and director of the Park Service from 1929 to 1933. During his tenure, Albright pushed to expand the park system east of the Mississippi River and introduced the concept of historic preservation into the National Park Service. Carlsbad Caverns would be transferred from a national monument to a full-fledged national park in 1930. In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt agreed to the transfer of national monuments from the Agriculture Department and military parks from the War Department to the Department of Interior. Such consolidation strengthened the Park Service and insured that these areas would be protected for generations to come. More than anything, Albright is revered for his integrity, loyalty, and devotion to the Park Service, something that seems lost as we look at the state of affairs today.

After World War II, the Park Service began to see a growth in popularity. This only increased as the highway system in America came of age in the early ’60s. The park system continued to expand with the additions of Cape Cod in 1961...
and Point Reyes National Seashores in 1962; Guadalupe National Park, Picture Rocks, and Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in 1966; and North Cascades National Park and Redwood National Park in 1968. It’s no coincidence that many of these parks were created during the tenure of then Secretary of Interior Stewart Udall. His time in office spanned the presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson. During these eight years, Udall would make his mark not only in the expansion of the park system but in pressing successfully for comprehensive environmental legislation, including the Federal Clean Air Act of 1963, the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Land and Conservation Fund Act of 1965, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. He would also champion major pollution abatement efforts on Lake Erie and the Hudson, Delaware, and Potomac Rivers. Contrast this role of an Interior Secretary with today’s efforts by Interior Secretary Gail Norton of the Bush administration.

Since being confirmed by Congress in 2001, Norton has made gutting the Interior Department (and all that its history stands for) a routine event. It begins with her relentless support for opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to full-scale oil and gas development. In this role she has consistently given misleading information about the potential impacts of drilling on this fragile and biologically sensitive area. In one widely reported incident, Norton claimed that caribou calving does not occur on the coastal plain of the refuge, when in fact it does, and that information has been public for years. She also hired Cam Toohey, a person who had activity lobbied to open the refuge to oil and gas development, to be her special assistant for Alaskan affairs.

This controversial decision was designed to remove millions of acres of potential wilderness from further consideration, and the case continues to be litigated by conservation organizations. She also has eased restrictions for mining claims in national monuments. It is no longer required that claims be proved valid before permitting mining on pre-existing claims in monuments. But perhaps most troubling has been the Interior Department’s attempt to rewrite the management policies for the national parks. This insidious plan would shift the management focus from the park’s historic mission—preserving natural resources for the enjoyment of future generations—to a commercial and recreational use of the parks for today’s generation.

The Interior Department itself continues to be run under a cloud of cronyism and deceit. As the New York Times recently reported, at least six high political positions have been occupied by people associated with business or trade associations tied to public lands or resources. Some are like Jason Peltier, who for more than 10 years was a paid advocate for the irrigation-dependent farmers in the Central Valley of California. Mr. Peltier now works at Interior for the Bush Administration and oversees new water contracts for the people he once represented as head of the Central Valley Project Water Users Association (several hundred land owners who each year consume more water than the city of Los Angeles). These federal contracts have the potential to tie up water for more than a quarter century, and can bring certain

continued next page
A NATIONAL DISGRACE

farmers a huge windfall if they turn around and sell their water on the open market. Peltier also has the power to stop the $11.5 million a year that goes into an environmental restoration fund. Another of those appointees, J. Steven Griles, a deputy secretary, continued to be receive $284,000 a year from his old lobbying firms while working at Interior. These firms have worked with companies involved in coal, oil and gas development, gold mining, real estate development, golf course construction, yet Mr. Griles saw no potential conflict of interest in working at Interior. Griles has recently become a central figure in the Jack Abramoff scandal. It appears Mr. Abramoff, according to testimony from Michael Rossetti, former council to Interior Secretary Norton, repeatedly lobbied Griles in 2002 and 2003 to deny land rights to the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians, whose plan to build a casino in Louisiana threatened the livelihood of the neighboring Coushatta tribe, which Abramoff eventually milked for more than $36 million in lobbying fees.

These are but a few examples of how the integrity of the Interior Department has been flushed down the toilet by political appointees designed to undermine our parks and wildest public lands. This calculated effort is designed to empower and profit a handful of Washington insiders and to destroy generations of preservation and conservation ethics in America.

When George Bush was running for president, he promised to end the maintenance backlog in the national parks. Six years later little has been done in this regard. In fact, the president’s new budget calls for a $651 million cut for the Interior Department. More than $84.6 million of this was earmarked for construction and major maintenance of the parks. Other agencies at Interior, including the BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Minerals Management Service, Office of Surface Mining, and the U.S. Geological Survey would continue to receive relatively stable funding. In the case of the BLM, such funding is designed to keep up with the explosion in oil and gas leases in recent years.

It does not take much imagination to see that under funding the parks opens the door for more commercial activity, which many former park employees feel goes to the heart of the administration’s plans for the parks and the very corporations and concessionaires

management.

Park employees have observed other disturbing trends in which Bush’s political appointees are taking the parks in dangerous new directions. Recently, according to PEER, the National Park Service has approved the display of religious symbols and Bible verses as well as the sale of creationist books giving a biblical explanation for the Grand Canyon and other natural wonders. Such decisions all emanate from top Park Service political appointees over the objections of park superintendents, agency lawyers and scientists.

Recently, the Mountain Biking group IMBA (International Mountain Bike Association) has made a serious push to put mountain bike trails in national parks. While mountain bikes and wilderness remain a controversial issue with some favoring their inclusion, it seems clear that the parks are currently financially stretched to the limit; they are not in a position to construct specialized trails for mountain bikers or be prepared for an increase in rescue and other medical emergencies. IMBA has offered to defer some of these costs, but the jury is still out concerning the real costs in terms of staff time and overall park budget. In parks where there are cultural and archeological resources, the concern is that the additional access of mountain bikes would significantly increase potential impacts to resources. Currently, Big Bend National Park is in a scoping phase on the question of building mountain bikes trails in the park, meaning the park is asking the public their opinion prior to moving toward an environmental analysis. Should trails be built, potentially large areas of the park could be removed from wilderness consideration.

The people of the National Park Service remain the real crown jewels of our parks. The superintendents, rangers, and interpreters are the people who have dedicated their lives to making our parks the best in the world and maintaining the high standards that insure future generations will enjoy the wonders of the park at the same level we have since their inception. But with the parks’ budgets being drained every year, park employees are feeling the greatest impact. Morale of park personnel is clearly at an all-time low. Though Congress still supports annual pay raises, these are simply unfunded mandates; so when it trickles down to a park level, the superintendent must make hard choices with raises rarely part of the end product. What is far more common is staffing cuts, often in jobs for natural and cultural resources. Attrition is another major budget fixer. When staff leaves a park for another job, the jobs tend not to be filled. This means more work for the remaining staff while the administration continues to look for more jobs to outsource. As one current employee said to me, “I see no improvements in morale among our staff; it was not great before 2000, but now it’s really tanking”. Other cuts at a regional and national level are those for resource management projects and research; these have been cut by millions over the last six years.

As the saying goes, “if you’re not outraged, you’re not paying attention”. This saying resonates when you relate it to the current state of our national parks. The Bush administration and their supporters clearly have no respect for our parks. New Mexico Congressman Steve Pearce was recently named chair of the national park subcommittee and has moved quickly to hold a hearing concerning the planned revisions of park system management. Pearce, when asked about this, stated, “Success should not be determined exclusively by whether our resources look the way they did when the pilgrims landed. . . . for 40 years, the preservationists have really inflated the national park system.” It is clear that the voice of the people must weigh in before our parks are reduced to Disney World. Our message to the congressman and this administration should be clear—the parks and their management are a national wonder that need no fixing. Please send more money and leave them alone!
CALL OR WRITE YOUR NEW MEXICO STATE SENATORS TO END THE RATTLESNAKE ROUNDCUP!

SEE PAGE 22

Call the New Mexico Legislative Switchboard and ask to speak to your representatives

505.986-4300

or email: senate@nmlegis.gov

BE HEARD.
GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

Call Washington, D.C. toll-free. Capitol Switchboard Number:
877-762-8762
Just ask the operator to connect you to your New Mexico Senator or Congressman.

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

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

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

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

Congressman Tom Udall
1414 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-6190
(202) 226-1331 fax

Governor Bill Richardson
Office of the Governor
State Capitol Bldg., Suite 300
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 476-2200
(505) 476-2226 fax

Concerned about oil and gas development on our public lands?
write:
Linda Rundell
BLM State Director
P.O. Box 27115
Santa Fe, NM 87502-0115

Call For Volunteers!
The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance seeks volunteers to help with several upcoming events within the next few months. These events include the Third Annual “Protect Our Public Lands Rally,” which will be held April 15th at the Kimo Theater in Downtown Albuquerque. Tasks include preparing materials for the rally, being ushers at the event, posting flyers, and making courtesy calls to members inviting them to the big day.

Other upcoming events we need the support of volunteers include the Otero Mesa Earth Day Outing, April 21-23, and the High School Wilderness Field Trip on April 25 in Albuquerque to the Botanic Gardens.

As always, we need volunteers to help out with general office work which includes compiling data entry, letter stuffing, writing letters to the editor of a local newspaper, putting together packets, newsletter distribution, and a whole slew of other projects.

If you’re interested in volunteering please contact Nathan Newcomer at 505-843-8696, nathan@nmwild.org

Band Together for Otero Mesa

Make a lasting impression on Senator Bingaman!

We are organizing our members, volunteers, and supporters to meet with Senator Jeff Bingaman and/or his staff, right here in New Mexico to demonstrate that we want Otero Mesa protected! This is the most effective way to state our case to the Senator. It remains clear that Sen. Bingaman is the one who can introduce legislation in Congress to preserve Otero Mesa from oil and gas drilling. We must make clear to the Senator that we want Otero Mesa protected and that he is the man that can make it a reality.

No expensive plane ticket to Washington D.C. is needed. You will not have to meet the Senator or his staff by yourself. Every month is available, so there is no need to be confined to a certain date.

Periodically, Sen. Bingaman will be back in New Mexico and the next time he will be back will be during the summer recess. We are working to make sure that Otero Mesa is the number one issue he hears while he is back home. This is an important opportunity to help make a difference in saving Otero Mesa, and is actually a relatively easy process to do.

If you are interested in doing more for Otero Mesa and you want to set-up a meeting with Senator Bingaman and/or his staff, please contact Nathan Newcomer at 843-8696 / nathan@nmwild.org. Nathan will be able to guide you through the process step-by-step and help you set up your meeting. You’ll be glad you did!

Help Protect our National Parks

Tell them:
- to leave the National Parks Management Policy alone;
- give the National Parks more funding;
- and stop the outsourcing of National Park Service jobs.

Write to:
Gail Norton
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington DC 20240
Phone: 202-208-3100
E-Mail: webteam@ios.doi.gov

Also write the Chair of the National Parks Subcommittee, Congressman Steve Pearce

Communicating effectively with agency personnel and your elected officials is one of the most productive methods of volunteering for Wilderness. Please write a letter to your Representative or Senator and let them know that you support Wilderness preservation. You can also visit our website at www.nmwild.org and Take Action to send decision makers an electronic letter. Also be sure to sign up with the NM Wild Action Center so you will receive important e-mails about upcoming events and actions.

Throughout the newsletter you will see the Action Alert symbol to let you know which issues need your support. You can really make a difference by sending a letter to your elected officials with your personal story about one or more of the places we are working to protect as Wilderness.
Alberto Zavala

En la continuación y dura tarea de informar y mantener activa a la Comunidad Hispánica en temas de conservación y protección de la tierra, en una de mis presentaciones alguien me preguntó acerca de la relación que existe o pudiera existir entre Wilderness y la Religión, en ese momento la presentación tomó un rumbo diferente, ahora estabamos hablando precisamente de Religión y Wilderness.

Es por esa razón por la que me nació el interés de investigar y tener más conocimiento acerca de esta relación Wilderness –Religión y sentí la necesidad de escribir acerca de este tema.

Investigando en diferentes religiones, platicando con Sacerdotes, Pastores y Rabíos encontré que efectivamente hay un viejo conocimiento en el Judaísmo y el Cristianismo en donde las áreas wilderness tienen un significado especial. Los Israelitas estuvieron en áreas wilderness por cuarenta años. Moises fue a la cima de una Montaña para estar en comunión con Dios. Los profetas estaban en el wilderness desértico, no en las ciudades.

En la era Cristiana Juan el Bautista empezó a predicar en áreas wilderness. Jesús pasó cuarenta días, no en un templo, sino en el wilderness. Los primeros monjes fueron a lugares silvestres desérticos para de esa manera practicar mejor su Fé. Los santos hablan a menudo de ese deseo de estar en lugares silvestres desérticos para que ellos tengan la posibilidad de disfrutar de estos lugares como lo mejor del Oeste. A pesar de esta herencia, los valores espirituales del wilderness son pocas veces articulados o tomados en cuenta por la religión moderna, dicha de otra manera, no todos toman en cuenta esta herencia. Cristianos, Católicos y Judíos comparten una pobreza de opinión con respecto a áreas silvestres. Una consecuencia es que a los miembros de la iglesia se les educa muy poco sobre el wilderness y el papel que ha ejercitado en gran parte en la formación de su fé.

Cabe mencionar, que como se cita anteriormente, esto no sucede en todos los iglesias o templos, así como en contra lugares en donde no tenían conocimiento o no le daban importancia a esta herencia, encontrá otros lugares en donde sí lo hacen. Encontré una iglesia que cada año hace un Retiro Espiritual en las Montañas de los Organos, hacen un campamento de tres días (de viernes a domingo) en donde todos los miembros de la iglesia asisten. Platicando con una persona que ha asistido a estos campamentos me comenta que “el estar en contacto con la naturaleza (que es la creación de Dios), en un lugar alejado del ruido de la ciudad se siente una gran paz y tranquilidad, es el lugar perfecto para estar en comunión con Dios, deberíamos de hacerlo más seguido, o al menos dos veces por año”.

Nuevo México grita por un testigo claro de los valores espirituales del wilderness. Temas como la conservación de lugares silvestres, como los Montañas de los Organos, Montañas Potrillos, Sierra de las Uvas, Robledos y Otero Mesa, son examinados en términos económicos, científicos y ambientalistas, pero cosideraciones espirituales y morales son totalmente ignoradas. Esto es en parte porque las iglesias han perdido su voz histórica en este tema social y en parte también porque los ciudadanos individualmente no están involucrados o no se dan el tiempo para involucrarse y estar al tanto de lo que sucede respecto a este y otros temas.

Aunque podemos ver que en la Montaña Tortugas en Las Cruces, así como en el Monte Cristo Rey en Sunland Park, cada año hay una peregrinación, en donde se reúne una gran cantidad de personas, creo que aún estamos haciendo muy poco por conservar esta herencia que hemos mencionado anteriormente, aún podemos hacer mas por conservarla. Es tiempo de dejar la apatía en un lado e involucrarnos en las cuestiones que realmente nos interesan, creo que podemos dedicar al menos una hora por semana para mantenernos informados y participar activamente.

Nosotros podemos servir a Nuevo México, sus iglesias y templos articulando los valores espirituales de lugares especiales con los cuales contamos, como las Montañas de los Organos, Potrillos u Otero Mesa, solo es cuestión de reunirnos como comunidad de fé y discutir sobre el tema. En el pasado cuando los exploradores españoles vagaron en esta región por primera vez, encontraron “una tierra dulce de colinas y de hierbas doradas” que llegaban hasta los estribos de los jinetes en sus caballos.

Esos días se han ido y muchas de esas “Colinas” han tenido que ser sacrificadas para desarrollar económicos y recreación con vehículos motorizados, y no quiere decir que estemos en contra tajantemente de estas prácticas, pero si nos gustaría ver que no se pierdan mas lugares especiales. Nosotros le debemos algo a aquéllos que vienen después que nosotros, futuras generaciones, para que ellos tengan la posibilidad de disfrutar de estos lugares como la tenemos nosotros en estos momentos, es por eso que debemos proteger y conservar áreas de wilderness, lugares atesorados como lo mejor del Oeste.

Haz tu parte, ayuda y ayuda a Nuevo México. Involverate e involucra a tu iglesia o templo, como lo mencioné anteriormente, es tiempo de dejar la apatía y empezar a ser activos y estar informados de lo que sucede no solo en este tema sino en todo lo que nos interese.

Actualmente estoy haciendo presentaciones a iglesias y templos sobre los lugares especiales que tenemos en el condado de Doña Ana y Otero Mesa, lugares que nos interesa proteger, si te gustaría que tu iglesia o templo tenga una de estas pláticas, con mucho gusto estaré con ustedes para aprender de sus experiencias, solo llamenme Alberto Zavala 505-527-9962 o envíen un correo electrónico a alberto@nmwild.org para programar la reunión.

Tal vez esto sea un reto para religión pero también es una oportunidad para extender su visión, una oportunidad de ampliar su visión hacia un futuro de su sensibilidad espiritual, y en el proceso para definir una visión religiosa para esta la “tierra del encanto”.

WILDERNESS Y RELIGION
by Alberto Zavala

During the continuous and hard work of keeping the Hispanic Community informed and involved in issues of conservation and land protection, somebody asked me about the relationship that exists between Wilderness and Religion. The question was an interesting one, so I decided to investigate.

Talking with priests, pastors and rabbis, I found that there is an old awareness in Judaism and Christianity that wilderness holds special meaning. The Israelites were in the wilderness for forty years. Moses went to the top of a mountain to commune with God. The prophets were in the desert wilderness, not in the cities. In the Christian era, John the Baptist began in the wilderness. Jesus spent forty days, not in the temple, but in the wilderness. The first monks went to the wild desert to practice their faith. The saints often speak of their lessons in wild places.

Despite this legacy, the spiritual values of wilderness are poorly articulated by modern religions. Christians, Catholics and Jews share a poverty of perception regarding wild areas. Most church members are not educated or informed about the role which wilderness has exercised in the formation of their faith.

In my research I found that some churches do not have the knowledge of Wilderness or they did not give importance to this legacy. However, I also found some churches that appreciate the spiritual connection in Wilderness. One church conducts a spiritual retreat each year in the Organ Mountains where all the church members assist. Talking with one person who has been to these retreats, I was told that “being in touch with nature, the creation of God, and being in a place far away of the noise of the city, you can feel a great tranquility and peace. It is the perfect place to commune with God, we should do this often, at least three times per year”.

New Mexico cries for a clear witness on the spiritual values of wilderness. Issues like preservation of wild places like Otero Mesa and the Organ Mountains are examined in economic, scientific and environmental terms, but moral and spiritual considerations are often ignored. This is partly because the churches and temples have lost their historic voice on this social issue and partly because most individuals are not involved or aware of issues impacting our wild landscapes.

I believe that we are currently doing very little to conserve the legacy of Wilderness. It is time to get more involved in all the issues that we care about. We can serve New Mexico by articulating the spiritual values of the special places that we have. From the Organ Mountains to Otero Mesa to Valle Vidal, we just need to sit down and talk about it. Back when Spanish explorers first roamed this region, they found a “sweet land of rolling hills and golden grasses” that reached up to the stirrups of horses. Those days are gone and many of the “sweet rolling hills” have been sacrificed. We owe something to those who will come after us—to preserve and protect some of these wildlands, treasured as some of the best in the West.

Do your part to help us Help New Mexico. Get involved—yourself and your church or temple. It is our time to get active. It may be a challenge to return the historical legacy of wilderness in religion, but we can at least work to further the spirituality of Wilderness, and in the process define a religious vision for this “Land of Enchantment.”

We drape our land and seas our people ourselves and we do so with economy sensibility to reverse all current commercial trends.

Pass on to our progeny a world draped and on the mend.

- Alex de Schweinitz
Not Cute, Not Cuddly, Just Essential: Our Friend the Rattlesnake.

by Trisha London

While the mere mention of rattlesnakes sends some people running, many of us appreciate their unique niche in the natural world. My experience with rattlesnakes began with my work as an interpretive guide in the Gila Wilderness. There I discovered what fascinating, valuable creatures they are. The most common kind I encountered was the Blacktail Rattlesnake, Crotalus molossus. During the Gila’s monsoon season, Blacktails were often observed on the visitor trail at predictable locations. I once saw a Blacktail square off with a very large, excited rock squirrel. I knew of another who survived plunging 30 feet off a cliff clutching a squirrel! I grew to admire these animals and how wonderfully they fit into this rugged, beautiful landscape. The vast majority of visitors marveled to see one of these creatures gracefully flow through the rocky terrain. That rattlesnakes are legally protected at the Gila Cliff Dwellings site is a fact that some of the public still doesn’t understand. I would explain that you didn’t have to love the snakes, but by gosh, you had to appreciate how they struggled to live and their special niche in the landscape. Although they play an important role in the ecosystem, rattlesnakes, like tigers, were not made to directly benefit human beings. This, I explained, was the meaning of “wildness.”

Equipped with poor eyesight, rattlesnakes can “see” infrared images of an animal’s body heat through the use of heat-sensing organs in their upper jaws, allowing them to gauge prey size. Even with such adaptations, they are highly vulnerable. Many herpetologists in the southwest believe that roads are the primary source of mortality for some species of rattlesnakes. Rattlesnakes are a top-level predator in the ecosystem. Their numbers are greatly diminished in many areas and their habitat is rapidly disappearing. Without the rattlesnake’s distinctive rattle to sharpen our senses, our world will lose an unmistakable part of its wildness.

Here in New Mexico, a major threat to rattlesnakes occurs from an unregulated commercial exploitation of snakes at the annual Rattlesnake Roundup in Alamogordo. Each year “hunters” collect hundreds of rattlesnakes which are ultimately auctioned to the highest bidder for trinkets and meat. Much of the collecting is done on private lands, but hunters also collect on public lands. The Roundup ultimately kills up to 700 rattlesnakes, teaches the public disrespect for wildlife, and is a disgrace to our state. During the Roundup, rattlesnakes are publicly owned. Children can be educated about snakes in a wiser, more compassionate way, and one that lends itself to sustainability.

Alliance has determined some key steps that must occur to end the Alamogordo roundup:

— Legislative action by NM State Legislators to end the Roundup

— Strict regulation of Western Diamond Rattlesnakes as a game species with reasonable bag limits including a hefty permit fee for collection and a provision for snake instances threatening life and property. This will remove the profit incentive from the Roundup.

If the wildest of the wild adds meaning to your experience of the world, and you want to end the Alamogordo Rattlesnake Roundup, contact your State Legislators at senate@nmlegis.gov and urge them to end this brutal tradition.

"The glory of life comes not from the things we can command, but from those we can reverence." Goethe
By Tom Bryant and Pat Buls

Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA) is a service organization of dedicated horsemen and women working with public lands managers to preserve trails and trailheads on public lands and educating users in Leave No Trace Techniques (LNT) while using back country trails and facilities. BCHA was founded in Montana in 1973 by concerned horsemen after the U.S. Forest Service released the now infamous Bob Marshall Wilderness Plan in 1971. This plan would have greatly restricted, reduced, and in many cases, eliminated horse use in the extensive north-western Montana wilderness complex, which now includes the famous Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wilderness, as well as the beautiful Sun River Game Range.

In 1973, four horsemen who loved riding, packing, hunting, fishing and photographing in "The Bob", as the popular wilderness is often referred to, saw the writing on the wall. They rented a room in a small town school, invited the public, and laid out their concerns and ideas for a solution to the impending crisis. From the first meeting, the horsemen decided that the newly minted organization would work with the various government agencies to ensure that horsemen have the right to use recreational saddle and pack animals in America’s vast back country.

From that inauspicious beginning, BCHA has experienced steady growth. There are now chapters in 19 states throughout the country. In over thirty years, despite thousands of hours of volunteer work worth millions of dollars, the threat to recreational riding in America’s back country is just as real—perhaps even more so now than ever before. Supervising government agencies continue to neglect trails, trailheads, bridges, and cabins in our back country. The primary cause of this neglect is the ever-increasing budget cuts by the federal government. Each year supervising agencies get less trail maintenance money. Each year more trails become dangerous to use, forcing the agencies to close those trails. It has become imperative for citizens to unite in preserving our heritage. The vast wildlands that remain available to us will only remain accessible to us if we work together to preserve the trails.

The mission of BCHA is to work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational stock users, to assist government agencies in maintenance and management of the back country, to educate horsemen in low impact use of horses in the back country, and to foster and encourage the formation of new state and local BCHA chapters.

New Mexico Back Country Horsemen (NMBCH) was started in 1990 by Arlene Walsh of Edgewood after she witnessed the continued decline of back country trails in the Land of Enchantment. There are now seven chapters in the state—The Pecos, Northwest, Middle Rio Grande, Lower Rio Grande, Santa Fe, Gila, and Three Rivers—with an eighth to possibly be started this spring in Ruidoso.

Each chapter works on trails and issues within their geographical area, sometimes collaborating with other chapters on projects where more hands are needed. Chapter members also work with local groups such as The Open Space and Trails Committee in Las Cruces, The Save Our Bosque (SOB) Task Force in Socorro, The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (NMWA), The NM Wildlife Federation (NMWF), The Wilderness Society, The Dona Ana County Public Lands Coalition, and similar non-profit organizations that work to preserve our back country and our rapidly deteriorating trails systems. The fight to save and use trails in our back country is almost a half-century old and shows no signs of abating—we need all the help we can muster.

To learn more about BCHA, check the website at www.backcountryhorse.com and for New Mexico: www.bchnm.org.
News from the WILD! campus-Spring 2006

The University of New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (UNMWA) has gotten its feet off the ground for 2006. With twenty active members, we are still small, but growing! We have plenty of exciting activities lined up for this semester, and with the energetic staff at hand, we will no doubt be able to bring together more defenders of wilderness in the months to come. We have hikes planned for the winter and spring seasons, and we are also planning our first big fundraiser, a Sandia Peak orienteering race. This event will take place April 8th in the Sandia Mountains, and we plan on bringing lots of people to the Sandias for a day of fun in the mountains. We hope to see NMWA community members as well as campus members out at the race. Details will follow in the months to come.

We have other activities planned on campus as well in addition to our bimonthly meetings. Many of our members work in outreach programs around campus, campaigning for various wilderness causes. Some of the important issues we are working on right now include reinstating the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, protecting the integrity of the Endangered Species Act, and working on local wilderness campaigns when needed. Since we are a registered student organization, we have many opportunities around campus for outreach activities, including talks in classrooms and to other student organizations about environmental issues and campaigns. Last semester some of our members worked hard on protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge by speaking to classrooms about the refuge; sending petitions around campus for faculty, staff, and students to sign; and working with other campus groups to promote the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We hope to continue this work in the future on other campaigns, as our responses thus far have been encouraging. We are a young organization with lots of energy, and we hope to be able to do great things on the UNM campus this year!

By Phil Carter

The coyote is a common symbol in New Mexico folklore representing humanity’s place within nature. The animal possesses an analytical and opportunistic intelligence similar to people. According to Enrique Lamadrid’s essay “The Rogue’s Progress,” “The coyote is the only animal spirit capable of bridging the vast religious contradictions that exist between the ancient Paleolithic hunting culture, where sustenance derives from death, and the agriculture of more recent Neolithic times, where sustenance derives from growth and life.” In the coyote tales collected by Barry Lopez in Giving Birth to Thunder, Sleeping with His Daughter, Coyote is sometimes clever. In the Jicarilla Apache story “Coyote Shows How He Can Lie,” Coyote swindles a horse and riding gear from humans. The Jicarilla Apache also employed a common theme of Coyote opportunistically imitating other animals but resulting in failure. In “Coyote and Mountain Lion,” Coyote, after watching a cougar kill a deer, tries to use the same pouncing technique and is flung away by the unhurt deer. In this way, Coyote is often arrogant and full of bluster and gets his comeuppance from animals smaller than him. The Southern Ute tale announcing his plans to eat Spider only to be tricked as Spider escapes and tricked again when the situation repeats itself.

In the 1930s, Juan B. Rael collected Coyote stories from Mexican communities in New Mexico. Faced with the same realities of living in the desert, the Mexicanos had put many of the same themes into their Coyote tales as Native Americans had. In “The Garaban Bird,” Coyote threatens to knock down the tree in order to eat Dove’s eggs. Dove calls his bluff and, in an unsuccessful attack on the tree, Coyote loses his teeth and hair. Behind this and other Coyote stories is a message of people, in their hubris, failing to recognize the older wisdom in nature. Like in the comic tales, this wisdom is often as straightforward as running headfirst into a tree, but I am afraid that we will nevertheless lose our hair and teeth if we continue to lose touch with the natural world.

Phil Carter is a recent New Mexico transplant who is very active with the UNM chapter of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance. He is majoring in Environmental Science. You can contact the author at pcarter2@unm.edu.
New Mexico WILD!

TAOS MOUNTAIN ARTIST RETREAT

Spend 3 Days & Nights at the Charming Old Taos Guesthouse
Friday, Saturday & Sunday
May 19-21st

* Guided Outdoor Painting Trips Daily
* Demo & Individual Instruction Available
* Lodging with Full Breakfast- Hot Tub
* Enjoy Friendship & Inspiration of Fellow Artists!

The Entire Retreat with
Shared Double Room, Only $295+tax
With a Private Room, Only $395+tax

Non-Refundable Deposit of $115 Due April 20th.

Call Now to Reserve Your Spot!
Michelle Chrisman
505-977-4785

The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance introduces the Go WILD! Shopping Program. Now for the first time you can help us protect Wilderness throughout the state, through your day-to-day shopping. That’s right, everyday as you shop in Albuquerque, you can elect to shop with supporting merchants who have agreed to rebate a portion of every dollar spent and have it sent to NMWA to help support us as we work to protect wild places in New Mexico.

HERE’S HOW IT WORKS

Enroll
You can visit nmwild.org and click on the link or go directly to www.tricordia.com/nmwa.go- it only takes a few moments and it is free! List NMWA as the cause you want to help support. Enter your credit and/or debit card numbers (it’s a fully secure site) so the rebates you create when shopping can be tracked.

Shop
Or dine at the participating local businesses listed in the To Shop section of the site. There you will find hundreds of national online businesses as well as local businesses such as A Bouquet Boutique, Artichoke Café, Martha’s Body Bueno, Kim Jew Photography, Beyond Borders and Morningside Antiques to name just a few.

Support
Each and every time you shop with any of the participating businesses you will be helping to protect New Mexico’s wild places. Please take this simple step and begin to make your day-to-day shopping contribute to the creation of an Enriched Community for all of New Mexico.

Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge Earth Day

Native Plant Field Trip
April 15, 2006
Join Judith Phillips, author of the best selling “New Mexico Gardener’s Guide” on a visit to the east side of the Refuge to discover the grasses, wildflowers and plants.

Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge International Migratory Bird Day Pinyon Canyon Birding Field Trip
May 20, 2006
An excellent guided field trip for the avid birder. Join US Forest Service ornithologist Hart Schwartz for a trek into Pinyon Canyon.

Events are free. Call Refuge to make reservations
(505) 864-4021

Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge is located off I-25 exit 169, approximately 1 hour south of Albuquerque or 2 hours north of Las Cruces.

Theobroma Chocolatier
Heights Location: (505) 293-6545 or Downtown (505) 247-0848

Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge
Earth Day

FOREVER WILD 2006!
A Multi-Media Celebration of
Wild Lands, Wildlife, and Wild Rivers
Featuring nature photographer/Jim Stoltz and guests!
April 4th, 7pm • James A. Little Theater, Santa Fe
Free Admission!
Come experience Jim’s inspiring photographs and original backcountry ballads from over 10,000 miles of hiking through America’s last wild places. Enjoy performances from local musicians and dancers, learn about local conservation efforts, and hear from Congressman Tom Udall (invited) about New Mexico’s natural heritage. Meet special guest Raven, a rescued gray wolf from Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary!
Sponsored by: Defenders of Wildlife, Sierra Club Northern NM Group, Forest Guardians, The Endangered Species Coalition, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, Valles Caldera Coalition, Audubon New Mexico, Santa Fe Conservation Trust, Acoustic Ecology Institute, and more TBA!
www.ForeverWild.info or Lisa (505) 248-0118

Mark Your Calendar Today for Earth Day 2006, April 22
Join Forest Guardians for the Annual Stream Team River Restoration Event!

Ways to participate in Stream Team:
• Plant trees with other volunteers
• Sponsor a Stream Team member
• Join the Stream Team!

This tree planting event is a truly inspirational display of grassroots activism to restore the degraded rivers and streams of the Southwest.

Informational Presentations on our Rio Puerco planting scheduled through March • Call 505-988-9126 x150 or email cnorton@fguardians for more information http://guardians.org, icon is on left

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school of grizzly etiquette). subscribe to the Timothy Treadwell assured, our operation does not knowledge of the big outside (rest add to your already considerable something right. That something horribilis suggests that we’re doing otherwise abused by Ursus arctos upon, slapped, clawed, eaten, or ever been chewed upon, drooled Falls. That none of our clients have tourist spectacle such as McNeil Falls. That none of our clients have been chewed upon, drooled upon, slapped, clawed, eaten, or otherwise abused by Ursus arctos horribilis suggests that we’re doing something right. That something is a body of safety habits that, if you join one of our trips, we’ll add to your already considerable knowledge of the big outside (rest assured, our operation does not subscribe to the Timothy Treadwell school of grizzly etiquette).

Fine, you say, but still, why pay all those Ben Franklins to Howie’s and Marilyn’s outfit when I’m happy to take my chances on my own, and if I end up as Griz feces, so be it.

Still, consider this: All of our guides are naturalists who understand the local plants, rocks, and critters. And we love to share that knowledge with our clients. In other words, a Big Wild Adventure isn’t simply a trek led by a big hairy guide who avoids catastrophic encounters with large carnivores. Really, we explore instead of “hike,” and we provide the opportunity for our clients to really learn about what makes a particular chunk of wild country tick. And we explore the wilds from the Gila, the Cabeza, and Utah canyons to the Brooks Range, with plenty of trips within the Greater Yellowstone.

There are other reasons to sign on, too, even for experienced outdoors folks like most NMWA members. For example, we know our trip areas well and thus will take you to some really wondrous unknown places off the trampled path. And we know how and where to look for animals, a major emphasis of our operation.

In addition, many of our clients are busy urban professionals (BUP-PIES) who love the convenience of simply jumping onto a 737 for Bozeman with nothing but a fleece-filled duffel. No muss, no fuss; we buy and organize the food, get all the permits, transport you from town to the trailheads (and back if we liked you). We even supply all the gear if you don’t trust the folks at Delta to keep your 40 year-old Kelty frame welded together as one unit. In other words, just show up. And leave the cooking to us.

So there you go. The only other reason to sign up for our trips is that our company is diehard pro-wilderness (as some of you folks who know us through conservation activism will attest), and we also have some great campfire discussions. By the way, I personally guide over half of our trips myself.

That’s about it; shameless self-promotion over. Whether or not you join us in the wilds, we appreciate your fine efforts for New Mexico. Long may her wilds thrive, and long live the wilds both on the ground and within us.

Howie Wolke is a longtime wilderness guide, writer (co-author of The Big Outside with Dave Foreman), and conservationist who lives in Montana just north of Yellowstone. Big Wild Adventures can be reached at (406) 848-7000 or at www.bigwildadventures.com. Sign up for a trip as a NMWA member and Big Wild will kick back 10% of the trip fee to the NMWA.
Join the Friends of Wilderness monthly giving program.
Contact Roxanne at 505/843-8696 to get set up.

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 ensure that future generations may enjoy them too.

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Questions?
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Do you need to renew? Check your membership expiration date located above your name and address.