



NEW MEXICO WILD!

Fall/Winter 2022

The Semiannual
Publication of the
New Mexico
Wilderness Alliance



CAJA DEL RIO



WHERE
HISTORY,
CULTURE,
AND
WILDERNESS
MEET



New Mexico WILD!

The Semiannual Publication of the
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

VOLUME 19, NUMBER 2
FALL/WINTER 2022

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ON THE COVER

The Caja del Rio Plateau is bounded on the west by the Rio Grande, shown flowing through White Rock Canyon. Lower left: Multi-generational Hispanic outdoorsman and grazing permittee Julian Gonzales lives in La Cienega. Lower right: Cochiti Pueblo member and director of the nonprofit High Water, Phoebe Suina. Photos by Garrett VeneKlasen

From the Executive Director | Mark Allison

FACING THE NEXT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF CONSERVATION HEAD ON

Thanks for picking up the most recent edition of our newsletter. As New Mexico Wild wraps up our 25th anniversary, we feel much gratitude for the vision of our founders, who saw the need for this organization and who invested the time and energy to make it a reality. We are so proud that the model they established—one instigated and sustained by volunteers and private citizens—lives on today. Your generosity and trust allow us to successfully defend and proactively conserve New Mexico's incredible lands, waters, and wildlife. We literally could not do our work without the thousands of supporters in every corner of our state and beyond. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you.



Inside you'll see inside a small sampling of what we are up to—from advancing federal legislation, to taking legal action to support Mexican wolf recovery, to expanding citizen science and stewardship projects, to fighting for increases in state conservation funding, to urging land management agencies to address problems associated with abandoned and orphaned oil and gas wells, and so much more.

You will see several additions to the team, including newly created positions designed to increase our capacity, expand our work on water issues and face head on climate change and mass species extinction.

Keep an eye out for some major announcements soon, including the results of a scientific study we've commissioned to analyze the benefits of additional protected public lands in New Mexico, an updated strategy about how we will achieve these protections, and a new initiative to incubate a Native-led organization to amplify the voices of Indigenous communities in conservation issues.

Being advocates for nature means believing positive change is possible. For example, when I read about the resurgence of California condors from the brink of extinction and see more bald eagles now than when I was a child, I see clear evidence that public policy choices make a difference, sometimes *the* difference. On page 14, we write about the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act. While not perfect—compromises have attracted criticism that communities already disproportionately impacted by fossil fuel pollution may bear the brunt of additional oil and gas production—it is nevertheless the single most important climate related bill ever, putting the U.S. on track to reduce carbon emissions by roughly 30 percent by 2030.

A recent study by the Center for Western Priorities noted that between 2011 and 2021, New Mexico ranked third among all Western states in conserving the most public land, behind only California and Utah. We should take pride knowing that future generations will be able to experience special wild places and that wildlife will still have a place in this world because of these efforts.

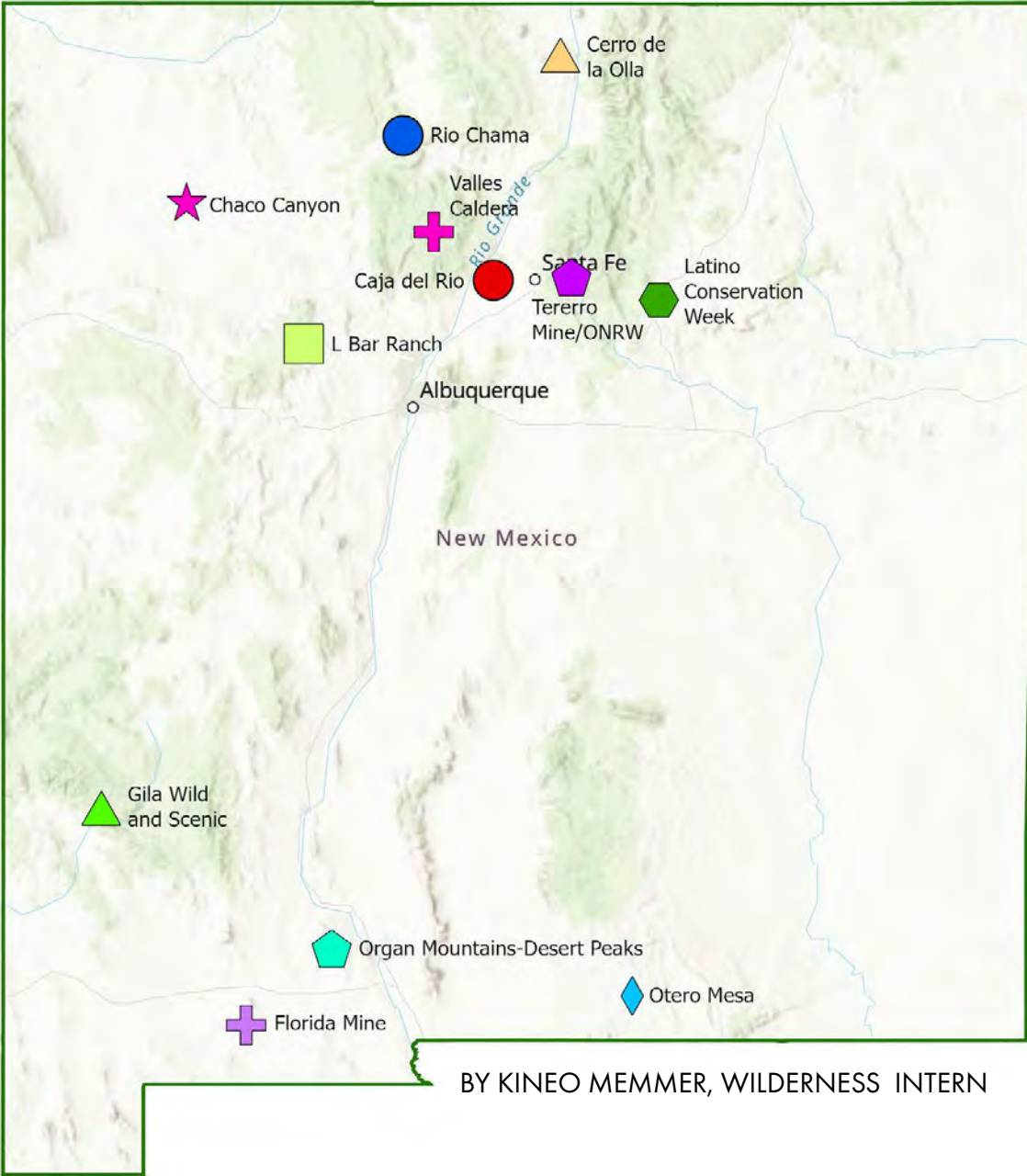
My wish is that New Mexico Wild's next 25 years will be filled with new discoveries, understanding and partnerships, and that—with your continued help—we will continue our important role in helping conserve New Mexico's special wild places.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Allison".

STORY LOCATIONS IN THIS ISSUE

New Mexico Wild is proud to protect Wilderness, Wildlife, and Water all over the state. Use the handy map below to see the project areas covered in this issue of the newsletter, and the corresponding page number for each article.



BY KINEO MEMMER, WILDERNESS INTERN

Legend

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WILDERNESS DISPATCHES

Updates on New Mexico Wild Projects Across the State



The middle fork of the Gila River. Staff photo

GILA WILD & SCENIC STILL FLOWING STRONG

BY NATHAN NEWCOMER

Legislation to protect 450 miles of waterways in the Gila Watershed as Wild and Scenic Rivers took a step forward in July when legislation was passed out of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee with rare bipartisan support. Given the current politics in Congress, bipartisan support for this legislation positions the bill to be passed into law should a package of public lands bills materialize before the end of the year.

For the past decade, New Mexico Wild has been at the forefront of organizing and working with local community stakeholders in the Gila region and other partners to permanently protect the rivers and streams in the watershed with Wild and Scenic designation. This effort has seen resolutions and letters of support from local municipalities and organizations, such as the town of Silver City, the Grant

Let's keep the Gila River Wild and
Scenic—the way it's always been!
Learn more at
www.wildgilariver.org

County Commission, the All Pueblo Council of Governors, the Fort Sill Apache tribe, more than 150 small local businesses, veterans' groups, landowners, sportsmen, faith leaders and civic organizations such as the NAACP and LULAC.

The Gila River has faced heinous proposals for decades to dam and divert its free-flowing character, including a project that we helped defeat two years ago. Without permanent protection, these assaults on the Gila River watershed are guaranteed to continue.

First introduced in the U.S. Senate in the spring of 2020 by former Sen. Tom Udall and now senior Sen. Martin Heinrich, the M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic Rivers Act seeks to preserve the free-flowing character and outstandingly remarkable values of the Gila River watershed. The bill was reintroduced in the fall of 2021 by Sens. Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján.

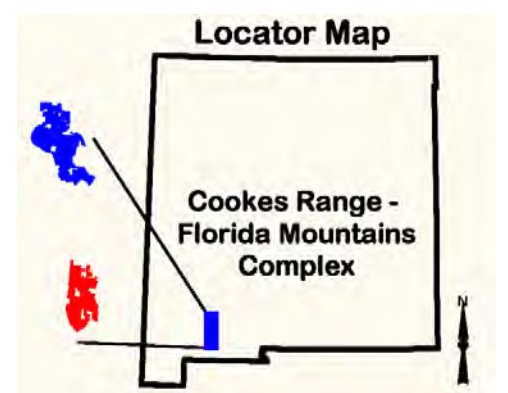
Should this legislation pass, it would be a testimony to the hard work that local communities have dedicated over the past 10 years to safeguard and protect a vital part of Southwestern New Mexico's heritage and culture. Let's keep the Gila River Wild and Scenic—the way it's always been! ▲▲

FLORIDA MINE—WE ARE NOT DIGGING THIS

BY SALLY PAEZ

Our fight against the proposed dolomite mine near the Florida Mountains outside of Deming continues to slowly work its way through federal court. In September 2020, we filed a lawsuit against the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to reverse its approval of an extensive mining project by American Magnesium, LLC. The proposed mine threatens to degrade the Wilderness characteristics of the nearby Florida Mountains Wilderness Study Area and to imperil numerous sensitive wildlife species.

In a single decision, the BLM approved both exploration (to determine the value of the mineral deposit) and a full-blown mining operation if a sufficiently valuable deposit is found. Our lawsuit—which we brought with co-plaintiffs Friends of the Floridas, WildEarth Guardians, Gila Resources Information Project, and Amigos Bravos—challenges the BLM's simultaneous approval of both exploration and a





The beautiful Florida Mountains in far southwest New Mexico are threatened by a proposed mining operation that would threaten the Wilderness values of the area. Photo by Krystyna Gonzalez

full-scale mining operation and argues that this dual approval process violated federal law.

In September 2021, the BLM gave the court documents it wants the judge to consider. Along with our co-plaintiffs, we filed a motion asking the court to require the BLM to provide additional documents for the judge's review. We must ensure that the BLM has presented all relevant information to the court, not just the documents that support its decision to approve the exploration and mining. On July 6, the court held a hearing on this issue, and we are still waiting for a final decision. Once the court has resolved the documents issue, we will proceed to the next step in the litigation. With your support, we and our partners are prepared to continue this fight! ▲▲



Do you own an old smartphone that you are no longer using? New Mexico Wild is accepting smartphone donations for our new Volunteer Wilderness Defender program. Please contact will@nmwild.org to see if your phone can be used for the cause!

MEXICAN GRAY WOLVES BELONG

BY SALLY PAEZ

The recovery of Mexican wolves, or lobos, continues to be a key issue for New Mexico Wild. The lobo is a keystone species whose presence is vital to maintaining the health, structure, and balance of ecosystems like the Gila Wilderness. Although lobos once numbered in the thousands, by the 1970s the federal government had driven these iconic animals to the brink of extinction through a misguided campaign to eradicate them. Thankfully, federal policy shifted just in time, and lobos were listed as endangered in 1976. Since then, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been tasked with recovering lobos and restoring them to their rightful place in the landscapes of the Southwest.

Now, almost 50 years later, we are seeing modest gains in the number of lobos in the wild. We are excited to report that the latest census, conducted in 2021, counted 196 lobos in southwest New Mexico and southeast Arizona, marking a 5% increase from the previous year and the sixth consecutive year of population growth! Unfortunately, the lobos' fate remains in doubt due to an array of threats, including low genetic diversity, illegal killings by humans and USFWS regulations that too often reflect politics instead of facts, science, and law.

New Mexico Wild is dedicated to ensuring that Mexican wolf recovery keeps moving in the right direction. To that end, we conduct public education and outreach such as our annual Mexican Gray Wolf Conservation Stamp Contest. We advocate for public land and water conservation in lobo habitat, such as a wild and scenic designation for the Gila River and expansions to the Gila Wilderness. We collaborate with local, state, and federal partners on recovery efforts.

Additionally, we are pursuing two important cases in federal court to ensure that the USFWS is applying the best available science and following the law when developing its Mexican wolf recovery



A Mexican gray wolf with a radio transmitting collar. Photo by Sherry Barrett

WILDERNESS DISPATCHES, CONTINUED

plan and management rule. In both lawsuits, New Mexico Wild and other plaintiffs are represented by the Western Environmental Law Center.

Our appeal of the 2017 recovery plan in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit is moving forward. We filed a brief on July 8, challenging the district court's legal determination that a recovery plan does not need to be based on the best available science and arguing that federal courts have authority to invalidate a recovery plan that fails to further the conservation and survival of the species. The briefing in the 9th Circuit will be completed this fall. Meanwhile, we are waiting for the USFWS to publish a final revised recovery plan, which the court has ordered the agency to complete by Oct. 14.

Regarding the management rule, on June 30, the USFWS published a new management rule for the experimental population of lobos under Section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act. The new rule replaces the 2015 version of the 10(j) rule, which a federal court had previously invalidated on several grounds. On July 1, we submitted a 60-day notice of intent to file a lawsuit challenging the new 10(j) rule. The lawsuit, which was filed in October, is focused on the USFWS's failure to list the experimental population as "essential" to the continued existence of the subspecies in the wild. Thank you for your ongoing support of our work to protect the lobo! ▲▲



Fisherman Nick Streit owns a fly shop and was an expert witness during the ONRW petition hearing. Here he is pictured in the Rio Grande Gorge. Photo by Garrett VeneKlasen

OUTSTANDING! NEW DESIGNATIONS A HUGE WIN FOR NEW MEXICO WATERS

STAFF ARTICLE

After years of intensive stakeholder collaboration and exhaustive community outreach, the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission unanimously voted on July 12 to designate approximately 306 miles of river and 43 acres of wetlands in Northern New Mexico as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRW). The designations result from two petitions covering the Upper Pecos River watershed and the Rio Grande and other rivers and creeks.

The first petition includes nearly 180 miles of rivers and streams and 43 acres of wetlands in the Upper Pecos River watershed. American Rivers recently named the Upper Pecos one of America's Most Endangered Rivers due to the imminent threat of pollution from proposed gold, copper and zinc mining. An ONRW designation would present a roadblock to mining development by prohibiting any degradation to the water quality in these streams. Outstanding Waters designation in the second petition area of the Upper Rio Grande basin would protect cultural and recreational values as well as ecological resources.

New Mexico Wild partnered with Amigos Bravos, the Western Environmental Law Center, Trout Unlimited, Climate Advocates Voces Unidas (CAVU), Flower Hill Institute, the Upper Pecos Watershed Association and many other organizations to form a dynamic coalition of stakeholders to advocate for ONRW designations. ▲▲

**READ MORE ABOUT THIS VICTORY
ON OUR WEBSITE!**

Or visit: [https:// bit.ly/3Cfj0sG](https://bit.ly/3Cfj0sG)



You're Invited

**NEW MEXICO WILD
HOLIDAY PARTY
& ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2
5-9 PM**

Gruet Winery

Albuquerque Tasting Room

8400 Pan American Freeway NE

For more information or to RSVP,

Call 505-843-8696

or email devon@nmwild.org



Active Mining Claims in the Upper Pecos Watershed Adjacent to the Thompson Peak Recommended Wilderness Area

This map was created using NM Wilderness Alliance data layers (NM Wilderness Areas and Municipal Watershed Boundary), layers from unm.rgis.com (NM Watershed Boundaries and Minor Waterways), US Forest Service Layers (Pecos River WSR Corridor and Thompson Peak Recommended Wilderness Area), USGS Layers (NM Major Rivers), the BLM Mineral & Land Records System (Active Mining Claims), and Comexico LLC's Tererro Exploration Project Proposal (Comexico Proposed Exploratory Drilling Sites). This map data was compiled by NM Wild Nancy Morton Intern Kineo Memmer in July 2022.

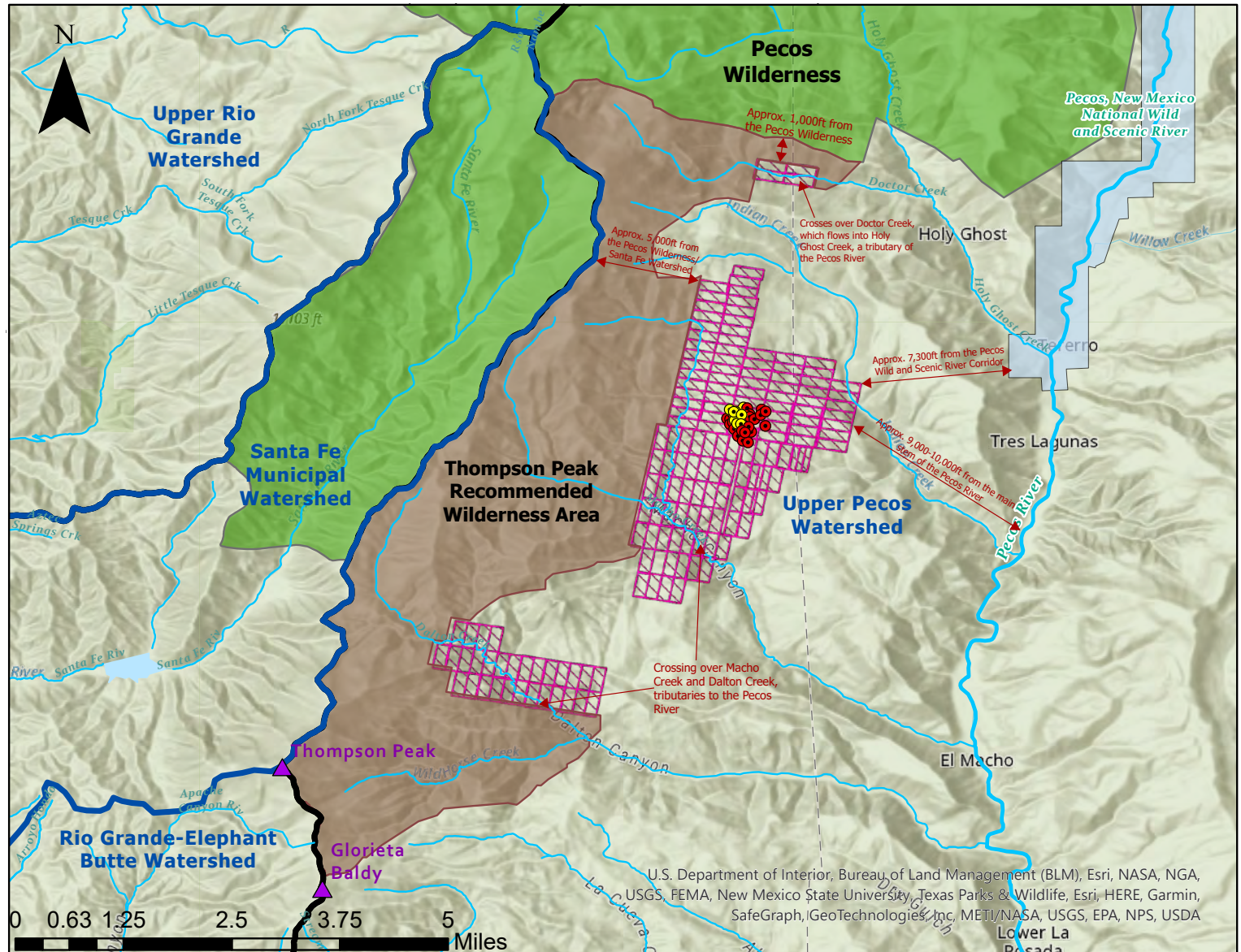
This map is not intended for legal use, but rather to inform the public on the general locations of mining claims and proposed exploratory drilling sites. The data layer "Active and Closed Mining Claims" is taken from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Mineral & Land Records System, which is dynamic and may change over time. No changes were made to this dataset prior to being displayed on the map.

Comexico Proposed Exploratory Drilling Sites

- High Certainty of Use
- Proposed for Use

Active Mining Claims

- Lode Claim
- Placer Claim
- Tunnel Site
- Mill Site
- Minor Waterways
- NM Major Rivers
- Pecos River WSR Corridor
- NM Watershed Boundaries
- Municipal Watershed Boundary
- NM Wilderness Areas
- Thompson Peak Recommended Wilderness Area
- Important Landmarks



TRYING TO TEAR UP TERERRO...AGAIN

STAFF ARTICLE

Efforts to stop a proposed mining project in the Pecos Valley scored a big win in July with the unanimous decision by the state Water Quality Control Commission to designate 180 miles of the Upper Pecos and its tributaries as well as 43 acres of wetlands as Outstanding National Resource Waters. This is a huge step forward in securing water quality standards and preventing further degradation of the Upper Pecos Watershed.

As readers may recall, Australian company New World Resources in 2019 acquired the Tererro copper-gold-zinc project in the Santa Fe National Forest. The company's U.S. subsidiary, Comexico LLC, applied for permits to conduct exploratory mining at Jones Hill. The Jones Hill Deposit is a middle-Proterozoic-aged volcanogenic massive sulfide ore deposit located approximately 5 miles southwest of the historic Tererro mine.

We are waiting for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to release the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the exploration project. The EA has been delayed due to the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak Fire. New Mexico Wild is working with coalition members to request a 60-day

comment period and public hearings once it is released. The project will also require permits from the N.M. Mining and Minerals Division and Santa Fe County, as well as federal approval.

New Mexico Wild continues to support our Congressional delegation in their efforts to pass Senate Bill 182 and House Bill 5628, the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, which would permanently prevent new mining claims in the Upper Pecos Watershed. We also are working with the delegation to request that Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland begin work to administratively withdraw federal minerals within the watershed from future mineral development, including new mining operations. ▲▲

The fight to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed from mining continues. Learn more at <https://bit.ly/3Rjl8in>



WILDERNESS DISPATCHES, CONTINUED

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS ARE CRITICAL FOR ANIMALS AND PUBLIC SAFETY

BY GARRETT VENEKLASSEN

With stressors like human encroachment and climate change already impacting New Mexico's diverse and vibrant wildlife populations, habitat resiliency and connectivity are increasingly critical issues. The 2019 Wildlife Corridors Act directed the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) to develop a plan to decrease wildlife vehicle collisions statewide. The New Mexico Wildlife Corridors Action Plan is now in its early infrastructure implementation phase. Using ecological data and modeling, the plan identifies wildlife-vehicle collision hotspots and wildlife corridors that bisect roads and provides a list of priority projects.

New Mexico Wild is a member of the recently formed New Mexico Safe Passage Wildlife Coalition, which includes NMDOT, NMDGF and conservation organizations working together to implement the action plan. Current corridor projects include the Taos Pueblo underpass for bighorn sheep on N.M. 64 and the NMDGF underpass on Interstate 40 just east of Albuquerque.



Elk are really beautiful when they're not coming through your windshield at a high rate of speed. Wildlife corridors keep people and wildlife safe. Photo by Garrett VeneKlassen

These projects are costly, but the investment is worthwhile to prevent impacts on public safety and wildlife. Ideally, the New Mexico Safe Passage Wildlife Coalition will be permanently formalized to mirror the Colorado Wildlife Transportation Alliance model. A permanent statewide coalition can improve the incorporation of human safety and wildlife movement needs in New Mexico's transportation system and project planning.

NMDOT, with the help of our coalition, has applied for a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant that could provide up to \$200,000 for the formation and operation of the coalition. As part of the Wildlife Corridors Action Plan process, NMDOT and NMDGF requested public input, especially concerning statewide highway locations that have the highest instances of wildlife collisions. New Mexico Wild held several informational webcast meetings during this process to educate members on the intricacies of the plan.

We greatly appreciate member participation in these calls, as well as the 950 comments our members submitted in favor of the corridors during the public process. Your comments make a huge difference!

As the coalition becomes a formal entity, we encourage everyone to reach out to both the governor's office and your state legislators to express support for robust, dedicated state funding for both safe passage infrastructure and statewide habitat resiliency restoration initiatives. Your continued interaction with agencies and lawmakers makes a huge difference in fast-tracking implementation of the Wildlife Corridors Action Plan statewide. ▲▲

CONFIRMED: IT'S OFFICIALLY LEGAL FOR YOU TO TOUCH THE STREAMBED

BY SALLY PAEZ

On September 1, the New Mexico Supreme Court issued a formal opinion reaffirming the long-standing right under the state Constitution to use public waters for recreation and fishing. The opinion explains the legal reasoning behind the court's unanimous ruling last March and clarifies that the right to use public waters, which predates statehood, includes the right to touch privately owned streambeds to the extent reasonably necessary to fish and recreate.

The case was brought by Adobe Whitewater Club of New Mexico, New Mexico Wildlife Federation and the New Mexico chapter



Yes, it really did take a New Mexico Supreme Court decision to make it officially ok to wade in the creek. Photo by Garrett VeneKlassen

of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. The petitioners challenged regulations adopted by the state Game Commission in 2018 that allowed landowners to close public access to segments of public water flowing over private property. New Mexico Wild filed an amicus brief on behalf of our organization and several partners, including the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); the Hispano Roundtable of New Mexico; Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO); and the Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project.

The Supreme Court said, “the right to recreate and fish in public waters” has always included “the privilege to do such acts as are reasonably necessary to effect the enjoyment of such right,” including touching the streambed. The court emphasized that the public right to touch the streambed does not include the right to trespass across private land and that any use of the streambed must be of minimal impact to uphold the property rights of private landowners.

We celebrate the clarity provided by the Supreme Court. We are dedicated to continuing our partnerships with land management agencies, private landowners, the public and impacted communities to ensure that the health and ecological integrity of our state’s waters are prioritized and protected for the use and enjoyment of all current and future New Mexicans. ▲▲



RECREATIONAL BOATERS HELP WITH BUG RESEARCH ON THE RIO CHAMA

BY REBECCA NEAL

New Mexico Wild wrapped up the third season of our Rio Chama Community Science Project throughout the Wild & Scenic section of the Chama in September 2022. Funded by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, this project has provided important data about the health of the ecosystem and has been a fun way for adults and youth alike to participate in the stewardship of their river.

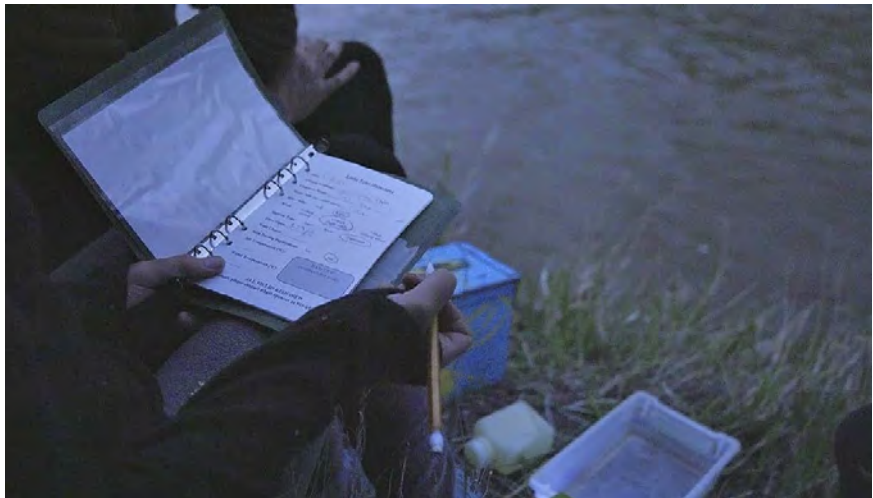
Boaters taking overnight trips on the Chama volunteered to spend a few minutes at sunset each night to collect bug and water samples, providing a snapshot of bug diversity near their camp and the water characteristics with which the bugs are associated. We were specifically looking for benthic macroinvertebrate diversity—bugs without backbones that can be seen without a microscope. Benthic macroinvertebrates are critical to understanding riverine health because of



Young boaters assisted with bug collection on the Rio Chama. Photo by Rebecca Neal

their importance as a food source and their sensitivity to aquatic habitats. Together, these snapshots uncover trends in the Chama’s health over the course of the boating season from year-to-year, informing flow management decisions for El Vado Dam.

Scientists at the University of New Mexico and Northern Arizona University are just beginning to process the volunteer-collected data, so keep an eye on our website in the coming months for a report on the findings. Thank you to all our citizen science volunteers! ▲▲



Upper: Science and fun come together on the Rio Chama for boaters who volunteered to collect bug data during their river trip. Photo by Tisha Broska
Lower: After deploying the insect traps at dusk, boaters recorded data in notebooks furnished as part of the collecting kits. Photo by Christi Bode

DRILLING MORATORIUM GIVES CHACO A REPRIEVE

STAFF ARTICLE

In January, the Biden administration commenced a two-year moratorium on new oil and gas leasing on federal lands within a 10-mile radius of Chaco Culture National Historical Park (about 350,000 acres). The moratorium marked the beginning of an administrative review and public comment period that will hopefully result in a 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal.

This protection is critical and long overdue. The Greater Chaco landscape within the buffer zone includes the park and dozens of



Indigenous communities and Chaco Culture National Historical Park are catching a break thanks to the Biden ban on drilling within 10 miles of the park. Photo by Alison Ruth Hughes

Oil and gas wells,
roads, pipelines,
and other
infrastructure
have destroyed
significant cultural
sites.

ancient villages, roads and shrines that were built by the ancestors of the Pueblos, Navajo Nation, the Hopi Tribe, and other Indigenous Nations between 850 and 1250 A.D. Chaco Canyon has also been designated a World Heritage Site.

Over the years, reckless drilling has caused significant harm to the health of local and Indigenous communities, air quality and cultural values. Oil and gas wells, roads, pipelines, and other infrastructure

have destroyed significant cultural sites and transformed others into industrial parks. The land that is being considered for withdrawal from future leasing is historically, spiritually, and ecologically significant to Indigenous communities.

Working with numerous organizations, we were pleased to help generate approximately 83,000 supportive comments from the public,

provide public testimony at the hearings, organize rallies and cultivate media attention. We look forward to additional opportunities for public comment and engagement and we eagerly await the U.S. Department of Interior's decision. Meanwhile, New Mexico Wild continues to work with our Congressional delegation to permanently protect the Greater Chaco landscape via legislation. ▲▲

BLM MANAGEMENT PLANNING MIRED IN DELAYS... WE WANT THEM TO DO BETTER

BY SALLY PAEZ

The BLM had been working to develop, revise or amend most of its Resource Management Plans (RMPs) across New Mexico, including the Farmington, Carlsbad, Rio Puerco and Tri-County RMPs. The BLM is also developing new plans for the Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks national monuments.

The BLM planning process presents opportunities to protect Wilderness quality lands across the state. When the BLM updates an RMP, it conducts an official Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC) inventory. Areas found to meet Wilderness criteria are then poised for Congressional designation as Wilderness. The BLM can also designate special management areas in an RMP, such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), which have rules to protect fish and wildlife, scenic values, and important cultural resources. New Mexico Wild typically conducts our own inventory of lands with Wilderness characteristics and makes recommendations to the BLM.

Near Las Cruces, the BLM is working on the RMP for Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, which received priority funding this year. Unfortunately, the RMP for the adjacent Tri-County area did not receive funding and, like several other RMPs in New Mexico, has been delayed due to resource limitations. The Tri-County RMP will administer 2.3 million acres of public land, including Otero Mesa, which is one of the largest intact Chihuahuan Desert grasslands, a culturally rich habitat for a stunning array of grasslands birds, critical colonies of black-trailed prairie dogs and what is likely New Mexico's last native pronghorn herd (pronghorn in other areas have been reintroduced).

We want to ensure that precious landscapes are not destroyed due to delays in adopting responsible management plans. As the various RMPs advance through the planning process, there will be opportunities for public input. Please keep a lookout for emails and action alerts in the coming months! ▲▲



Birds like the burrowing owl depend on protected public lands like Otero Mesa for habitat critical to their survival. Photo courtesy of Mike's Birds, Wikimedia Commons

WILDERNESS NEEDS DEFENDERS LIKE YOU!

BY WILL RIBBANS

The Wilderness Defenders have hit the ground running! This new volunteer program is designed to have you get out on public lands to provide us with information regarding the conditions of New Mexico’s wildest areas. Our focus is on Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), lands with Wilderness characteristics and other areas that might benefit from added protections.

Our history of doing statewide inventories of lands with Wilderness characteristics set us up to keep a close eye on wild areas that may need further protections, such as from off-road vehicle trespassing, illegal dumping, illegal tree cutting, defacement of cultural resources, illegal shooting ranges, overgrazing and much more. This program also provides us information on recreation facilities, such as trail status, signage conditions and access points.

Withing two months of our June 2022 launch, we engaged over 80 volunteers from around the state who completed training videos to learn the program objectives, our mapping application, and protocols. Volunteers independently embarked on 10 field trips and dedicated 300 hours of volunteer service. A great start!

This work and the information collected is already proving useful, giving us a wealth of knowledge to adequately respond to federal comment periods, Wilderness eligibility and protection campaigns. For example, GPS points with corresponding photos will aid us in our understanding and in submitting relevant comments and recommendations. Thank you to the volunteers and staff who have helped us develop this program. ▲▲

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Wilderness
Defenders

NEW FOREST PLANS MISS THE MARK BUT WE WILL
KEEP THE PRESSURE ON

BY SALLY PAEZ

After a decade of engagement by New Mexico Wild and our members and partners, the United States Forest Service (USFS) has completed the revised Land Management Plans for the Carson, Cibola and Santa Fe national forests. The new plans took effect in August and will likely guide forest management for the next 20 years.

The final plans include elements worth celebrating. All three forests recommended lands for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System and identified river segments eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. These administrative protections obligate the USFS to manage these increasingly rare lands and waters for their Wilderness qualities, pending formal designation by Congress. Additionally, the Santa Fe National Forest recognized the ecological and cultural importance of the Caja del Rio plateau and created a Caja del Rio Wildlife and Cultural Interpretive Management Area.

Unfortunately, these protections were granted to only a small fraction of the lands and waters with high-quality Wilderness characteristics. It is disappointing that the USFS failed to take full advantage of this opportunity. New Mexico Wild will continue to work with the USFS to make sure that wildness remains a value worth conserving.

The final plan for the Gila is likely to be released in early 2023, with the Lincoln to follow. New Mexico Wild thanks our members and partners who contributed time conducting Wilderness inventories and submitting public comments during this exhaustive process. ▲▲



Volunteers at Boca del Oso lookout in Ignacio Chavez Wilderness Study Area. Photo by Mike Osborn

WILDERNESS DISPATCHES, CONTINUED

SPECTACULAR 54,000-ACRE L BAR RANCH BECOMES PUBLIC LAND



The L Bar Ranch will become part of the Marquez Wildlife Management Area. Photo by Garrett VeneKlasen

Thanks to the leadership of U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, and House Appropriations Vice Chair Nathan Small, lands that make up the “L Bar Ranch” near Grants have been purchased from a willing seller. The acquisition will add over 54,000 acres to the existing Marquez Wildlife Management Area, making it the largest WMA and largest state-owned recreational property in New Mexico. With this action, the state is preserving an important ecological landscape that is crucial to wildlife conservation, and has substantial cultural importance to Pueblos. Securing L Bar Ranch to the public trust ensures permanent public access to these lands. ▲▲

VALLES CALDERA...AN ICONIC LANDSCAPE WORTHY OF WILDERNESS

STAFF ARTICLE

In July, Valles Caldera National Preserve announced it is evaluating which parts of the preserve could be designated or managed as Wilderness. The National Park Service (NPS) manages approximately 88,900 acres at Valles Caldera—located in the Jemez Mountains west of Los Alamos, including about 58,000 acres that are relatively wild.

There are many spectacular areas within Valles Caldera with great

cultural and ecological significance that should be considered in the Wilderness evaluation, including the Valle San Antonio, Valle Toledo, Seco, Redondo, Banco Bonito, Valle Grande and Cerro Grande areas.

New Mexico Wild members and our staff provided input to the NPS on the Wilderness eligibility assessment in August. We recognized that the preserve is home to vital water resources, sensitive wildlife species and diverse fauna. We urged the NPS to meaningfully consult with affiliated Pueblos and tribes regarding the preservation of sensitive and important cultural sites and artifacts within the preserve.

New Mexico Wild strongly supports Wilderness designation for all eligible areas within Valles Caldera. These regions of the preserve offer tremendous opportunities for wildlife habitat and corridors, backcountry solitude and primitive recreation, the preservation and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems, and the protection of sacred sites and cultural resources.

In addition, we urged NPS to adopt a protective management approach for the active geothermal systems in the Sulphur Springs area. This location likely falls outside the areas eligible for Wilderness designation but having a special management plan will be critical to ensuring that visitors can continue to enjoy this unique and sensitive environment without destroying it.

Valles Caldera is in the initial stage of the evaluation process and NPS will be seeking public comment and participation to help identify what lands contain Wilderness qualities. Check our website and email alerts for the latest public comment opportunities.▲▲



Mariopsa Lily along the Rito de los Indios, Valles Caldera National Preserve. Photo by Sally Paez



The volcanic Valles Caldera will soon be evaluated by NPS for wilderness designation in some areas. This image is in the Valle Toledo. Photo by Sally Paez



CELEBRATING THE



Clockwise from top left: Cipriano Vigil, who wrote and performed the music for the Milagro Beanfield War movie, and his family played traditional Norteño Musica Folklorica; Senator Martin Heinrich accepts a ceremonial prayer stick from Joseph Brophy Toledo of Jemez Pueblo; the Jemez Pueblo Cloud Eagle Dance Group performed; Representative Teresa Leger Fernández also received a ceremonial prayer stick; City Counselor Renee Villareal, Former Santa Fe City Counselor Carmichael Dominguez, and City Counselor Carol Wirth spoke at the event; All Pueblo Council of Governors Chairman Mark Mitchell spoke; grazing permittee Pat Gallegos attended, along with Northern Grassroots Organizer Julian Gonzales; Northern Conservation Director Garrett VeneKlasen jokes with Commissioner Anna Hansen. Photos by Irene Owsley

Our efforts to protect the magnificent Caja del Rio Plateau in Northern New Mexico continued in August with a free community celebration at Santa Fe Brewing Co. Hundreds of advocates joined New Mexico Wild staff and community leaders at this multi-cultural event, which we sponsored with the Caja del Rio Coalition.

The festivities kicked off with spectacular traditional dances and music, and included comments from Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández, Sen. Martin Heinrich, and local government and community leaders. Participants

enjoyed free food and beer as well as music and a short movie.

The Caja del Rio is one of the most geologically, biologically, and culturally diverse areas in the state and provides a critical wildlife corridor and vital habitats for a wide range of plants and wildlife, including many endangered and sensitive species.

The Caja is a strikingly beautiful place of great cultural, historical, and ecological importance. Sadly, the area has long suffered the consequences of inadequate protection by land management agencies. Desecration of

petroglyphs, persistent illegal dumping and unregulated shooting, poaching, destruction of critical wildlife habitat, and irresponsible off-roading must be addressed. In addition, Los Alamos National Laboratory has proposed expansion of fiber optic and powerline infrastructure and an expansive highway bypass across the plateau.

We are working with a diverse coalition of stakeholders to secure permanent federal protection for the 107,000-acre Caja, which encompasses land managed by the U.S. For

Continued on page 16.

Climate Change Bill Will Help New Mexico Weather an Uncertain Future

BY JUAN SANCHEZ

In the last year, New Mexico has been on the front lines of our planet's battle against climate change. The two largest fires in the state's history ravaged our communities, our watersheds and our public lands. The people and ecosystems that survived the two largest fires, the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak Fire and the Black Fire, have yet to fully recover. We will continue to do all we can to help with the long recovery ahead.

With more than 850,000 acres burned across our state in 2022, there have been far-reaching consequences that will bring about changes in ways of life, safety and even perception. Many people who live in the areas most affected by fires have a different viewpoint toward many things. For some, the blessing of rains during monsoon season has turned into the curse of flash floods plowing through homes and tra-

ditional farming areas. Many see the beloved Wildernesses and watersheds where they grew up impacted to the point that they will likely need an entire generation to fully recover.

As the climate continues to change, our leaders have taken huge steps to address these issues, most notably the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. On Aug. 16, President Joe Biden signed the act, the single greatest legislative action on climate change that the United States government has ever taken. At one point, it looked like the bill was not going to make it through the Senate. Thankfully, New Mexico Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan worked tirelessly to negotiate and push this crucial bill through. Reps. Melanie Stansbury and Teresa Leger Fernández supported the legislation in the House.

Though not perfect, the act makes huge steps toward addressing climate change, investing \$370 billion and putting the U.S. on track to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 40% below 2005 levels by 2030.

This bill will affect New Mexico for years to come—not only from the perspective of slowing down changes to our climate, but also in helping us respond to weather events and enjoy cleaner air. With projects that boost resilience in the face of extreme weather, tens of thousands of people are eligible for upgrades like flood-proofing and storm resistance, as well as rebates and tax credits for energy efficiency and clean energy projects. As we continue to fight for the health and continuity of our increasingly threatened public lands, the decisive actions of the Inflation Reduction Act are something to be celebrated and built upon. ▲▲

This scorched adobe in northern New Mexico was a casualty of the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon fire.
Photo by Lois Manno



RISING FROM THE ASHES

BY RALPH VIGIL AND DEVON NAPLES



Community members gathered on the Las Vegas plaza to celebrate Latino Conservation Week and the end of wildfire season with live music, games, dancing, and free food. Photo by Devon Naples

New Mexico Wild staff and volunteers were humbled to celebrate the resilience of the people and ecosystems of the Las Vegas and Mora areas with our Rise from the Ashes event on July 23.

In collaboration with several partners, New Mexico Wild acknowledged Latino Conservation Week and the strength of a community recovering from the worst wildfire in New Mexico's recorded history.

Community members were joined at Plaza Park in Las Vegas by Sen. Ben Ray Luján and Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández. Each spoke about the federal efforts to provide relief to communities affected by the recent Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Fire. They also acknowledged local leaders and organizations who provided early and ongoing relief to their

neighbors, such as the Las Vegas Community Foundation and the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Long Term Recovery Group. Luján and Fernández observed that local relief networks and federal aid are both crucial safety nets for our New Mexico communities affected by natural disaster.

Continued on page 21.



Above: After a summer of heartbreaking loss, locals enjoyed the opportunity to relax outdoors and play some corn-hole. Clockwise from right: Lea Knutson of the Hermit's Peak Watershed Alliance; Senator Liz Stefanics, Senator Ben Ray Luján; and Representative Teresa Leger Fernández all spoke at the event. Photos by Sally Paez



A 60-day Session Swimming in Surplus Dollars

STAFF REPORT

New Mexico is once again swimming in budgetary surplus dollars, primarily from oil and gas revenue. In August, **state economists estimate roughly \$2.5 billion in new money — yes, that’s “billion” with a B.** How this money is allocated will depend on November’s midterm election and its resultant impacts on the Legislature.

New Mexico Wild is working to ensure some of these record windfalls are earmarked for conservation to help the state leverage new federal money in post-COVID packages like the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, some of which require states to match the federal investment. It’s important to remember that most of the state’s surplus comes at the expense of the environment—and indeed the planet as a whole—since it’s tied to oil and gas production.

That’s why our top priority for the upcoming legislative session is a conservation fund for state agencies to tap into for land and watershed restoration projects. Attempts to create a fund have been made for years without success. There are hopeful signals of bipartisan support for a substantial investment in 2023.

We are working to fund the existing **New Mexico Strategic Water Reserve**, which allows the state to buy or lease water to help endangered species and improve water compact deliveries. As our rivers run increasingly dry, this will enable the state to acquire water more nimbly as opportunities arise, rather than having to ask permission from the Legislature each January.

There is legislation in the works to **modernize the Department of Game and Fish** to improve management of non-game spe-

cies. The concept is tied to federal legislation expected to pass soon: Sen. Martin Heinrich’s bipartisan Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (RAWA), cosponsored by Sen. Ben Ray Lujan. The bill would allocate revenue to states annually to help them better manage threatened and endangered species and habitats. New Mexico would have to find about \$9 million/year in matching dollars to fully leverage RAWA.

Finally, New Mexico Wild continues to strongly advocate for full funding of our state environmental agencies at the levels they request. With the worsening effects of climate change, keeping our air clean, our drinking water safe and our forests and rivers protected has become more important than ever. ▲▲

Caja del Rio, continued from page 13.

est Service and Bureau of Land Management along the Upper Rio Grande. The All Pueblo Council of Governors, Santa Fe County, and the City of Santa Fe have passed supporting resolutions. Extensive outreach to the Congressional delegation and federal administration officials is ongoing.

Our partners include individual Pueblos, Hispanic community leaders, *acequia parciales*, cattle permittees, business owners, private landowners, sportsmen/women, outdoor recreationists, NGOs, environmentalists, and faith leaders.

Indigenous communities have thrived in the Caja for centuries, and Pueblo people regard the landscape as sacred and critically important for future generations. As the original stewards of this landscape, these Pueblo communities continue to fight for protection of the Caja.

Right: Caja del Rio supporters enjoyed an afternoon at Santa Fe Brewing Company with speakers, music, and food. Far right: Veteran Jose “Chappy” Villegas was one of the speakers at the event. Photos by Irene Owsley

There is also a rich history of Spanish settlement in the region. Communities like La Bajada, Agua Fría, Jacona, Cañón, La Cienega, La Cieneguilla, and El Rancho have relied on the land for hunting, grazing, religious pilgrimages and more.

We are excited at the remarkable progress of this historic land protection campaign and

hope this special place will soon enjoy the protections it deserves.

Watch our events page for opportunities to experience the magic of the Caja del Rio on a guided hike or stewardship project! ▲▲



UNM WILD BEGINS A NEW YEAR

UNM Wild, the student chapter of New Mexico Wild, works to harness the passion of youth to create meaningful change and protect and preserve Wilderness. The group does Wilderness trail work across the state as well as advocacy for public lands.

MEETINGS

7pm every other Wednesday
Instagram: @unmwild
Email: unmwild@unm.edu

Officers are Simon Doneski and Helena Mieras. Doneski is a senior pursuing a degree in conservation biology. He came out West to work for the Bureau of Land Management to pursue his passion for Wilderness. He loves guiding UNM students through the Outdoor Adventure Center on campus. He can be reached at sdoneski@unm.edu.

Mieras grew up in the mountains of Northern New Mexico, right next to the Latir Peaks Wilderness. Mieras is studying conservation biology. As a Nordic ski instructor and former president of the UNM Mountaineering Club, she loves taking people outside and helping them forge a bond with nature. She is happy to receive inquiries about the club at hmieras@unm.edu.



UNM Wild leaders Simon Doneski and Helena Mieras.

Dr. Joseph Cook is the faculty advisor for UNM Wild and has years of conservation expertise. He has been a professor in the Biology Department since 2004 and has been the faculty advisor for UNM Wild since its inception. ▲▲



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.



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!

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

During the 117th Congress, conservation-minded Congressional leaders have pursued an array of legislation that aims to address climate change and protect public lands, water and wildlife. The Senate bills outlined below are sponsored by Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., and cosponsored by Sen. Ben Ray Luján, D-N.M. New Mexico Wild has been closely tracking the following bills:



The Inflation Reduction Act (Public Law No. 117-169)

signed by President Biden on Aug. 16, marks the most significant climate legislation in U.S. history! The act includes provisions to lower the costs of clean energy, build a clean energy economy and reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions. See the full article in this newsletter for more details.

The Pecos Watershed Protection Act (S.182, H.R.5628)

would enact a mineral withdrawal for the entire Upper Pecos Watershed, including its tributaries. The act would protect sensitive riparian areas,



water quality and other important natural and cultural resources by preventing private companies from establishing new hardrock mineral claims in the withdrawn area. The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources heard the bill in May. An identical house bill is sponsored by Rep. Teresa Leger-Fernández, D-N.M., and cosponsored by Rep. Melanie Stansbury, D-N.M. See the full articles in this newsletter about our Stop Tererro Mine and Outstanding National Resource Waters campaigns for more information about our ongoing efforts to protect the Upper Pecos Watershed.

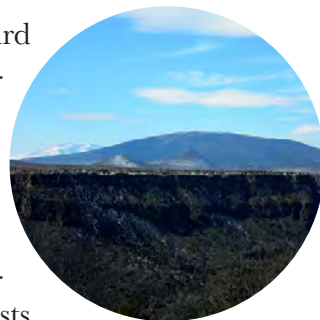
The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (S.2372, H.R.2773) is bipartisan legislation that would provide funding for the conservation and restoration of wildlife and plant species of greatest conservation need, including endangered or threatened species. Technical assistance and supplemental funds would be available to states, territories and Tribal na-



tions for proactive, on-the-ground wildlife conservation initiatives. The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works passed the bill in August; and the House bill, sponsored by Rep. Debbie Dingell, D-M.I., and cosponsored by Leger-Fernández and Stansbury, passed the House in June.

The Cerro de la Olla Wilderness Establishment Act (S.177, H.R.2522)

would create a third 13,103-acre Wilderness Area within the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument in Taos County. Cerro de la Olla consists of an impressive volcanic shield and caldera at 9,500 feet elevation. It offers spectacular views, cultural and archaeological sites, and grassland habitat for a large elk herd and other species, including mule deer, black bears, pronghorn and mountain lions. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed the bill in May. An identical House bill is sponsored by Leger Fernández.



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/aldo-leopold-circle/



The M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act (S.3129)

would designate 446 miles of the Gila and San Francisco rivers as Wild and Scenic. The Natural Resources and Energy Committee passed the bill with bipartisan support in July. See the full article in this newsletter for more information about the legislation and our campaign to protect the Gila River.

The Wildlife-Livestock Conflict Resolution Act (S.2980)

would require federal public land agencies to accept the donation of any valid existing lease or permit to graze livestock on public lands in New Mexico, resulting in the permanent retirement of that grazing permit or lease. The bill was heard by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in July.



The Water Data Act (H.R. 7792), sponsored by Stansbury and cosponsored by Leger Fernández, D-N.M., and Rep. Yvette Harrell, R-N.M., is bipartisan legislation that would establish a national water data framework for sharing, integrating, and utilizing water data and supporting the development of innovative water data technologies and tools. Hearings were held by the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife in



June. The provisions of the bill are incorporated into companion Senate legislation, see the Water Data and Security Act of 2022 (S.4236) below.

The Rio Grande Security Act (H.R. 7793) sponsored by Stansbury and cosponsored by Leger Fernández and Harrell, is bipartisan legislation that would result in the development of an integrated water resources management plan for the Rio Grande Basin using the best available science, data, and local knowledge to improve water conservation, address community water needs and restore the iconic river and its tributaries. Hearings were held by the House Natural Resources

Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife in June. The provisions of the bill are incorporated into companion Senate legislation, see the Water Data and Security Act of 2022 (S.4236) below.



The Water Data and Security Act of 2022 (S.4236) is a companion bill in the Senate that combines both the Water Data Act and the Rio Grande Security Act, described above. The bill was heard by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power in May. ▲▲



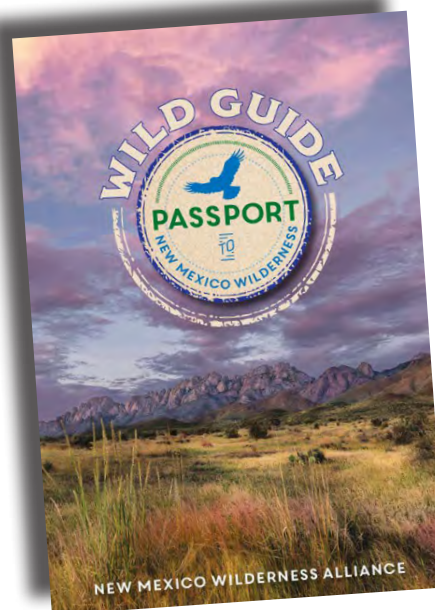
MEET THE ORPHANS NOBODY WILL ADOPT

Over 1,700 abandoned wells exist in New Mexico

Both of New Mexico's oil-producing regions—the Permian Basin in the southeast and San Juan Basin in the northwest—have scores of inactive wells, per a recent study by New Mexico Wild. We are pushing for a statewide BLM audit of these sources of toxic contamination. The Department of the Interior has made \$43.7 million available to the state to clean up these wells through the federal Infrastructure and Jobs Act. We thank the New Mexico congressional delegation for getting this money to the state.

If You Love Wilderness, You Need This Book!

**WILD GUIDE:
Passport to New Mexico Wilderness**



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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.



GET OUT!

New Mexico Wild Online Hiking Guide Featured Area
hike.nmwild.org

Chavez Canyon

Rio Chama River Canyon Wilderness

TRAIL INFO

Trailhead: 36.369° N 106.6754° W

Length: 2.2 miles round trip

Trail Type: Out and Back

Difficulty: Easy - A hike suitable for anyone who enjoys walking regularly, to novice hikers with little experience.

Route Type: Day Hike

Water: Intermittent water - Water presence varies depending on season, location, and current weather conditions. Recommended to bring water on person as a precaution.

Solitude: Lightly Used

Best Season(s) to visit: Spring, Summer, Fall

USGS 7.5" Topographic maps: Laguna Peak-36106-C6, Navajo Peak-36106-D6

Low and High Elevations: 6,483 and 7,134 feet above sea level

DESCRIPTION

The trail heads through pinon-juniper forest into the canyon, which narrows dramatically, becoming almost a slot canyon. Soon you encounter pouroffs in the slots, where you can decide to turn back or scramble onward. Chavez Canyon offers great views of the surrounding sandstone cliffs.

GETTING THERE

The trailhead is on the east side of Forest Road 151 less than 0.5 mile south of the entrance to the Christ in the Desert Monastery.

NATURAL FEATURES

Streams, Plateau, Ecosystems

Piñon-juniper - Piñon-juniper woodlands generally occur between 4,500 to 7,500 feet in elevation, transitioning from grasslands or shrublands at lower elevations, and to ponderosa pine or other montane forest associations at higher elevations.

Ponderosa Pine - Ponderosa pine trees occur as pure stands or in mixed conifer forests in the mountains and have a lush green color and pleasant odor.

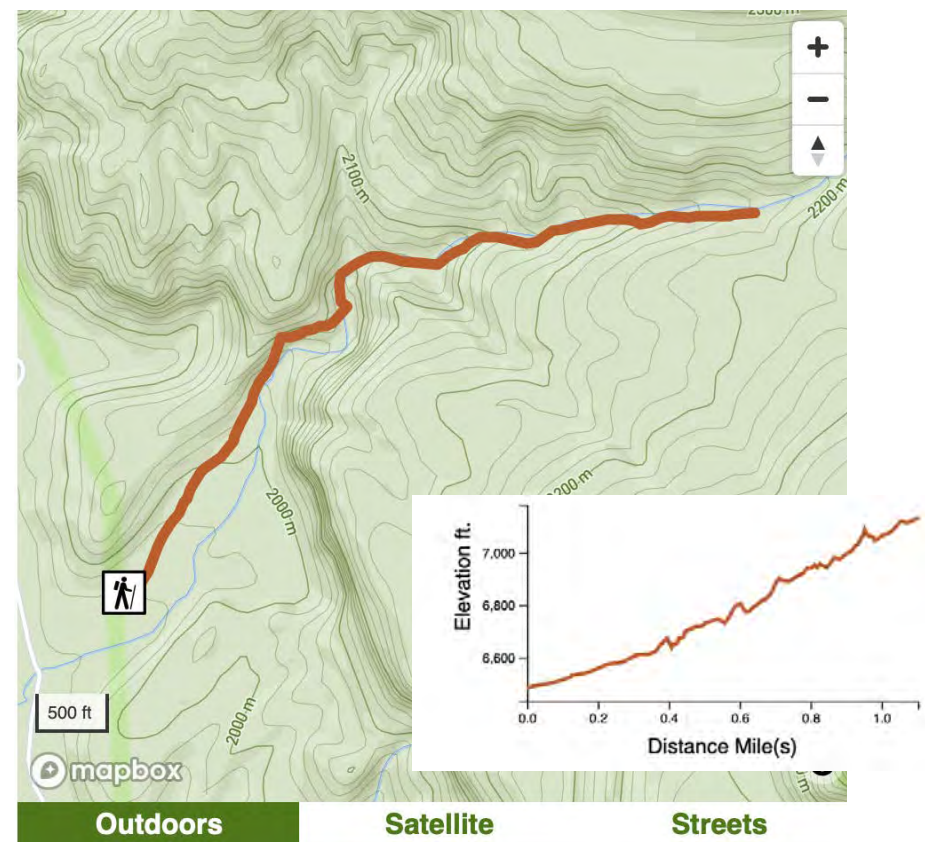
Riparian Deciduous - Riparian Deciduous is more of a descriptive term than a specific type of plant or tree. "Riparian" meaning, occurring and benefiting from a nearby water source such as a stream or river, often occurring along the banks of one of these. "Deciduous" refers to the nature of a tree that sheds its leaves annually.

ABOUT THE CHAMA RIVER CANYON WILDERNESS

The Chama River Canyon Wilderness, established in 1988, offers colorful mesas and cliffs, as well as a broad floodplain of meadows and cottonwoods bordering the Rio Chama north of Abiquiú (the home of the famous artist Georgia O'Keeffe). This 50,000-acre wilderness centers on the river, and



Chavez Canyon looking toward Chama Canyon. Photo by Zack Bumgarner



consequently hiking is rather limited, with only one marked trail, the Ojitos trail. If you are willing to walk cross-country or along roads, however, the endeavor is worthwhile. Very few people come to the wilderness to hike or backpack; for most visitors, the river is the main attraction. The Rio Chama Wild and Scenic River bustles with whitewater enthusiasts in spring, riding the wild water and setting up camps at the numerous sites. For most of the year the river is rather quiet and serene, meandering through its broad floodplain. ▲▲

Rising from the Ashes, continued from page 15.

As a grassroots conservation organization, New Mexico Wild strives to connect with communities in authentic ways. Our organizing efforts are informed by conservation concerns that are significant to locals within their communities. New Mexico Acequia Commission Chairman and New Mexico Wild community organizer Ralph Vigil saw an opportunity to connect with local organizations at our July event regarding not only the challenges they face in the aftermath of the fires, but also to understand their vision for making lasting conservation progress.

The Hermits Peak Watershed Alliance and the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute have taken the lead in healing the land. Diligent staff and volunteers have been conducting post-fire cleanups and watershed restoration along the Rio Gallinas. Erosion mitigation efforts are crucial to prevent further flooding. However, addressing immediate restoration of the watershed is only the beginning of what will be a long-term process to protect the Rio Gallinas from permanent degradation. A growing local coalition is pre-

paring to seek protections for the Gallinas and its watershed.

We deeply appreciate the city of Las Vegas for having us in their beautiful park, and thanks to our organizational partners and amazing volunteers who made this event a success. Most of all, we thank New Mexicans touched by the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon Fire for persevering through impossibly challenging circumstances to take care of yourselves, each other, and the land. ▲▲



Above: Live music and dancing on the plaza in Las Vegas was a perfect example of the resilience of this community.

Left: New Mexico Wild staffers enjoy the delicious free food furnished by the event organizers and local food trucks. Staff photos

HIKE!

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

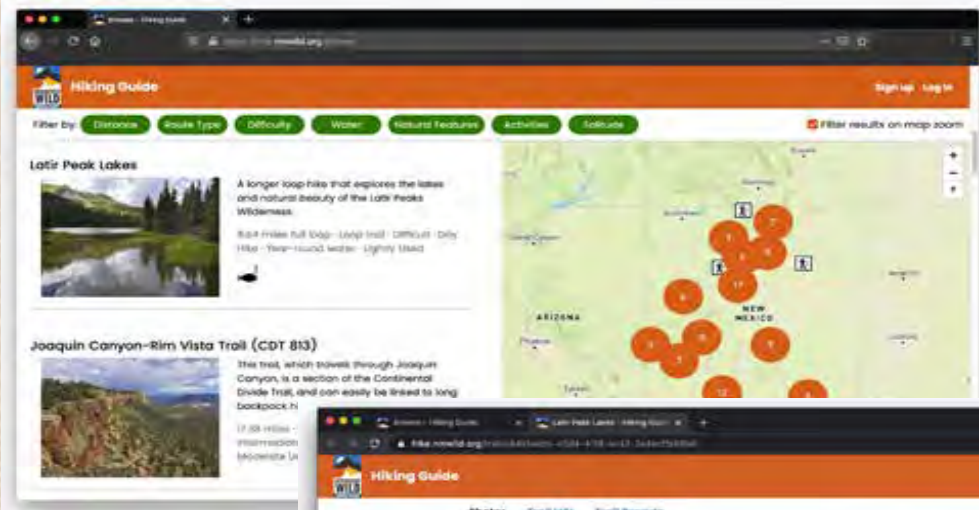


- Interactive features
- Powerful planning tools
- Famous hikes and secluded Wilderness treasures
- Rich descriptions and useful trail information
- Track progress on the route, see elevation profile
- Print a PDF of the hike to take with you
- Useful info about local businesses

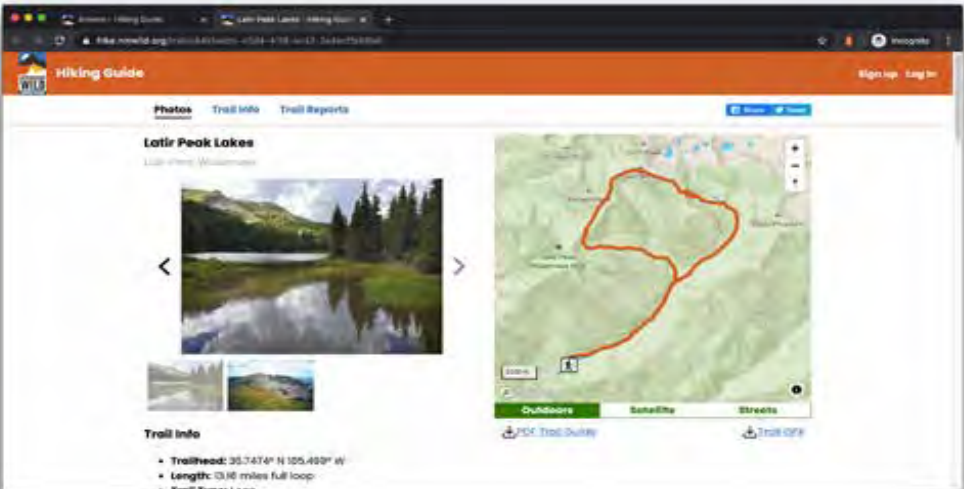
SPONSORED BY



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



**Always
Free!**
**Unlimited
Access**



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

WELCOME TO OUR NEW STAFF!



Sara Berghold, Digital Communications Coordinator

Sara is a native New Mexican with a professional background that includes the legal and healthcare fields. She most recently established a communications and marketing department for a behavioral health care company that serves rural communities throughout New Mexico. A longtime member of New Mexico Wild, Sara brings a passion for the outdoors to her role.



Emma Rigler, Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator

Emma is new to New Mexico. She is serving as a Young Adult Volunteer for the next year, focused on addressing systemic oppression and engagement with the local community. She is from Dallas and graduated from Austin College in Sherman, Texas, with a degree in business administration. Emma hopes to learn a lot from not only her peers, but from the landscape and Wilderness of New Mexico.



Juan DeJesus Sanchez III, Communications Coordinator

Juan is a 13th generation New Mexican. Growing up around his family's ranch south of Belen, Juan learned to appreciate the outdoors from an early age. After graduating from New Mexico Highlands University in 2014, he began working toward a master's degree from the University of New Mexico in water resources. An avid fisherman, hunter, hiker, gardener and rancher, he loves to enjoy the beauty that New Mexico has to offer.



Tricia Snyder, Senior Water Policy Analyst

Tricia credits growing up along the often dry banks of the Rio Grande in El Paso as the catalyst for her interest in water resources. She received a BS in Geography, with a focus on the human-environment connection, from New Mexico State University and started her career in Las Cruces working to protect and restore the southwest borderlands. She is excited to share her passion for climate resilient water systems and equity for all the plant, wildlife, and human communities that depend on them.



Kineo Memmer, Wilderness Intern

Kineo is from Taos and is currently a senior at UNM studying environmental science and sustainability. She is heavily involved in environmental activism on campus through UNM Leaders for Environmental Action and Foresight (LEAF). After graduation, she hopes to work in natural resource management to protect the country's water and land resources.



Vicente Ordonez, Gila Wilderness Ranger and Grassroots Organizer

Vicente comes to us after a 33-year career with the U.S. Forest Service. He has a wide range of land management experience, including wildlife biology, wildland firefighting, wilderness management and trail maintenance, and endangered species impact analysis. The last eight years of his career, he worked as the Forest Service liaison to the Mexican wolf recovery effort.



Sally Paez, Staff Attorney

Sally fell in love with nature and all things wild at an early age. She moved to New Mexico with her family in 1989. Prior to law school, Sally studied biology at UNM, where she focused on biodiversity, conservation, and ecology. Sally obtained a law degree in 2009 from UNM, completing the Natural Resources Law Certificate Program. Sally spends her free time exploring the outdoors with her husband, Danny.

FAREWELL TO A BELOVED WILDLING

At the time of print, we learned that founding board member and conservation legend **Dave Foreman** has passed away. It would be hard to overstate the contributions he made to protecting wilderness and wild things, and for advancing—years ahead of his time—concepts like rewilding. We will post more information on our website about Dave's legacy and about arrangements for his life celebration.



**THANK YOU
TO
LDD CONSULTING**

**FOR THE CONTRIBUTION OF FABULOUS NEW TELECOM
EQUIPMENT FOR THE NEW MEXICO WILD OFFICE!**

MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS!



Holley Hudgins

Living in Silver City for 30 years, Holley has had the opportunity to see firsthand how our natural environment connects with our local economy and quality of life. She has a passion for travel, fishing, birding, and spending time in the Gila with her two standard poodles. It's important to Holley to ensure that future generations will be afforded the same opportunities and experiences. Holley currently serves as the executive director of The New Mexico Primary Care Training Consortium.



Starr Woods

Starr Woods has a background in public lands management and is currently a Wyss Fellow on the Colorado/Southwest land protection team at The Trust for Public Land, whose mission is to protect land for people. She is passionate about New Mexico Wild because it goes beyond preserving Wilderness areas and supports many initiatives that benefit all New Mexicans by protecting important habitats and ecosystems, cultural landscapes, and water.

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 14-16: Apache Kid Wilderness Signage. Installing Wilderness signage. Backpacking project. RSVP to walker@nmwild.org

November 4-6: San Francisco River WSA Volunteer Project. Signage and river protection. RSVP to will@nmwild.org.

November 29: Giving Tuesday Fundraiser at REI Albuquerque. Come purchase a hat, Wild Guide, or make a donation to support our organization.

December 2: New Mexico Wild Holiday Party & Annual Membership Meeting. Open to all lovers of public lands! See page 6 for additional details.

March 10-11, 2023: BANFF Film Fest at Kimo Theatre, 7pm. Tickets will go on sale February 1.

Ongoing: Wilderness Defender Program. Looking for volunteers to hike on public lands to gather data about conditions on the ground. Easy training provided. Visit nmwild.org/volunteer to learn more.

Ongoing: Hike with our Gila Wilderness Ranger. Vicente Ordonez is performing Wilderness Character Monitoring in the Gila Wilderness. Join him for a day in the field! Email: vicente@nmwild.org.

GET INVOLVED! NMWILD.ORG/EVENTS

FAREWELL TO BOARD MEMBER KEN COLE

Ken was a longtime board member for New Mexico Wild, an avid birder, and an advocate for natural resources protection. He passed away this spring and will be missed.

On April 19, we presented Ken with a hand-carved statue of a curlew to honor his work with New Mexico Wild. Ken had served on the Board of Directors since 2009 and spent six years as chairman. As a lawyer and avid bird watcher, Ken traveled all over the world and observed the benefits of healthy habitats and the problems caused by the degradation of natural resources. Ken's enthusiasm for birding was contagious, and he helped many of us learn about birds from all over the world. At last count, he had seen over 8,100 species of birds, an accomplishment that put him in the company of fewer than 100 birders in the world.

He contributed many hundreds of hours of time to help New Mexico Wild grow, and we know that the organization's mission and continued success was very important to him. We all will miss Ken and are very grateful for his time with New Mexico Wild. We'll be thinking of you, Ken, when we are so lucky to have those special bird sightings on New Mexico's public lands.

Ken passed away at the age of 83 on May 2, following a battle with pancreatic cancer. He is survived by his wife Jane, and daughter, Suzanna. A celebration of Ken's life was held on Sept. 18 in Albuquerque. ▲▲



Above: Executive Director Mark Allison presents Ken Cole with a bird carving to honor his work with New Mexico Wild. Staff photo



Left: Even on one of his birding expeditions in the Amazon, Ken was a tireless advocate for New Mexico Wild. Here he is in the jungle, holding an issue of the newsletter. Photo courtesy of Ken Cole



NEW MEXICO
WILD
25TH ANNIVERSARY

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



IN THIS ISSUE OF NEW MEXICO WILD!

Gila Wild and Scenic River Still Flowing Strong
L Bar Ranch Acquisition Adds 54,000 Acres to Public Lands
Caja del Rio Celebration Huge Success
Oil Drilling Moratorium Gives Chaco a Reprieve
Northern New Mexico Community Rising from the Ashes
A Triumphant Latino Conservation Week
Conservation Updates Statewide
Featured Hike: Chavez Canyon



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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