

New Mexico

The Semi-annual Publication of the
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Winter 2020

WILD!

GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT SIGNED INTO LAW!



**Plus: New Resources
for our Public Lands**



New Mexico **WILD!**

The Semiannual Publication of the
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
VOLUME 17, NUMBER 2
WINTER 2020

Inside
This Issue:

From the Executive Director2-3

Protecting the Pecos Watershed4

Outstanding National Resource Water Designations5

Saving Greater Chaco From More Drilling6

Studying Bugs on the Rio7

Moving Toward a Wilderness Designation for Cerro de la Olla ...8

New Legislation to Address Racist Names on Public Lands ...8

Restoring the Mexican Gray Wolf9

Gila River Closer to Wild and Scenic Designation10

A Lawsuit to Save the Floridas11

Gila Diversion Defeated11

Great News—Great American Outdoors Act Signed into Law!
.....12-13

Greetings and Farewells14

Latino Conservation Week 202015

A Preview of the 2021 Legislative Session16

Share with Wildlife17

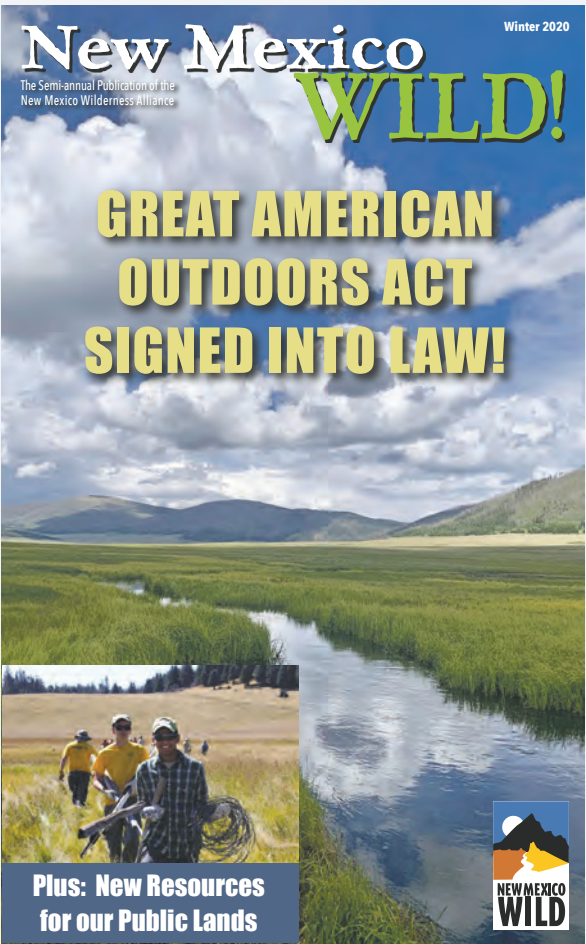
Wilderness FAQs18

Recreate Responsibly19

Wilderness Ranger Update20-21

Volunteering in the Wild22

A Tribute to Roland Scott23



ON THE COVER:
Valles Caldera, photo: Garrett VeneKlasen; inset: youth volunteer
project at Valles Caldera, Photo: Raymond Watt

TURNING THE PAGE ON 2020

Regardless of the outcome of the election, we were prepared for anything. No matter what, we would be on the job, doing all we could to protect New Mexico’s Wilderness, waters, and wildlife.



We have shown this throughout our history, in both Republican and Democratic administrations, during times of almost unimaginable hostility to conservation values and in more supportive times.

I think one thing a divided country can agree on is that we are glad to leave 2020 behind, thank you very much. I wonder exactly how fast we can put it the rearview mirror? And speed towards...what exactly?

It would be great if Americans could agree on a destination, even if there are deep disagreements about how to get there. And if that is not possible just yet, when it comes to long journeys, most everyone at least likes to look out of the window at America the Beautiful and awe-inspiring purple mountain majesties.

What I do know is that public lands are one of those issues that can bring us together.

When New Mexicans see (and sometimes complain about) out-of-state license plates, you can bet many are visiting because of our public lands. As big as Texas is, for example, only a fraction of its lands are public. When people don’t have public lands close, they are willing to go to great lengths to find them.

Don’t believe me that we can find common ground about our common ground? One need look no further than the last four years.

It is true of course that the past administration was the most hostile ever towards the environment, which is well documented. (I’ll refrain from listing those examples here, both for space considerations and a genuine desire to look forward.) This is not a dig at any voters. In fact, my point is just the opposite.

We’ve seen some of the most significant conservation successes in a generation during this time, including the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, protecting millions of acres and creating 13 new Wilderness Areas in New Mexico, and the Great American Outdoors Act, reviewed in more detail in the following pages. Of course, these laws, welcome as they were, did not begin to balance the administration’s record.

President Trump did not sign these into law for any great love of public lands. He did so for political calculations to bolster, in particular, the re-election prospects of two U.S. senators in difficult campaigns (Cory Gardner, R-Colo., and Steve Daines, R-Mont. He tacitly acknowledged he supported these bills because they were overwhelmingly popular with the voting public. Why try to bolster the conservation credentials of senators in threatened seats unless it was understood that protecting public lands is a winning issue for voters of every political stripe? (The 2020 Colorado College “Conservation in the West” poll found that 72% of New Mexicans identify themselves as a “conservationist” — consisting of Republicans, Independents and Democrats.)

Unfortunately, the larger story of the last four years is one of lost ground and time squandered, time that we can’t get back. We feel a sense of urgency as never before.

Here at New Mexico Wild, the dual threats of a changing climate and mass species extinction are always on our minds. Protection of public lands is a critical component to addressing both these issues, and there isn’t a moment to be lost.

President-elect Joe Biden should use his executive authority to re-establish the 125 rules the previous administration rolled back that protected our country’s air, lands, waters — and the people and wildlife that call them home. These include rules and policy changes related to the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Wilderness Act, the Endangered Species Act, national monuments, the Roadless Rule, the Administrative Procedures Act, Resource Management Plans...and on and on.

These directly affect issues of great importance to our supporters, such as Mexican gray wolf recovery, new oil and gas leasing on the doorsteps of Chaco and Carlsbad Caverns, the water quality of New Mexico’s streams, hard rock mining in sensitive watersheds like the Pecos, and how our national forests are managed.

Executive orders reversing the assaults of the last four years are necessary but, of course, insufficient on their own. They are but a small down payment on what will need to be deeper commitments to tackle the biggest environmental challenges of our time.

We’ll continue to work to pass federal legislation to designate nearly 450 miles of the Gila River as Wild and Scenic; prevent new oil and gas leasing on federal lands within 10 miles of Chaco; designate new Wilderness in Taos County; permanently withdraw mineral development in the Pecos watershed; pursue review and reconciliation of the names of our public lands and monuments; and other exciting efforts we’ll share in the upcoming months. At the state level, we are partnering with other organizations and stakeholders on a shared vision to protect New Mexico’s lands, waters, wildlife and cultural heritage through state legislation, policies, and regulations. New Mexico is not only one of the most biodiverse states in the country, we also have a unique history, cultural heritage — and way of doing things.

Critical to any success is to recognize and meet this historic moment and premise our vision on a need for equity, inclusion and justice for communities of color as well as the need to contribute to job creation and economic recovery for hurting communities, particularly rural ones. Far from conflicting with economic goals, protecting and restoring our ecological health is fundamental to the long-term health and prosperity of our state and the resiliency of local communities.

Conserving and restoring more lands and waters will have the practical effect of helping protect our communities from floods, fires, storms, and other impacts of climate change, safeguarding the natural resources we rely on for food, jobs, and recreation. Our state-level efforts will include supporting water policy reform; redirecting \$70 million from the aborted Gila diversion to local, shovel-ready water conservation projects; ensuring that state agencies have sufficient budgets to provide industry oversight; advocating for wildlife corridors; and growing the Outdoor Equity Fund.

We know this will require creativity, hard work, courage, new collaborations, and plenty of conversations. There will need to be room at the table for everyone. Whatever we do, we know it will take all of us working together. We hope you will be part of it.

Buckle up — might be a bumpy ride!

For the Wild,



New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

ALBUQUERQUE OFFICE

505-843-8696 | news@nmwild.org | www.nmwild.org
317 Commercial Avenue NE, Suite 300 | Albuquerque, NM 87102

SANTA FE FIELD OFFICE

341 E. Alameda St.
Santa Fe, NM 87501
505-216-9719

LAS CRUCES FIELD OFFICE

300 N Main Street
Las Cruces, NM 88001
505-843-8696

SILVER CITY FIELD OFFICE

301 W College Ave. #14
Silver City, NM 88061
505-250-4225

MISSION STATEMENT

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

NEW MEXICO WILDERNESS ALLIANCE STAFF

Albuquerque Office

Mark Allison, Executive Director
Tisha Broska, Deputy Director
Madeline Cauthen, Intern
Brittany Fallon, Policy Director
Logan Glasenapp, Staff Attorney
Joey Keefe, Communications Coordinator
Lois Manno, Grants Manager
Kerry Renshaw, Administrative Assistant
Will Ribbans, Wilderness Stewardship & Outreach Manager
Suzanne Soto, Operations Manager

Northern New Mexico

Julian Gonzales, Northern New Mexico Grassroots Organizer
Garrett VeneKlasen, Northern Conservation Director

Gila Region

Nathan Newcomer, Grassroots Coordinator
Simon Sotelo, Community Grassroots Organizer

WILDERNESS RANGERS

Lincoln National Forest: Andres Osorio, Liam Tow
Cibola National Forest: Brennan Davis, Walker Martin
Gila National Forest: Laura Aubry, Abel Lazzell
Santa Fe National Forest: Zack Bumgarner, Jesse Furr,
Rio Chama BOR Bug Ranger, Rhett Spencer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nancy Morton, Chair
Todd Schulke, Vice Chair
Ken Jones, Treasurer
Joe Alcock, Secretary
Ernie Atencio
Wendy Brown
Kenneth Cole
Sam DesGeorges
Carol Johnson
Keegan King
Brian O'Donnell
Sally A. Paez
David Soules

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Jeanne Lambert, Art Director/Designer
Mark Allison, Executive Editor
Lois Manno, Co-Managing Editor
Joey Keefe, Co-Managing Editor
Tania Soussan, Editor

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.



Interested in advertising? Contact Suzanne@nmwild.org

PROTECTING THE PECOS WATERSHED

STAFF REPORT

The Stop Tererro Mine coalition continues to fight attempts by Comexico and its parent company, New World Resources, to conduct exploratory drilling in the sensitive Pecos watershed. In addition to the petition to the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission to designate the Upper Pecos Watershed as Outstanding National Resource Waters, or “Outstanding Waters,” reported in our Summer 2020 edition, there were several other positive developments in recent months.

The state Mining and Minerals Division (MMD) found several flaws in Comexico’s original permit application, including a lack of concrete plans for wildlife protection and revegetation. We are encouraging MMD to continue to scrutinize the permit application and to use its authority to prevent unnecessary drilling, particularly such a short-sighted proposal in a sensitive and valued area. We were also gratified to see the U.S. Forest Service determine that additional oversight and environmental analysis is needed for this exploratory drilling proposal.

We expect the Forest Service to open a public comment period in the upcoming months, and both MMD and Santa Fe County will be holding at least one public hearing. We will once again call on you to tune in, sign on and otherwise let your voice be heard so we can prevent this project from moving forward. This place is simply too special and too fragile for hard rock mining.

The most significant recent development is an exciting federal bill that would withdraw all federally managed minerals in the Pecos watershed from future leasing or sales introduced by Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., in September.

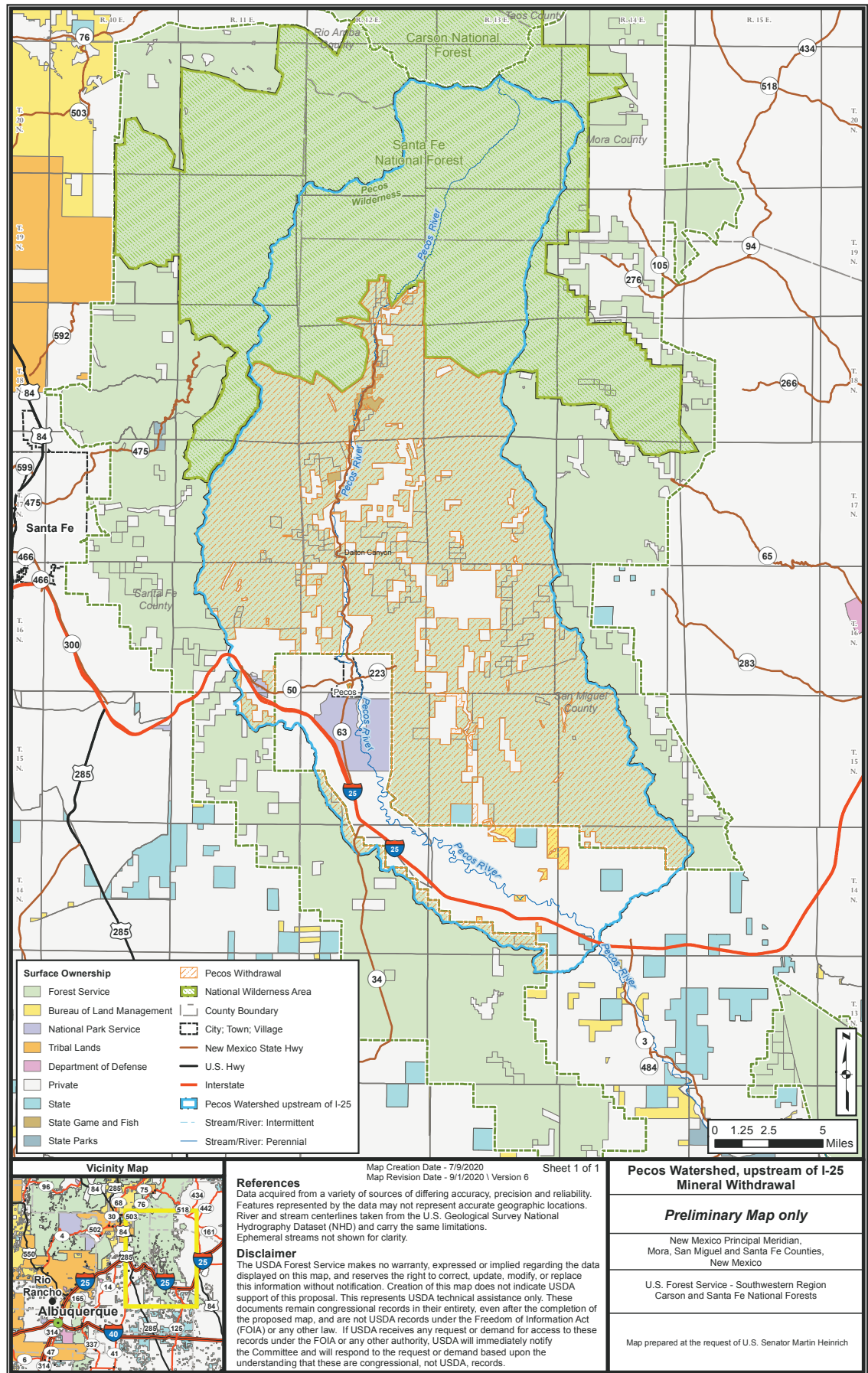
“We all have different relationships with this river, but whether you’re a fisherman or farmer or outdoor recreationist, people understand this river is the thing that ties them all together,” said Heinrich. “The New Mexico people want to see that protected to the greatest extent possible, and I think this legislation is the most straightforward way to do that.”

While the Pecos Watershed Protection Act would not affect pre-existing mining claims, including the proposed drilling operation near Tererro, the legislation would protect the Pecos watershed from all such future threats. The legislation is particularly welcome considering how much the antiquated 1872 Mining Act ties the hands of federal land managers when it comes to regulating the activities of large mining corporations.

Following the introduction of the legislation, New Mexico Wild Executive Director

Mark Allison issued the following statement in support: “This special area is far richer for its cultural, historic, habitat and recreational values than it is for any mineral development. The surrounding communities have fresh memories from the devastation wrought by past mining activities, and this legislation sends a clear message that multinational mining corporations need to look elsewhere. We thank Senator Heinrich for his continued leadership in looking out for New Mexico’s irreplaceable natural and cultural heritage.”

Pecos River watershed, photo: Garrett VeneKlasen
Below map: Pecos Watershed Withdrawal, courtesy: Office of U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich





OUTSTANDING NATIONAL RESOURCE WATER DESIGNATIONS

BY GARRETT VENEKLASEN, NORTHERN CONSERVATION DIRECTOR

Especially in the face of climate change, it is extremely critical that we protect our precious watersheds as well as the quality of the water they produce. Without resilient watersheds and clean water, New Mexico’s very future — culturally, economically, agriculturally speaking — is jeopardized.

One important state-based tool for protecting our waters and watersheds is an Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRW) designation. Rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands can receive ONRW protections to preserve water quality and ensure future generations of New Mexicans have access to clean water. The protection afforded by Outstanding Waters des-

ignation respects the role of clean water as the lifeblood of our communities, ensuring that people from all walks of life can enjoy the benefits of clean water in our special places.

New Mexico Wild is part of a dynamic coalition working to designate a variety of watersheds in Northern New Mexico as ONRW.

Q: What are Outstanding Waters (ONRWs)?

A: Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs) are rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands that receive special protections to preserve water. ONRW designations are made by the state Water Quality Control Commission.

Q: Which bodies of water in New Mexico currently have Outstanding Waters designation?

A: Several Outstanding Waters already exist in New Mexico, all on U.S. Forest Service land: the headwaters of the Rio Santa Barbara, the waters in the Valle Vidal and surface waters within Forest Service Wilderness Areas.

Q: Which waters are eligible to be protected as Outstanding Waters?

A: Any surface water of the state that meets one or more of the following criteria can be designated as an Outstanding Water:

- Special trout waters.
- Waters in a national or state park, monument, wildlife refuge or designated Wilderness Area.
- Part of a designated wild river under the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
- Waters with exceptional recreational or ecological significance.
- Waters with existing water quality equal to or better than state water quality standards.

Q: Who benefits from Outstanding Waters protections?

A: We all benefit from clean water. By protecting clean water, we preserve traditional uses essential to New Mexicans and our rich cultural heritage, including agriculture and ranching. Outstanding Waters also ensure all New Mexicans have access to clean water when fishing, rafting and swimming. Our state’s abundant fish and wildlife also benefit from clean water, which contributes to their survival and New Mexico’s wild, outdoor heritage. And we all rely on clean sources of drinking water flowing downstream to our towns and cities. 🏞️



Rio Santa Barbara, photo by Tisha Broska



SAVING GREATER CHACO FROM MORE DRILLING

BY JOEY KEEFE, COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

This summer and fall, New Mexico Wild helped generate over 3,500 public comments on a management plan that will determine how the lands near Chaco Culture National Historical Park are managed for decades.

The Farmington field office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wrapped up the public comment period for its draft Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) on Sept. 25 despite calls from the Navajo Nation, the All Pueblo Council of Governors and members of New Mexico’s congressional delegation to postpone the process until the state’s tribes, pueblos and rural communities could safely and fully participate.

The Navajo Nation and the state’s pueblos have been disproportionately impacted by the ongoing global pandemic and have rightly focused on addressing the health and needs of their citizens during this difficult time. As a result, many key stakeholders have been unable to devote adequate attention to the land management alternatives proposed by the BLM.

A lack of quality internet access in some Native American and other rural communities in the northwestern quadrant of the state meant that many stakeholders were completely shut out of the process even if they tried to participate.

The BLM’s decision to plow ahead with this process under uncommon circumstances is made even more problematic by the contents of the draft RMPA itself. The agency’s “preferred” alternative would open up the federal public lands in the Greater Cha-

co region to increased oil and gas drilling, placing cherished cultural and archaeological resources, lands with Wilderness characteristics and the health of nearby communities at great risk.

Only one of the proposed alternatives—known as “Alternative B-1”—comes close to legislation co-sponsored by New Mexico’s entire congressional delegation to protect these lands from future development. As reported in previous issues of this newsletter, the legislation would remove all federal public lands within 10 miles of Chaco Culture National Historical Park from future oil and gas lease sales. Most of the public comments gathered by New Mexico Wild urged the BLM to choose this alternative in its final plan.

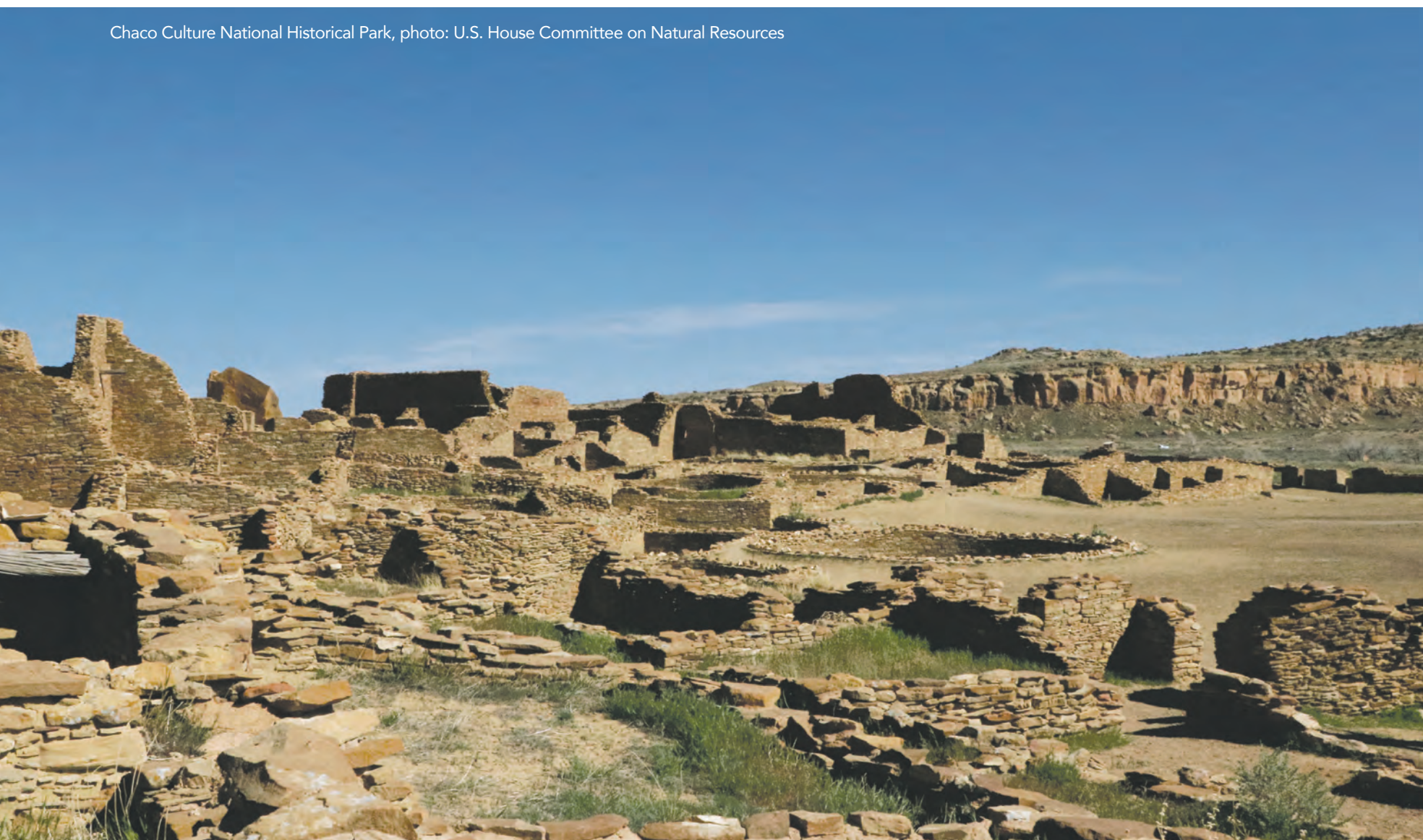
While the legislation has already passed the U.S. House of Representatives, its status in the Senate remains a question mark. Fortunately, Assistant Speaker Ben Ray Luján, D-N.M., passed an appropriations amendment in July to create a new, one-year moratorium on oil and gas drilling in the buffer zone established in the Chaco legislation. Additionally, the rest of the state’s congressional delegation continues to push the Department of the Interior to conduct more appropriate consultation with tribes and pueblos while the bill works its way through the legislative process.

At New Mexico Wild, we will continue working with our elected leaders and Native partners to permanently protect the lands in the Greater Chaco region. 🦋



Assistant Speaker Ben Ray Luján visited Chaco Culture National Historical Park with fellow members of Congress to learn more about impacts of drilling in the region, photo: U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources.

Chaco Culture National Historical Park, photo: U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources



STUDYING BUGS ON THE RIO



BY RHETT SPENCER,
RIO CHAMA CITIZEN
SCIENCE COORDINATOR
AND WILDERNESS RANGER

Rio Chama boaters, photo: Zack Bumgarner

This year, New Mexico Wild began coordinating a two-year citizen science project, collecting data to help improve the quality of water released from El Vado Reservoir. We’re calling it the “Chama Bug Project.”

The Wild & Scenic stretch of the Rio Chama starts just below El Vado Reservoir and runs 31 river miles to Big Eddy Takeout along Forest Road 151. This stretch of river is significant to New Mexicans for a multitude of reasons, and all of those reasons could benefit from the water being the best it can be for the environment surrounding the river corridor and beyond.

Who are the citizens acting as scientists? You! Anyone can participate, and many already have. At the end of our first season, we had over 130 adult participants and over 60 youth participants (...and well over 30 canine participants).

What are the citizen scientists doing? Participants are collecting adult aquatic insects, i.e., the flying insects that hatch in the water, using ethanol and a light trap set up on the river bank at night while camping. They’re also collecting a river water sample and recording the collection location. These insects are particularly sensitive to water conditions, so determining which insects are present and in what numbers at given conditions will indicate the impact that those conditions are having on that environment. Our samples (approximately 85 bug and river water samples collected between July and September) are being processed by labs out of the University of New Mexico (UNM) and Northern Arizona University (NAU).

Why are we collecting these data, and why now? Starting in 2021, the dam wall and spillway of El Vado Reservoir will be undergo-

ing some much needed repairs, and, consequently, the reservoir will not be holding water nor doing scheduled releases with predictable flow rates in the Rio Chama as usual. Though this leaves a lot of questions about how the river float season will look, it presents us with the unique opportunity to compare the environmental impacts of water coming out of the reservoir in a normal year (more turbid and colder than it naturally would be) to the impacts of water flowing freely through the reservoir (likely closer to natural conditions). The findings from these data could be used to recommend the installation of an intake tower in El Vado. Currently, water is released only from the bottom of the reservoir. An intake tower would allow managers to regulate temperature and sediment loads by releasing water from different elevations, making the releases more environmentally friendly.

How and when can you participate? Whether you’re interested in adding some science to your backcountry float down this stretch of the river or spicing up your car-camping at any of the free U.S. Forest Service campgrounds along Forest Road 151 (on the way to Monastery of Christ in the Desert), you can join the Chama Bug Project. All you have to do to participate is contact Rhett Spencer, our Rio Chama citizen science coordinator, to reserve the materials; his email address is provided below. Our collection period for this year is over, however, it isn’t too early to start planning for 2021! Early season on the Rio Chama is between April 15 and July 15, and release season is from July 16 to September 15.

Thank you so much to everyone who has already participated! We look forward to seeing you again next year on the river!

Contact Rhett Spencer for more information at rhett@nmwild.org. 🐛

Partners: Rio Grande Restoration, University of New Mexico, U.S. Geological Survey, Rio Chama Flow Project, Northern Arizona University, Far Flung Adventures, Los Rios River Runners, New Mexico River Adventures, Santa Fe Rafting Co., New Wave Rafting, U.S. Bureau of Land Management Taos Field Office, Bureau of Reclamation



Rio Chama Citizen
Science sticker,
Artwork by
Jesse Furr



Cerro de la Olla, photo: Garrett VeneKlasen

MOVING TOWARD A WILDERNESS DESIGNATION FOR CERRO DE LA OLLA

STAFF REPORT

Our Summer 2020 newsletter delved into new legislation co-sponsored by Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich that would establish a new, 13,000-acre Wilderness Area known as Cerro de la Olla within the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. We are excited to share that the designation is closer to becoming a reality.

In September, the bill received its first hearing in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining. Heinrich, who is a member of the subcommittee, testified on behalf of the legislation and its importance to residents of Taos County and surrounding communities.

“Protecting this peak and its spectacular

views has long been a priority for the Taos community and I’m glad this bill is moving forward today,” he said.

The hearing was an important step in the legislative process, paving the way for the legislation to eventually go before the full Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and eventually the entire Senate.

The path to designation became even clearer in October when then-Assistant Speaker Ben Ray Luján and Rep. Deb Haaland introduced legislation to establish the Cerro de la Olla Wilderness in the House of Representatives. This bill mirrors the legislation co-sponsored by Udall and Heinrich and provides an avenue for the legislation to ultimately

clear both chambers of Congress. The Cerro de la Olla Wilderness legislation is supported by sportsmen, Taos area community members, small businesses, faith leaders, Taos Pueblo and nonprofit organizations like New Mexico Wild. Cerro de la Olla, which loosely translates to “Pot Mountain” in Spanish, has been cherished by traditional users such as hunters and firewood gatherers for centuries. A Wilderness designation for Cerro de la Olla would permanently protect these traditional uses of the land from overdevelopment and provide Northern New Mexico with another destination for solitude. New Mexico Wild will continue working with the local community and our Congressional leaders to make the Cerro de la Olla Wilderness Area a reality. 🏔️

NEW LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS RACIST NAMES ON PUBLIC LANDS

STAFF REPORT

New Mexico Wild is thrilled to support new legislation introduced by New Mexico Representative Deb Haaland and Representative Al Green to address racist names on public lands and other geographic features.

The bill seeks to identify national forests, Wilderness areas, and other public land units that, through their official names, honor efforts to denigrate Native or Black Americans. The Reconciliation in Place Names Act would set up an advisory committee to

review the names of these land units and make recommendations to the Board on Geographic Names on how to appropriately rename them.

“It’s past time to change the offensive names of public lands, especially with input from groups who have been discriminated against,” Rep. Haaland said in a press release announcing the legislation in September. New Mexico Wild commends Rep. Haaland for her leadership in addressing the racist history of the nation’s public lands.



Congresswoman Deb Haaland, photo: Office of Congresswoman Deb Haaland

RESTORING THE MEXICAN GRAY WOLF

STAFF REPORT



A running Mexican gray wolf pup, photo: Rebecca Bose Wolf Conservation Center

The Mexican gray wolf, or lobo, is emblematic of the wild Southwest, representing the ruggedness and relentlessness of the region. The recovery of the Mexican gray wolf deserves a deeper commitment from our government agencies and a renewed sense of urgency to return this species to its critical place in the ecosystem. Over the past two decades, tremendous work has been done by the Fish and Wildlife Service, state partners and advocacy organizations but the threats to the species have only increased over that time.

The Mexican gray wolf has been fighting for decades for a position in our region's ecosystem in the face of encroaching ranching and logging and a rapidly changing climate. Despite federal protections and the work of powerful advocates, the lobo continues to face death in the form of unpenalized takings. It is time to designate the lobos of Southwestern New Mexico and Southeastern Arizona as an essential experimental population of this species. An essential population, under the Endangered Species Act, is one that is considered essential to the continued existence of the endangered or threatened species. Besides this technical consideration, an essential designation ensures the take prohibitions and consultation requirements of the Endangered Species Act are enforced and followed. As a nonessential population, the lobos of New Mexico are susceptible to certain types of harm which carry no criminal or civil liability for the person harming the creature.

As the Trump administration neared its final days, it struck a blow to species protections by stripping nationwide protections from the gray wolf. This move spared, for the moment, the Mexican gray wolf but it sent a very clear signal that the federal government was moving towards abdicating responsibility for wildlife management.

There are a few simple things the Biden administration could do to not only signal a re-commitment to lobo recovery but to accelerate recovery efforts. First, the Mexican gray wolf should be listed as an essential population through a new and meaningful 10(j) rulemaking. Second, the disastrous McKittrick Policy should be ended once and for all. Third, US Fish and Wildlife should base its new recovery rule on science and not politics.

An adequately and appropriately protected population of Mexican gray wolves would return the landscape to its pre-interference ecological balance and guarantee consistent, reliable incomes for ranchers and supplies for consumers. Continuing to list the Mexican

gray wolf as non-essential undermines decades-long legitimate recovery work and threatens any real commitments in the future by allowing federal agents and private landowners to kill with impunity.

The burden of proof in prosecutions of wolf killers must be shifted. The McKittrick policy essentially allows for the unwarranted and unmitigated killing of wolves unless it can be proved that the individual knew the creature was endangered prior to the kill. The "shrug defense" simply cannot be allowed to be used any longer if the lobo has any hope to meaningfully recover.

The lobo was first reintroduced to the landscape in 1998 and has been slowly reestablishing its position in the ecosystem ever since. In 2015, however, the Fish and Wildlife Service reclassified the species as non-essential and seriously threatened the continued recovery. New Mexico Wild, along with several partners, won a lawsuit to force the agency to return to the drawing board and ensure that science, and not politics, drives recovery plans for the Mexican gray wolf. Since then, the agency has been working to meet the court order and we have been closely monitoring the progress. We spent most of 2020 expecting a new rule from the agency, but as the year draws to a close and a new administration nears there is a chance that any decision about the lobos recovery plan will wait for brighter days. Any future recovery plan must follow the science, meaning no arbitrary manmade boundaries to wolf territory, no arbitrary population caps, and no misinformation about predation. Only then will New Mexicans again hear the howl of the wolf through our canyons and over our mesas and know that balance has been restored to our wild country. 🐾

CALLING ALL ARTISTS!

Help Protect the Critically Endangered Mexican Gray Wolf with Your Artwork

New Mexico Wild invites all artists to submit original artwork for our 2021 Mexican Wolf Conservation Stamp Contest. All two-dimensional drawings, paintings, or photographs featuring the Mexican gray wolf are welcome. The winning artwork will be printed on the 2021 Mexican Wolf Conservation Stamp and will be sold to support Mexican gray wolf conservation and education programs. All artwork must be scalable to the size of the stamp: 4.5-inches wide by 5.5-inches tall.

Please submit electronic images of original artwork by February 28, 2021 to tisha@nmwild.org.



2020 winning artwork by Jessica Gama

GILA RIVER CLOSER TO WILD AND SCENIC DESIGNATION

BY NATHAN NEWCOMER, GRASSROOTS COORDINATOR, GILA REGION

T*M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act* was heard before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on Sept. 16. This is exciting news – it was far from certain there would be any more public lands hearings during this Congress or, if there were, that this recently introduced legislation would make it onto the agenda.

In an opening statement, Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M. and a member of the committee, said, “The Gila and San Francisco rivers are the beating heart of southwest New Mexico and are home to some of the most spectacular places in the West – full stop.”

Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., testified, “The Greater Gila Watershed, including the San Francisco River and other main tributaries, comprises the largest remaining network of naturally flowing river segments in the Southwestern United States.”

Jamie Crockett, co-owner of Gila Backcountry Services, testified virtually before the committee and advocated for the legislation. During her testimony, Crockett stated in part that “New Mexicans travel distances to get to the water’s edge, it’s where we connect with family and friends, it’s where we escape the summer heat in the cool clear water, it’s where we raise our children to respect nature, God and each other. Preserving our ability to hunt elk, to fish for Gila trout, to camp, backpack, horseback ride, kayak or to simply have a picnic on the banks of these wild and scenic rivers is something that is vital to the residents of Grant County and New Mexicans alike. I believe that this legislation will preserve our rivers while protecting the traditional uses and values of the Gila River, San Francisco River and their main tributaries.”

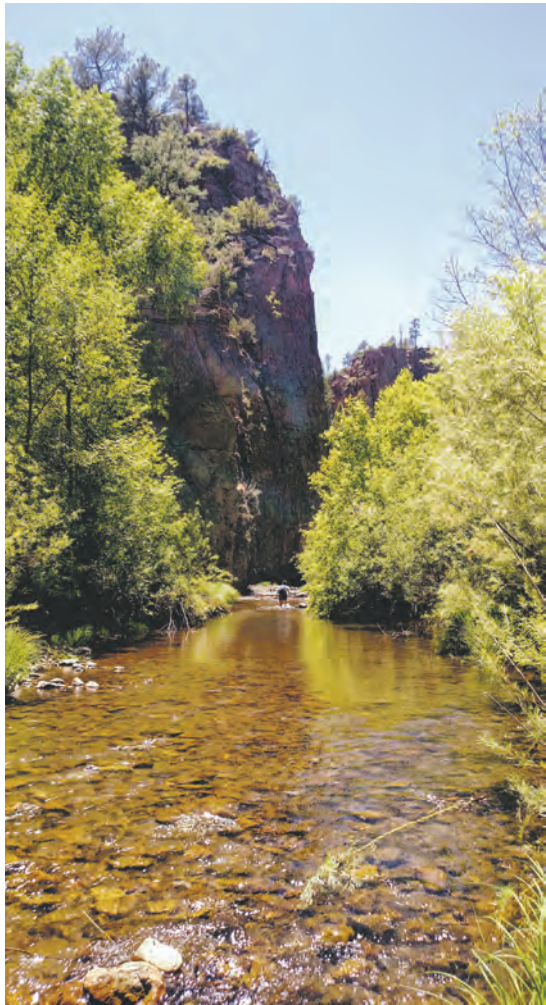
Mark Allison, executive director at New Mexico Wild, said the committee hearing was an important step.



Middle Fork of the Gila River, photo: Will Ribbans

“In a year unlike any other, it has become more apparent than perhaps ever before how much New Mexicans and Americans truly cherish their public lands. We’ve also seen that conservation is one of the increasingly rare issues that enjoys overwhelming, bipartisan support. A committee hearing might be ‘inside baseball’ but it is an important event in the life of a bill and it makes us proud to see Senators Udall and Heinrich roll up their sleeves, do the hard work of legislating and show that the democratic process has not completed been halted,” Allison said. “We look forward to the day when this bill become law and this remarkable example of our natural and cultural heritage is protected forever.”

This legislation is the result of a grassroots movement and nearly a decade of work by the people of southwest New Mexico to guarantee protections of nearly 450 river miles and their traditional uses and values. To learn more about the campaign to protect the Gila River, please visit www.nmwild.org. 🐾



Grecia by Kendra Milligan won 3rd place at the Gila Wild and Scenic Art Show



From the Gila Bridge by Diane Cornelius won first place at the Gila Wild and Scenic Art Show at Leyba and Ingalls Arts



Jornada de Muerdo Acrylic Gouache won 2nd place at the Gila Wild and Scenic Art Show at Leyba and Ingalls Arts

A LAWSUIT TO SAVE THE FLORIDAS



BY LOGAN GLASENAPP, STAFF ATTORNEY



Florida Mountains WSA, photo: Mark Bixby

New Mexico Wild has filed a lawsuit against the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to reverse the agency’s approval of an extensive mining exploration and development project in the Florida Mountains by American Magnesium, LLC.

The lawsuit focuses on violations of the Administrative Procedures Act, Federal Land Management Policy Act and National Environmental Policy Act and asks for full public disclosure of the impacts of the entire mine project. Co-plaintiffs include Friends of the Floridas, WildEarth Guardians, Gila Resources Information Project and Amigos Bravos. The plaintiffs are represented by attorneys with the Western Mining Action Project, New Mexico Wild and WildEarth Guardians.

The federal lawsuit, filed in the District of New Mexico, claims the BLM approved the construction and operation of a dolomite mine in the Florida Mountains while simultaneously approving the exploration activity required to prove the value of mineral claim in the area. This two-for-one approval violates federal law and BLM

regulations and jeopardizes continued preservation of a Wilderness Study Area and various sensitive species.

The suit also contends that the BLM did not fully evaluate all of the environmental issues due to the failure to identify the impacts of ore hauling through residential areas and necessary ore processing activities.

The Florida Mountains are a 12-mile long range in southern Luna County, about 15 miles southeast of Deming. The area offers exceptional hiking and other recreational opportunities, as well as important archaeological and geological research sites. The Floridas are also home to a Wilderness Study Area, two state parks and critical ecological corridors and wildlife habitat.

The proposed mining project, potentially lasting 20 years, would bring increased industrial traffic through the small town of Deming. Additionally, the environmental and municipal impacts of transporting and processing the ore have not been analyzed, nor publicly disclosed. 🦋

Gila Diversion Defeated

BY MARK ALLISON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

After 15 years of fighting a preposterously ill-conceived and spectacularly mismanaged effort to construct a major diversion project on the Gila River, New Mexico Wild and our partners celebrated the Interstate Stream Commission’s decision to end the Environmental Impact Statement process in June.

As readers of this publication know, the headwaters of the Gila River begin in the world’s first administratively protected Wilderness Area, and the Gila is the last free-flowing river in New Mexico and one of only a few left in the entire Southwest. The “Billion Dollar Boondoggle” lurched from one proposed site to the next, one project idea to another, and squandered years of effort and millions of dollars all for a pipedream (pun intended) that even at the end couldn’t articulate the beneficiaries, the yield or the cost of the developed water.

New Mexico Wild was proud to stand with an indefatigable group of organizations and individuals to ultimately save the Gila River from this threat. A special note of recognition is due to the leadership of the Gila Conservation Coalition. We thank the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) for deciding that they could no longer support throwing good money after bad. Gov. Michelle Luján Grisham, Lt. Gov. Howie Morales and Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich, both D-N.M., deserve credit for their strong leadership. Thanks to you, too – for responding to our action alerts



A hiker crossing the Gila River, photo, Nathan Newcomer

over these past years, writing letters and contacting policy makers. Most recently, leading up to the ISC vote, New Mexico Wild members responded by sending over 8,700 emails to commissioners voicing opposition to continuing the diversion project! This reinforces what we know to be true – persistence pays off. Citizen action makes a difference. Your voice counts. As Michael Franti sings: “Those who dam streams can build fountains. Those of us who just let them run free can move mountains.”

Our work isn’t completely done. Along with key partners, we’ll be working in the upcoming state legislative session to free up the \$70 million in remaining funds to redirect them to local, shovel-ready water improvement and conservation projects to benefit residents in Grant, Luna, Hidalgo and Catron counties. Stay tuned! 🦋



GREAT NEWS - GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT SIGNED INTO LAW!

STAFF REPORT

Rio Grande del Norte National Monument was a recipient of LWCF funding, photo: Bureau of Land Management

In a year filled with bad news, we were thrilled to celebrate a historic victory for our public lands. The Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law on Aug. 4.

The new law has two major components. First, it fully and permanently funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$900 million per year – the amount intended for the program when Congress first created it in 1965. Secondly, the new law provides \$9.5 billion over five years to address a backlog of deferred maintenance projects for the National Park Service (NPS) and other federal public land agencies.

New Mexico Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich and Reps. Xochitl Torres Small, Ben Ray Lujan, and Deb Haaland co-sponsored the legislation in the Senate and House of Representatives. Heinrich deserves special recognition for leading negotiations to include the nearly \$10 billion dollars for backlogged projects and for expanding the eligible agencies beyond the National Park Service.

What exactly will this mean for New Mexico? Federal agencies such as the NPS, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management can apply for funding to improve roads, buildings (such as visitor centers), infrastructure and more. Virtually every local office of these agencies is in desperate need of this type of funding. Application for and use of LWCF funds has the greatest impact and

benefit for local communities, counties and municipalities. According to the Department of the Interior, the LWCF “was established to fulfill a bipartisan commitment to safeguard our natural areas, water resources and cultural heritage, and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. Using zero taxpayer dollars, the fund invests earnings from offshore oil and gas leasing to help strengthen communities, preserve our history and protect our national endowment of lands and waters.”

LWCF supports projects big and small, from the maintenance of national monuments to the construction of public pools, city parks and greenspaces, public recreation facilities, baseball fields and playground equipment in our community parks. This legislation simultaneously recognizes New Mexicans’ desire for quality outdoor experiences and invests desperately needed resources in our communities as they struggle to recover from the havoc wrought by the global pandemic. New Mexico’s entire congressional delegation should be commended for their role in this historic moment.

LWCF is also the principal source of funds for land acquisition for outdoor recreation by four federal agencies — the Forest Service, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management. LWCF provides matching grants to assist states in recreational planning, acquiring recreational lands and waters,

Story continued on page 16



Valles Caldera is a recipient of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, photo: Garrett VeneKlasen; New Mexico Wild hosted a virtual celebration of the Great American Outdoors Act featuring New Mexico’s entire congressional delegation in August. Senator Tom Udall is not pictured, but attended by phone, screenshot: Tisha Broska

GREETINGS AND FAREWELLS

Farewell Grecia, We'll Miss You!

A little note from Simon: Grecia encouraged me and inspired me every day to be a better human being.

And now, she is moving on and moving up. SHE'S GOING TO LAW SCHOOL to work in Environmental Policy and Civil Rights!

Grecia, I wish you the absolute best in life and so much success. You are a real KICKASS Latina. It has been an honor to work with you and to be your friend.

Much love and respect.

Greetings from our Intern, Madeline!

My name is Madeline Cauthen and I have recently accepted an internship position at New Mexico Wild. I am excited to expand and update the online hiking guide with photos, trail reports, and other important data that will aid in the understanding of our Wilderness areas. I am especially eager to get our volunteers involved!

I moved to Albuquerque from Kansas City, Missouri eight years ago to earn my Bachelor's in Archaeology and am currently earning an associate's degree in GIS. The preservation of historical context is important to me, and my love of environmental conservation ties in with that. I hope to utilize my degrees in conjunction with our nation's park systems and designated Wilderness areas to further educate the public and advocate for the protection of more Wilderness.

Email me with any questions or suggestions at madeline@nmwild.org. I look forward to working with all of you!

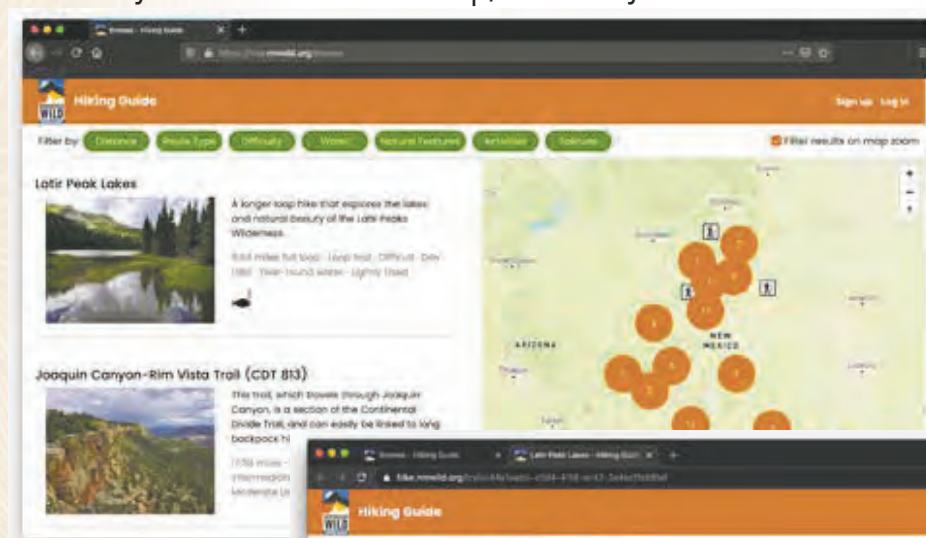


HIKE!

Introducing 100+ Great Hikes
in New Mexico Wilderness Areas
<http://hike.nmwild.org>



Locate your hike on the state map, or filter by feature.



**Always
Free!**

**Unlimited
Access**

Interactive features

Powerful planning tools

Famous hikes and secluded Wilderness treasures

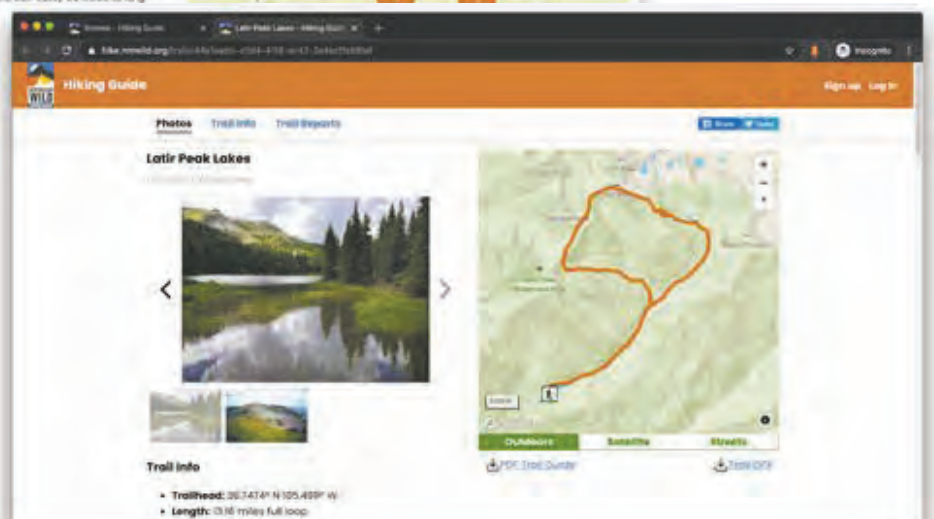
Rich descriptions and useful trail information

Track progress on the route, see elevation profile

Print a PDF of the hike to take with you

Useful info about local businesses

SPONSORED BY



Dive deeper into a specific trail, view photos, download maps.



LATINO CONSERVATION WEEK 2020

BY SIMON SOTELO, COMMUNITY GRASSROOTS ORGANIZER

Latino Conservation Week (LCW) 2020 was a success, even navigating the interesting times we are living in now. Due to the complications caused by COVID-19, this year’s events were conducted virtually. More than ever, we need to strive for engagement and inclusion in everything we do.

When New Mexico Wild Executive Director Mark Allison asked me and my former colleague Grecia Nuñez to “up our game” for LCW 2020, we decided to get creative. What better way to do that than to have an art show? We partnered with Leyba & Ingalls Arts in Silver City and Defenders of Wildlife for the second annual Wild & Scenic Art Show. This year we opted to send out a “call for artists” across the state. This resulted in 30-plus submissions. The art submissions were juried by Fred M. Barraza, a Commissioner with New Mexico Arts. Defenders of Wildlife generously donated swag and prizes for first, second and third place along with a “hoi pollo!” or viewer’s choice award.

This year, we also took to engaging the Latinx population by creating a “Lotería de Conservación” version of the traditional Mexican card game similar to bingo that has brought Latinx families together for generations. The traditional images like La Serena, El Gallo and El Mundo (The Mermaid, The Rooster and The World) were replaced with El Nopal, Las Botas and El Pino (The Cactus, The Boots and The Pine Tree), images synonymous with the outdoors and wild places.



Lotería de Conservación Tabla (left) and El Nopal Playing Card, (right), artwork by Jesse Furr

The intent is to bring families together in the outdoors and to encourage participation in the conversation of conservation where the Latinx population typically is under-represented. The Lotería cards held true to the traditional 4x4 game board grid and the 54-card deck. The artwork was done by New Mexico Wild wilderness ranger and artist extraordinaire Jesse Furr. Jesse retained the colorfulness and detail of the traditional version of Lotería. There is even a downloadable version of the game in black

and white so that kids can get in on the fun by coloring their very own Lotería cards. Download the game at nmwild.org.

While Latino Conservation Week activities were concentrated in the south this year, New Mexico Wild is looking forward to making this a statewide celebration of the many contributions Latinx communities have made, and are making, to conserving New Mexico’s special wild places. 🌵

WE’LL DONATE \$500 FOR YOU!

Photon Rainbow will donate \$500 to NM Wild in YOUR NAME when you switch your home to solar. Contact us today and mention this announcement!



Solar reduces your greenhouse gas emissions by 11,479 pounds annually! No down payment required. We GUARANTEE the cost of your solar to be lower than your average monthly electricity bill.

photonrainbow.com/nmwild

(505) 249-9926

mark@photonrainbow.com





A PREVIEW OF THE 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BY BRITTANY FALLON, POLICY DIRECTOR

Thanks to the confluence of COVID-19 and a major election year, the 2021 legislative session is slated to be one of the more unusual sessions in New Mexico state history.

The session will run for 60 days, from January 19 to March 20. “Long sessions” occur in odd years and are open to all issues, while even-year sessions focus solely on the state budget and are only 30 days long.

It’s hard to believe that COVID-19 hit just after the 2020 legislative session. So much has changed since then – most critical for New Mexico is the fluctuating revenue from oil and gas production, which funds the bulk of our state budget, due to political and market conditions. While we have all felt the impact of COVID on our lives, New Mexico is likely to be feeling its impacts for a long time. For that reason, policy opportunities this January will be limited by the likely depressed revenue forecast for the state expected in December. Additionally, our legislators are working hard to ensure that the public and advocates have a COVID-safe way to participate and make their voices heard. Stay tuned for an announcement in January as to what the protocol is for public participation.

You may recall from the June primary election that five long-time moderate Democratic state senators were defeated by progressive, environmental champions. Not every champion went on to win in the general election, but these changes will still have enormous impact because several of the defeated Democrats had held significant leadership positions in the Senate. While the Senate in re-

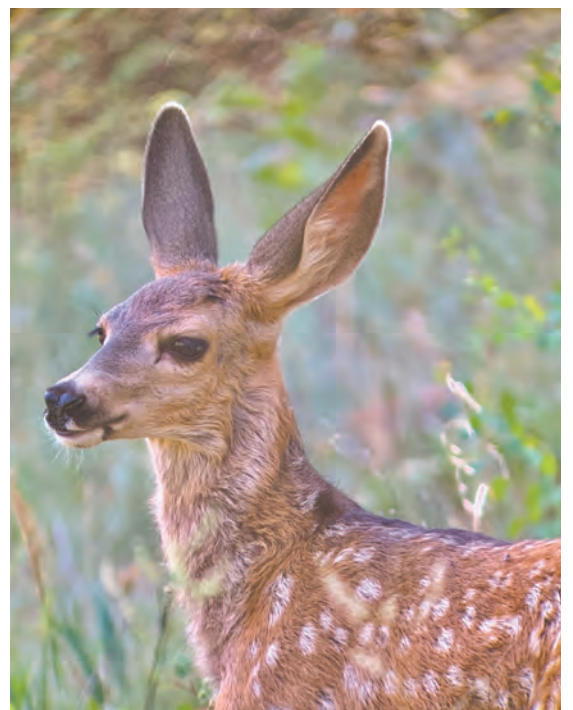
cent years has been the roadblock to much conservation legislation, it is certain that the incoming Senate will be substantially different come November. This is important to know because much of our planning for state legislation is dependent on what happens at the ballot box – a good reminder that local elections matter more than ever.

Here are a few of our goals for the session, pending revenue and election results:

- **Protecting environmental agency budgets:** After years of gutting under former Gov. Susana Martinez, we must continually emphasize the need to preserve the budgets of the agencies that protect our lands, water, wildlife and public health. Without adequate resources, they cannot protect us or the environment.
- **New Mexico Unit Fund legislation:** We must ensure that the remaining \$70 million from the failed Gila Diversion project be used instead for local water conservation projects.
- **Environmental Database Act:** This effort would expand a conservation planning tool used by the New Mexico Game & Fish Department to review important resources for wildlife and habitats.
- **Outdoor Equity Fund:** An initiative we have wholeheartedly supported in the past, we will continue advocating for funds to ensure that all youth in New Mexico can access our public lands and waters.

- **Protect our water:** New Mexico has felt the impact of climate change this year, with rampant wildfires and many dry or close-to-dry riverbeds. We are now in significant “water debt” to Texas. Several water policies will be advanced this year to begin what will be a multi-year process to modernize New Mexico’s water management – details pending.

Much of what we accomplish in January will be dependent on COVID-19 and state revenue forecasts. Whatever the circumstances, New Mexico Wild will work alongside our community partners to accomplish policies that better New Mexico. 🦌



New Mexico Wild’s legislative priorities include protecting the state’s abundant wildlife; photo: Garrett VeneKlasen

Great News story continued from page 13

and developing outdoor recreational facilities. LWCF has been used to fund other federal programs with natural resource-related purposes, such as the Forest Legacy program of the Forest Service and grants under the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

LWCF has been a critical public lands funding source for New Mexico. The fund has contributed more than \$312 million to conservation efforts in all 33 New Mexico counties – despite never being fully funded before now. Its most significant local contribution was the purchase of the 90,000-acre Valles Caldera in 2000. The LWCF contributed just over \$100 million, permanently protecting priceless Puebloan cultural resources and promoting singular recreational opportunities and public access while at the same time conserving critical habitat for wildlife as well as the headwaters of the San Antonio and Jemez watersheds.

In the coming years, New Mexico has a remarkable opportunity to build new city parks, green spaces, pools, recreation centers, baseball fields and more. We should be ambitious and aim for another acquisition on the scale of the Valles Caldera. If you know of a large iconic private inholding that might be for sale, please let us know about it and we will reach out to the appropriate agencies and congressional liaisons to place it on a growing wish list of acquisition properties.

A second exciting opportunity is the acquisition of smaller, private inholdings that can open permanent access to landlocked private lands. In New Mexico, approximately 554,000 acres of federal land is inaccessible to the public because access is blocked by private land. New Mexico Wild is talking to communities and stakeholders and putting together a list of what we think are priority projects. Please let us know your ideas.

As an added bonus, the Great American Outdoors Act will boost New Mexico’s growing outdoor recreation economy, which directly supports \$1.2 billion in income and 33,500 jobs in the state annually. This significant infusion of new investments in our public lands, job creation and economic recovery couldn’t have come at a more welcome time.

New Mexico Wild and many other state and national conservation organizations worked tirelessly for nearly two decades, lobbying Congress to permanently authorize and fully fund the LWCF program. We are so proud of and grateful for the leadership of New Mexico’s congressional delegation. And, once again, we are reminded that political opportunities can come at unexpected times – and that perseverance pays off.

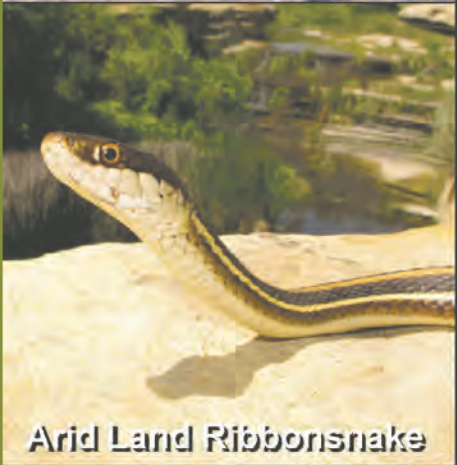
Visit nmwild.org for more information. 🦌

Saving Non-Game Species

Below is a flyer from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish about the state's Share with Wildlife program to protect non-game wildlife species. We encourage our members to learn more about how to support the Share with Wildlife program and the organizations and projects they fund to save some of New Mexico's most vulnerable species.



Burrowing Owls



Arid Land Ribbonsnake



Grace's Warbler



Meadow Jumping Mouse



Big Bend Slider

Share with Wildlife

www.wildlife.state.nm.us/conservation/share-with-wildlife

What is Share with Wildlife?

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish's non-game enhancement program funded by donations from the public. Each year, the program distributes funds for non-game focused projects.



Share with Wildlife

What kinds of projects does Share with Wildlife fund?

Non-game wildlife research, education, rehabilitation (i.e., wildlife rescue, treatment, and care), and habitat purchase and improvement projects.

What species do Share with Wildlife projects focus on?

Species that are not hunted or fished, especially Species of Greatest Conservation Need identified in the New Mexico State Wildlife Action Plan. Every year, Department biologists and habitat specialists identify program focal species, habitats, and research questions. To learn more about species in New Mexico, visit the Biota Information System of New Mexico (bison-m.org).

What kinds of organizations receive funds from Share with Wildlife?

Universities, non-profit organizations, and private consulting firms and individuals

Where does the money for Share with Wildlife grants come from?

Donations from people like you are combined with funds from the federal government to maximize the benefit for New Mexico's wildlife.

How can I donate to Share with Wildlife?

Buy a Share with Wildlife vehicle license plate through MVD, donate part of your state income tax refund, or donate online through the Department's Online Licensing System (onlinesales.wildlife.state.nm.us).

How can I get more information about Share with Wildlife?

Visit the Share with Wildlife website (www.wildlife.state.nm.us/conservation/share-with-wildlife), search for project reports on the Biota Information System of New Mexico (bison-m.org), or contact the program coordinator Ginny Seamster, virginia.seamster@state.nm.us.



New Mexico Department of Game and Fish www.wildlife.state.nm.us
One Wildlife Way, Santa Fe, NM 87507 • 888-248-6866

WILDERNESS FAQs



Pecos Wilderness boundary sign. Photo: Vincent Franzen, www.ultrazona.com



WHAT IS A WILDERNESS AREA?

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as “an area where the earth and community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain” and “an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions.” There are currently 765 designated Wilderness areas, totaling 109,129,657 acres, or about 4.5 percent of the area of the United States.



WHAT QUALIFIES A PLACE TO BECOME WILDERNESS?

The following conditions must generally be present for an area to be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System: 1. the land is under federal ownership and management, 2. the area consists of at least 5,000 acres of land, 3. human influence is “substantially unnoticeable,” 4. there are opportunities for solitude and recreation, and 5. the area possesses “ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”



WHO DECIDES WHAT PLACES ARE WILDERNESS?

Designated Wilderness is the highest level of conservation protection for federal lands. Only Congress may designate Wilderness or change the status of Wilderness areas. Wilderness areas are designated within existing federal public land. Congress has directed four federal land management agencies—the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service—to manage Wilderness areas to preserve and, where possible, to enhance their Wilderness character.



HOW MUCH WILDERNESS EXISTS IN NEW MEXICO?

Approximately 1,972,507 acres are protected as Wilderness in the state. Though this seems like a lot, New Mexico actually ranks next to last among Western states in the percentage of its land designated as Wilderness, at roughly 2.5 percent. On average, Western states (not including Alaska) have 5 percent of their land designated as Wilderness.



WHERE WAS THE FIRST WILDERNESS AREA ESTABLISHED?

The Gila Wilderness in southwestern New Mexico was the world’s first designated Wilderness area, created on June 3, 1924. It’s ironic that the state where Wilderness got its start now is lagging behind in total acres of Wilderness created.



WHY IS WILDERNESS IMPORTANT?

Through the Wilderness Act, Congress recognized the intrinsic value of wildlands. Some of the tangible and intangible values mentioned in the Wilderness Act include “solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation,” as well as “ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.” Wilderness areas provide habitat for wildlife and plants, including endangered and threatened species.



CAN I HUNT AND FISH IN A WILDERNESS AREA?

Hunting and fishing are allowed in Wilderness areas, subject to applicable state and federal laws.



IS GRAZING ALLOWED IN WILDERNESS?

Livestock grazing is permitted where it occurred prior to an area’s designation as Wilderness. On rare occasions, Congress prohibits grazing in Wilderness at the time of designation.



CAN I DRIVE IN A WILDERNESS AREA?

The Wilderness Act generally prohibits the use of motor vehicles in Wilderness. The law contains special provisions for motor vehicle use when required in emergencies or as necessary for the administration of the area. Motor vehicles may also be permitted for special uses such as to access a private inholding, to support grazing or to exercise valid existing rights.



CAN I BIKE IN A WILDERNESS AREA?

The 1964 Wilderness Act prohibits motorized or mechanized forms of recreation, and this includes bicycles. Instead, visitors are required to walk or ride horseback.



HOW DOES WILDERNESS HELP WILDLIFE?

Habitat fragmentation caused by roads, power lines, fences, dams and other structures seriously affects the ability of animals to move through their ranges. The roadless quality of Wilderness preserves large tracts of habitat needed for healthy populations of animals that need space to roam, like large predators, migratory species and herd animals.



DOES A WILDERNESS AREA INCREASE THE RISK OF FIRE?

Wilderness areas are to be primarily affected by the forces of nature, though the Wilderness Act does acknowledge the need to provide for human health and safety, protect private property, control insect infestations and fight fires within the area. Wilderness areas are managed under the direction of the Wilderness Act, subsequent legislation (such as the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act) and agency policy.



I LIVE IN THE CITY ... WHY DOES WILDERNESS MATTER?

Wilderness protects open space, watersheds, natural soundscapes, diverse ecosystems and biodiversity. The literature of Wilderness experience frequently cites the inspirational and spiritual values of Wilderness, including opportunities to reflect on the community of life and the human place on Earth. Most Wildernesses are also carbon sinks that help combat climate change. Wilderness provides a sense of wildness, which can be valuable to people whether or not those individuals actually visit Wilderness. Just knowing that Wilderness exists can produce a sense of curiosity, inspiration, renewal and hope.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT WILDERNESS?

Join the New Mexico Wild! We are your most complete resource for information about wildlands and Wilderness areas in the state. As a member you’ll get our newsletters, E-news, action alerts and notices about hikes, service projects and special events. You can help us Keep it Wild! Join on our website at www.nmwild.org or use the convenient mail-in form on page 23. 🐾

Being Responsible on Public Lands

A global pandemic has made all of us more aware of the steps we need to take to protect ourselves and others. These efforts apply to our use of public lands as well. The federal and state agencies that manage our public lands were already short-staffed and low on resources; the pandemic has only exasperated those difficulties.

In order to keep yourself, your family, and others safe when using public lands, please employ the 7 Leave No Trace principles when visiting public lands.

7 Leave No Trace Principles

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Also, review these helpful tips from REI about how to **#RecreateResponsibly** when visiting public lands.

#RecreateResponsibly

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Check the status of the place you want to visit. If it is closed, don't go. If it's crowded, have a back up plan.

PRACTICE PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Keep your group size small. Be prepared to cover your nose and mouth and give others space. If you are sick, stay home.

PLAN AHEAD

Prepare for facilities to be closed, pack lunch, and bring essentials like hand sanitizer and a face covering.

PLAY IT SAFE

Slow down and choose lower-risk activities to reduce your risk of injury. Search and rescue operations and health care resources are both strained.

EXPLORE LOCALLY

Limit long-distance travel and make use of local parks, trails, and public spaces. Be mindful of your impact on the communities you visit.

LEAVE NO TRACE

Respect public lands and waters, as well as Native and local communities. Take all your garbage with you.

BUILD AN INCLUSIVE OUTDOORS

Be an active part of making the outdoors safe and welcoming for all identities and abilities.



Cibola Rangers Walker Martin and Brennan Davis, Staff Photo



Gila Rangers Laura Aubry and Abel Lazzell, photo: Will Ribbans

Wilderness Rangers in the Cruces Basen Wilderness, photo: Andres Osorio



WILDERNESS RANGER UPDATE

BY WILL RIBBANS, WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP AND OUTREACH MANAGER

Wilderness Rangers are on the verge of completing another successful season of Wilderness stewardship work around New Mexico. We faced many challenges this season while navigating COVID-19 and an overall increase in Wilderness area use but persevered and completed a great amount of work. We also had the exciting opportunity to expand our ranger work to the Gila National Forest to help complete Wilderness education objectives and general Wilderness stewardship work.

Here are some highlights from our rangers around the state.

Santa Fe Wilderness Rangers

- Coordinated over 200 hours of COVID-safe volunteer projects, ranging from installing much-needed new trail signs to Wilderness monitoring and education sessions.
- Designed interpretive trailhead kiosk signs and area maps for five locations along the Continental Divide Trail where it enters the San Pedro Parks and Chama River Canyon Wilderness Areas.
- Collaborated with ranger districts across the Santa Fe and Carson national forests to complete Wilderness Character Monitoring baseline assessments.
- Made recommendations for grazing, invasive species and user-created trail management plans in five of New Mexico's Wilderness areas.
- Maintained trails and made visitor contacts in the San Pedro Parks Wilderness.

Cibola Wilderness Rangers

- Completed trails assessment for Sandia and Manzano wildernesses.
- Finished solitude monitoring cycle for Sandia Wilderness zones.
- Mapped and reported on all user trails in the Cibola Wilderness areas.
- Worked with U.S. Forest Service employees on developing plans to improve primitive and unconfined recreation management in the forest plan.

Lincoln Wilderness Rangers

- Coordinated over 150 hours of volunteer projects, including Ranger-for-a-Day events, campfire ring dispersal and crosscut logouts in the White Mountain Wilderness.
- Identified and reported on significant populations of invasive species of musk thistle and Dalmatian toadflax in Capitan and White Mountain Wilderness areas.
- Conducted Wilderness-wide campsite and trails system survey in the Lincoln National Forest.
- Educated kids at the Alamogordo Boys and Girls Club in Leave No Trace principles and Wilderness history.
- Dismantled illegal hunting structures in Tortolita Canyon of White Mountain Wilderness.

Gila Wilderness Rangers

- Completed 600+ volunteer hours within the Gila, Aldo Leopold and Blue Range Wilderness Areas.

- Presented in-person and virtual Leave No Trace education to local schools.
- Created Leave No Trace educational film for local high schools.
- Spearheaded the "Dear Wilderness" Project, inviting youth in the community to write a letter or draw a picture to the Wilderness explaining what they love most about being outside.
- Redesigned Leave No Trace materials and updated over a dozen trailhead signs.
- Dispersed fire rings, non-compliant campsites and social areas.
- Removed non-native species in partnership with the Forest Service and local non-profit Heart of the Gila.
- Worked closely with the Forest Service in the Wilderness districts to fulfill their requested items for the season.
- Facilitated Walk with a Ranger days at the Big Ditch Park in downtown Silver City as well as Wilderness areas.
- Recruited 50+ community members to sign up as volunteers for local New Mexico Wild projects.
- Provided information on New Mexico Wild, the Wilderness Ranger program and Leave No Trace principles at downtown Silver City markets, at trailheads, within the trail systems and at campgrounds and day use areas.

A big thank you to our partners at the Forest Service as well all the volunteers who participated in our COVID-19-friendly events. 🏔️



Carson National Forest, photo: Jesse Furr



Wilderness Rangers Installing a New Trail Sign in the Chama River Canyon Wilderness, photo: Rangers



Lincoln Rangers Liam Tow and Andres Osorio, photo: Liam Tow



Gila Rangers hiking, photo: Laura Aubrey



Rio Chama boaters, photo: Zach Bumgarner



Gila cleanup volunteer project, photo: Abel Lazzell



Cruces Basin Wilderness, photo: Andres Osorio



A socially distanced hike led by Lincoln Wilderness Rangers, photo: Liam Tow

Rangers in Cruces Basin, photo: Jesse Furr



Manzano Peak, photo: Brennan Davis



Masked Wilderness Rangers, photo: Walker Martin



Greater short-horned lizard, photo: Andres Osorio



VOLUNTEERING IN THE WILD

STAFF REPORT

The Gila region continues to be a top priority for New Mexico Wild. In addition to pushing for legislation to protect the Gila River as Wild and Scenic and urging Forest Service officials to increase the acreage of the Gila Wilderness, we remain committed to getting our hands dirty with the work on the ground.

Over an extended weekend in early October, New Mexico Wild joined Heart of the Gila and Gila Backcountry Outfitters to lead volunteers on a stewardship project in the Gila Wilderness. The goal of the project was to maintain a section of Gila River Trail No. 724 by cutting through thickets, redefining tread and clearing sections of overgrown trail corridor.

It was a true honor and a wonderful experience working on such a classic and truly wild part of the Gila Wilderness.

Access to these trails and experience are possible due to the year-round commitment of local community members who call this place home and protect it as they would their own backyard. Taking stewardship into their own hands, they help all who visit become lifelong advocates of such a unique and special part of this country.

The Gila National Forest's preferred alternative in its current draft management plan only recommends 110,402 acres of new Wilderness, even though analyses by New Mexico Wild and others have identified approximately 1.8 million acres of land within the Forest as eligible for Wilderness designation. This trip was a reminder of why we continue to fight for expansion - to protect these magical places before it is too late. It was also a reminder of why we continue to fight for a Wild and Scenic designation for the Gila River - to preserve the state's last free-flowing river in its remarkable condition.

We owe a huge thank you to our partners at Heart of the Gila and Gila Backcountry Outfitters, who are part of this community and use their knowledge to protect one of our state's wildest destinations. We are also grateful to our volunteers who put in the hard work just for the experience and a chance to give back to Wilderness (and delicious food, of course).

We look forward to future opportunities to keep the Gila wild!

Volunteer projects like this one are ongoing. If you would like to learn about opportunities to get involved in upcoming projects, please email will@nmwild.org. 🐾

Gila Wilderness sign, photo: Will Ribbens; below: Volunteers in the Gila Wilderness, photo: Will Ribbens

Congratulations Jesse Furr!

This fall, our Santa Fe Wilderness Ranger Jesse Furr won the Wilderness Rising Leader Award from the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance! The award recognizes young stewards who have demonstrated outstanding potential to lead the stewardship community into the future. Jesse received the award for his willingness to go the extra mile, whether that meant bush-wacking through gambel oak and locust to find a long-lost trail or finishing out an 18-mile day hike in the dark. He was instrumental in completing Wilderness character monitoring and Wilderness assessments in several of New Mexico's Wilderness Areas. We are so proud of you for the way you represent New Mexico Wild, Jesse!



A Tribute to Roland Scott

New Mexico Wild would like to recognize the legacy contribution of Roland B. Scott, Jr. (Scotty), who died in January 2020. He left us with a generous gift with the hope of encouraging the education and preservation of the unique history and natural beauty of New Mexico.

Roland retired to New Mexico after practicing law in New York City and the U.S. Virgin Islands for 30-plus years. He was the son of Roland B. Scott, a renowned pediatrician known for his early research on sickle cell anemia and the great, great, grandson of the abolitionist, Frederick Douglass.

During Scotty's retirement, New Mexico enriched his life as he explored its history and photographed its ever-changing beauty. Scotty wanted to support and contribute to the critical work New Mexico Wild continues to do.



WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY CONSIDER A LEGACY GIFT TO NEW MEXICO WILD

If you'd like to help protect wilderness for future generations but feel you cannot make a significant gift today, consider making a charitable contribution through your will in the form of a bequest. It is simple to designate New Mexico Wild for an estate gift and your contribution will help protect our public lands far into the future.

You can learn more about making a bequest through your will at:

nmwild.org/legacy-giving-bequest/

or by contacting Tisha Broska at tisha@nmwild.org, 505-321-6131.



THE ALDO LEOPOLD CIRCLE SUPPORTING NEW MEXICO WILD

JOIN A SPECIAL GROUP OF SUPPORTERS WHO HELP SUSTAIN NEW MEXICO WILD

The Aldo Leopold Circle helps sustain our vital work protecting the Land of Enchantment. Members of the Aldo Leopold Circle contribute \$1,000 or more each year to New Mexico Wild. The group participates in special events and outings and receives exclusive briefings on conservation issues in New Mexico.

For more information: nmwild.org/leopoldcircle/

Help us protect the Wilderness, Wildlife, and Water of New Mexico

I want to make a one-time donation

- ☐ \$25 (Student/Senior)
☐ \$35
☐ \$50
☐ \$100
☐ Other amount \$ _____



I want to become a monthly sustaining donor*

- ☐ \$10
☐ \$30
☐ \$60
☐ \$100
☐ Other amount \$ _____

*If you are already a monthly sustainer, thank you! You can use this form to increase your recurring donation. Donations totaling \$1,000 or more over the course of a year become members of our Aldo Leopold Circle.

Credit card payment

Name _____
Credit Card Number _____
Exp. Date _____ C V V _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____
Email _____



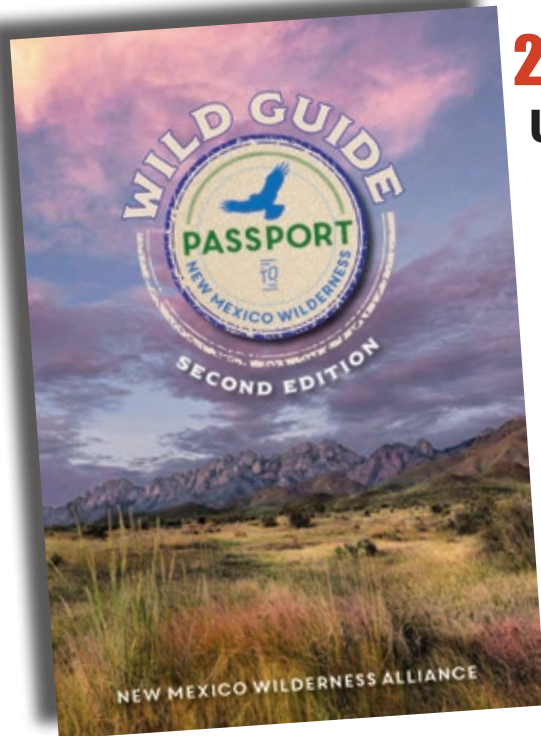
Other payment options:

- 1) Enclose your check payable to:
New Mexico Wild
2) Donate online at
nmwild.org/donate

Mail your membership form to New Mexico Wild, PO Box 25464, Albuquerque, NM 87125. Thank you!

If You Love Wilderness, You Need This Book!

WILD GUIDE: Passport to New Mexico Wilderness



2ND EDITION
Updated with
**NEW
PROTECTED
AREAS!**

**Only
\$19.95**

Plus \$3.25 S&H

Available online
at
www.nmwild.org

This comprehensive guide to New Mexico's protected wildlands is the only book that features each of the state's designated wilderness areas and wilderness study areas as well as other treasures, such as the new Rio Grande del Norte National Monument and Organ Mountains–Desert Peaks National Monument.

CITIZEN SCIENCE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

RIO CHAMA BOATERS
CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS SPRING 2021

Do you have plans to run the Wild and Scenic section of Rio Chama in 2021?

We are looking for volunteers to collect insect samples during your trip. We will provide training and sampling kits at the launch and meet you at the take out to retrieve the samples. Please contact rhett@nmwild.org if you are interested in learning more about this project.

Visit nmwild.org/events to view all upcoming events.



Visit the New Mexico Wild Online Shop!



nmwild.org/shop/

**NEW
HATS!**

20\$



**WOLVES
BELONG
STICKER!**

CHECK US OUT ONLINE



facebook.com/nmwilderness



Check out more information at
nmwild.org

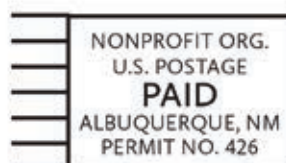


instagram.com/nmwilderness



twitter.com/nmwilderness

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
P.O. Box 25464
Albuquerque, NM 87125
Not a member yet? Go to nmwild.org.



Hikers Crossing the Gila River, photo: Laura Aubrey