

New Mexico

The Semi-annual Publication of the
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

Spring/Summer 2021

WILD!

A NEW DAY FOR PUBLIC LANDS

**New Federal Leadership Offers Hope
for Wilderness, Wildlife, and Water**

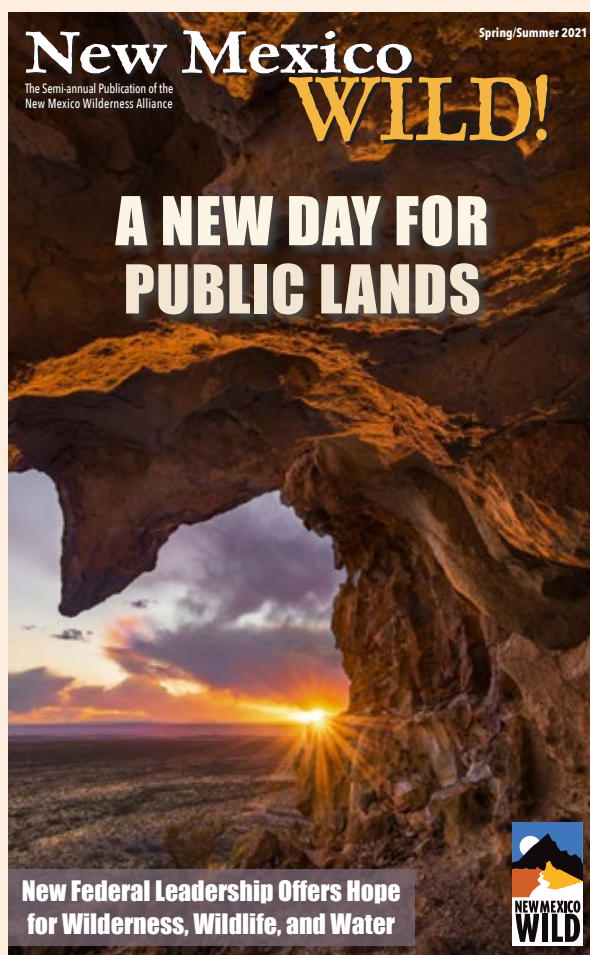


New Mexico **WILD!**

The Semiannual Publication of the
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
VOLUME 18, NUMBER 1
SPRING/SUMMER 2021

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ON THE COVER:
Sunset Cave, photo: Wayne Suggs

CHARTING A BOLD NEW PATH

With not a moment to spare, we have entered a new era — one with no guaranteed outcome, of course, but with at least the possibility to, for the first time as a country, seriously tackle the dual challenges of climate change and the mass species extinction crisis. New Mexico has always played an outsized role in the history of the conservation and Wilderness protection movements and will once again be called on to help lead.

It will require creative thinking, difficult choices and moral and political courage. We are encouraged by a new federal administration that has already taken steps to reverse course from the last four years and to chart a bold new path.

Within days of taking office, President Biden issued an executive order placing a moratorium on new oil and gas leases on federal public lands so that the leasing program could be reviewed. This pause is welcome and necessary — estimates are that the federal minerals program accounts for as much as 24% of carbon dioxide/greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. (E&E News, 2/8/21). In addition, the program itself is broken, and we know first-hand there has been little to no consideration in leasing decisions for values such as wildness, wildlife, cultural heritage or sacred sites. Moreover, industry has locked up millions of acres, paying virtually nothing to taxpayers towards the public benefit, with some parcels going for as little as \$2 per acre. Worse still, woefully inadequate bonding requirements of industry could leave New Mexicans on the hook for close to \$10 billion to clean up nearly 60,000 active and hundreds of abandoned wells (High Country News, 2/17/21).

Still, as Tim Puko of the Wall Street Journal points out, New Mexico is the federal government's biggest oil producer — producing more oil than on-shore Alaska and Oklahoma combined. The industry supports thousands of well-paying jobs here and, as is widely known, contributes a large part of the state's annual budget revenues — as much as 34% in 2020, though previous years have ranged from 15% to 25% (HCN, 2/17/21).

Oil and gas aren't going to disappear tomorrow, but their days are numbered. Extractive industries simply are not sustainable. Ask former coal country in West Virginia or Wyoming. We need to use this moratorium wisely to put in place a plan to make the transition away from fossil fuels. New Mexico's long-term future depends on it. We need to get this one right.

President Biden also issued an executive order on Jan. 27 committing the U.S. to conserving 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030. We at New Mexico Wild take seriously this call to action to address species extinction, climate change, landscape/watershed health and resiliency on public lands.

Given our large size, low population density and high biodiversity (we rank fourth in the country), it makes sense for New Mexico to be in the forefront of importance nationwide in achieving this ambitious goal. The members of our federal delegation, for the most part, believe in the importance of protected public lands. And New Mexico is fortunate to have an impressive array of committed and talented organizations and individuals passionate about this.

New Mexico Wild is well positioned and ready to lead the public lands part of this ambitious effort in New Mexico. We are exclusively New Mexico focused, statewide in scope, based in community with a foundation of grassroots support, and have demonstrated success at assembling formidable coalitions of diverse stakeholders.

On the other hand, we know that it will not be possible to significantly advance protections at this scale at our current capacity, with existing resources.



Nor is it realistic to believe that this effort can be achieved exclusively by a D.C.-centric, top-down approach. (Though we are beside ourselves with pride to see New Mexican Deb Haaland become the first Native American cabinet secretary in U.S. history as Secretary of Interior!) Everything we know about successful conservation efforts underscores that those most affected — typically rural and poorer communities as well as communities of color — must be part of the conversation from the very beginning, and this is particularly true to our experience in New Mexico.

New Mexico Wild has identified 5 million roadless acres with Wilderness qualities that are not currently protected. Every day that goes by means less Wilderness through “death by a thousand cuts” disappearing “like a snowbank on a hot day.” And only one-tenth of 1% (124 miles) of our 108,014 miles of rivers enjoy Wild and Scenic Rivers protections. There is lots of work to do.

Of course, not all areas are appropriate for Wilderness or Wild and Scenic designation, and federal legislation is only one method in what will need to be a broad range of strategies. It also will be essential to pursue actions that can be taken administratively and through executive authority, such as mineral withdrawals and new National Monuments. We continue our commitment to working with communities to tell us where and how they want to maintain their traditional uses and to protect the values that make a particular place special.

To increase our organizational capacity to realistically position New Mexico Wild to meet this urgent historic moment, we have identified additional staff positions, tools and research that will be necessary. We will be seeking additional support, investments and assistance. We will be doubling down on our public lands stewardship programs as well and will continue to grow and diversify our base of support.

You’ll read in the following pages some recent heartbreaking losses to the New Mexico Wild family that we are still reeling from, including the passing of long-time board members Nancy Morton and David Soules. I am still at a loss for words and can only muster an inadequate feeling of obligation to do the absolute most I can with whatever time I have left to protect this incredibly special place called New Mexico that we are fortunate enough to call home or visit. That is certainly what Nancy and David did and what I can do to honor their memories. I hope you will join me.

We have weathered the storm of the last four years together, suffered through the darkness of COVID and emerged strong. None of it would have been possible without your generous and steadfast support, your commitment to and passion for our mission and your trust and confidence in us. We remain humbled by that and inspired. Thank you.

With gratitude and hope,



“If we are to have a culture as resilient and competent in the face of necessity as it needs to be, then it must somehow involve within itself a ceremonious generosity toward the wilderness of natural force and instinct.”

~ Wendell Berry, The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays

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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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A RECAP OF THE 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BY BRITTANY FALLON, POLICY DIRECTOR

In my last newsletter article previewing the legislative session, we knew very little about what a pandemic session would look like, and I noted that the confluence of COVID-19 and a major election year would mean big things for New Mexico. I warned you that policy opportunities might be limited by the need for a virtual legislative session and depressed budget forecast. I am very happy to report that I was completely wrong, and instead this session saw the passage of monumental environmental legislation that collectively comprised decades of work as well as the success of bills that have been run for as many as 13 years.

We are so pleased to note that every single one of our legislative priorities passed the Legislature and have now been signed into law by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. Four major victories are:

HB 200, Water Trust Board Projects & New Mexico Unit Fund (Reps. Matthew McQueen and Nathan Small, Sens. Siah Correa Hemphill and Mimi Stewart): Ensures that the remaining \$80 million from the failed Gila Diversion project be used instead for local water infrastructure projects, under the leadership of the qualified Water Trust Board, and prevents the funding from being used to pursue a diversion.

HB 51, Environmental Database Act (Reps. Gail Chasey and Georgene Louis, Sen. Stewart): Expands a conservation planning tool used by the New Mexico Game & Fish Department to review important resources for wildlife and habitats.

SB 32, Roxy's Law (Reps. McQueen and Christine Chandler, Sen. Brenda McKenna): Improves public safety and humane wildlife management on public lands by restricting the use of traps, snares and explosive poison de-



Campers in the Lincoln National Forest; photo: New Mexico Wild Wilderness Rangers

vices, with exceptions for Native American religious rights and multiple avenues for ranchers to protect livestock.

HB 2, the state budget: We successfully advocated for budget increases for the Environment and Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources departments. We are particularly pleased by the increase in the Outdoor Equity Fund allocation from the Legislature's original \$100,000 recommendation to a total of \$872,600 — what a difference that will make for New Mexico's youth!

I want to give you a little behind-the-scenes insight into how HB200 was born. We could not be more pleased with this extraordinary success,

after years and years of effort. It goes without saying that advocates like Allyson Siwik, Todd Schulke, Donna Stevens and the New Mexico Wild team have been working on this issue for well over a decade and nothing would have been possible without them. We are also lucky that ending the Gila Diversion has been a signature issue for prominent New Mexico voices in Congress, most especially Sens. Martin Heinrich, Tom Udall and now Ben Ray Luján. Gov. Lujan Grisham also made the issue a campaign promise, and her staff have worked hard alongside advocates to ensure success.

In the Legislature, we were incredibly lucky to have sponsors who worked so hard and with such heart. This is not always the case. Each sponsor followed this issue for many years — the first version of a similar bill was run in 2008 — and each contributed something critical to the effort, whether it was helping write the bill, negotiating community support or advocating with the governor for local representation on the Water Trust Board. Rep. Matthew McQueen, who presented the bill in each committee, deserves a particular shout out because he was so incredibly well prepared that he often did not need an expert witness. Sen. Siah Correa Hemphill, who represents the region, never lost sight of the needs of her community and negotiated both monetary support and regional Water Trust Board representation.

I also want to note the incredible role of Democratic leadership in the passage of HB200. In addition to Senate Pro Tempore Mimi Stewart presenting the bill on the Senate floor with incredible passion, Senate Leader Peter Wirth and House Speaker Brian Egolf both meaningfully engaged with the writing of the bill, and both played a huge role in shepherding the bill through the legislative process. We are so grateful for their support. 🎉



Mogollon Box of the Gila River; photo: Nathan Newcomer

VALLES CALDERA NATIONAL PRESERVE NEEDS YOUR COMMENTS

STAFF REPORT



The Valles Caldera National Preserve; photo: Garrett VeneKlasen

The National Park Service is seeking input from the public as it considers a zoning approach to help guide future planning and management decisions at Valles Caldera National Preserve. A public comment period began on April 9 and will run through May 5.

“Public and tribal feedback and engagement are important at this early phase and will help guide how we define and plan future management at Valles Caldera National Preserve,” Superintendent Jorge Silva-Bañuelos said in a statement. “Our goal is to preserve and protect fundamental resources and values within the park while enhancing sustainable visitor access, experiences, and opportunities.”

Valles Caldera National Preserve created three draft zoning options to guide future planning and management. Management zoning aims to balance how the park supports visitor services and recreational opportunities with the stewardship of the special natural and cultural resources and values that bring people to experience the park.

Zoning describes the desired future resource conditions and visitor experiences to be

reached and maintained in geographically distinct areas of a park. It includes considering the types of management activities and visitor uses and general types and levels of development that are appropriate and compatible in a given area. Zoning does not propose specific developments; rather, it is used to guide future planning and decision-making.

The park is planning two virtual townhall meetings at 1 p.m. April 20 and at 5:30 p.m. April 22 to give the public a chance to ask questions and learn more. Additional information on this zoning effort and links to the public meetings can be accessed on the project website at parkplanning.nps.gov/VALL_zoning.

The public can submit their thoughts through the project website. We have achieved impressive victories for New Mexico’s public lands and wild places thanks to the thoughtful input of supporters like you. Please consider weighing in on the Valles Caldera National Preserve’s proposal during this planning process to protect this special place for future generations to enjoy.

Editor’s note: Some language in this article was provided by staff at Valles Caldera National Preserve. 🌲

Exciting News: A New Form of Advocacy!

New Mexico Wild has launched a 501(c)(4) partner organization called the New Mexico Wild Action Fund.

This new organization gives us more ways to advocate for New Mexico’s public lands and wild places. Under the 501(c)(4) setup, we are now able to actively support political candidates and policies that advance protections for our state’s Wilderness, wildlife, and water.

We are excited to see what positive changes we can make for the Land of Enchantment with this new setup!

To learn more, or to donate, please visit nmwildactionfund.org.



Pursuing Protections for Caja del Rio



**BY GARRETT VENEKLASEN,
NORTHERN CONSERVATION
DIRECTOR**



Caja del Rio, inset: Caja del Rio is home to a diverse array of wildlife, photos: Garrett Veneklasen

The Caja del Rio Plateau west and southwest of Santa Fe is one of the most ecologically rich and culturally significant landscapes in New Mexico.

Caja is part of the vital Western Wildway Priority Wildlife Corridor that runs along the Upper Rio Grande Watershed from Colorado through New Mexico. The plateau and canyons are vital habitat for a diverse range of plants and animals, and the area is recognized by the National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area.

The entire plateau and adjacent Santa Fe and Rio Grande river basins have been, and still are, used for spiritual practices, hunting and herb gathering since time immemorial by Cochiti, Santo Domingo, Tesuque, Pojoaque, Jemez, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, San Felipe, Sandia, Santa Ana and Ohkay Owingeh pueblos. There also is evidence of historic Navajo, Apache and even Comanche use in and around the area, and innumerable petroglyphs can be found throughout the landscape.

The Caja Plateau has a rich Spanish history dating back to 1598. Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (an ancient trade route between Central America and North America) intersects the plateau. Descendants of Spanish colonial settlers still utilize the Caja for grazing; firewood, piñon and herb gathering; hunting and outdoor recreation.

Sportsmen/women and outdoor recreation enthusiasts of all stripes frequent the area and also care greatly about the Caja's future.

The Caja del Rio Protection Campaign aims to secure durable administrative and legislative protections for this sensitive area and to obtain enhanced attention to the area and enforcement of regulations by land management agencies.

The Caja del Rio Plateau consists of both Santa Fe National Forest and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, providing both management challenges and cross-agency opportunities. The Caja del Rio Wildlife and Cultural Interpretive Management Area and Caja del Rio Wild Horse Territory designations overlie the area, though neither of these designations appear to have resulted in any enhanced management practices.

The Caja del Rio landscape faces significant threats, including:

- A proposal by Los Alamos National Laboratory to build a highway across the escarpment and to install new transmission/fiber optic lines.
- Vandalism, desecration and theft of petroglyphs/sacred sites.
- Out of control off-highway vehicle use.
- Illegal dumping.
- Cattle rustling.
- Theft of cattle drinkers and water infrastructure.
- Unregulated shooting.
- Poaching and destruction of endangered species.
- Illegal wood cutting and rock removal.

- Potential development of sand and gravel resources on BLM lands.
- Potential development of uranium resources at the mouth of the Santa Fe River Canyon.

With COVID-19 restrictions easing up, New Mexico Wild is setting up meetings with key grassroots local tribal and Hispanic leadership, sportsmen/women, outdoor recreation interests, agency officials, NGOs and elected officials to discuss a robust, proactive community-driven management plan, including an enforcement plan to mitigate abusive actions perpetrated by bad actors. This fledgling effort is just one step in a greater local initiative to permanently conserve and responsibly manage the magnificent Caja for generations to come.

Achieving protected status for this culturally rich area will ensure that the historic connection between various communities and the landscape will remain intact and that people will have access to this important region. 🏔️



Petroglyphs at Caja del Rio, photo: Garrett Veneklasen



GREATER HOPE FOR GREATER CHACO

BY JOEY KEEFE, COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Congressional efforts to halt new oil and gas sale leases in the Greater Chaco region were unsuccessful last year, but we have plenty of reasons to believe that a more hopeful outcome is right around the corner. In November 2020, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources removed language from an appropriations bill that would have prevented new Bureau of Land Management (BLM) oil and gas lease sales within 10 miles of Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Sen. Martin Heinrich and former Sen. Tom Udall had successfully included the language in the previous fiscal year’s appropriations bill. The New Mexico senators tried to include the same language in the current year’s fiscal bill, but Republicans on the committee removed the restriction from this fiscal year’s funding bill.

New leaders at the BLM and the Bureau of Indian Affairs briefed Interior’s new assistant secretary for lands and minerals in February about the devastating impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on tribal communities in the Greater Chaco Region. As a result, the BLM will pause a Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment process that the previous administration had pursued aggressively despite the inability of tribal communities to participate in the public process as they grappled with the public health crisis. The Navajo Nation, the All Pueblo Council of Governors, New Mexico’s elected leaders, New Mexico Wild and our conservation partners had repeatedly requested that the



Chaco Culture National Historical Park, photo: Tisha Broska

previous administration pause the process until all affected parties could participate, but those requests were met with cold indifference.

Meanwhile, Sen. Ben Ray Lujan intends to re-introduce legislation that would permanently prohibit oil and gas drilling within 10 miles of Chaco Culture National Historical Park in the U.S. Senate, with Sen. Heinrich co-sponsoring. Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez is expected to re-introduce the bill in the U.S. House of Rep-

resentatives. Here at New Mexico Wild, we will continue working with our elected leaders to shepherd this legislation through Congress while the new and more inclusive administration, led by new Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, engages in constructive collaboration with tribal leaders. With compassionate and effective leaders like Secretary Haaland and the bill’s co-sponsors in place, we are confident a new day is on the horizon for the Greater Chaco region. 🌱

SAVING AN ENDANGERED PECOS RIVER

STAFF REPORT

The long-term survival of the Upper Pecos Watershed is top of mind for local stakeholders, including farmers, acequia and land grant communities, business owners, elected officials, outdoor enthusiasts and many more. The river’s viability is of such great concern that national entities have begun to take notice.

National conservation nonprofit American Rivers has released its annual America’s Most Endangered Rivers report and lists the Pecos River among those at a crossroads. The greatest threat to the river identified in American Rivers’ report is a potential mining operation in the Jones Hill area southwest of Tererro that has been proposed by Australian corporation New World Resources Ltd.

When news broke that New World Resources had applied to the Santa Fe National Forest in 2019, New Mexico Wild convened dozens of local stakeholders and nonprofit organizers to form what has since become the formidable Stop Tererro Mine coalition. This collection of individuals and organizations has been effective, convincing the Santa Fe National Forest

to require an environmental assessment for New World Resources’ proposed operation.

The threats posed to the Upper Pecos Watershed have mobilized local communities to petition the state Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) to give the Pecos River an Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRW) designation. Our congressional leaders have taken notice. Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan and Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez penned a joint letter to the WQCC in March, urging the body to support the ONRW designation. Additionally, Sen. Heinrich recently reintroduced legislation that would remove all federally managed minerals in the Upper Pecos Watershed from future lease sales, which would prohibit future operations like the one proposed by New World Resources from breaking ground there.

American Rivers’ decision to list the Pecos River as one of the nation’s most endangered has created a heightened awareness about the river’s vulnerability. New Mexico Wild is committed to working with local partners in the Pecos region to protect the river from all possible threats. 🌱



Pecos River, photo: Garrett VeneKlasen

Saying goodbye to a conservation hero: Remembering the life and legacy of Nancy Morton

Nancy Morton, New Mexico Wild Founding Board Member



Nancy, photo: Jaimie Park



Nancy with friends on a San Juan River kayak trip; photo: Jaimie Park

BY TISHA BROSKA

I first met Nancy as a New Mexico volunteer over 20 years ago. We were at a board meeting in El Malpais, where the board was officially naming our first executive director. Being new to New Mexico, I found the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (now New Mexico Wild) a very warm and welcoming group. When I started working for New Mexico Wild a short time later, it became clear that Nancy was at the heart of that warmth.

She and Dave Foreman, her husband and fellow Wilderness advocate, threw the best Christmas parties each year. With Nancy's homemade eggnog, salmon moose and guacamole, everyone was always happy. Nancy was a river-lover, spending much of her summers paddling the West. My first river trip was organized by Nancy in 2000 on the Chama River. I was most impressed when I saw her organize the food for the trip and assign duties around the camp.

Nancy was a wonderful volunteer for New Mexico Wild. Beyond her commitment as a board member, she worked behind the scenes of many of our annual conferences, supported staff at numerous events and joined volunteer service projects. Most recently, Nancy got to pull out her amazing, well-stocked first aid kit at a service project in the Sabinoso Wilderness to tend to a snake bite.

Nancy's generosity goes far beyond food and volunteering. She was a monthly donor to New Mexico Wild since 2003, providing that backbone support to keep the organization going.

We will miss you, Nancy, but we will remember your wonderful inspiration, your generosity and your relentless commitment to Wilderness and wildlife. To keep your fiery heart for Wilderness burning, the New Mexico Wild Board of Directors passed a resolution to create the Nancy Morton Wilderness Internship. During Nancy's tenure on the board, New Mexico increased its designated Wilderness areas by 389,576 acres. 🌲

NANCY MORTON WILDERNESS INTERNSHIP



Nancy Morton was a volunteer wilderness activist for more than 40 years, working to protect Wilderness in California and New Mexico. To honor Nancy's inspiration, generosity and relentless commitment to Wilderness and wildlife, New Mexico Wild has established the **Nancy Morton Wilderness Internship** to keep her fiery heart for Wilderness burning.
www.nmwild.org/internship/



Learn more about the internship at nmwild.org/internship.

Nancy Morton passed away on Jan. 16, 2021, at her home in Albuquerque, New Mexico. A life celebration is being planned for summer 2021, when we can hopefully come together in person.

A TRIBUTE TO DAVID SOULES

By Mark Allison, Executive Director

David was one of the kindest, most generous people you could ever meet. He had an easy laugh and an infectious boyish enthusiasm, particularly evident when talking about or experiencing southern New Mexico’s public lands and the Chihuahuan desert. He was a passionate presence and would bring his engineer’s brain to bear in long and sometimes obscure — but important — disquisitions of various issues, both big and small, be they public access, wildlife guzzlers or a proposed transmission line.

At the same time, he was a real listener, with a rare willingness to learn something new. He always had time to sneak away to a quiet corner to compare notes, share thoughts and scheme together about how to make something better.

David held a doctorate in mechanical engineering, was a lifelong sportsman, served on the New Mexico Game and Fish Commission, was co-author of “Exploring Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument,” was a member and supporter of numerous nongovernmental sportsman’s and conservation organizations, and served on New Mexico Wild’s board of directors since 2010.

In his last days before his unexpected death, we discussed new places to explore, new dreams of additional protections and ideas about ways to better care for the land and the wildlife that call it home. We were both looking forward to Nathan Small returning to the New Mexico Wild team and making lists of things to tackle together.

As chair of our personnel committee, he also talked with me about more mundane policies and procedures and about how to better support staff. He was proud to serve as mentor to our public lands fellow, Grecia Nunez, recently departed for American University Law School. I was hoping to find a way to share time with David and his wife, Nancy, on a future Arctic canoe trip.

David was a humble, grounded man, quick to praise others and freely offer his help whenever asked. He was more comfortable exploring the land than receiving recognition for protecting it — however well deserved. The successful, decade-plus-long effort to establish the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument (2014) was the result of the work of countless people, but it is impossible to imagine without David. He was a guide, an interpreter, an evangelist for the land — an austere landscape that sometimes requires patience and an intimacy to fully appreciate its beauty and value. His knowledge and love for it, and his willingness to share

that knowledge and love, created converts, newfound appreciation and new stewards.

The National Monument, and the 10 new Wilderness Areas that are now protected forever within it, is a gift from David to all of us. How rare and special it is to be able to leave something so enduring for future generations, and I can only hope that Nancy, the rest of his family and all who loved him can receive some measure of solace from that. David was a large spirit, and I will never be on that land again without thinking of him.



David Soules, photo: Tisha Broska; David Soules, photo: Mark Allison (right)

REMEMBERING OUR FRIEND AND SUPPORTER, SONNIE SUSSILLO

Staff Report

The communities of Silver City and Grant County lost a dear friend and public lands advocate on March 12, 2021. Sandra “Sonnie” Sussillo passed away suddenly while out on a hike with a friend in the Gila National Forest. She was such a bright light for so many people and for the entire community. Her generosity knew no bounds and through her various volunteer capacities, most recently as the Curriculum Director for the Western Institute of Lifelong Learning out of Western New Mexico University, she touched many hearts and minds.

When I first moved to Silver City eight years ago, one of the first people I met was Sonnie. Our first conversation happened at the Curious Kumquat over lunch to discuss potential Wilderness inventory and wild and scenic river studies in the Gila National Forest, and how we were working to build a community-driven effort to protect some of the wildest lands and rivers remaining in the Gila region.



Having worked in federal government for much of her life, Sonnie was eager to participate in New Mexico Wild’s efforts because it meant that she would be a part of a community-driven effort, and as added bonus, most of our work would be spent outdoors hiking and camping for countless hours, days, and weekends in some of the most remote locations in the Gila. And that’s exactly what she and I, and countless other volunteers did for more than five years. The very first hike we did ended up being a 10-mile thru-hike down Big Dry Creek and up the Lower San Francisco River Canyon Wilderness Study Area. I remember Sonnie saying she had never done anything like that before in her life.

Sonnie, we love you and miss you, but you’ll always be with us in our hearts, and with us when we take a walk in the woods.

HOLLOMAN DECISION WILL KEEP GILA SKIES PEACEFUL



**BY GRANT COUNTY
COMMISSIONER
ALICIA EDWARDS**

It's not often that a single issue can bring together an entire community, but the proposal from Holloman Air Force Base to expand F-16 training flights over Grant County, our designated Wilderness areas and the Gila National Forest did just that.

Initially, the Air Force didn't inform local officials or schedule any public hearings in the affected areas. Once they scheduled a hearing in Silver City, hundreds of concerned citizens showed up to express their unified opposition, resulting in more than 2,500 written comments, a petition signed by more than 150 businesses and several very well attended protest rallies.

Although the Air Force had publicly acknowledged that current airspace on the east side of the state was adequate to successfully conduct additional F-16 pilot combat training, one of their proposals would have exposed the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness Areas, as well as other beloved public lands, to the threat of wildfires, sonic booms, wildlife disruption and environmental contamination. The proposal would have resulted in 10,000 additional flyovers annually, including low-altitude flights over our small towns and national forest, as well as discharging more than 30,000 magnesium flares and toxic aluminum chaff each year.

Thankfully, after concluding a public planning process in 2020, the Air Force announced in February that it had chosen the alternative that will have the least negative impact on Wilderness Areas, public lands and outdoor recreation. This is a huge victory for the greater Gila bioregion and for all of the advocates who worked to organize

local residents for a common cause. New Mexicans respectfully sent a loud and clear message that the places we visit to enjoy nature are not appropriate for military combat training.

The announcement by the Air Force reaffirms that productive public advocacy can lead to positive outcomes. As a veteran, I greatly appreciate the important role Holloman Air Force Base plays in our national security. Once we got their attention, Department of Defense officials honored their commitment to a fair and open public process, heard community concerns and ultimately reached the appropriate decision.

Today is a great day for Grant County and southwestern New Mexico residents, and there are many who deserve our thanks, including Silver City's own Lt. Gov. Howie Morales. The lieutenant governor was vocal in his advocacy for safeguarding our communities, economy and environment from the very beginning of this debate. Furthermore, U.S. Sens. Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich joined with elected officials from Bayard, Hurley, Santa Clara, Silver City and the Grant County Commission to stress the importance of preserving our quality of life, local economy and environment, and all of them should be commended for their actions.

The role that Holloman Air Force Base plays in our national security cannot be understated. The men and women stationed at Holloman are some of the nation's most courageous, and they are deserving of our respect. I, for one, am thankful they in turn respected our concerns and ultimately made the right choice to preserve our peaceful Gila skies. 🌲



LAWSUIT TO PROTECT FLORIDA MOUNTAINS MOVES FORWARD

BY LOGAN GLASENAPP, STAFF ATTORNEY

In the fall 2020 issue of this newsletter, we told you about a lawsuit we filed 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 of southwest New Mexico by American Magnesium LLC.

The BLM approved exploration necessary to determine if a full-blown dolomite mine is feasible and, at the same time, initially approved the construction and development of the actual mine. Federal law does not allow the BLM to approve both activities simultaneously. That is the basis of our lawsuit along with co-plaintiffs 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 proposed mine is not far from the Florida Mountains Wilderness Study Area and would have threatened the Wilderness characteristics that make this unique place ideal for a future federal Wilderness designation – not to mention imperiling numerous sensitive wildlife species that call the region home.

Additionally, the proposed mining operation would have severely disrupted daily life



Florida Mountains Wilderness Study Area, photo: Lee Pattison

in nearby communities like Deming, as the company planned to haul 38-ton truckloads of blasted rock through the center of the city on a daily basis.

However, thanks to our lawsuit, the BLM has decided to take a closer look at the Plan of Op-

erations for the proposed exploration and mine in the Florida Mountains. The lawsuit is temporarily stayed while the BLM conducts its assessment and re-analysis. We are prepared to continue the fight should the BLM decide to approve the mining activity. 🗡️



AN UPDATE ON GILA WILD AND SCENIC LEGISLATION

BY NATHAN NEWCOMER, GILA GRASSROOTS ORGANIZER

New Mexico Wild continues our work to seek the permanent protection of the Gila River, San Francisco River and their main tributaries by designating them as Wild and Scenic. Last year, then-Sen. Tom Udall and Sen. Martin Heinrich introduced the M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and we continue to work with our community partners and leaders to have the bill reintroduced this Congress. Our focus now is to work with our newly elected Senator, Ben Ray Lujan on cosponsoring the legislation with Senator Heinrich. We are organizing a virtual fly-in to Washington, D.C. to bring community leader voices to the table to highlight the diversity of support for the bill within the community. Once the bill is reintroduced it will need to be passed out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee before heads to the Senate floor for a full vote of passage.

The need for this designation became even more apparent when in late February 2021 we discovered that a Tucson-based company, Pumped Hydro Storage LLC, had a preliminary permit approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to construct a dam on the Lower San Francisco River.

The proposal would create a 10-mile-long slack water reservoir on this segment of the San Francisco River, as well as completely flood the Lower San Francisco River Canyon Wilderness

Study Area. Though the permit is preliminary and no construction can begin until environmental analysis is completed, it is very concerning that our rivers in southwestern New Mexico

continue to face the prospects of future damming and ruin. We will continue to work to ensure that the Greater Gila Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is reintroduced in Congress and passed. 🗡️



Middle Fork of the Gila River, photo: Nathan Newcomer

A New Day

STAFF REPORT

A blooming hedgehog in the foothills of the Organ Mountains, photo: Wayne K Suggs Photography, inset: Then-Congresswoman Haaland with New Mexico Wild supporters at a hike to celebrate Wilderness in June 2019, photo: Tisha Broska

After four years of unrelenting attacks on our nation's public lands and natural resources by the Trump administration, we are breathing a collective sigh of relief at the current sea change underway. While there is much to celebrate, we know that our work to protect New Mexico's Wilderness, wildlife and water never ends.

A Pause on Oil and Gas Leasing

New President Joe Biden has wasted no time using the powers of his office to patch up the damage to our public lands at the hands of the previous administration. A few days after inauguration, President Biden issued a sweeping executive order aimed at reversing dozens of Trump policies that put our natural resources at risk and threatened to accelerate the worsening climate and wildlife extinction crises.

Perhaps the most significant feature of the executive order is a nationwide moratorium on new oil and gas lease sales. The pause on leasing on approximately 700 million acres of federal public land will allow the Biden administration to review the environmental impacts of existing lease claims and determine what changes need to be made to the outdated federal minerals leasing program.

With Bureau of Land Management (BLM) districts like Farmington having over 90% of lands already leased for oil and gas development, it will take industry years to develop the leases it already holds. The federal pause slows down this rampant sell-off of our beloved lands to the highest bidders and gives the Biden administration necessary time to fill staffing vacancies at pertinent agencies with competent, environmentally conscious professionals — a stark contrast to the previous administration's preference for stocking these agencies with industry lobbyists. While it will take years of collaboration to truly protect our public lands from unfettered development, President Biden's moratorium is a beacon of hope for places like Chaco Culture National Historical Park, Carlsbad Caverns National Park and other vulnerable public lands throughout New Mexico and the entire United States.

30x30 Initiative

Also included in President Biden's executive order was a promise that the White House will commit fully to the 30x30 climate initiative — a plan to protect 30% of the nation's public lands, waters and oceans by the year 2030.

Year-round threats of wildfires in New Mexico and other Western states like California, ice storms that caused a power crisis in Texas, and East Coast hurricanes that are no longer bound by seasons are constant reminders that the climate crisis is already here. The Biden administration's commitment to protecting our natural resources before they are gone is a welcome change from the previous administration's denial of the crisis.

We are advising state and federal officials on the best course of action for New Mexico and, at the same time, working with communities throughout the state to protect special places, which would contribute to addressing the threats of climate change and mass species extinction.

Fierce New Leadership at Interior

In addition to the aforementioned executive order, President Biden has taken swift action by choosing former Albuquerque-area Rep. Deb Haaland as the new secretary of the Department of the Interior.

Secretary Haaland's appointment was long overdue, as she became the first Native American cabinet secretary in the nation's history. Her appointment is particularly poignant at Interior, which houses the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs. Interior oversees millions of acres of tribal lands, yet shamefully the department has never been helmed by an Indigenous leader before now. Secretary Haaland is already hard at work looping tribal leaders into discussions about the protection and management of federal public lands and repairing a government-to-government relationship severed by centuries of exclusive and often racist policies.

In addition to bringing a much-needed native perspective to the department, Secretary Haaland brings a lifelong devotion to our nation's public lands to Interior. At New Mexico Wild, we were fortunate to work closely with Secretary Haaland and her staff on public lands and conservation issues during her time in Congress, so we have witnessed up-close just how fierce a protector of our natural resources she is.

While in Congress, Haaland was a leading co-sponsor of legislation to permanently protect the Greater Chaco Region from oil and gas development. As vice chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources, Haaland helped shepherd to passage a federal public lands package that established 13 new Wilderness areas in New Mexico in 2019 and did the same for countless other commonsense public lands bills.



We are excited to see Secretary Haaland bring her passionate leadership and determination to Interior, and we look forward to working with her in this new role to protect our Wilderness, wildlife and water.

A Friendly Face at BLM

In addition to having a sympathetic leader at Interior, the BLM is being led by a friendly face who will usher in a new era of public land conservation. Biden has named Nada Culver as the BLM's new deputy director of policy and programs, essentially serving as acting BLM director until a permanent director is appointed.

Deputy Director Culver replaces the controversial William Perry Pendley, whose aversion to federal management of public lands and tendency to openly make racist remarks placed the nation's natural and cultural resources squarely in the crosshairs. We have worked closely with Deputy Director Culver over the years as she served in various public policy positions for several of our nonprofit partners, most recently with the National Audubon Society. We are confident that, much like Secretary Haaland, Deputy Director Culver will bring fierce leadership skills and a dedication to public lands to her new position. 🏔️



A butterfly sits atop wildflowers in the Cibola National Forest, photo: Staff; Wildflowers , photo: Garrett VeneKlasen

New Mexico Wild Executive Director **MARK ALLISON** Talks with **REP. TERESA LEGER FERNÁNDEZ** (NM CD3) during a recent **ALDO LEOPOLD CIRCLE** member event.



Congresswoman Leger Fernandez on a recent visit to Cerro de la Olla with local stakeholders; photo: Garrett VeneKlasen

What does the nomination of Deb Haaland for Secretary of Interior mean for New Mexico and to Native communities?

It is marvelous, isn't it? You know how you get really proud when a family member does something that makes you just beam from the inside out? That's kind of what it feels like. This is one of our own and this is part of our beautiful New Mexico family, and she has done such a beautiful job in the face of pressure.

Her (confirmation hearing) opening was perfect, the way she evoked who she is and what her sensibilities are. To have both a Democratic senator from her own state and a House Republican introduce her shows that she is good about working across the aisle.

She uses the word sacred every so often, and there is something about that word that evokes the sense we all get inside of us when we are in our places of beauty; we feel it in our body. It is a body experience that connects you with the land and with nature or an ideal like Democracy. She helps us get to that place of sacredness with regards to the beautiful place we call home. It makes us so proud to have the first Native American not head up the BIA, but the entire Department of Interior. It's time!

What are you most excited about working on in your first term?

Many of you know my love of the land. Coming as a 17th generation New Mexican, we have been stewards of the land for a long time. We have also seen historical trauma that continues through today regarding the land. We need to remember that, while we work to protect public lands.

I get out in the wild as often as I can. I did a backpacking trip in 2018 before I started running for office. I'm out there. I got to go cross country skiing twice this last trip back to New Mexico. It made my heart expand with happiness. I look forward to getting my partner out on the lands and rivers.

I'm pleased to be here and work on these issues. To be the chair of the Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States is a huge honor for me. To be on the Natural Resources Committee, which was one of my top choices, means so much to us in New Mexico. I'm also on Education and Labor, which creates a lot of opportunity for New Mexico. As we look at moving ourselves away from fossil fuels, education is going to be key. Because of my experience in electoral reform, the speaker also asked me to sit on the House Administration Committee, which will have jurisdiction over the Capitol riots, but also it is where we will take up federal voting law. A lot of the things New Mexico Wild wants to get done rely on democracy. Democracy is at the foundation of all that work.

Do you have top line goals for your position as chair of the Indigenous Peoples Subcommittee?

Many years ago, I worked on a tax bill, and we brought ranchers, Native American tribes, environmentalists and hunters together. This was a long time ago, but we were able to show that all of these groups could work together. Fast forward 20 years and we now see these groups working together regularly.

We see that there are no boundaries. Wildlife doesn't know when they are crossing from tribal jurisdiction to state jurisdiction to federal jurisdiction. Wildlife doesn't have boundaries unless we put up fences. We need to recognize that we need to create wildlife corridors where there are no fences. I think there will be lots of opportunities for collaboration for conservation.

The Pecos Act, STOP Act, Chaco Canyon — those bills will be coming. Cerro de la Olla Wilderness is also on the list, where there is wonderful coordination. It will be nice to introduce a bill that has all of that support and the coalition of support that includes Taos Pueblo.

What does the Biden administration commitment to protect 30% of our lands and waters by 2030 mean to New Mexico?

I signed on to (Natural Resources Committee) Chairman Raúl Grijalva's letter expressing support for 30x30. We do see it as a goal and a goal we need to meet. Part of what we need to change in this country is thinking about what our public lands are supposed to be. What is the long-term horizon? Americans, and definitely too many of our corporations, have very short-term horizons, looking at profits or what did we do this year vs. what are we building for future generations?

We have a lot of public lands that are not in protected status. We need to start looking at these public lands in terms of how they fit into a long-term vision of where we want to go and where we need to go. I loved former Sen. Tom Udall's advice to us regarding looking at our public lands as our future. Public lands will be the way in which we confront the crisis we are in now.

There are many demands on our public lands for multipurpose uses. We are going to have to figure out which pieces of land we have in conversations with landowners, acequia associations, land grant heirs, tribal people, ranchers. How do we decide which ones to protect immediately? Which do we set up for protecting five or 10 years from now? Some will be easy, like Cerro de la Olla, but others are part of a transition. We need to think in terms that some things are easy and some things are in transition, and we need to recognize that sometimes we are setting things up that we are not going to see in our lifetime, but our grandkids are going to see, or maybe I might see in my lifetime but not during my tenure as a congresswoman. It is something we are building for 15 or 20 years from now.

[Editor's Note. This interview has been edited for space and clarity.] 📌



A herd of elk in the proposed Cerro de la Olla Wilderness, photo: Rivers and Birds



PREVIEWING LATINO CONSERVATION WEEK 2021

BY SIMON SOTELO III, COMMUNITY GRASSROOTS ORGANIZER

The isolation and repercussions of COVID-19 over this past year make it more important than ever to find ways of connecting with others and with public lands. Latino Conservation Week 2021 could be just that for the Latinx community.

With the goal of taking this celebration state-wide for the first time, a steering committee has been formed. The purpose is to give voice to the Latinx community and to see how we within the Latinx community can help reconnect people with public lands. Ultimately, it is our hope that one day a week-long celebration like Latino Conservation Week will not be necessary when our outdoor spaces are more equitable and accessible to all New Mexicans. It's

just one reason New Mexico Wild pushed hard to secure more funding for the Outdoor Equity Fund during the 2021 legislative session.

New Mexico Wild is excited to contribute to recognizing the important history and continuing contributions of Latinx people on public lands. There are several projects and ideas in the works, including connecting rural and urban communities across New Mexico through a Latino Conservation Week travel show starting in Santa Fe and ending in Silver City, giving meaning to the phrase “meeting people where they are at.” Every Latinx community in New Mexico is unique, and we want to highlight what Latino Conservation Week means for each of them.

We will have some familiar events, including the third annual Art in Conservation juried show, hikes along the Continental Divide Trail and activities in proposed Wild & Scenic areas along the Gila River.

New Mexico Wild is proud to support this important event. Please let us know if your organization would like to partner with us or if you have ideas about how your community can participate.

Here's to Latino Conservation Week 2021! To learn more about Latino Conservation Week events as they are planned, please visit nmwild.org. 🌲



Spring Canyon in the Florida Mountains, photo: Simon Sotelo III; 3 Mile Dwelling, photo: Simon Sotelo III (right)



Grassroots Community Organizer Simon Sotelo III at the West Fork of the Gila River, photo: Tuan Charan

THE 2021 MEXICAN WOLF CONSERVATION STAMP: A Winner Emerges from More than 60 Pieces of Original Artwork!

More than 60 pieces of original art were submitted to the 2021 Mexican Wolf Conservation Stamp Contest, making the choice of this year's winner harder than ever before. We want to thank everyone who participated in the contest and for helping us raise awareness about efforts to conserve the Mexican gray wolf.

The Mexican Wolf Stamp is sold to support Mexican gray wolf conservation and education programs. This year's winner is Pia Langfeld!

More about Pia Langfeld:

Pia Langfeld received her B.A. in Visual Communications at UC San Diego, emphasizing in black and white photography. Conventional painting was always a hobby for her, but she did not pursue it seriously until the beginnings of smart phones and the emergence of the digital art world. She now divides her painting time equally between watercolor and digital painting. Having lived all over the world, she now resides in Colorado with her husband and two awesome descendants of wolves.

In addition to this year's winner, we are also happy to present our inaugural Youth Honorable Mention Award to 16-year-old Hosanna Cruz! Congratulations, Hosanna!



Honorable mention (above); Wolf stamp winner (right)



Help choose the Mexican Wolf Stamp People's Choice Award!

Visit nmwild.org and read our blog on the 2021 Mexican Wolf Conservation Stamp and help us choose a winner for this year's People's Choice Award!

MEXICAN GRAY WOLF POPULATION INCREASES!

STAFF REPORT

The Mexican gray wolf is an iconic wild-life species in the American southwest, and its survival is vital to the Gila region's ecosystem. It is a keystone species, a top predator that—if populations were allowed to return to a viable size— would help maintain healthy herds of native ungulates such as elk and deer. But the species has long faced existential threats, including illegal killings by humans with bad intentions.

However, we recently got great news about our beloved Lobo. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has reported that the population of the Mexican gray wolf increased for the fifth consecutive year in 2020! The population count now stands at 186 – a 14% increase over the previous year.

Our annual Mexican Gray Wolf Conservation Stamp Contest is just one small way New Mexico Wild is working to protect this iconic species. We also collaborate closely with local, state, and federal partners like Fish and Wildlife to ensure that recovery efforts meet the highest standards. We are pursuing a wild and scenic designation for the Gila River and are urging the U.S. Forest Service to expand the Gila Wilderness. These land and water protections would help ensure the Mexican gray wolf can continue roaming in its natural habitat. We also hold federal agencies accountable and even pursue litigation to ensure these agencies are properly carrying out recovery plans.



A Mexican gray wolf, photo: Matthew Wilks

Supporters like you provide the resources and advocacy strength necessary for this important work to continue, and we cannot thank you enough! Here's hoping 2021 will be the sixth straight year of population growth for the Lobo! 🐾

Help save the Lobo!

There are many ways you can help us with Mexican gray wolf recovery efforts. Visit our website to learn more about the iconic species and how you can get involved. Please visit:

nmwild.org/mexican-gray-wolves.

Capturing the Beauty of Public Lands: Recognizing the Photos of Wayne Suggs

Wayne Suggs, whose photo graces the cover of this issue, has been photographing landscapes for over 40 years. He was introduced to the wonders of nature at an early age by parents who knew the importance of having a relationship with the Great Outdoors. Wayne captures the beauty of the Southwest and shares his images not only for others to enjoy, but to help increase awareness for the necessity to preserve our precious surroundings.

“Spring Symphony,” featuring a double rainbow over the Organ Mountains Wilderness and “The Guardian” featuring the Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness are two photographs by Wayne Suggs that were chosen as the 101 Best Photographs of 2020 by the International Landscape Photographer of the Year contest judges. The annual contest drew more than 3,800 entries from around the world.

Native to Las Cruces, Wayne has been a contributing photographer to New Mexico Wild for over 10 years. “It is so humbling to go through all these photographs, from Norway, the Dolomites, Patagonia and other extremely photogenic places throughout the world, and have the Organ Mountains and Northern New Mexico amongst them,” said Wayne. The “Spring Symphony” is featured on the cover of his new book *The Color of Dreams*, which can be ordered at: waynesuggsphotography.com/shop

Thank you, Wayne, for capturing the beauty of New Mexico and helping us preserve that for future generations! 🌵



Spring Symphony, photo: Wayne Suggs



Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness, photo: Wayne Suggs

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.

~ **THANK YOU** ~

Senator Martin Heinrich; Senator Tom Udall; Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales; Representative Rudy Martinez; Grant County Commission; Silver City Town Council; Bayard City Council; Hurley Town Council; Santa Clara Board of Trustees; and Local Community Members

For Keeping Our Skies Peaceful and Protecting Our Communities and Public Lands!

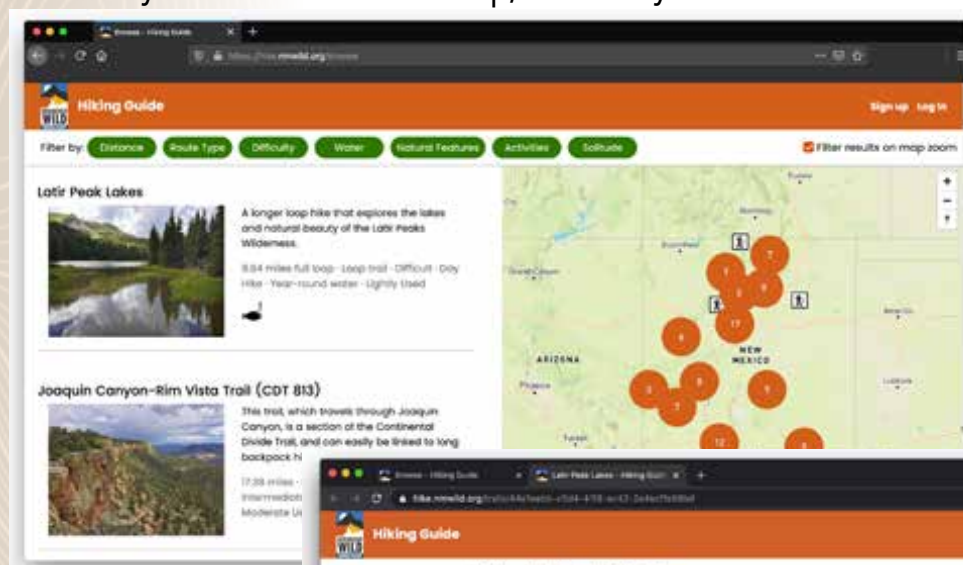
Because of you, the U.S. Air Force has decided not to expand F-16 fighter pilot training over the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness Areas and other beloved public lands!

HIKE!

**Introducing 100+ Great Hikes
in New Mexico Wilderness Areas
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Locate your hike on the state map, or filter by feature.



**Always
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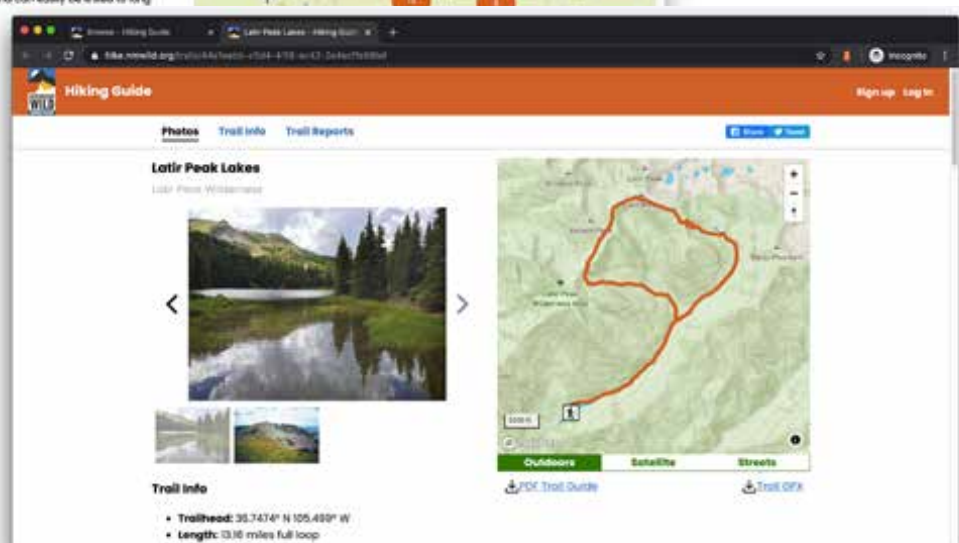
Rich descriptions and useful trail information

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.

WELCOME NEW STAFF



Nathan Small

Welcome Back to Nathan Small!

After two years away, Nathan Small is returning to work with New Mexico Wild. Nathan's first stint with New Mexico Wild began in 2004, when he came back to New Mexico after graduating with dual degrees in Philosophy and English from the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio. Nathan is a third generation New Mexican who comes from a family of ranchers and educators. Nathan was a key team member working to secure and then safeguard National Monument protection for the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. Now there are 10 new wilderness areas in the OMDP, and Nathan's focus on community conservation partnerships will be a key part of recovering and rebuilding from the twin challenges of Covid-19 and the climate crisis. You're as likely to see him riding horseback out in the OMDP Wilderness Areas as you are to see him walking on Las Cruces' Main Street. You can reach Nathan at nathan.small@nmwild.org.



Wendy Brown

Wendy Brown Confirmed as the New Chair of Our Board of Directors!

Wendy Brown was confirmed as the new Chair of our Board of Directors in December 2020. Wendy joined the Board of Directors in 2015 after retiring from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where she managed the endangered species recovery program for the Southwest Region. During her professional career she conducted field research and project management for whooping cranes and Mexican gray wolves, and she was always focused on the conservation and recovery of vulnerable species. She has held voluntary leadership positions in non-profits such as the North American Crane Working Group, the Whooping Crane Conservation Association, and the Southwest International Folk Dance Institute. Wendy has been a member of New Mexico Wild for over 20 years and is honored to serve the organization in its work to conserve the wild landscapes of New Mexico for its many inhabitants – plant, animal, and human.

UPCOMING EVENTS: For more information on all upcoming events, please visit nmwild.org/events.

ALL YEAR: Sandia Mountain Wilderness Solitude Monitoring (email brennan@nmwild.org for more info)

APRIL-OCT: Solitude monitoring in Apache Kid, Withington, and Manzano Mountain Wilderness areas (email brennan@nmwild.org for more info)

APRIL-OCT: Solitude monitoring in Dome (email jesse@nmwild.org for more info)

APRIL 16TH: Rio Chama Citizen Science Bug Collection Begins (email rhett@nmwild.org to learn more about this volunteer opportunity)

MAY 16TH: Wilderness Ranger Season begins (email will@nmwild.org to get connected with Wilderness Rangers)

JUNE 19TH: Float trip on the Rio Grande Lower Gorge with Far Flung Adventures

AUGUST 14TH: Float trip on the Rio Chama with Far Flung Adventures



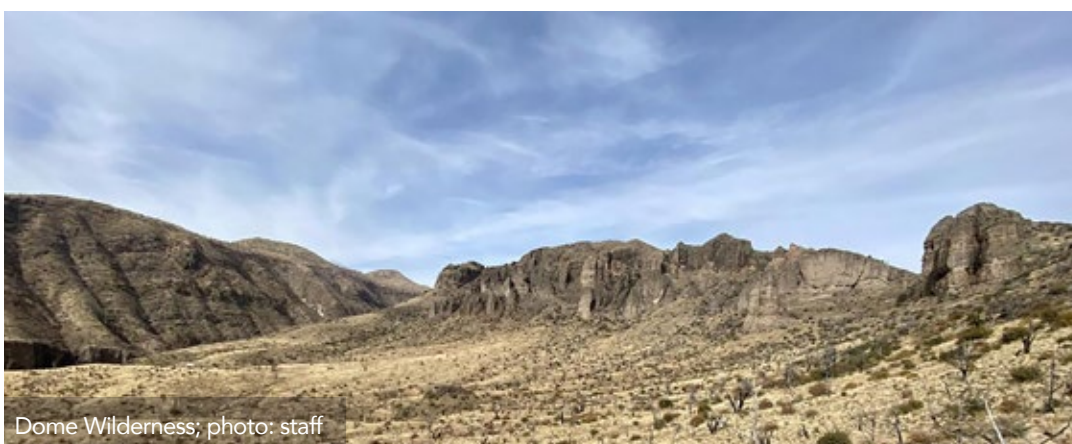
Cibola Wilderness Ranger Brennan Davis atop the Sandia Mountains; photo: Walker Martin



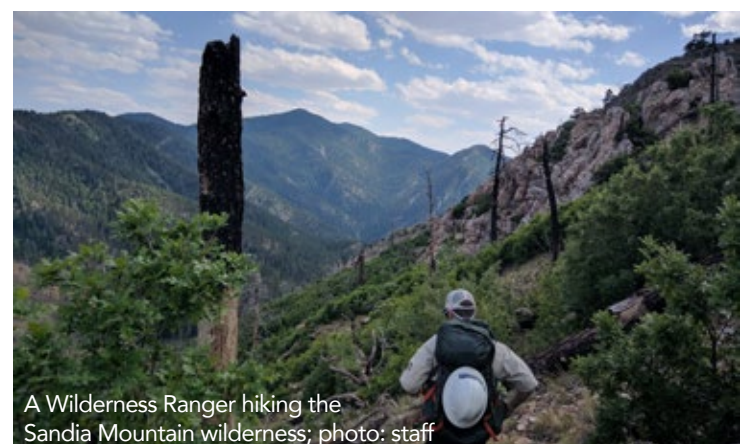
Kayaks on the bank of the Rio Chama; photo: staff



Kayaks on the bank of the Rio Chama; photo: staff



Dome Wilderness; photo: staff



A Wilderness Ranger hiking the Sandia Mountain wilderness; photo: staff



PREPARING FOR ANOTHER WILDERNESS RANGER SEASON

BY WILL RIBBANS, WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP AND OUTREACH MANAGER



The Pecos Wilderness in the Santa Fe National Forest, photo: staff

We are gearing up for our fifth Wilderness Ranger season and could not be more ready to hit the ground implementing Wilderness stewardship work. We will be deploying three teams this season in the Santa Fe, Gila, and Cibola national forest Wilderness Areas.

This work is made possible through a public-private partnership between the Forest Service and New Mexico Wild. This partnership is designed to increase stewardship in Wilder-

ness Areas across New Mexico. Rangers will be providing a range of important services including wilderness character monitoring, trails assessment, trail clearing, campsite rehabilitation, public outreach and Wilderness education. Their work provides valuable information on current Wilderness conditions while enhancing public safety and contributing to positive Wilderness experiences.

We will also be continuing the work we started last fall in the Taos BLM Wilderness areas (Sabinoso, Cerro del Yuta, Rio San Antonio and Chama). We are currently completing wilderness character monitoring and will be organizing volunteer service projects for installation of trail signage and/or trailhead kiosks, in collaboration with the BLM Taos Field Office.

As we prepare ourselves physically, mentally and logistically for another great season in Wilderness, we hope that you won't hesitate to reach out to learn more about our work and volunteer with us. Contact will@nmwild.org to learn more and to get connected to Wilderness Rangers and other COVID-safe stewardship projects. 🌲

In the meantime, we wanted to share with you a project that we put together. We were fortunate enough to receive funding to build our own tool cache to be more self-reliant and prepared when working the backcountry. To store these tools neatly and efficiently in our Albuquerque office, Santa Fe Ranger Jesse Furr built this excellent compact tool rack using all recycled wood.



Wilderness Ranger tool rack, photo: Will Ribbans



Wilderness Ranger Jesse Furr being presented the National Wilderness Stewardship Award from the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, photo: staff



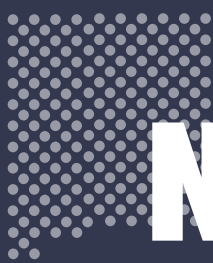
National Forest Foundation



Thank you to the National Forest Foundation and the Inland Empire Community Foundation for funding us for a second year of Wilderness Stewardship work in the Gila.



Wilderness Stewardship Manager Will Ribbans and Ranger Walker Martin in the Sandia Mountains; photo: Brennan Davis



Colorado College's State of the Rockies Project
2021 Conservation in the West Poll

NEW MEXICO

READY FOR BOLD ACTION



58% of New Mexicans are **worried** about the **future of nature**. New Mexicans are ready to see action.

ENERGY ON PUBLIC LANDS



65% would prefer their Member of Congress **emphasize conservation and recreation** on public lands **over** maximizing the amount of land available for responsible **energy development**.



74% think that **oil and gas development on national public lands** should be **stopped or strictly limited**, as opposed to expanded.



New Mexico Bureau of Land Management

FIRE IN THE WEST



65% think **wildfires in the West** are **more of a problem** than ten years ago.

PROTECTING LAND, WATER & WILDLIFE



77% support a national goal of **protecting 30 percent** of America's lands and oceans by 2030.



83% support **creating new national parks, national monuments, national wildlife refuges, and tribal protected areas**.

CONSERVATION FUNDING

90%

agree that even with state budget problems, we should still find money to protect the state's land, water, and wildlife.

78%

support **directing funding to ensure adequate access to parks and natural areas** for lower-income people and communities of color that have disproportionately lacked them.

ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

71%

support **gradually transitioning to one hundred percent clean, renewable energy** over the next ten to fifteen years.

69%

support making **public lands a net-zero source of carbon pollution**.

coloradocollege.edu/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewest

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A butterfly resting on an owl's-claw flower in the Santa Fe National Forest, photo: Jesse Furr; A view from the top of the Sandia Mountains, photo: staff (right)



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.

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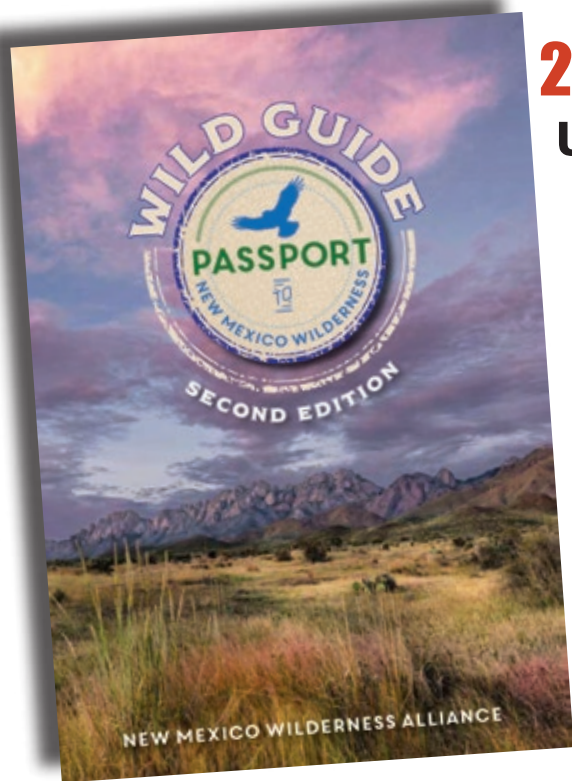


Other payment options:
1) Enclose your check payable to: New Mexico Wild
2) Donate online at nmwild.org/donate

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

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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!



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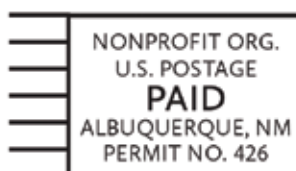


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New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
P.O. Box 25464
Albuquerque, NM 87125
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A prickly pear cactus at Caja del Rio, photo: Garrett VeneKlasen