

New Mexico

The Semi-annual Publication of the
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Summer 2020

WILD!

GILA WILD AND SCENIC LEGISLATION INTRODUCED!



**Plus: A Conversation with
Congresswoman Deb Haaland**



New Mexico **WILD!**

The Semiannual Publication of the
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
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ON THE COVER:
Middle Fork of the Gila River, Gila Wilderness. Photo: James Hemphill

DESPERATELY LOOKING FOR THE LEMONADE
BY MARK ALLISON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I write, New Mexico's stay at home orders are gradually being relaxed. After nearly three months in self-quarantine, people are taking tentative steps out. The in-person greetings are generally warm, if a little awkward and invariably sticking to a now familiar script. "Are you all safe and well? This is surreal isn't it? How are you holding up? Could you have ever imagined..."



A large part of the reason many people are venturing out this particular week is to express grief and outrage at the death of yet another black man by police and vigilantes. The man was George Floyd this time. Before that it was Ahmaud Arbery, Treyvon Martin, Jordan Davis...and so many more. And of course, women of color, like Breonna Taylor, are also brutally victimized. You may be reading these words weeks or months after I write them and who knows what may transpire during that time.

It is inescapable to observe that the communities that are being disproportionately ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic are the same ones that have been the victims of persistent racism and racist policies, systems, and institutions: black communities certainly, and of course Native Americans, all people of color. We watch in heartbreak the devastation on the Navajo Nation, for example, with the highest per capita infection rate of anywhere in the country. Who hasn't been reminded of the decimation of indigenous peoples resulting from European contact, in no small part from the introduction of smallpox?

The lands New Mexico Wild is trying to protect are the ancestral homelands of Native Americans and remain sacred sites for them even today. We are reminded every day in our work of how complicated our history—and our present—is. Our hearts go out to everyone who has lost a loved one to the pandemic or to institutional violence.

It is human nature to try to find the bright spots in all this gloom, however difficult that may be. People have certainly become more aware of the wildlife in their neighborhoods. Perhaps there is even more wildlife to be aware of, as animals take advantage of the slowed pace and volume of human activity. I wonder if we can hold on to that attentiveness and appreciation?

The planet itself has been able to take a metaphorical deep breath, and we have all seen the pictures of cleaner waters and clearer skies, and perhaps noticed them ourselves. Chances are this is just a temporary and mostly cosmetic respite, lasting only until we go back to doing what we were before...unless we don't.

We have been reminded how truly remarkable and essential our public lands and wilderness areas are, with some discovering this for the first time. Many places in New Mexico are seeing more visitation than ever before. How do we get all those visitors to become stewards and advocates? That is our challenge.

While we want everyone to have the opportunity to experience the beauty, awe, and humbling power of nature, it is obvious that the infrastructure,

law enforcement, and public education regarding “Leave No Trace” and how to safely and appropriately behave on our shared public lands is woefully, even dangerously, inadequate.

So much for the lemonade.

Disgracefully, the Trump administration has used our distraction and anguish during the pandemic to continue and even accelerate its systematic dismantling of virtually every bedrock conservation and environmental rule, regulation, and law dating back fifty years and more. The *New York Times* recently attempted to catalogue the rules that are being revoked or rolled back, identifying 98, but noted that the list did not include everything.

High Country News reported that the Trump administration instructed state offices of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to let oil and gas companies determine for themselves the royalty rates that they pay to the government for drilling on your public lands! National Resource Defense Council’s Josh Axelrod noted that BLM is also making public lands available to private companies with “non-competitive leasing” that provides taxpayers virtually no financial benefit whatsoever. Adding insult to injury, the precipitous fall in oil prices could leave the state of New Mexico liable for billions of dollars in cleanup costs when small extraction companies go bankrupt.

It is all connected. The rise in global pandemics, including coronaviruses, is connected to poverty, social injustice, climate change, species extinction, reduced biodiversity, deforestation, and fragmented wilderness.

Daring to look forward a bit, perhaps we can we have a conversation about how to create new employment opportunities for struggling New Mexicans to both stimulate our economic recovery and address the decades of neglect and millions of dollars of deferred maintenance and backlogged capital projects on our public lands? Can we talk about investing in our land management agencies for enforcement and better coordination and more public awareness and education about what it means to be a responsible public lands owner? Can we please discuss how to reduce our state’s dependence on oil and gas revenues? How can we be better listeners, not just to the birds in our backyards, but also to one another? And how can conservationists promote equity and help end racism?

It is up to all of us to make a choice not to simply go back to the way things were before. It wasn’t working for the planet or for New Mexico’s public lands, and it certainly wasn’t working for black men or Native Americans or other communities of color. It wasn’t working for small rural communities in New Mexico either. Instead of trying to get back to where we were, can we use this opportunity to create a new world that is more fair, equitable, and sustainable?

I hope you are safe and holding up well. This time we are living through is surreal, isn’t it? Could you have ever imagined...?

In solidarity.



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The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance is dedicated to the protection, restoration, and continued respect of New Mexico’s wildlands and Wilderness areas.

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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.



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Preserving Culture at the Caja

BY JOEY KEEFE, COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Nestled just southwest of Santa Fe is a sprawling 107,068-acre plot of remarkable public land known as Caja del Rio. Though not as well-known as other sites across New Mexico, the Caja del Rio is at once a magnificent landscape and home to cultural resources and sacred sites cherished by the region’s pueblos. Well-preserved petroglyphs depicting thunderbirds, elk, spirals, stars and more decorate the black basalt escarpment and canyon walls on the site’s eastern plateau.

If you are fortunate enough to see a petroglyph or other cultural resource, be respectful, do not touch and leave it as you found it.

Part of the Western Wildway Priority Wildlife Corridor, the Caja del Rio supports vital wildlife habitats along the Upper Rio Grande Watershed. Gray fox, badger, burrowing owls, mountain plover, long-billed curlew, spotted bats and the threatened gray vireo traverse this corridor.

The Caja is also an important slice of history. The Spanish came to the area centuries ago, and El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro from Mexico City to New Mexico passed through the canyons of the Caja. The original Route 66 runs atop the mesa and is now a seldom-used dirt road.

Co-managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service, the Caja del Rio is a hidden natural and cultural gem. Yet a terrifying prospect has emerged in the form of a proposed superhighway from Los Alamos National Labs to Santa Fe that puts the Caja del Rio at risk of utter destruction before many New Mexicans have had a chance to visit the area.

In addition, immediate threats such as illegal poaching and unregulated, ad hoc shooting ranges have largely gone unchecked. Indiscriminate target practice is evidenced by empty shotgun shells along the dirt road atop the mesa, scattered among other discarded objects and garbage. In addition, vandals have scratched out petroglyphs and chipped off large chunks of rock to illegally take petroglyphs home as souvenirs. These destructive activities persist in large part because understaffing and a shortage of funding make it virtually impossible for BLM and forest managers to adequately monitor the area and enforce laws and regulations.

New Mexico Wild has convened meetings with Cochiti, Santo Domingo and Tesuque pueblos and other local communities like La



In February, New Mexico Wild joined Rep. Deb Haaland, Cochiti Gov. Charles Naranjo, Tesuque Gov. Robert Mora, former Tesuque Gov. Mark Mitchell, and partners for a field trip to Caja del Rio. Photo: New Mexico Wild

Cienega to listen to concerns about the cultural resources and traditional land uses that the proposed superhighway has placed squarely in the crosshairs. Our goal is to use this local stakeholder guidance to determine how we can be the most helpful in local efforts to preserve a way of life on the Caja.

In February, New Mexico Wild accompanied Rep. Deb Haaland, D-N.M., Cochiti Gov. Charles Naranjo, Tesuque Gov. Robert Mora, former Tesuque Gov. Mark Mitchell and other concerned stakeholders on a field trip to the Caja del Rio. The trip provided congressional and pueblo leaders an opportunity to explore the landscape together and discuss the shared values that have brought so many communities to the Caja over the centuries.

New Mexico Wild is grateful to work alongside Northern New Mexico’s pueblos, local communities and federal conservation champions like Rep. Haaland as we continue fighting to protect special places like the Caja del Rio. Our staff will continue looking to these leaders and local residents to come up with a plan to protect the Caja before entire cultures and natural landscapes are erased from history forever. 🌱

SPOTLIGHT ON A CAJA DEFENDER: DEIRDRE MONROE

Deirdre Monroe has spent much of the past two decades exploring the Caja del Rio on foot and horseback. The more she explored the Caja over time, the more she wanted to share the area with others, all while preserving landscape and traditional uses, such as grazing. Monroe purchased a GPS in 2000 to discover and map the trails in the Caja, which resulted in published trail maps in 2004 and 2014. Monroe brought together a diverse coalition of Caja stakeholders, including the Caja del Rio La Majada Grazing Association, to write a \$100,000 “Recreational Trails Program” grant application. The grant was awarded in 2007, allowing the Santa Fe National Forest to build a trailhead (the Headquarters Well Trailhead) that has now become incorporated into the 2018 El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historical Trail. Local stewards like Deirdre Monroe help keep the Caja del Rio wild and beautiful.



Wildflowers, photo: Brian O’Donnell; Deirdre Monroe; photo: Deirdre Monroe

A CONVERSATION WITH CONGRESSWOMAN DEB HAALAND

New Mexico Wild Executive Director Mark Allison recently sat down with Rep. Deb Haaland (NM-CD1) to get her views on public service, public lands, equity and Indian Country.

Mark Allison: Thank you for taking the time to sit down with us, Congresswoman.

Congresswoman Deb Haaland: Thank you for having me. I'm happy to be here.

MA: Politics seems to be increasingly challenging, from the need to fundraise, to how polarized we've become, to how ugly and mean spirited it often is ... how and when did you decide to get into politics?

DH: Well, I've been organizing for close to a couple decades here in New Mexico, mostly working in underrepresented communities, and 2014, you know, was a bad year for Democrats and I recognized that early on and decided that I would run for Lieutenant Governor and see if I could activate some voters and volunteers, and that's what I did. I started out as a volunteer and now I'm a member of Congress, so I've worked on lots of campaigns and helped lots of candidates in between.

MA: There was famously a wave of new women joining the House of Representatives in 2018, and, of course, you made history by being one of the first two Native American women elected to Congress (Sharice Davids being the other, from Kansas' 3rd Congressional District). What has your impression been about how this has affected Congress?

DH: Of course, having more women is important because we have a different perspective on issues. There's Lucy McBath (of Georgia), for example, whose son was killed by gun violence, so she brings that perspective. We've got a CIA agent, a helicopter pilot, career military women who have come in and share their perspectives as well. I think it's important. We're half of the population, but we're definitely not half of Congress or half of elected positions in this country, so our voices are absolutely needed. I'm proud to serve with that number of women, and there are even more women running this time around in 2020.

MA: Do you feel that you have a special responsibility to speak for all Native voices? Is this fair or reasonable? How do you balance being a single congresswoman representing a district with representing a historically absent voice?

DH: I can't represent my tribe or anyone's tribe, but what I can do is make sure that I can bring tribal leaders to the table so that we can hear their voices. The slogan for my campaign was "Congress has never heard a voice like mine." I'm on the Natural Resources Committee and the vice chair of that committee and the chair of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands. Our first three hearings in that full committee were all on climate change. That hadn't happened for 10 years. And so we absolutely felt like we had lost a lot of ground on that issue alone, and a part of that conversation involved Indian tribes so we brought them to the table so they could talk about what climate change was doing in their own communities. We know that climate change affects communities that are least equipped to adapt. Those are communities that don't have a lot



Mark Allison and Tisha Broska with Rep. Haaland. Photo: Joey Keefe

of money. So we brought tribal leaders to the table to talk about the religious significance of Bear's Ears (National Monument), Grand Staircase-Escalante (National Monument) and Chaco Canyon, those areas we know are ancestral homelands to the Pueblo people and other tribes that practice their religion there, including the Navajo Nation. We brought all those folks to the table to talk about those issues and we will absolutely keep doing so. They've been brought in on a number of issues like wildlife and dealing with wildfires in this time of climate change. And we'll absolutely keep doing that.

MA: Can you take a minute to describe what tribal sovereignty is?

DH: Sure. The United States has a trust responsibility to Indian tribes. Indian tribes are essentially nations within our nation. Think about this way: The United States was Indian land from sea to shining sea. From east to west and north to south, every single inch of this country was at one time Indian land. When the Europeans first came to this country, they needed land and more land, so by conquest they took lands from Indian tribes. They said, "We need this land. We'll put you over here." Essentially, most of the land was taken by force or bargained for through treaties and executive orders. In exchange for that land, the United States made a promise to Native Americans to offer education, healthcare, public safety and things of that nature. It was best put by the chairman of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe, Aaron Payment, when he said, "You've already got the land and now the mortgage is due." The trust responsibility never goes away. The United States falls behind when it doesn't meet those obligations. The trust responsibility that the U.S. government owes the Indian tribes is in exchange for the land that is now the United States of America.

MA: I saw in your remarks at a 2020 State of the Indian Nations event recently that you talked about climate change and public lands, but you also talked about the importance of the census in Indian Country. I see you're even wearing a census button right now. Can you say a few words about why the census is so important?

DH: Well it's all about the money. Federal funding is predominantly decided based upon what the populations are in various communities. Not only that, but representation is decided by that as well. So, it's our obligation to be counted, and we are working hard to make sure that people are counted in a fair and proper way. There was a

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ONGOING THREATS TO THE PECOS REGION

BY LOGAN GLASENAPP, STAFF ATTORNEY

As highlighted in the previous edition of this newsletter, a Colorado company has applied for exploratory drilling permits in the Jones Hill area of the Santa Fe National Forest north of Pecos. Comexico, LLC, a subsidiary of Australia-based New World Resources — the rebranded name of New World Cobalt — is looking for gold, silver, lead, copper, zinc and other metals in this potentially mineral-rich area.

The Santa Fe National Forest kicked off the public scoping period for the proposal at an informational meeting at Pecos High School in early December 2019. Approximately 200 individuals, including community members, environmental organization and acequia representatives and the governor of Tesuque Pueblo, attended and spoke in opposition to the proposed exploratory drilling.

The New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division, the New Mexico Environment Department and Santa Fe County have all submitted requests for additional information to Comexico and highlighted crucial gaps in the application for exploration.

New Mexico Wild generated over 2,600 public comments—thank you!—on Comexico’s proposed exploration project, urging Santa Fe National Forest officials to conduct an appropriately robust environmental analysis to ensure full protection of the lands, water, air, wildlife and people that rely upon Pecos Canyon. We are urging the agency to require an environmental impact statement instead of issuing a categorical exclusion. Here are a few other things we’re working on to prevent this kind of short-sighted project in the future:

STATE AND COUNTY PERMITS

Comexico’s hurdles do not start and stop with the Forest Service. The company needs permits from the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department and Santa Fe County, thanks to a recent amendment to the county’s Sustainable Land Development Code. San Miguel County has signaled that it intends to follow Santa Fe’s lead. New Mexico Wild has been engaged with both the state and the counties on these processes and will continue to urge our local decisionmakers to require the strictest environmental protections available before allowing any drilling to occur on such a treasured landscape.

OUTSTANDING NATIONAL RESOURCE WATERS

Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs) are streams, lakes and wetlands designated by New Mexico for special protection against degradation. ONRWs cannot be subjected to new degradation. This means

that existing uses may continue on these special waters, but new degradation — such as contamination from an exploratory drilling or mining project, for example — cannot occur. New Mexico Wild is working with partners to get ONRW designation for a stretch of the Pecos River — and its tributaries like Indian Creek, Macho Creek and Sawyer Creek — that starts at the Wilderness boundary and ends at the Dalton Day Use Site. (The stretch of the Pecos that runs through the Wilderness is already designated as an ONRW.) This new designation would allow the New Mexico Environment Department to require strict mitigation standards for any drilling that might occur in Pecos Canyon, making it more certain that any activity would not degrade the water quality of the Pecos River or its tributaries in the canyon.

A petition for ONRW designation was recently filed with the New Mexico Water

Quality Control Commission (WQCC). The petitioners include San Miguel County, the village of Pecos, the New Mexico Acequia Association, the Upper Pecos Watershed Association and Molino de la Isla Organics. Jemez Pueblo submitted a letter of support and contributed to a section of the application, noting the cultural ties to the Pueblo of Pecos.*

The commission met on May 12 and scheduled the Pecos Outstanding Waters hearing for Nov. 10.

Chris Toya, of Jemez Pueblo, provided the following history of the cultural connection between the Jemez and Pecos pueblos. *P’á kilâ or Pecos Pueblo translates to “the place above the water.” The Pecos People built villages along the Pecos River Valley in the 1200s and 1300s and by the 1450s, they had constructed and settled in the one

Story continued on page 17



The Pecos River, photo: Hunter Ten Broeck

CHACO PROTECTION CAMPAIGN UPDATE

BY JOEY KEEFE, COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

In late February, the Farmington field office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released a draft Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) to determine how the lands in the office's jurisdiction will be managed for the foreseeable future. BLM's identified "preferred" plan would allow oil and gas development right up to Chaco's doorstep, jeopardizing fragile public lands and irreplaceable cultural resources and sacred sites in the Greater Chaco landscape. The draft RMPA also prioritizes oil and gas development at the expense of Lands with Wilderness Characteristics. These lands, which New Mexico Wild inventoried and submitted to BLM, are some of the last wild places in northwest New Mexico and need to be protected from the irreversible damage that follows oil and gas development.

In light of Covid-19 related challenges and heartbreak being borne disproportionately by tribal communities, particularly the Navajo Nation, New Mexico Wild joined the All Pueblo Council of Governors, the Navajo Nation, New Mexico's federal congressional delegation, and dozens of conservation and community groups calling on the Department of Interior (DOI) to extend the comment period deadline. Tribal communities are rightly focused on responding to the pandemic and virtual meetings are not an appropriate substitute for meaningful participation. With a lack of broadband for internet services in much of rural New Mexico, many citizens wouldn't have been able to participate, even if they weren't



Assistant Speaker Lujan, Congresswoman Haaland, and other leaders visited Greater Chaco in April 2019. U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources

struggling to deal with the pandemic and related economic hardships.

We appreciated that DOI Secretary Bernhardt ultimately made the correct decision and extended the comment period by 120 days, until September 25.

New Mexico Wild for years has worked closely with tribal leadership, elected officials, and partners to push back against these threats of development. We are proud to endorse federal legislation co-sponsored by New Mexico's entire Congressional delegation—Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, Assistant Speaker Ben Ray Lujan, and Reps. Deb Haaland and Xochitl Torres Small—to protect the greater Chaco region. The bill, known as the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act of 2019, would permanently remove all public lands within 10 miles of the national park from future oil and gas lease sales. While the legislation passed the House

of Representatives in October 2019, it still awaits action in the Senate.

Of the five alternatives proposed by the BLM RMPA, four contain little to no protection for the greater Chaco region. The fifth alternative, known as Alternative B1, while far from perfect, most closely approximates the pending federal legislation, sponsored by New Mexico's entire federal delegation. In addition to encouraging the public to support Alternative B1, we are also following the leadership of the All Pueblo Council of Governors and recommending that there is also a need for a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to examine other alternatives, account for the industry downturn, and to let the Congressionally-authorized cultural resources investigation be completed.

While we continue to work with our Congressional delegation to find a path to pass the Chaco protection legislation in the US Senate, we are simultaneously putting pressure—with your help—on BLM to choose a final plan that adequately protects the natural, cultural, historical, and archaeological resources and existing communities that make the greater Chaco region so special. We have set up an online system so supporters like you can weigh in. It is critical that BLM hear from as many members of the public as possible so that they understand the overwhelming community desire to save the greater Chaco area. To learn how to comment on the Farmington RMPA to protect Chaco Canyon, please visit nmwild.org. 🏡

Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Photo courtesy of the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources.



WILDERNESS RANGER UPDATE

BY WILL RIBBANS, WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP AND OUTREACH MANAGER

We are excited to be partnering with the Forest Service for our fourth season of Wilderness stewardship work across New Mexico. For the past three seasons we have worked hard to make a positive impact on New Mexico’s Wilderness areas through stewardship, monitoring, data collection, education and volunteer engagement.

We are ready for another season working for Wilderness and building new partnerships along the way. This season we will have four returning Wilderness rangers and have hired two new rangers to work on the Lincoln National Forest. Here is where we will be and how to get in contact with us:

Santa Fe National Forest: Pecos, Dome, Chama River Canyon and San Pedro Parks Wilderness Areas

Rangers: Jesse Furr and Zack Bumgarner
Contacts: jesse@nmwild.org and zack@nmwild.org

Cibola National Forest: Sandia Mountain, Manzano Mountain, Withington and Apache Kid Wilderness Areas

Rangers: Brennan Davis and Walker Martin
Contacts: brennan@nmwild.org and walker@nmwild.org

Lincoln National Forest: White Mountain and Capitan Mountains Wilderness Areas

Rangers: Liam Tow and Andres Osario
Contacts: liam@nmwild.org and andres@nmwild.org

Wilderness Ranger Program Manager:
Will Ribbans—will@nmwild.org

Please drop us a line if you’d like to learn more about volunteer opportunities on our national forests. 🐾

Above right: Wilderness Rangers attend a trail clean-up project on the Continental Divide Trail. Photo: New Mexico Wild; middle right: “Alone Ranger”. Illustration: New Mexico Wild Wilderness Ranger Jesse Furr



UNM WILD UPDATE

BY KAI HOLLENBERG, PRESIDENT OF UNM WILD

The University of New Mexico chapter of New Mexico Wild is excited to be supporting conservation work and advocacy campaigns in 2020 with 35 active student members. We are particularly excited to launch our new advocacy campaign, “Lobos for Lobos!” This campaign is aimed at increasing awareness and support for Mexican gray wolf (lobo) conservation efforts among the UNM student body and administration. The lobo remains endangered, and we think the university can play an important role in protecting our mascot.

If you’re interested in learning more about UNM Wild, please visit facebook.com/groups/unmwild. 🐾



UNM Wild members on a cross-country ski trip in the Valles Caldera. Photo: Mareyna Kai Hollenberg

FIGHT FOR ACCESS TO NEW MEXICO'S STREAMS

STAFF REPORT

Our friends at the New Mexico Wildlife Federation and Adobe Whitewater Club filed a petition for a writ of mandamus with the New Mexico Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of the NM Game Commission's landowner certification rule (Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico, et al. v. Grisham, et al. (N.M.S.Ct. No. S-1-SC-38195)).

The case asserts that the state game commission exceeded its authority when it promulgated the landowner certification of nonnavigable waters rule, which allows landowners to restrict public access to waters running adjacent to or through their lands. This rule has already effectively closed five stretches of streams to public access and will continue to close segments as more landowners receive certifications.

We would prefer to come together with all stakeholders to work towards practical solutions to address concerns from private property owners through collaboration and commonsense regulations, planning, education, and enforcement. We recognize that increased use could have adverse to water quality, watershed functionality, and wildlife health within the riparian areas impacted. Regulated use—like that found on streams in the Valles Caldera—would help minimize these impacts. (No one is asserting that the public has a right to trespass on private property to access waters.)

We do not, however, believe the rule is constitutional, a viewpoint shared by past New Mexico Attorneys General, who affirmed the importance of and right to access our public waters.

That is why New Mexico Wild filed an amicus brief with the Supreme Court to ensure that all the necessary arguments are before the court. We were very pleased to be joined by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); the Hispano Roundtable of New Mexico; Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO); and the Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project.

We believe it critical to preserve New Mexico's surface waters for recreational, wildlife, and conservation uses. This is an issue of particular concern, of course, to our many angler and boater members, but to all those concerned about limiting public access to public waters. Amid the biggest assault on the environment we've ever seen and unrelenting efforts to privatize and profiteer from public lands, we're determined to jealously guard the idea of public waters.

The New Mexico Supreme Court should invalidate the unconstitutional landowner certification rule and direct the Game Commission to conduct a new rulemaking with full participation from all interested parties. 🐟



A Rio Grande cutthroat trout. Credit: Garrett VeneKlasen



A stream in northern New Mexico. Photo Credit: Garrett VeneKlasen.

DIRTY WATER RULE UPDATE

New Mexico Wild has filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration to fight its Dirty Water Rule. Officially called the "Navigable Waters Protection Rule," the Dirty Water Rule threatens to strip 90% of New Mexico's waters of their protections under the Clean Water Act. Our complaint, filed in April, challenges the administration's failure to consider the effects of its narrow re-definition on the nation's interconnected waterways and wetlands.

In October 2019, the Trump administration repealed an Obama-era rule that clarified the extent of Clean Water Act protections and confirmed that New Mexico's ephemeral and intermittent streams and wetlands were indeed protected under the law. The recently proposed Dirty Water Rule is the next step toward making it easier for polluters to degrade our waters and destroy one of New Mexico's most vital natural resources. This proposal is a threat to waters across the state, as well as the people, wildlife and ways of life that depend upon them, and the opportunities for recreation that take advantage of clean, fresh water.

SAYING NO TO MILITARY TRAINING ABOVE WILDERNESS

STAFF REPORT

Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo has plans to expand its F-16 pilot training airspace across southwestern New Mexico. Although the Air Force has acknowledged that the current airspace is adequate for F-16 combat training, it has proposed adding more airspace above some of the most beloved public lands in southern New Mexico, including over the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness Areas and portions of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument as well as over Silver City and other small towns in Grant County. The trainings could result in the discharge of 15,000 flares and 15,000 bundles of chaff annually above southern New Mexico’s Wilderness areas and some of the state’s most popular outdoor recreation destinations.

Two of the alternatives Holloman proposed would add 4.5 million acres of airspace for a total of 7 million acres available for high-level, supersonic and nighttime F-16 pilot training over the Gila, Aldo Leopold, Robledo Mountains and Sierra de las Uvas Wilderness Areas and over the Rio Grande Valley from Socorro to Las Cruces. These proposals threaten New Mexicans’ quality of life, health and local economies by putting our communities, public lands, watersheds, wildlife and outdoor recreation at great risk from extreme noise, wildfire and environmental contamination.

New Mexico Wild recognizes the important role of Holloman’s F-16 pilot training mission in ensuring national defense. While we believe the “no change” alternative is the best possible outcome, we consider it unlikely to be selected. Of the remaining draft plans, Alternative 1 most adequately balances efforts to defend our nation with the least negative impacts to public lands. The Air Force has acknowledged that Alternative 1 meets its training needs with the fewest risks and impacts. Holloman’s proposed airspace expansion (particularly Alternatives 2 and 3) would unnecessarily threaten some of New Mexico’s most cherished public lands and wild places along with local outdoor recreation economies.



F-16DM flares. Photo: United States Air Force



A public meeting on Holloman Air Force Base’s plan in Silver City. Photo: Nathan Newcomer

New Mexico Wild partnered with community members and other nonprofit partners in southern New Mexico to spread the word about Holloman’s proposal and to engage New Mexicans in the public comment process. Our staff attended a number of public meetings across southern New Mexico in December 2019 and January 2020 to establish our opposition to Alternatives 2 and 3 in person. At one meeting in Silver City, more than 500 residents from Grant County stood in unison to voice their opposition to expanded military flights above their communities. We also engaged our members through email and social media campaigns to generate more than 1,600 public comments online.

These comments were delivered directly to the Air Force, demonstrating a groundswell of support for the plan that had the least impact on New Mexico’s public lands and wild places.

New Mexico Wild is grateful to all our members and others who participated in this public comment process in an effort to protect Wilderness from noise pollution and the threat of catastrophic wildfires caused by falling flares. We will continue to monitor this process, meet with our elected officials and do everything we can to convince Holloman to choose the best plan. 🏔️

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CHOOSING THE RIGHT PLAN FOR THE GILA

STAFF REPORT



A family crossing the Gila River. Photo: Tisha Broska; The Gila River. Photo: Nathan Newcomer

New Mexico is home to over 9 million acres of national forest system lands, managed in five regions by separate forest service offices. These are places to hike, hunt, fish, find solitude, gather firewood, camp, ride horses and backpack. These rugged lands are critical for our state's water, food and economy, and they deserve our care and affection.

Each national forest across the country operates under what is called a forest plan. These documents provide strict, detailed management guidelines and standards, as well as broader, big-picture objectives. The plans also include New Mexico's national forests have been operating for almost 40 years under the same forest plans, initially published in the 1980s.

The three northern forests — the Carson, Cibola and Santa Fe — published their draft forest plan documents last year and closed the public comment period on Nov. 7, 2019. We generated over 3,000 citizen comments through social media and email outreach from members like you—thank you. We met with Forest Service staff and participated in numerous public meetings. Finally, we submitted technical organizational comments in conjunction with several partners. We advocated for areas we believe deserve Wilderness recommendations; waters we think should be recommended for wild and scenic designation; appropriate wildlife corridors and special management areas; and a science-based review process with robust, inclusive public participation. The three northern forests are now reviewing all the comments they received and will be ready for next steps by this fall or winter.

As part of the revision process, each forest is required to conduct an inventory of lands under its jurisdiction to determine which areas contain Wilderness characteristics, and then to make a management decision about whether to preserve those characteristics for possible future Wilderness designation by Congress. The forest plan revision process also includes an analysis of Wild and Scenic river eligibility.

In southern New Mexico, the Gila National Forest published its draft forest plan documents in late January. New Mexico Wild quickly organized to analyze and comment on the Wilderness recommendations, wild and scenic eligibility analysis, and technical management direction pieces of the document that will guide the management of the forest that is home to the world's first Wilderness area. We generated 1,583 comments from supporters calling for better protection of fragile resources and a more nuanced approach to Wilderness management.

Despite a tremendous amount of land with high Wilderness values throughout the Gila and a thoroughly researched and analyzed citizen inventory conducted by New Mexico Wild and submitted to the forest, the draft preferred alternative proposes just over 100,000 acres for Wilderness designation. In contrast, New Mexico Wild's inventory recommends well over 600,000 acres, based on a multi-year, field-based analysis utilizing staff and community volunteers who donated approximately 15,000 hours to the survey.

When compared to the paltry proposed Wilderness recommendations of the Carson, Cibola and Santa Fe national forests—9,189, 24,265 and 25,793 acres respectively—we

are pleased to see that the Gila National Forest is taking its obligations under the multiple-use land management scheme seriously. We remain, however, disappointed that the preferred alternative would recommend only about 15% of roadless lands for Wilderness designation.

As many of you know, New Mexico Wild has been working to permanently protect the Gila and San Francisco rivers for many years through a separate effort calling for federal legislation. We were disappointed that the Gila National Forest omitted several stream segments we inventoried for this separate administrative process from its draft plan. For example, we believe the forest incorrectly found Gilita Creek, the headwaters of the middle fork of the Gila, ineligible for Wild and Scenic designation. New Mexico Wild combed through the eligibility analysis conducted by the forest and submitted comments detailing other similar errors in judgment. Nevertheless, the Gila National Forest did identify approximately 250 river miles as eligible, and we commend them for this significant analysis, even as we advocate for more segments that we believe are threatened and deserving of protection.

Your voices are critical to ensure these forest plans work for New Mexico's wild places, wildlife, wild rivers and people. We appreciate the support you have shown by submitting comments to the Gila, urging better choices when it comes to wilderness recommendations and wild and scenic eligibility determinations. The work doesn't stop there! Continue to follow New Mexico Wild on social media and open our emails to learn what you can do to help protect our national forests. 🌲

A Wild and Scenic Gila:



Protecting New Mexico's Last Remaining Free-Flowing River

BY GRECIA NUÑEZ, PUBLIC LANDS FELLOW

New Mexico is celebrating the introduction of legislation to permanently protect the last free-flowing river in the state. In March, Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, both D-N.M., introduced the M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act, which would cover nearly 450 miles of the Gila and San Francisco rivers and their main tributaries.

The introduction of the legislation follows years of local grassroots outreach and education with support from business owners, private property owners, tribes, faith leaders, sportsmen, nonprofits, civic organizations, and local governments. The town of Silver City led the way from a local government standpoint by passing a unanimous letter of support for Wild and Scenic Rivers legislation on Oct. 10, 2018. The letter highlighted the importance of protecting local watersheds and of healthy rivers for outdoor recreation—a growing focus for the town's economy—as well as the quality of life of its residents.

The city of Bayard and the town of Hurley, two communities in Grant County's mining district, also passed resolutions in January and April 2019, respectively. Both communities echoed Silver City's points and added that they would love to see these rivers protected for their children's children. Following the lead of these communities, the Grant County Commission passed a resolution in support of the proposed wild and scenic legislation on Sep. 12, 2019—the first time Grant County's government had ever approved a strong show of support for a federal conservation initiative. Grant County Commission Chairman Chris Ponce and Commissioners Harry Browne, Alicia Edwards and Javier Salas voted in favor of the resolution, with only Commissioner

Billy Billings voting against it. The commissioners who voted in favor of the resolution understood that protecting rivers and their watersheds is a unifying issue for Grant County residents and the vast majority of New Mexicans.

New Mexico Wild is proud to work alongside local, county, state and federal elected officials who are so committed to protecting New Mexico's rivers, public lands and wild places.

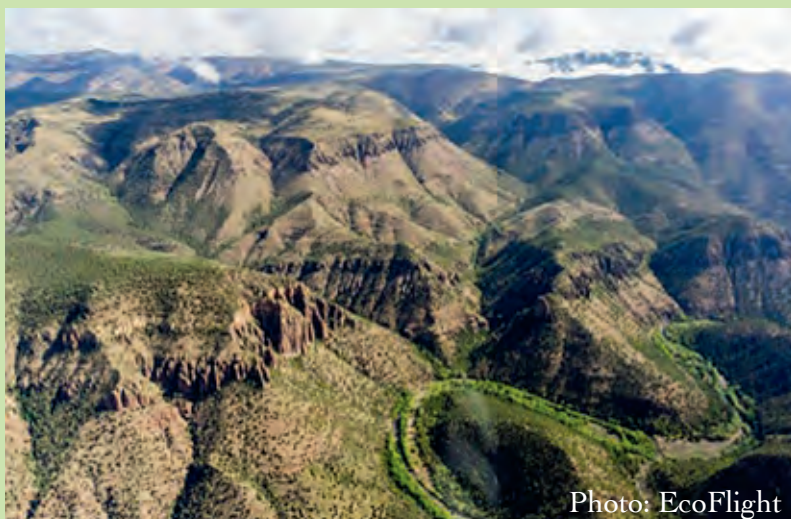
WHAT THE LEGISLATION WOULD PROTECT

The Gila and San Francisco rivers and their main tributaries possess many outstandingly remarkable values that make their protection important not only for the environmental services they provide to New Mexico residents and visitors but also for the riparian ecosystem they sustain. The river segments recently proposed for designation hold scenic, historical and cultural, recreational, wildlife and geologic values.

SCENIC VALUES

- The scenery found along the West Fork of the Gila River, heading upriver from the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, is stunning. The canyon is broad with grassy banks, wildflower meadows and ponderosa pine scattered here and there. Shortly upstream, near where the Big Bear Canyon Trail ascends to the north, the canyon walls begin to slowly creep in, almost enveloping the river corridor in a claustropho-

Highlighting Some River Segments That Would Be Protected:



The main stem of the Gila River

This river segment provides visitors with a profound sense of solitude. This long, meandering river corridor through the heart of the Gila Wilderness is an assertive landscape, where a combination of aridity and moisture sharpens the steep cliff walls and enhances the smooth riparian belt that surrounds the water. Constant volcanic eruptions from 35 million to 20 million years ago, followed by millennia of weather, pressure and erosion, are what make the geology along the Gila River so outstandingly remarkable today.



The Upper San Francisco Box

Over millennia, the river has cut a tremendously deep and narrow gorge that stretches 1,000 feet from top to bottom through this region. The box canyon itself is astoundingly constricted and tight, stretching for roughly 2 miles with massive boulder fields, cascading waterfalls and deep pools. This deep canyon, along with its associated geological wonders and scenery, is unique to the region and the Gila National Forest.

bic atmosphere of winding spires and sheer bluff walls amid soaring ridgelines dotted with ponderosa pine and piñon-juniper woodland.

- The Gila headwaters, including the San Francisco River, compose the largest network of natural streams in the Southwest. In addition, the Gila is home to one of the largest undammed headwater watersheds left in temperate North America.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL VALUES

- The Gila headwaters have outstanding historical significance, inseparable from our natural and cultural heritage as New Mexicans and Americans. The region was the site of the Mogollon civilization dating to 9,500 BC; the home of the Apaches, Mountain Men and Buffalo Soldiers; and the birthplace of the idea of protecting a place for its wildness.
- The access to and use of large tracts of healthy, viable, intact ecosystems and public lands are essential to the perpetuation of traditional New Mexico land uses such as hunting and fishing.

RECREATIONAL VALUES

- The outdoor recreation economy in New Mexico directly supports \$1.2 billion in income and 33,500 jobs, according to analysis by the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division.
- Healthy public lands with quality fishing, hiking, kayaking, rafting and other recreational resources are major factors in attracting new businesses, jobs and retirees to Grant and Catron counties and New Mexico that might otherwise locate elsewhere.

WILDLIFE VALUES

- Fourteen native fishes live in the basin, including four—the desert sucker, spike dace, Gila trout and Apache trout—that occur nowhere else in the world.
- The Gila headwaters are critical habitat for federally endangered Southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, northern Mexican garter snake, narrow-headed garter snake and Chiricahua leopard frog.

- The Gila harbors some of the greatest non-coastal breeding bird diversity and density in the United States.
- The Gila headwaters are the keystone for connectivity between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Madres, from Alaska to Mexico.
- The headwaters of the Gila River are in the world's first protected Wilderness and one of the largest Wilderness complexes in the Americas south of the boreal forest and north of the Amazon rainforest. The Gila headwaters is the most ecologically diverse Wilderness complex in North America.

GEOLOGIC VALUES

- The geology on the West Fork of the Gila River is a utopian splendor of compacted volcanic material formed into gnarly spires, elaborate hoodoos, pocket caves and polished-smooth slabs of Gila conglomerate, ascending over 800 feet high. The rhyolite rock walls of the river canyon appear as though they were once stained-glass cathedral windows, now stone-weathered into a tapestry of the geological past. Up and down the river canyon, a broken barricade of weather-carved rocks and beehive formations jumble with the surrounding landscape. Tier upon tier of ridges and vertical volcanic columns rise above the twisting river.
- The volcanic activity that created what is now known as the Gila Wilderness is the combination of at least four major volcanoes, which were active over a span of time between 35 million and 20 million years ago.
- The constant eruptions, followed by millennia of weather, pressure, erosion and time, are what today make the geology along the West Fork of the Gila River so outstandingly remarkable.

Thank you, Sens. Udall and Heinrich, for being conservation champions for New Mexico and acknowledging the importance of the rivers in the greater Gila region! Thank you to all who committed to the protection of the greater Gila River system as wild and scenic: Grant County Commission, city of Bayard, town of Hurley, town of Silver City, All Pueblo Council of Governors, Fort Sill Apache Tribe, Silver City LULAC Council #8003, NAACP - Doña Ana Branch #6102, Vet Voice Foundation, Disabled Veterans of America Chapter #10 and Copper Country Senior Olympics.

More than 30 faith-based organizations, 150 Grant County businesses and 60 private property owners in Grant and Catron counties.

The following sportsmen organizations also were committed to the protection of the Gila and San Francisco: Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Backcountry Horsemen of New Mexico-Gila and Lower Rio Grande chapters, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, New Mexico Sportsmen, Southwest Consolidated Sportsmen, Trout Unlimited New Mexico Council, Trout Unlimited-Gila and Rio Grande chapters, Wild Turkey Sportsmen's Association. Also, outdoor recreation organizations Adobe Whitewater Club, American Canoe Association, Gila Backcountry Services and U-Trail Outfitters joined the effort.

And, the following conservation organizations: American Rivers, American Whitewater, Arizona Wilderness Coalition, Audubon New Mexico, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Southwest Culture, Conservation Lands Foundation, Conservation Voters New Mexico, Continental Divide Trail Coalition, Defenders of Wildlife, Environment New Mexico, Gila Conservation Coalition, Gila Resources Information Project, Gila Native Plant Society, Grand Canyon Wildlands Council, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Native Plant Society of New Mexico, New Mexico Wild, Rio Grande Restoration, Sierra Club - Rio Grande Chapter, Sky Island Alliance, Southwestern New Mexico Audubon, Southwest Environmental Center, Upper Gila Watershed Alliance, Western Environmental Law Center. 🌲



Photo: Tisha Broska

The West Fork of the Gila River

This is one of the most visited locations in the Gila Wilderness, the first Wilderness designated in the world. Activities such as multi-day backpacking, day hiking, horseback riding and pack mule trips are all popular forms of recreation here. Opportunities to hunt and fish are also abundant, given that the West Fork of the Gila River runs through some of the most remote and wildest public lands left in North America.

Support for a Wild and Scenic Gila River

LOCAL COMMUNITY LEADERS

“Wild and Scenic designation for the Gila River and its tributaries is about protecting our heritage, diversifying our economy, and preparing for climate change. It’s so important in so many ways that support for it crosses the usual political and ethnic divisions in our community: Hispanics and Anglos, hunters and hikers, businesspeople and old hippies.” — **Grant County Commissioner Harry Browne**

“It is important that we call for the protection of the Gila River because we have been going there to fish, hunt, and picnic with our families for many years and we want to continue to do so while securing it for future generations.”
— **Chon S. Fierro, the City of Bayard’s Mayor**

“Many of our families have lived in this area for multiple generations, passing our profound respect for our land, water, and other natural resources down to each succeeding generation. In an ever-changing world, this is a tradition worth preserving.”
— **State Representative Rudy Martinez**

“Now more than ever, New Mexicans want to ensure that future generations will be able to experience the full glory of a protected wild Gila River: clean drinking water, wildlife habitat, and a huge driver of outdoor recreation. Thank you Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich for working to preserve these incredible waters.”
— **Grant County Commission Chairman, Chris Ponce**

“Strictly from my position as County Assessor, the property values of the area are affected positively by the presence of the Gila River as a major attraction and draw to relocate in southern New Mexico. Personally, being a fourth-generation native, I am fortunate to live here near the Gila and feel we need to continue to preserve it for future generations. The Gila is rare and valuable as one of the last free-flowing rivers in the United States, flowing from the first wilderness area in the United States. Todos juntamos por la conservacion de nuestro rio Gila, se lo debemos a generaciones futuras.”
— **Raul Turrieta, Grant County Assessor**

“I was born in Santa Rita, New Mexico, and have lived my entire life, 73 years, in Grant County... For many years, some of us would take the challenge of rafting down the Gila River in spring when the runoff was the highest, from The Forks to Turkey Creek. We made our own rafts from large truck inner tubes and cut-off 55-gallon barrels, carried our own food and fishing supplies. It was always a thrilling adventure, filled with breathtaking scenery and wildlife. We frequently encountered the remains of other people’s attempts at rafting the Gila in canoes, rafts, etc. The Gila River is a jewel to be enjoyed for generations, to appreciate the beauty, enjoy the thrill.”
— **Danny Vasquez, Member, Silver City LULAC Chapter**

“We believe it is vitally important that we protect these critical watersheds and rivers, and that by designating them Wild and Scenic Rivers, it will protect them for future generations.”
— **Lori Gooday Ware, Chairwoman, Fort Sill Apache Tribe**

SPORTSMEN

“For generations, my family has been visiting the Gila and San Francisco Rivers to fish, hunt, and picnic. I am thankful that Senators Udall and Heinrich introduced legislation to safeguard our time-tested traditions.”
— **Larry McDaniel, a hunter in Silver City**

“As a Sierra County property owner and sportsman I treasure the wildlife habitat and free-flowing waters of the Gila and San Francisco Rivers. I want to thank Senators Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich for their leadership in preserving these rivers for future generations.”
— **David Soules, a hunter in Sierra County**

“Hunters and anglers have long understood the value of the Wild Gila River. It is where we go to find peace and unwind, and where we harvest food to sustain our families. I am not surprised that a recent poll showed that my friends and neighbors overwhelmingly support protecting the Gila and San Francisco Rivers.”
— **John Trujillo, an avid hunter and angler who frequents the Gila area**

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BUSINESS LEADERS

“The Gila and San Francisco Rivers are a powerful economic driver in Western New Mexico. People come from near and far to explore all that Grant County has to offer, and that keeps the wheels of our local economy turning.” —Diana Ingalls Leyba, owner of L&I Arts

“In 10 years, I want to be certain our four sons can still bring my grandchildren to the river. I want them to have a place to teach our grandchildren patience as they wait all morning for the first hit of a Gila Group on their line. I want to be sure they can learn resilience as they hike through a crossing of the last free-flowing river in the state.” —Rocky Mondello, owner of Morning Star Sports

“The Gila River is a powerful economic driver. Our store, Gila Hike and Bike, relies heavily on visitors to the Gila purchasing gear for their adventures or spending time in our community.” —Chris Schlabach, owner of Gila Hike and Bike

“People come from near and far to explore all the Gila and San Francisco Rivers and the lands they sustain. If our ‘main attraction’ dries up, many business owners would lose their livelihoods.” —Gordon West, President of the Southwest New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce

LOCAL RESIDENTS

“Preserving the river in free-flowing condition is in the best interests of those who have been able to enjoy it as such in the past as well as those who will come to our state to experience it in the future. Let’s care for our state by supporting efforts to preserve as much of it as we can.” —Patricia Cano, Western New Mexico University, Professor Emerita

“I use the rivers and tributaries for hunting, fishing, and viewing the spectacular scenery and ecological features while on horseback. I am also a trail advocate and a person concerned about retention of public lands na dfeel wild and scenic designation would help protect my interests.” —Gerry Engle, Gila Chapter of Backcountry Horsemen

“Throughout our planet wild places are disappearing and under constant threat. River walking in the wild waters of the Gila National

Forest is amazing! We are so lucky to have these unique places to honor and protect by getting them designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers. The joy they bring to my life cannot be duplicated.” —Lisa Fields, private property owner, certified crop advisor CCA-retired

“I look forward to springtime in the Gila. Despite the relentless wind, it is a time of beauty and renewal. The snow melts off of the Mogol-lon Range, the flowers bloom and the river swells. I love being on the river. The waters flow free from the high peaks and wind down through the canyons. I see signs of bear. Deer scatter as I round the bend. Countless springs add to the river’s flow. The waters give life. Not just to the plants and animals, but to the people and communities beyond the wilderness boundary.” —John Harned, Mimbres property owner

“As a property owner within the Gila National Forest; An Oasis in the desert is how I refer to the Gila River and enjoy sharing its beauty as I hike, camp and backpack with friends along its backs and watershed. The Continental Divide Trail hikers rely on this precious water source, as do the variety of flora and fauna which are provided the critical habitat needed for sustenance and a joy for me to observe.” —Carol Martin, Grant County resident

“The Gila River, originating in America’s first designated wilderness area, deserves to stay wild and free as nature intended... We can all work together to gain national Wild and Scenic River designation for the Gila River.” —Brett Myrick, Veteran

“While women of a certain age may no longer be designated scenic, we are most certainly still wild. There is no finer place than the unspoiled wilderness of New Mexico to really unwind, let our hair down and form lasting and meaningful relationships. One might say that this exceptional group of retired ladies is finally in their element.” —The Walkie Talkies

“The Gila Region is one of the most ecologically diverse areas of North American with over 1,500 vascular plant species and mammal diversity second only to the Sierras; the Gila River is the lifeblood of this magnificent diversity.” —Dr. Kathy Whiteman, Associate Professor, Department of Natural Science, Western New Mexico University

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CONSERVATION WEEK


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July 18-26, 2020

Latino Conservation Week was created to support the Latino community getting into the outdoors and participating in activities to protect our natural resources.

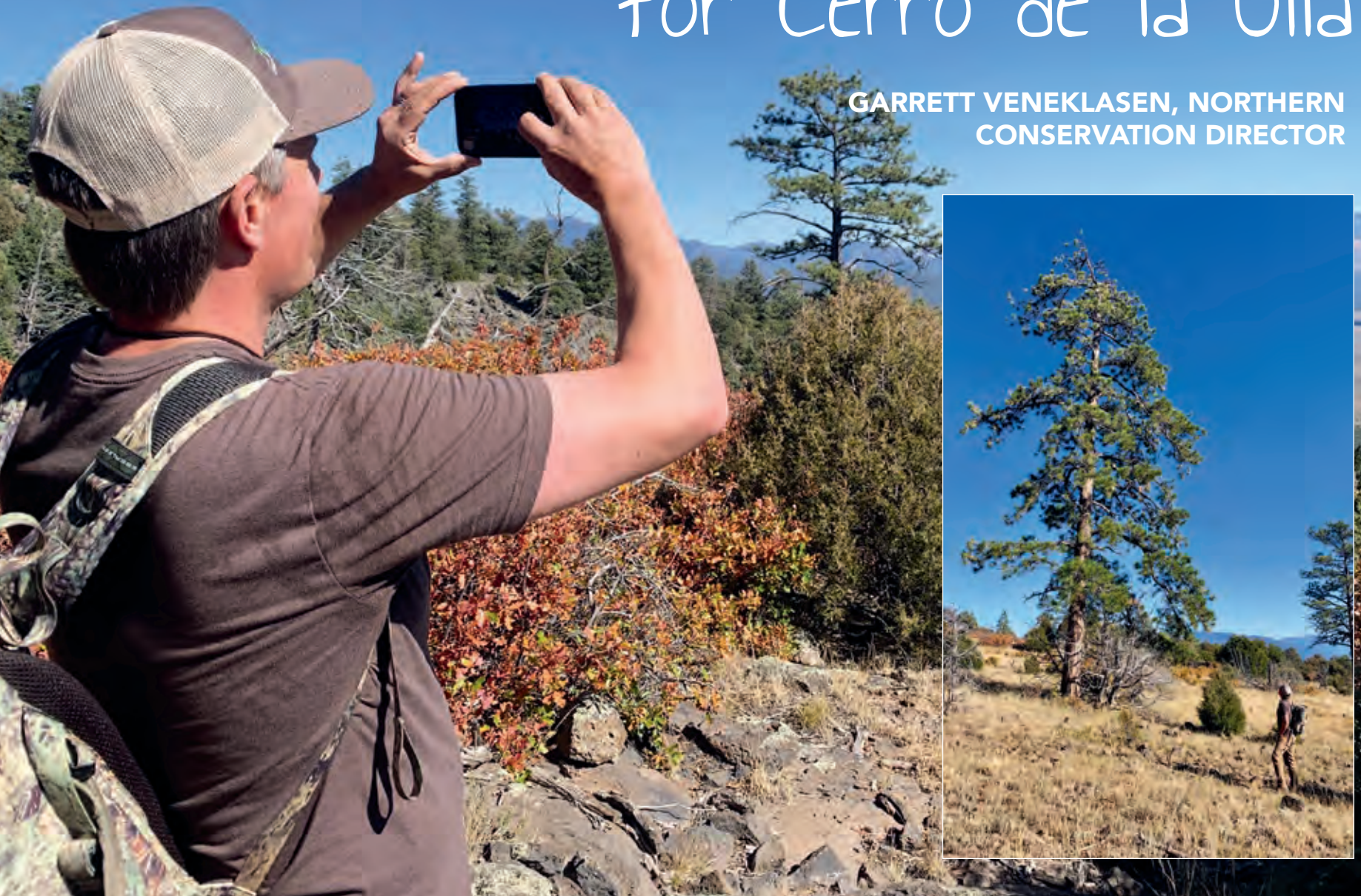
View all Latino Conservation Week events at nmwild.org.

Stone Age Climbing Gym is proud to support New Mexico Wild and is looking forward to opening our second location in Summer 2020.



Seeking a Wilderness Designation for Cerro de la Olla

**GARRETT VENEKLASEN, NORTHERN
CONSERVATION DIRECTOR**



Sen. Heinrich visiting Cerro de la Olla with New Mexico Wild; Sen. Heinrich visiting Cerro de la Olla with New Mexico Wild. Photos: Garrett VeneKlasen

Rio Grande del Norte National Monument is one step closer to gaining a third Wilderness area. On June 8, 2020, Sens. Martin Heinrich and Tom Udall introduced legislation to designate more than 13,000 acres within the monument as the Cerro de la Olla Wilderness Area.

“These mountains serve as an important wildlife corridor and provide security habitat for species such as elk, mule deer, black bears, and mountain lions,” Heinrich said upon introducing the legislation. “I’m proud to join the community to introduce legislation to designate Cerro de la Olla as Wilderness to ensure this outdoor treasure is there for future generations.”

Udall stressed the historical importance of Cerro de la Olla, adding, “Sitting within the Río Grande del Norte National Monument, Cerro de la Olla is a spectacular caldera that carries deep historical, environmental, and recreational importance.”

The area that Heinrich and Udall are pursuing for Wilderness designation is already a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts, including hunters and hikers. Cerro de la Olla has also been important to nearby communities for centuries, as people living in the area have gathered herbs and firewood there to sustain a traditional way of life. A federal Wilderness designation would permanently protect this special place, allowing these popular forms of outdoor recreation and vital traditional uses to continue in one of the most remote parts of northern New Mexico.

New Mexico Wild Executive Director Mark Allison praised the senators for their efforts, saying, “This bill recognizes the importance of saving this special place for tomorrow’s visitors, human and wildlife

alike, that they may have the same opportunities that we are fortunate enough to have today.”

Prior to introducing the legislation, Heinrich joined New Mexico Wild Northern Conservation Director Garrett VeneKlasen on a trip to Cerro de la Olla (often referred to as “Pot Mountain”) to better understand where locals access the base of the mountain for firewood use, hunting and other traditional uses. He also wanted to learn more about the locations of natural and man-made water sources to ensure wildlife would continue to have available water after Wilderness designation.

The Cerro de la Olla Wilderness legislation is supported by sportsmen, community members in the Taos area, small businesses, faith leaders, Taos Pueblo and conservation groups.

Rio Grande del Norte National Monument is already home to two Wilderness areas. A federal public lands package signed into law in March 2019 created the Cerro del Yuta and Rio San Antonio Wilderness Areas, creating 21,540 acres of new Wilderness.

New Mexico Wild appreciates the continued leadership of Sens. Udall and Heinrich to protect Wilderness within our national monuments. For years, we partnered with stakeholders including Taos Pueblo, land grant heirs, acequia parciantes and mayordomos, local businesses, elected officials, grazing permittees and others to push for a national monument designation for Rio Grande del Norte. This grassroots advocacy finally paid off in 2013 when President Barack Obama used the authority granted him under the Antiquities Act of 1906 to establish the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. 🏔️

RESTORING THE NATION'S FLAGSHIP CONSERVATION PROGRAM

STAFF REPORT

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was created by Congress in 1964 to fund conservation and restoration programs in all 50 U.S. states. The program receives all its revenue from royalties generated by offshore oil and gas drilling operations; none of the funds come from taxpayers.

Since the program's implementation, the LWCF has funded conservation projects in all 33 New Mexico counties. Popular public lands like the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, the Continental Divide Trail, Valles Caldera National Preserve, Chaco Culture National Historical Park, the state's national forests and even city parks (for example, Big Ditch Park in Silver City) have received more than \$300 million to protect and restore New Mexico's land and water.

The importance of the LWCF was highlighted this past holiday season. The 2019 U.S. Capitol Christmas tree came from the Carson National Forest in northern New Mexico, a beneficiary of LWCF money. The tree's presence in front of the Capitol symbolized the importance of protecting the LWCF and our nation's public lands for the benefit and enjoyment of all Americans. (New Mexico Wild took out a full paid ad featuring the connection between the LWCF and the Christmas tree in Politico to catch the attention of Congress.)

Though LWCF is often referred to as the nation's flagship conservation program, the program has faced threats since its inception. Congress repeatedly failed to ad-



Rio Grande del Norte National Monument; Photo: Sally Paez

equately fund the LWCF and in 2018 even failed to reauthorize it, leading to the loss of tens of millions of dollars for America's public lands. A federal public lands package that was signed into law in March 2019 (the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act) permanently reauthorized the program—a major achievement - however its funding remained inadequate and uncertain.

It now appears there is a real possibility of finally fully funding LWCF. A bipartisan group of senators, now nearing 60, has introduced the Great American Outdoors Act, which combines the LWCF legislation and the Restore Our Parks Act, which was drafted to help address deferred maintenance and capital projects. The bill would fund LWCF at \$900 million each year and would invest \$1.9 billion annually for the next five years in deferred maintenance for public lands!

For context, the proposed \$900 million for LWCF is nearly double the \$485 million

Congress approved this year and 60 times larger than the \$15 million President Trump proposed in his 2021 budget.

New Mexico's entire Congressional delegation—Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, Assistant Speaker Ben Ray Lujan and Reps. Deb Haaland and Xochitl Torres Small have been stalwart champions of the LWCF. Senator Heinrich, in particular, deserves special recognition for leading negotiations to include the roughly \$10 Billion dollars for backlog projects and expanding eligible agencies from the National Park Service (70%) to also include the US Forest Service (10%), Fish and Wildlife Services (10%), Bureau of Land Management (5%), and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (5%).

This is truly be a monumental, generational piece of legislation, and would bring millions of dollars to New Mexico for our public lands and city parks. At the time of writing, President Trump has indicated he would sign the bill. 🏹

Ongoing Threats to the Pecos Region continued from page 6



Wildflowers near the proposed Tererro drilling site; Photo: Garrett VeneKlasen

big village known as Pecos Pueblo, home at one time to more than 2,000 people. They established shrines or sacred places along the Sangre de Cristo Mountains said to be Gyûhlûbu or the Place to Take Down Game and along the sacred waters of the Pecos River. Today the descendants of the Pecos Pueblo reside with the Hemish (Jemez) and are one with the people, pueblo and culture. The second lieutenant governor for Jemez Pueblo serves as the Pecos Pueblo governor, a tribal leadership role created when Pecos and Jemez merged in 1838. The Pecos Eagle Society returns to its aboriginal homelands at Pecos to perform ceremonial rites at shrines that exist even to this day.

FEDERAL MINERAL WITHDRAWAL

Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., is working on a federal mineral withdrawal bill for the Santa Fe National Forest that would re-

move certain lands from risk of exploitation by the mining industry. This withdrawal would not prevent the exploratory drilling proposed by Comexico, but it would prevent new claims from being made in the future and is a step toward preserving these pristine lands. The proposal sends a strong message that New Mexicans do not support mining in this special place.

Mineral withdrawals remove specific federal public lands from the provisions of the Mining Law of 1872, the Civil War-era law that leaves the Forest Service with little discretion when analyzing a mining permit application. Unfortunately, until the federal Mining Law is repealed or amended, mineral withdrawals only prevent new claims from being filed and have little effect on established claims. (New Mexico Wild continues to work with our federal congressional delegation to amend the 1872 Mining Law.) 🏹

2020 WILDERNESS POETRY CONTEST WINNERS

MORE THAN 30 POETS SUBMITTED THEIR WORK FOR THE NEW MEXICO WILD 2020
WILDERNESS POETRY CONTEST. HERE ARE THE TOP FIVE WINNERS.

1ST PLACE

On the forest trail

a space
of solitude, where
essence of spruce, piñon, juniper seeps into cells.

a whisper
inaudible to ears,
translated by wind into mind's eye,
a sigh
in rustling of needles thick with resin
and reaching of roots, spread deep in ancient Earth.

hawk soars overhead,
red and gold flickers of sunlight on upward spiraling flight
high above the hum of being human.

the forest floor
is a fine place to plant feet
on a sunny day
or when flailing in the fray,
a way up and out
to solid ground, where the only sounds are
a creek, babbling and bubbling,
winged things, chirping and buzzing,
the sturdy sway of towering trees,
earth softly bowing under weight of booted feet
and song of the candy rock ringing
in the shade of a scrubby oak,
half moon on the rise in the blue sky,
heart beating and breath, rising and falling,
in and out.

— Elise Brianne Curtin



Elise Brianne Curtin

2ND PLACE

Crossing over...

Crossing over
Into the wilderness
The boundary
Into the boundless
A journey
Into another world
Immersion
Into wide-eyed innocence
And wonder
With freedom to wander
My mind meanders
My body roams
My spirit soars
I am enlightened
I am enchanted
I am transformed
— Andrea Telmo



Andrea
Telmo

3RD PLACE

The Summons

When the wild summons
murmurs its heavy magic through skin, heart and spine
however the spell wafts in you, however you hear it,
you ramble out for the revelry of trails, of remote terrain
and remember how to return
primitive as you already are
to be the fierce pulse for river,
schist or sandstone
for ice
for the tiniest silvery glint of gills in a drying streambed.
It's possible to be reclaimed whole
in this way, to when your marrow rooted
rapt with the unfettered reverie of trees
and sang hymns to the vast elixir of stars.
Even shorn from your true skin and obscured
for this long
you are still caught prey to the flit of feathered sunlight or chirp
that reels you in
you still do stop in mid-step with head cocked upward
ear or eye swept by the ordinary lift
of cliff swallows in the river canyon.
Imperiled and complicit, we stifle the summons



Tamara Saimons

but its fervent wish for the incantation
of clicks, howls, warbles and shrieks
to be heard
burns and breaches to be seen.
Not in any sphere of this life are you excused from this behest
Summoned as you are to wild from birth
— Tamara Saimons

HONORABLE MENTION
Heron, Rising

Clear, calm river,
sullen summer heat:
the Eno runs low
and slight.

Sudden black-blue
flash: reflection of the great
bird, startled by footfalls,
rising stately above

the valley. Not seen,
but its silent flight
mirrored crisply
in still water.
— Tony Reevy

HONORABLE MENTION
The Cliff

where birds plunge
sharp splash
to feed
in the sea

where wet rocks
glisten deep black
like a heart
turning to darkness

where on clear
nights
with half a waxing
bone moon

white light
roils rolls
on ripples
between the waves
— Tony Reevy



**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2020
WOLF STAMP ARTIST JESSICA GAMA**



Originally from Massachusetts, Jessica’s early years were spent creating artwork and adventuring in the New England woods. At the University of Massachusetts, Jessica earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Literature and Criticism with a focus on environmental literature and theory, followed by a Master of Fine Arts degree in Writing from Emerson College. A New Mexican resident since 2017, Jessica works at the University of New Mexico and spends much of her free time hitting the trails with her wife and dogs and creating new artwork. Jessica’s artwork, stories of her outdoor explorations, and the challenges of life with a chronic illness can be found on her website, BackCountryChronic.com. Understanding the importance of environmental stewardship, Jessica supports Mexican gray wolf conservation efforts and is thrilled to have her drawing displayed on the 2020 Wolf Conservation Stamp.

Making Room at the Conservation Table

INTERVIEW BY MARK ALLISON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This is part two of an interview between Executive Director Mark Allison and Public Lands Fellow Grecia Nuñez and Gila Grassroots Organizer Simon Sotelo.

Mark: A lot of the general public might not know what a grassroots organizer is. Is there anything you'd like to tell them about your job that they might be surprised by?

Simon: For me, the grassroots is literally what it means. It's starting from the bottom up, it's starting with the community on the ground to make change, to mobilize them and to get them involved in the conversation. We can propose all the legislation we want but if we don't have the community support, if we don't have the support from the ground up, we're not going to get anywhere. And if we do make changes without having the community involvement from the ground up, we're going to make enemies, we're going to end up alienating communities. If they have a voice in it, they're more likely to support it.

Mark: Grecia, when you're reaching out to these communities that maybe haven't had a seat at the table, are people surprised that you're taking the time to talk to them? How are people reacting?

Grecia: They have detached themselves from what's going on in the environment because they make it like "their" fight, not "my" fight. So when I start having conversations with people about the (Gila) river and how it affects whole systems, not just the wildlife—kind of bridging conservation and the people's lives or histories or cultures, what we get from the outdoors—there's a switch that goes on in their heads like, "Oh, this is everybody's fight." Part of community organizing is taking the time to talk to people on an individual level so you understand where they stand and how they connect to the issue.

Mark: We've had some pretty big wins in New Mexico, and sometimes these big, broad coalitions we've put together have been called national models, but I know there are always things we can do better. And we hear these terms like diversity, equity and inclusion knocked around a lot. I wonder if we can talk about what those terms mean to you, maybe assessing what we are doing well, but more importantly what we can do better in New Mexico to make sure there is space at the table?

Grecia: Hiring local and being very comprehensive and going into communities and providing tools instead of providing answers is great. Having worked in big coalitions with different groups across the spectrum, I think the leadership doesn't reflect diversity in New Mexico. A lot of boards, a lot of EDs, a lot of people that are in leadership positions are not a reflection of the people that we are serving.

Simon: Diversity, equity—we hear those words. It's kind of sad that we have to label those things that should be pretty simple. A board or a community organization should reflect the community that it's in.

Mark: We celebrated the annual Latino Conservation Week last summer. Tell us about what that week entailed.

Grecia: It's to showcase and highlight the experiences of Latinos outdoors. And it's important to have this week because we don't really see Latinos doing stuff outdoors. It's not that prominent in social media. We're utilizing it more to bring attention and awareness to the fact that Latinos have been doing all these outdoor recreation activities for a long time. It's a great celebration of that and a great platform to celebrate Latinos outdoors.

Simon: Latino Conservation Week is a wonderful initiative. For me, it was about meeting the Latino Hispanic community where they're at.

We did have hikes, and that was great. The first hike we did was out to the Mogollon Box. It was actually more about having a conversation and talking to those people who were on those hikes. It was about like, "Hey, why do you like about being out here?" If it were up to me, we'd have Latino Conservation Week every week, but it wouldn't be labeled Latino Conservation Week.

Mark: You read the news, and it's really grim—climate change, and all these species at risk. It's easy to get demoralized about the state of our natural world. As you involve young people, engage with them, are you hopeful about the future?

Grecia: I'm in my late 20s and I've been doing this for a while. I've been really blessed in my life to have awesome mentors who took the time to help me develop ideas. So, when I talk to young people sometimes it is about having opportunities to get employed and to be heard and get the experience. I am hopeful because I do see a diverse group of young people being more active and more engaged. But then, I'm also waiting to see older generations step up and say, "OK, we're going to create places for you to be heard and be part of the conversation."

Simon: Climate change is real, it's here. That's not an awesome way to think about things. That's not a productive way to think about conservation and the environment—just let it burn. That's not productive at all, that's not hopeful. I had to reframe the way I was thinking about it. When I think about what I do for the community, I'm self-empowered. At first, I was like, "We're screwed. We can't change this." But I reframed it. I've been empowered to do something for my community. When we empower the younger generation and give them tools and education and inspire them to make a difference, that gives them hope.

To read the full interview, please visit www.nmwild.org. 🐾



Public Lands Fellow Grecia Nuñez and Gila Grassroots Organizer Simon Sotelo

TRANSITIONS



Brittany Fallon

NEW STAFF

BRITTANY FALLON Policy Director

Brittany Fallon, Ph.D., leads the organization's state policy and legislative efforts; wildlife issues; policy research and analysis; and community organizing. Brittany previously worked at the Sierra Club, where she helped negotiate and pass state legislation on clean energy, lands, water, wildlife, and the regulation of oil and gas. Dr. Fallon was a research professor at The University of New Mexico funded by the American Association of University Women. Brittany has extensive experience in conservation as the former Assistant Director of the Budongo Conservation Field Station, a research station in Uganda's largest forest and home to an estimated 600 wild chimpanzees.



Keegan King

NEW BOARD MEMBER

KEEGAN KING

Keegan King is from the Pueblo of Acoma and has over 15 years of experience in political and public policy work. He has managed dozens of candidate and issue campaigns beginning with his time at the Albuquerque based Soltari Inc. Keegan continued as the Executive Director of the League of Young Voters New Mexico and New Mexico Youth Organized. In 2009, Keegan founded Atsaya Consulting a Native-owned political consulting company. Since then he has worked as Political Director of the NM Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, national Field Director to the Pushback Network and Data Director for United We Dream. He has been instrumental in protection campaigns such as Chaco, particularly in his work with the All Pueblo Council of Governors and the National Congress of American Indians. Keegan is currently the Policy, Legislative Affairs, and Communications Bureau Chief for the NM Department of Indian Affairs.



Esther Garcia

SAYING GOODBYE TO A CONSERVATION CHAMPION

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Esther Garcia in January. In addition to being the former Mayor of Questa, Esther served on the board of directors at New Mexico Wild and was a powerful force for her community and for the protection of public lands and wild places. She was involved and instrumental in essentially every conservation gain in Taos County over the course of the last decade, including the designation of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. Esther's kind heart, warm smile, and steadfast commitment to public service will be missed by all who were lucky enough to meet her.

(bogus) mailer sent out that looked official and confused people with language like, “You must answer this.” We are working hard to make sure that the census is done accurately and fairly and without fear. We want everyone to answer the census because when we don’t, we leave millions of dollars on the table that could go for infrastructure, schools, playgrounds, public safety and things that we know we need in all of our communities.

MA: We’ve been proud to partner with veteran’s organizations in our efforts to protect public lands in New Mexico. We know that for some returning combat veterans, they seek solace and healing in nature. How did growing up in a military family affect your views of protecting our planet or patriotism or public service?

DH: I was very lucky. My dad was a 30-year career marine so that meant we traveled around a lot. I was raised mostly on the East and West coasts because that’s where the military bases were that my dad was transferred to, and so we spent a lot of time at the beach when I was growing up. My dad was raised on a farm in Minnesota, so he was extremely bonded to the land. His family came from Norway. They were Norwegian farmers who came to the United States in 1881. And my mom’s side was from the Pueblo, and they were extremely bonded to the land as well. It’s a tradition of being outdoors for both sides of my family, and both sides respect the land immensely. My dad made sure that we spent every vacation outdoors, whether it was fishing or hiking or something else outdoors when we were kids. We were kind of like, “OK, dad. We would rather be at Disneyland right now.” But he just felt it was important for us to experience the outdoors everywhere, whether it was in a swamp, at the beach, in the mountains or on a lake. He was adamant about us spending time outdoors, and that translated into many adventures I will never forget. So, I am grateful to my dad’s military career for teaching me the importance of our oceans, which are so threatened by climate change right now.

MA: Along with many of our partners, we helped push for the recent creation of New Mexico’s Outdoor Equity Fund to recognize and help address obstacles that make it difficult for everyone, particularly persons of color, to more fully participate in experiencing their public lands. You’ve been open about the challenges you faced being a single mother and living paycheck to paycheck. Were there things that reduced your opportunities, and what should we be paying attention to as this fund is implemented and hopefully grown to make it meaningful and successful?

DH: I think we should increase that fund so every kid has an opportunity to get outdoors. There are so many things right here in Albuquerque: the Petroglyphs, Valle del Oro, the mountains to the east. Tent Rocks is about 40 minutes away. So, there are many opportunities for our kids to be outdoors. I was privileged to visit the Eastern Cherokee Nation a few years ago. Their reservation is adjacent to the Great Smoky Moun-

tains. We drove up to the entrance of the Great Smoky Mountains (National Park), and there were wild turkeys cruising around by the road. What the tribal administration told us was that they had learned that a survey showed that the vast majority of incarcerated people had never spent time outdoors. So that fueled their idea to ensure that every child who belongs to that community spends time outdoors. So, they invest heavily in programs for their school-aged children. If you belong to the tribe, you’re required to take a summer program outside. They invest in that because they don’t want their children to become a statistic. There’s no reason why any child should not have a chance to be outdoors and learn what’s at stake with our environment. I’ve tried to make sure that’s true of my own daughter. It’s a gigantic return on the investment if you give children that opportunity. So many people who are working to protect our environment were influenced by their experiences outdoors when they were younger. How are you going to know who our future environmentalists, oceanographers and farmers are if you don’t give children these opportunities? So, I fully support this kind of investment.

MA: When we were growing up, our parents wouldn’t let us come inside during the summer. They would tell us to come home at dark!

DH: That was my grandmother, too. She would get up to clean her house by six in the morning and she would send us outside. So, we would go out and hike the mesas all day. We would come home and fill up our water bottles at the spigot outside because we didn’t want to mess her house up.

MA: We continue to see tremendous leadership from tribes and pueblos defending our lands, waters and wildlife, from Standing Rock to Bear’s Ears National Monument. Closer to home, we’ve seen that leadership defending New Mexico’s national monuments and the greater Chacoan area, for example. What would you tell people about the unique perspectives and the value of Native voices in these increasingly desperate battles to save our planet?

DH: People Indigenous to North America, and particularly the United States, have centuries of history. I’m a 35th-generation American, for example. Those traditions have been passed down through stories, songs and dances. As a Pueblo woman, our ceremonies are meant to celebrate nature and what nature has brought to us. We celebrate it, honor it and pray for it. There are songs for rain, for snow and for planting. We recognize that our Earth needs to be given back to. You can’t just take. We’re required to give back to the Earth, whether it’s a spiritual manner or taking care of it, rotating your crops or not fishing in one area, but fishing in another. One clear lesson that seemed universal was the water protectors at Standing Rock in North Dakota, which I had a chance to go to in 2017. They were protecting their sacred lake, which was not within the boundaries of their reservation. But just because we don’t have our sacred sites within our boundaries, we’re still obligated to protect those sacred sites. So, I really feel very strongly that we all need to recognize that as a nation. Bear’s Ears being under national monument status essentially protects it from the onslaught of the drilling and fracking of extractive industries and so forth. Taking that away, it’s just very shameful that our government did that.

MA: When [former] Secretary of Interior Zinke visited there during the national monument review he said that reducing the boundaries was not about oil and gas leasing. But then they shrunk the boundaries and immediately started leasing that area on Cedar Mesa.

DH: It’s just extremely shameful, but I think it was really powerful to see how the pueblos and the Navajo Nation came together to protect Chaco Canyon, and we just need to keep working at it.

MA: Thank you so much for your time. We are looking forward to continuing to work with you to protect places like Chaco Canyon and Caja del Rio.

DH: Absolutely. Without question, I’m there.

Editor’s Note: This interview occurred prior to COVID-19. 🦋



Rep. Haaland at Caja del Rio. Photo: Joey Keefe



A SPECIAL THANK YOU

Pictured: New Mexico Wild Intern Tristan Wall at the top of the Narrows Rim hike, Cebolla Wilderness.

Thank you, Tristan, for your wonderful contributions to New Mexico Wild in 2019-2020!



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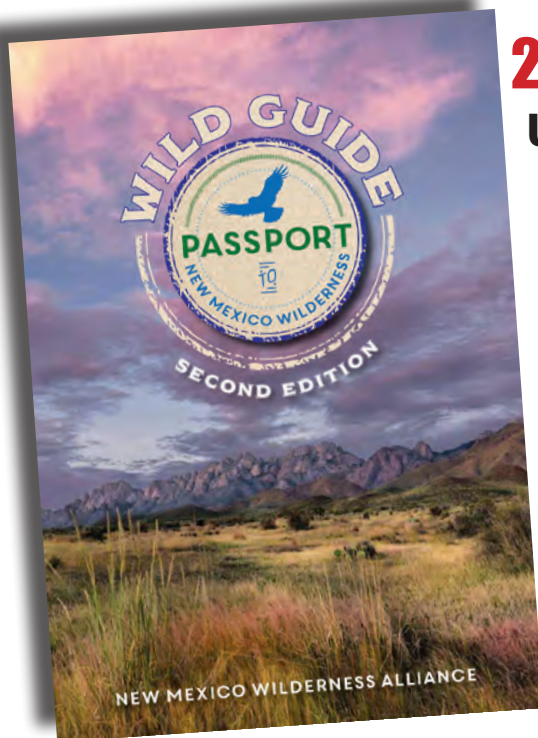
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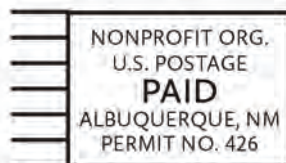


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Caja Del Rio desert flowers; photo: Jim O'Donnell