



NEW MEXICO WILD!

Spring/Summer 2023

The Semiannual Publication
of the New Mexico
Wilderness Alliance

**HISTORIC
CONSERVATION
FINANCE
VICTORY!**

**INTRODUCING
THE NATIVE LAND
INSTITUTE**

New Mexico WILD!

The Semiannual Publication of the
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

**VOLUME 20, NUMBER 1
SPRING/SUMMER 2023**

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ON THE COVER

The winning entry for the 2023 New Mexico Wild Wolf Stamp is the cover art for this issue. The painting titled "Lady Luna Lobo" is by the Las Cruces-based artist Darien Bogart. Read more about the competition on page 22.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | Mark Allison

MEETING THE MOMENT



Readers of this publication know we were pushing numerous lands, waters, and wildlife bills in the 117th U.S. Congress and had high hopes of a larger public lands package coming together in the lame duck session in December. Despite the best efforts of our truly stellar delegation, this didn't materialize but I'm happy to report that several of our bills have already been reintroduced, which you can read more about in the following pages.

One bill in particular bears highlighting—the M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act, originally sponsored by former Sen. Tom Udall and then by Sen. Martin Heinrich with Sen. Ben Ray Lujan co-sponsoring. The bill would designate 446 miles of New Mexico's last free-flowing river as Wild and Scenic. Newly elected Rep. Gabe Vasquez boldly and proudly made it a priority to introduce the bill in the House for the first time ever. The leadership he demonstrated is exactly what New Mexico needs if we are to meet this urgent moment, and he has my gratitude. He was joined by Reps. Melanie Stansbury and Teresa Leger Fernández. We are thrilled that for the first time, New Mexico's entire congressional delegation supports this overwhelmingly popular effort.

We also are pushing hard for the Biden administration to protect places like Greater Chaco and the Pecos watershed. We are urging administration officials to make conservation on public lands a higher priority by using their rulemaking power and new tools, like the recently proposed and potentially historic Public Lands Rule for the Bureau of Land Management. At the same time, we are calling on the president to use his authority under the Antiquities Act to designate new National Monuments in New Mexico, including the cultural and ecological crossroads of Caja del Rio and Otero Mesa, the largest intact Chihuahuan Desert grasslands remaining on public lands.

In addition to our D.C.-oriented efforts, we're working to ramp up our public lands stewardship efforts and grow our Wilderness ranger program by seven or more new positions in the coming months by pursuing partnerships with the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Reclamation. Rangers will be deployed throughout New Mexico to benefit the health of our public lands and waters through citizen science, trail work, post fire assessments, new signage and serving as goodwill ambassadors to the public.

In the following pages, you can read about the launch of the Native Land Institute, where we will host and serve as a fiscal sponsor for a visionary Indigenous-led effort designed to increase the capacity of Native voices to help lead on conservation and other issues of importance to Tribes and Pueblos.

This edition also summarizes the results of a scientific study we recently commissioned to evaluate the climate change adaptation and mitigation value of nearly 6 million acres of federally managed public lands in New Mexico. The study will help inform priorities for additional protection. And if that wasn't enough, we also share the results of the New Mexico legislative session, highlighting some unprecedented and historic gains for conservation and water policy.

New Mexico truly is a special place, and New Mexicans overwhelmingly support protecting our natural world. Our state and federal elected officials have well-deserved reputations as leaders on these issues. New Mexico routinely punches above our weight, and we're fortunate to have New Mexicans in high places within the Biden administration.

It's a good thing, too. We don't have a moment to lose. We thank you for your trust and for your support. To meet this moment, to do everything we can to address climate change and mass species loss, we need you now more than ever.

In gratitude,

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



2023-2024 Priorities

New Mexico Wild continues to have ambitious goals to conserve our lands, wildlife, and waters. We have exciting projects underway and big dreams for enhancing our statewide oversight, stewardship and volunteer engagement work this year. We will also continue to invest heavily in state level policy and legislative work.

We were proud of the leadership by New Mexico Democratic Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján and Reps. Melanie Stansbury and Teresa Leger Fernández in the 117th Congress championing public lands issues. In particular, we thank them for their support of the most significant climate legislation in U.S. history, the **Inflation Reduction Act** signed by President Biden on Aug. 16, 2022, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Investment Act, which includes important conservation measures. We look forward to continuing to work with them (and newly elected Democratic Rep. Gabe Vasquez in New Mexico’s 2nd Congressional District) to advance our shared conservation priorities.

Our federal priorities include finishing the job on previously introduced legislation, introducing new legislation, and securing support for administrative and executive actions. The following is a partial list:



The **M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act**, reintroduced in March, would designate 446 miles of the Gila and San Francisco rivers as Wild and Scenic. Sponsor: Heinrich, cosponsor: Luján. House Sponsor: Vasquez, cosponsors: Stansbury, Leger Fernández.

The **Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act** would prohibit new oil and gas leasing on federal lands within a 10-mile radius surrounding Chaco Culture National Historical Park, representing approximately 354,668 acres. Sponsors: Luján, Leger Fernández; cosponsors: Heinrich, Stansbury.



The **Cerro de la Olla Wilderness Establishment Act**, which was reintroduced in March, would create a 13,103-acre Wilderness Area within the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument in Taos County. Sponsors: Heinrich, Leger Fernández; cosponsors: Luján, Stansbury.

The **Pecos Watershed Protection Act** would enact a mineral withdrawal for the Upper Pecos Watershed, including its tributaries. The act would protect sensitive riparian areas, water quality and other important natural and cultural resources by preventing new hard rock mineral claims. Sponsors: Heinrich, Leger Fernández; cosponsors: Luján, Stansbury.



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WILDERNESS DISPATCHES

Updates on New Mexico Wild Projects Across the State



The golden gaze of a Mexican gray wolf. Photo by Robin Silver, www.robinsilverphoto.com

ADVENTURES WITH ASHA AND OTHER WOLFISH NEWS

BY SALLY PAEZ

Our ongoing work to advocate for the recovery of critically endangered Mexican gray wolves, or lobos, continues to bring exciting moments of hope and, unfortunately, occasional bad news.

First, the 2022 population count of lobos in the wild documented 241 animals in Arizona and New Mexico, up from 196 animals in 2021. The new population estimate, which was released Feb. 28, represents the first time our reintroduced population of Mexican gray wolves has surpassed 200.

Second, early this year, lobo advocates celebrated the travels of a female wolf who left her pack in southeast Arizona and journeyed into Northern New Mexico. Schoolchildren named this wolf Asha, which is Sanskrit for hope, in an annual pup-naming contest. Asha traveled through the Gila National Forest in southwest New Mexico, passed through Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge north of Socorro, and crossed back and forth across Interstate 25, visiting the Manzano Mountains, before finally crossing Interstate 40 near Moriarty.

Once north of I-40, Asha was outside the area that wildlife officials have established for Mexican gray wolf recovery. Undeterred by this artificial geographic boundary, Asha continued northward until she was about 12 miles east of Angel Fire. The rules and policies of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service (FWS) allow the capture of wolves that leave the recovery area. On Jan. 22, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish used a helicopter to locate and capture Asha. The FWS stated in a press release that plans were in place to pair Asha with a male wolf for transfer as a pair to Mexico later this year.

The Mexican gray wolf is the only endangered species that the FWS confines by regulation to an arbitrary geographic zone. Independent scientists have determined that recovering the subspecies and, in particular, supplementing its poor gene pool will require the establishment of three connected populations, totaling at least 750 individuals. The scientists determined that two of these necessary populations could find sufficient habitat north of I-40, one in the Grand Canyon ecoregion and one in the southern Rocky Mountains, where Asha was headed.

The new population estimate, which was released Feb. 28, represents the first time our reintroduced population of Mexican gray wolves has surpassed 200.

New Mexico Wild continues to pursue two lawsuits in federal court aimed at requiring FWS to incorporate this science into the Mexican gray wolf recovery plan and management rule. In both cases, New Mexico Wild and partner organizations are represented by the Western Environmental Law Center. Our appeal of the 2017 recovery plan has been fully briefed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit, and we anticipate that the court will schedule a hearing this spring or summer. The 9th Circuit recently denied a motion by FWS to dismiss our case, allowing our appeal to move forward. Our second, October 2022 lawsuit challenging the new management rule has been consolidated with a suit by other conservation organizations and is still in the scheduling phase. Stay tuned for litigation updates as these cases slowly make their way through the courts.

Meanwhile, lobo advocates have been devastated by news of the recent deaths of several Mexican gray wolves. Three collared members of the Seco Creek Pack and a member of the Whitewater Canyon Pack have been confirmed dead in the past six months, and the deaths are under investigation. Humans cause 70% of Mexican gray wolf deaths, and illegal killing remains a major threat to the future of these rare wolves.



New Mexico Wild and other advocates have pledged a \$40,250 reward for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of wolf poachers. Mexican gray wolves are protected under the Endangered Species Act. Killing a Mexican gray wolf can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000 and/or up to one year in jail, plus a potential civil penalty of up to \$25,000. Thank you for your ongoing support of our lobo recovery efforts—wolves belong!



HIKING WITH A PURPOSE:
BECOME A DAVE FOREMAN WILDERNESS DEFENDER

BY WILL RIBBANS

“Hiking with a purpose” is how many of our new volunteers have explained why they signed up to be a New Mexico Wild Dave Foreman Wilderness Defender. There is much we still don’t know about some of the wildest areas in our state, and this program is working to change that. This work is vital to our mission to designate and protect new areas and also for the agencies tasked with managing these areas.

Wilderness characteristics are among the data points we are collecting out in the field. These reaffirm qualities experienced on the ground that show the area is indeed wild, has opportunities for solitude, is ecologically significant and qualities that make it special. Reports on Wilderness characteristics are where we have found some of the most fascinating commentary about and photos of areas seldom seen or visited in New Mexico. This information contributes to our narratives of why a place is deserving of protection. Not everything we are finding out there is hoodoos and wildflowers, however. Ecological impact is another one of the data points we are collecting out in the field. Vehicle incursions, riparian damage, graffiti and excessive cattle impacts are a few examples of what is occurring on your public lands. We have found several instances of trespass roads within the boundaries of Wilderness Study Areas, where new roads are prohibited. This impact threatens



Interesting rock formations in the Florida Mountains Wilderness Study Area. Photo by Devon Fletcher

the natural ecosystem of the area and its potential eligibility for protection. Trespass roads are just one example of issues we are documenting and formulating a response to.

We also are also collecting information on recreational developments, such as the need for new signage or excessive trail routes. This will inform volunteer stewardship projects so we can get out there and actively work to address problems where we can.

The information our Wilderness Defenders are collecting is incredibly valuable to our work for so many reasons. We are referencing this data for volunteer stewardship days, protection narratives, agency oversight, grant funding opportunities and much more.

I want to give a big shoutout to our active Wilderness Defenders who are consistently staying engaged, eager to learn more and passionate about this work. It’s not all work, though. This program is a fun way for our members to visit areas they may have never been to while also giving back to our mission. You can work at whatever pace suits your schedule, independently or as a group. We are hosting training days for Defenders all year long.



Wilderness Defender training in the Sandia Mountains foothills. Photo by Emma Rigler

Here are some testimonials from our Wilderness Defenders:

I have thoroughly enjoyed being an “official” Wilderness Defender. It’s been a lot of fun with a purpose! I’ve been day tripping out in Rio Puerco country (Boca del Oso, Cabezon, etc.) for over 40 years, and it has been wonderful to further explore that area with friends, both old and new. I’ve also had the opportunity to correspond with experts and write about some of my experiences. Camping out in the area has been unforgettable and so has my slightly quixotic hunt for some elusive cultural/historic sites. Now, I’m in the process of planning several more explorations in the next few months—won’t some of you join me?

Mike Osborn – Cabezon Complex

Being a Wilderness Defender has given me ... I hesitate to say an excuse, let’s just say a good reason to go out and explore an area more thoroughly than I would have. So far, the best thing about it has been the realization that the Florida Mountains are an amazingly diverse and scenic desert range. Finding running water, which I did a couple of times, anywhere in the Florida Mountains WSA is a wonderful thing, but coming across a striped whipsnake that had to be nearly 6 feet long (about the maximum for this species) sunning itself on a bedrock outcropping has been my favorite highlight.

Devon Fletcher – Florida Mountains

If you are interested in signing up to become a Wilderness Defender, please visit www.nmwild.org/wilderness-defenders-program/ ▲▲

**New Mexico Wild to Develop
Wild, Scenic and Recreational River Guide**

Your Contributions Welcomed!

We are starting work on a new guide that will serve as a river-focused companion to our *Wild Guide: Passport to New Mexico Wilderness*. This book will highlight New Mexico’s designated Wild & Scenic Rivers as well as other rivers that merit protection, while also spotlighting awesome recreational opportunities.

Featured river segments must be free flowing and possess one or more unique scenic, recreational, geologic, fish, wildlife, prehistoric, historic, hydrologic, paleontological, ecologic or botanical values.

If you have suggestions for river segments we should include in the river guide or would otherwise like to contribute content, please contact Bjorn Fredrickson, conservation director, at bjorn@nmwild.org.

Nominate Your Favorite River Today!

WILDERNESS DISPATCHES, CONTINUED

RIO GRANDE DEL NORTE NATIONAL MONUMENT: COME CELEBRATE ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY WITH US!

BY ERNIE ATENCIO, EXCERPTED FROM *HIGH COUNTRY NEWS*

Approximately 35 years ago, a handful of Taos residents began to discuss the critical need to permanently protect the magnificent Rio Grande plateau and Rio Grande corridor that runs from Pilar to the Colorado border. Like all successful public land protection campaigns, it eventually grew into a unified movement that—after tremendous effort and exhaustive consensus building—culminated when then President Barack Obama used the Antiquities Act to create the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument on March 25, 2013. NM Wild board member Ernie Atencio's 2013 *High Country News* article gives great context for the extensive and lengthy process it took for the administrative designation:

“Proposals to protect Río Grande del Norte have been in the works since the early ‘90s, when then-Rep. Bill Richardson, D-N.M., introduced a bill to make it a national conservation area. At the time, in a state with a majority Hispanic population, you could count the number of professional Hispanics in the New Mexico conservation movement on one hand. Many rural Hispanics felt that mainstream environmental groups had done little for their communities except restrict their access to critical resources on public land.

“When then-Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., resumed meetings on the issue in 2007 to prepare a bill for 2009, Esther García, current mayor of the village of Questa next door to the monument, emerged as one of its staunchest opponents. The proposal swallowed part of the community’s historic land grant, and García and her constituents worried it would hamper their cattle grazing and firewood and piñon-nut gathering, which date back to the 1700s. “We called Washington and told them that without the land grants, it was a no-go,” says the 67-year old.

“The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance began helping Bingaman’s office with precedent-setting provisions that recognized land-grant rights under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, required grantees be consulted on management decisions and protected traditional land uses. Even so, García’s trust proved elusive until the organization tapped John Olivas, a local hunting



Kids and donkeys celebrate the new Monument. Staff photo

and fishing guide who studied environmental science, to be its traditional community organizer in 2008.



“If the movement didn’t happen within the Hispanic leadership, it wasn’t going to happen” in northern New Mexico, Olivas says.

“Hispanics have always been conservationists. We care about protecting the land and the water; that’s how we survive. But no one has ever paid attention,” says García. “Things are changing.” Hispanics in New Mexico have begun to take their rightful place in the conservation community, becoming more comfortable expressing environmental values on their own cultural terms.” “The Río Grande del Norte may be an early sign of what that can mean for conservation nationwide. So it was that García, opponent at the outset, ended up in the Oval Office for the formal signing ceremony. “It was,” she says, beaming, “a dream come to reality.” ▲▲

Read the full *High Country News* story at www.hcn.org/issues/45.7/hispanic-leaders-spearheaded-the-rio-grande-del-norte-national-monument



Ute Mountain in Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. Photo by Stuart Wilde

A Monumental Journey



Celebrating 10 Years of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument

Join us for an evening of music and connection as we honor the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument's 10-year anniversary. An international troupe of traveling singer/songwriters on a Monumental Journey will perform to raise funds and goodwill for the Friends of Rio Grande del Norte, a citizens' group being formed to work with the BLM to manage and protect the National Monument. We'll also hear from several community speakers and enjoy light appetizers!

When: Thursday, May 25th from 5-8 pm

Where: Taos Country Club, 54 Golf Course Dr, Ranchos De Taos, NM

Free, but RSVP required. Please RSVP on the events page of our website!

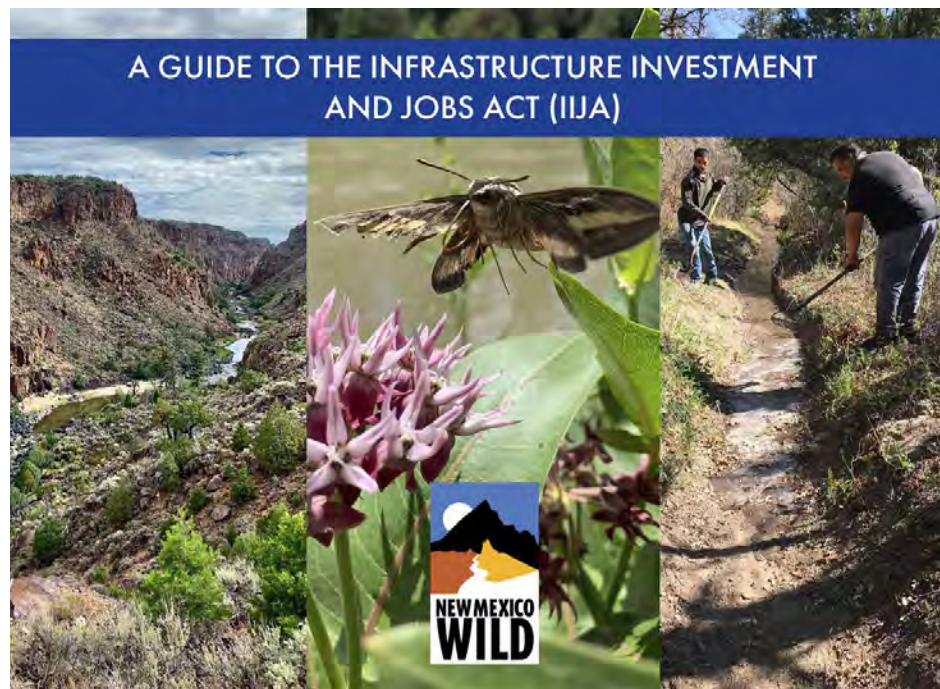


PROTECTION FOR THE GREATER CHACO LANDSCAPE MAY BE IMMINENT

STAFF ARTICLE

New Mexicans are anxiously awaiting a final decision by Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland to approve a 20-year mineral withdrawal for federal public lands within a 10-mile protection zone around Chaco Culture National Historical Park. This action by the Biden administration would protect about 355,000 acres of public land from new oil and gas leasing. In December 2022, New Mexico Wild submitted supportive comments on the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) draft Environmental Assessment, and the BLM received over 130,000 comments in support of the withdrawal during the two public comment periods held in 2022. We are optimistic that good news will be coming soon. Stay tuned and check our website for up-to-date information: www.nmwild.org/chaco-canyon-campaign/. ▲

A GUIDE TO THE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT (IIJA)



REPORT HIGHLIGHTS WATER FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW MEXICO COMMUNITIES

STAFF ARTICLE

Over the past couple of years, an influx of federal money has become available for conservation projects across the country. One such funding opportunity is the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), signed by President Biden on Nov. 15, 2021. The legislation authorized more than \$250 billion to advance natural resources conservation, restoration and accessibility. New Mexico Wild has recently finalized a report identifying which of these programs are most relevant for New Mexico, particularly in the context of one of our most precious resources: water.

To date, New Mexico has been able to access more than \$3.8 billion, but the need remains high. Last year, the federal Office of Management and Budget estimated \$5 billion is needed for restoration and assistance following the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak Fire. And our current State Water Plan estimated in 2018 that \$4 billion was needed for water projects, including over \$140 million for watershed efforts.

It is our hope that this report, which not only identifies some of the most integral programs for meeting these needs but also some of the challenges in getting these dollars on the ground, will be useful to policy and decision makers as we craft solutions to ensure communities across the state are able to access these funds. To better distill the report findings, New Mexico Wild published a short booklet to accessing them. It is available at www.nmwild.org/iija-report. We have distributed these booklets to legislators, state and local natural resource agency staff, Tribal and Pueblo leaders, and other key players in ensuring a secure water future for our state. We look forward to working with them and others to protect and restore the waterways of the Land of Enchantment. ▲

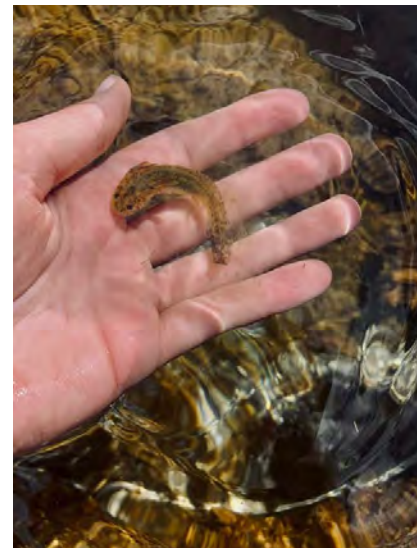


Photo by Garrett VeneKlasen

**READ THE FULL WATER REPORT ON
OUR WEBSITE!**

Or visit <https://bit.ly/3K1mdcS>



WILDERNESS DISPATCHES, CONTINUED

BUILDING A STATE WATER MANAGEMENT FUTURE, DROP BY PRECIOUS DROP

BY TRICIA SNYDER

It is no secret that New Mexico is facing a water crisis. Each year, farmers are making do with less and less water, cities and municipalities are undertaking extensive efforts to find new ways to conserve, and endangered species are being pushed closer and closer to the brink of extinction. Climate change projections tell us that our future is one that is both hotter and drier, only exacerbating these challenges. Such big challenges must be met with equally big solutions. Below we highlight a few bright spots related to water in New Mexico.

Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force

Last summer, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham convened a Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force, led by the state engineer, to provide input and support for the state's 50-year Water Plan and to develop consensus recommendations to improve New Mexico's water policy and infrastructure. The group was made up of experts from Tribes and Pueblos, state agencies, the acequia community, the agricultural sector and more. Their work resulted in 17 recommendations with over 100 action items that have broad consensus and, if taken now, can significantly improve water management across the state.

2023 Legislative Session

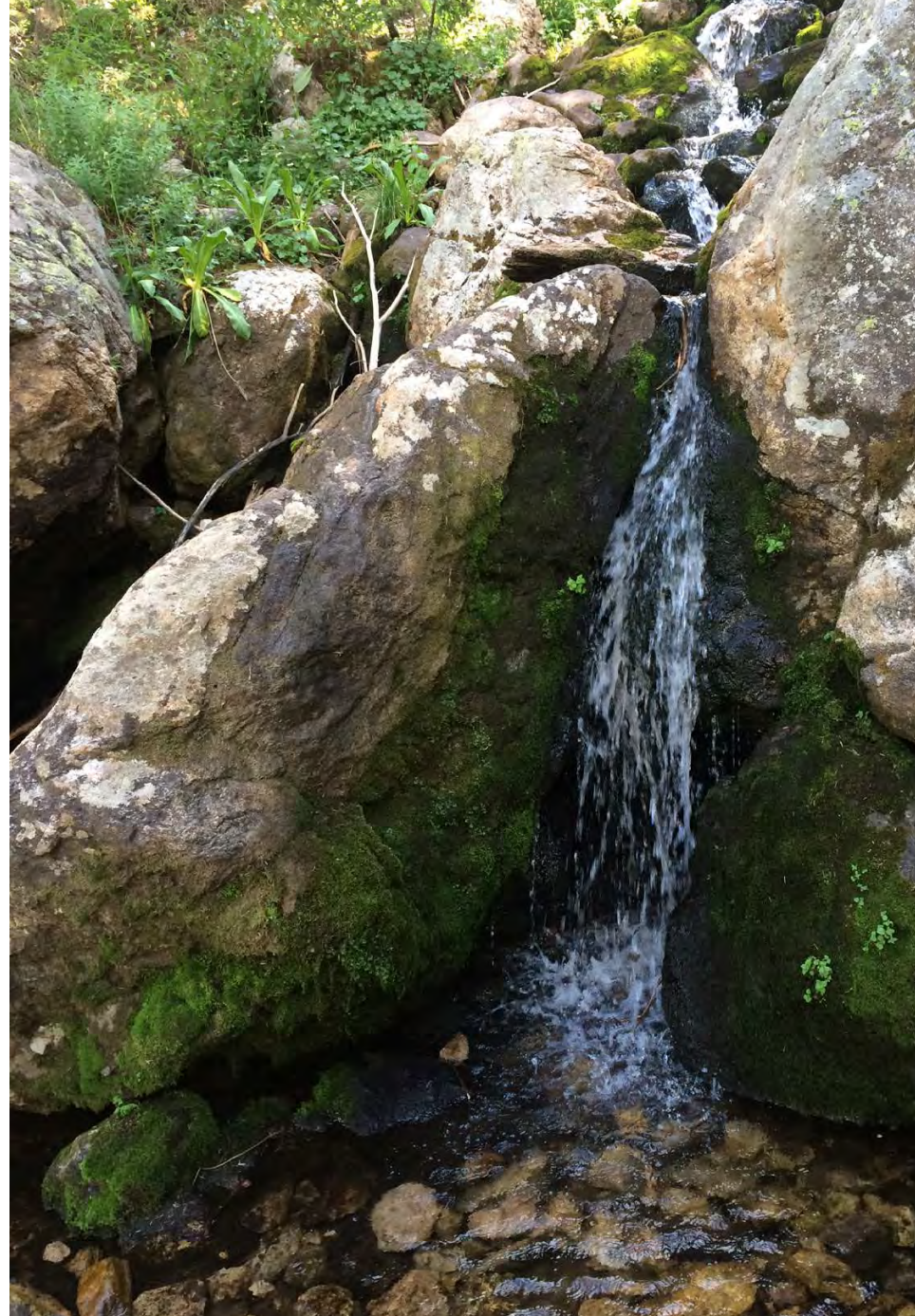
Many of the legislative efforts related to water this year focused on funding, both specific initiatives and ensuring our state agencies are well-resourced. Although not all bills we supported were successful, our main priorities were.

Through our advocacy and in coalition with partners across the state, we were successful in our top three water-related legislative priorities, all Task Force recommendations:

Securing \$7.5 million in funding for the Strategic Water Reserve, which enables the state to buy and lease water rights to meet the needs of endangered species and to send water downstream to meet commitments to neighboring states.

Securing \$680,000 for the Environment Department to establish a surface water quality permitting program. New Mexico is currently one of only three states without the ability to issue permits for polluted discharges under the Clean Water Act.

Revising the regional water planning statute, a critical tool in building climate resilience and ensuring communities are prepared for the challenges ahead. Unfortunately, a last-minute amendment removed wording around equity and ensuring prioritization of ecological uses. However, the details of this effort will be worked out through the agency rulemaking process. Expect to hear more from us on how to engage and ensure all water uses, including the needs of species and recreations, are prioritized and equitable and collaborative water management centered in this important effort.



Small feeder stream in the Pecos Wilderness. Photo by Lois Manno

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Middle Rio Grande Basin Study: NGO Sectoral Committee

Our senior water policy analyst, Tricia Snyder, is currently serving as co-chair of the NGO Sectoral Committee for the newly authorized Middle Rio Grande Basin Study. The study aims to develop a common framework for water resource-related challenges and opportunities, increase preparedness for future challenges, and provide a technical basis for water infrastructure and policy decisions. The NGO Sectoral Committee is working to take this one step further. By building on economies of scale, the committee is working to develop environmental flow needs for six different reaches along the Rio Grande and Rio Chama. This has never been done before in a scientifically justifiable way, and we believe having a strong understanding of the ecological needs is integral to developing solutions that work to ensure water exists for all uses at the times it is most needed.

The efforts above are critical components of building a water future that ensures equitable and collaborative water management, river and habitat protection, and water availability for all uses, including the needs of native and imperiled species and recreation. The road ahead is challenging and there are no easy answers, but we believe there are solutions to be found. With your support, we will continue to work to identify and implement those solutions. ▲▲

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

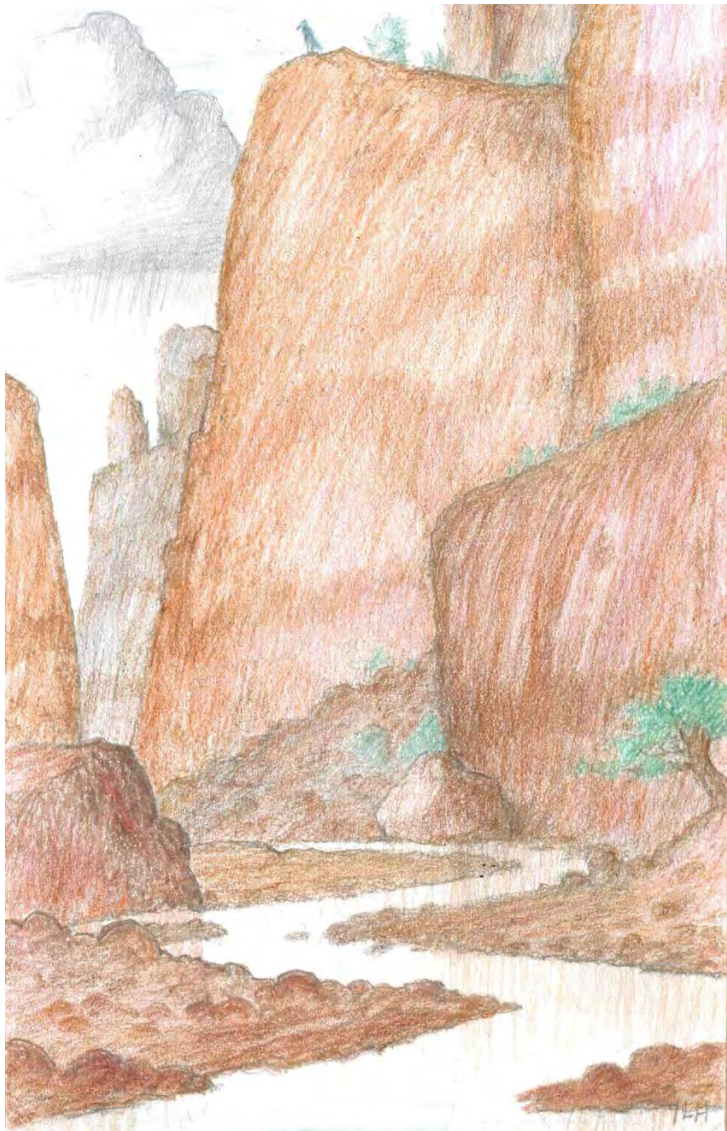
GILA WILD & SCENIC LEGISLATION REINTRODUCED!

ALICIA EDWARDS, GRANT COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Editor’s note: *New Mexico Wild and our partners sponsored a delegation of local stakeholders to go to Washington D.C. recently to meet with New Mexico’s elected officials to urge permanent protection of the Gila River.*

Listening to Lori Gooday Ware, great, great, great granddaughter of Chief Mangas Coloradas and Chief Loco and Chairwoman of the Ft Sill Apache (known locally as Warm Springs and Chiricahua Apache) tell Senator Martin Heinrich stories of the tribal history in the Gila and San Francisco river watersheds, it’s clear the Apache people were the first preservationists; understanding and adapting to the challenges of the carrying capacity of a harsh and beautiful land in a way we seem to be unable to do today. When Michael Darrow, tribal historian, tells a creation story about a gambling game played between the plants and animals to determine night and day and the draw they played to, giving us both night and day, I am struck by how disconnected we are to the ancient rhythms of this land and our sacred obligation to be stewards of this magnificent planet for the next seven generations.

I am listening to Lori and Michael in Senator Heinrich’s office in Washington DC. We are here to talk to our federal delegation about the importance of reintroducing and passing the MH “Dutch” Salmon Wild and Scenic legislation designed to protect and preserve nearly 450 river miles of the Gila and San Francisco Rivers and their watersheds. This is the third time the bill will be introduced and Senator Heinrich tells a very tired and footsore group—his office is our last stop of the day—that “it’s not a matter of if, but of when [it passes].” I am encouraged by his optimism. I am also encouraged by the meetings we have had with Senator Ben Ray Luján and the legislative staff of our three Congresspeople. Our Representatives have committed to co-sponsoring the legislation in the House as a companion to the Senate bill. I also have to mention how impressed and encouraged I am by the fact



Gila cliffs. Illustration by Ivan Hall



Left to right: Greg Smestad, Rachel Conn, Jon Harned, Alicia Edwards, Lori Gooday Ware, Michael Darrow, Mike Fiebig and Rachel Ellis standing outside Senator Heinrich’s DC office after meeting with him and his staff to advocate for the reintroduction of the Gila Wild and Scenic Rivers legislation. Photo by Joel Davis

that New Mexico entire delegation understands the value of conservation—that’s something to be proud of!

The legislation, now supported by all members of New Mexico’s Federal Delegation, has broad, grassroots support of Pueblos and Tribes, faith leaders, private property owners, local governments, civic organizations, sportsmen, conservation groups, and more than 150 small businesses in Grant County and surrounding communities. Additionally, polling has found that more than 76% of voters across New Mexico are supportive of legislation to protect these rivers through Wild and Scenic designations.

Shortly after we returned home to Southwestern New Mexico, the legislation was introduced in both the House and the Senate —our job now is to do everything we can to get it over the finish line and on President Biden’s desk for signature. The Dutch Salmon Wild and Scenic bill will protect and preserve the free-flowing Gila and San Francisco Rivers and go a long way towards our obligation to be good stewards of our natural resources for our children, grandchildren and beyond. ▲▲

BUFFALO TRACT PROTECTION ACT REINTRODUCED!



Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury, Executive Director Mark Allison, Senator Martin Heinrich, and Deputy Director Tisha Broska join in an event to celebrate the re-introduction of Buffalo Tract Protection Act, which would protect local communities and wildlife on and around the Buffalo Tract and the Crest of Montezuma by withdrawing four parcels of U.S. Bureau of Land Management land from all forms of mineral development.

Wilderness Study Area FAQs

BY BJORN FREDRICKSON

What is a Wilderness Study Area?

Wilderness Study Areas—also commonly referred to as WSAs—are formally protected lands managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service that have Wilderness characteristics such as naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, and potentially other special features. The legal requirements associated with WSAs direct the managing agency to evaluate whether they are suitable for designation as Wilderness by Congress. If they are deemed not suitable, Congress may elect to release the WSAs from their protected status.

How many WSAs are there in New Mexico and where are they located?

There are currently 53 WSAs in New Mexico. Of these, 48 are managed by the BLM and five are managed by the Forest Service. In sum, these WSAs total more than 800,000 acres, and they are generally concentrated in western, central and Southern New Mexico.

How are WSAs established?

WSAs can be established in a few different ways. In New Mexico, the vast majority of the WSAs managed by the BLM were designated under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), which upon its passage automatically protected BLM roadless areas greater than 5,000 acres in size that had previously been determined to have Wilderness characteristics. FLPMA also designated smaller “Instant Study Areas” previously identified as “natural” or “primitive” under other legal mandates. Several other WSAs managed by the BLM were designated later under Section 202 of FLPMA, which directs the BLM to conduct ongoing land use planning activities. Finally, a single WSA managed by the BLM was designated by Congress in 1987 under Public Law 100-225. The five WSAs managed by the Forest Service were designated by Congress in 1980 under the New Mexico Wilderness Act (Public Law 96-550).

How do WSAs protect wildlands and are these protections permanent?

WSAs managed by the BLM are protected in accordance with FLPMA mandates and under policy that for most activities requires “non-impairment,” meaning Wilderness characteristics and suitability for Wilderness designation must be maintained. However, these standards allow for temporary impacts as well as a greater level of impact for certain preexisting uses such as livestock grazing, some motor vehicle uses and mining in accordance with valid existing rights. WSAs managed by the Forest Service are protected solely under brief legislative language that requires their preexisting Wilderness character and potential for Wilderness designation be maintained. These protections for BLM and Forest Service WSAs are not as robust as those afforded to designated Wilderness under the Wilderness Act. They are also not necessarily permanent—Congress can and has released WSAs from protected status through legislative action, and members of the Republican Party periodically propose legislation that would release vast numbers of WSAs from protection.

Have any WSAs in New Mexico been designated as Wilderness or released from WSA protections?

Yes, on both accounts. For instance, thanks to advocacy by New Mexico Wild, Congress in 2019 designated numerous WSAs as Wilderness, including several Wildernesses in Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument near Las Cruces, as well as Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness in Northwest New Mexico and Rio San Antonio Wilderness in Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. Other examples include the designation of Sabinoso Wilderness in 2009 and Columbine-Hondo Wilderness in 2014, both of which were previously classified as WSAs. Congress has also released portions of numerous WSAs in New Mexico when making associated Wilderness designations. Most notably, this includes the release of approximately

30,000 acres of the West Potrillo Mountains WSA from WSA status associated with the 2019 designation of Potrillo Mountains Wilderness in Southern New Mexico.

Have the BLM and Forest Service found WSAs to be not suitable for Wilderness designation?

Yes. In fact, the BLM and Forest Service have asserted that nearly half of WSA acreage in New Mexico is not suitable for designation as Wilderness, though not because the WSAs lack Wilderness qualities. For instance, in its WSA suitability studies in the 1990s, BLM classified what was formerly the Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah WSA as not suitable for Wilderness designation, along with many other WSAs. The reason? Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah contained recoverable coal reserves, leading the BLM to prioritize resource extraction over land, water and wildlife protections. Fortunately, in the case of Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah, Congress disregarded the agency suitability recommendation and permanently protected this stunning and unique landscape as Wilderness.

What is New Mexico Wild doing to permanently protect WSAs?

New Mexico Wild is working on several fronts to protect WSAs. First, we engage in ongoing agency oversight—often with the assistance of our invaluable Dave Foreman Wilderness Defenders volunteers—where agency action or inaction risks degrading the Wilderness characteristics of WSAs. Second, we are working with partner organizations and advocating for change in a flawed BLM policy interpretation that led the agency to discontinue additional administrative WSA designations under FLPMA beginning in 2003. Lastly, we are developing a campaign that seeks Wilderness designation for the remaining 800,000+ acres of WSAs in New Mexico and potentially for substantial additional acreage of adjacent Wilderness quality lands.

Where can I learn more about WSAs in New Mexico?

Become a member of New Mexico Wild or otherwise continue to follow our work to stay up to date on our campaign, advocacy and oversight activities related to WSAs and/or pick up a copy of our “Wild Guide: Passport to New Mexico Wilderness,” which features numerous WSAs. ▲▲



CELEBRATING THE CAJA DEL RIO

As one of the most geologically, biologically, and culturally diverse areas in New Mexico, the Caja del Rio provides a critical wildlife corridor and vital habitat for a diverse range of plants and wildlife, including many endangered and sensitive species. It is regarded as sacred by the Pueblo people, the original stewards of this land. There is a rich history of Spanish settlement in the region. This strikingly beautiful place has long suffered the consequences of inadequate protection. We are working with a diverse coalition of stakeholders including Pueblos, Hispanic community leaders, *acequia parciales*, cattle permittees, business owners, private landowners, sportsmen and women, outdoor recreationists, nonprofit partners, environmentalists, and faith leaders to secure permanent federal protection for the 107,000-acre Caja.

The following are excerpts from the multimedia Caja del Rio Story Map. You can view the complete story map on the **Protect Caja del Rio** website at <http://bit.ly/3zmGYec>



“Protecting the Caja del Rio is about not only protecting an area with incredible history and culture, but also incredible spirituality and a place that’s very sacred that I think captures a lot of the story and the imagination of the Southwest.”

—Rev. Andrew Black
Earthkeepers 360 Founder & National Wildlife Federation Field Director of Public Lands



Animals living in the area include black bears, mountain lions, bobcats, elk, porcupines, jackrabbits, and the Gunnison’s prairie dog, which conservation groups are pushing to be listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. The area is also home to golden and bald eagles as well as several species of lizards and snakes, such as the desert kingsnake.

“There is an opportunity to save this last bit of heritage that we have here. It’s tied into our water. It’s tied into our accessibility, but also it’s tied into our broader sense of stewardship for the land.”

—Darrin Muenzberg
Northern New Mexico Traditional Communities Communicator and La Bajada resident



“In order for this landscape to be protected for future generations, we have to shift our managerial paradigm and ensure that co-management opportunities are given to our tribal leaders.”

—Julia Fay Bernal
Director Pueblo Action Alliance, Member of Sandia Pueblo



“We have an inherent responsibility to steward this land, not for ourselves and those living today, but for those future generations.”

—Phoebe Suina
Cochiti Pueblo Member;
High Water Mark, LLC



“The Caja del Rio is important to many neighboring communities, including the Southside of Santa Fe, an area that represents the poorest and youngest population in the City of Santa Fe. With limited resources to serve this unique community, we have a responsibility to protect the Caja del Rio for future generations and create opportunities for today’s Southside population to be responsible stewards of and enjoy this amazing landscape.”

—Carmichael Dominguez
Earthkeepers 360 Community Organizer



Significant neglect is already impacting the land and its inhabitants, and endangering petroglyphs.

The La Cieneguilla Petroglyphs were recently vandalized by 10 spray painted images and scratching. According to the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, “Some of the images depicted in the graffiti were graphic in nature and included a pentagram, a swastika and several racially derogatory slurs.”

Without better protection, petroglyphs like these are at risk.



“Our connection to history really started to develop when [...] we started doing oral history interviews [...] We discovered a lot of little gems about the mesa, because every family came up here to do some type of resource gathering. It might have been herbs, or it might have been piñon picking, or it might have been firewood gathering, or it might have been deer hunting.”

—William Mee
6th Generation resident and President of the Agua Fria Village Association

“It’s our right and responsibility to carry out this work of protection.”

—Reyes DeVore and her son Bryant Ramone
Community Programming Director,
Pueblo Action Alliance



The Pueblo people believe that the footprints of their ancestors stretch across the landscapes of the Caja del Rio. It is a place that represents journey, growth, and life. No matter where you go, the Caja Plateau embodies home and belonging for many.

Retaining the original sense of this place, its integrity, its people, heritage, and culture, along with communities and their ties to the landscape, is of critical importance. ▲▲



DAVE FOREMAN

WILD LEGACY

BY MARK ALLISON

It is, of course, impossible to do much credit to anyone's life in just a few words. This is particularly true for a life as full and rich as Dave Foreman's.

Dave was a towering figure in the Wilderness and conservation movement, with many notable contributions and achievements to his credit. He was not just a rabble-rouser—though that in itself was significant—but a serious intellect with a deep and sustained passion and discipline spanning decades. He authored numerous works of consequence and helped to create a range of influential conservation organizations. I trust others more qualified than I will highlight the historic importance of his role and so I will instead share some thoughts about Dave as a person.

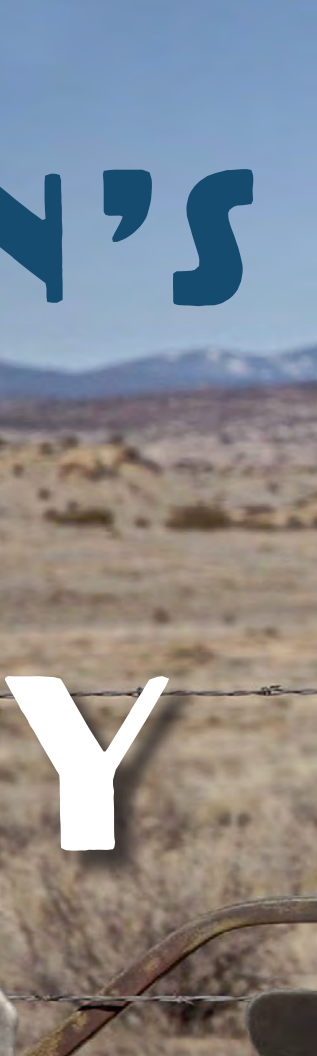
Looking to join New Mexico Wild 10 years ago, I initially found the thought of being interviewed by Dave and serving under him as a director on the board intimidating. I was somewhat star struck, having read his books and being aware

of his reputation. How, I wondered, could I as a newcomer possibly withstand his scrutiny and measure up against the fierce standards of this giant in the movement? I may have even had some notion of being castigated by a displeased fanatic, likely in his booming voice, possibly with his arms waving.

Instead, Dave was warm and welcoming to me beyond anything I had a right to expect or deserved. He was gracious and always willing to share his time. He was patient with my questions and my newness to “professional” conservation. I saw him extend this same kindness of spirit to countless others over the years.

Over time, I learned he needed little prompting to regale those in earshot with stories, which more than occasionally started off, “Back in the 1970s ...”





Wilderness was the place where Dave felt most at home, and was a concept for which he fought passionately all his life.
Photos from Dave Foreman's archives



I loved hearing all of them, recognizing even then how lucky we were to have this opportunity.

I was fortunate to spend time on river trips with Dave and his wife, the late Nancy Morton, a New Mexico Wild founding board member and a force for conservation in her own right. I can personally confirm numerous examples of his well-deserved reputation for bumbling accident-proneness. On one occasion on the San Juan River, Dave had contrived early in the trip to injure his hand, which Nancy had expertly taped (from what most would describe as an excessively large first aid kit, but which, through much experience, had been determined to be just the right size with Dave along). Later, Dave was trying to get the grill going at camp when the happy hour chatter was interrupted by him loudly crying out, “#&%#—my bandage is on fire!”

After expressing the requisite initial concern, the absurdity of the situation made it impossible to stifle laughs. And after a cold botanical gin, which Dave called a “martini” despite zero vermouth, he, too, found the humor in it. I liked that he was able to laugh at himself with eyes crinkling and hearty guffaw. And how he managed to become so filthy half an hour into a week-long trip was always a mystery to me. Paddle forward...or something!

Danger lurked closer to home, too. Like the time he was trying to cat-proof his back yard and fell off the roof not once, but twice! His longtime friends could spend days recounting stories like these, something I know Dave would welcome and take great pleasure from. He really did have nine lives. He used to say that he “wasn’t old, just beat up.” And it’s true, he could be hard on himself.

Left: Avid explorers and river rats, Dave and Nancy traveled all over in search of the next great adventure. Photos from Dave Foreman's archives



Even before he became a published author, a significant part of Dave’s advocacy entailed motivating others to action through speeches. Public speaking was important to Dave, and early on, he resolved that he wanted to do it well and worked at it very intentionally. As anyone who had the chance to hear him speak knows, he succeeded. (Kenneth Brower told me after an event in Silver City some years back, that the one person his father, David Brower, the first executive director of the Sierra Club, did not want to follow as a speaker was Dave.)

Dave was a truly gifted orator, and his speeches could move people to tears and get them on their feet. He had a rare ability to resonate intergenerationally, and new and younger cohorts would lean forward in their chairs eagerly listening to what he was saying. Reaching and exciting new advocates and stewards is one of his important legacies. After a speech, people young and old

Continued on page 21

DAVE FOREMAN & NANCY MORTON MEMORIAL EVENT

June 2-4

Ponderosa Group Campground A & B
at Bandelier National Monument

**Main event on Saturday, June 3rd
at 1:00PM**

*All who loved Dave and Nancy
are welcome to attend.*

Questions? Email devon@nmwild.org

INTRODUCING THE NATIVE LAND INSTITUTE

BY KEEGAN KING, FOUNDER AND CEO



NATIVE LAND
INSTITUTE

I am thrilled to introduce you to the Native Land Institute (NLI), a new non-profit organization dedicated to promoting economic, environmental, and social justice for indigenous communities while preserving the sacred landscapes that are integral to our cultural and spiritual heritage. Our mission is to safeguard the natural resources and cultural traditions that will continue to sustain indigenous people for generations to come.

As we embark on this journey, we recognize the magnitude of the challenges we face. At NLI, we are grounded in the recognition of the systemic injustices that have historically and continue to impact indigenous communities. But our unwav-

ering commitment to confronting these injustices drives us to strive for a more equitable and just future for all people. By working alongside and learning from the wisdom and experience of our indigenous communities, we can create transformative change.

In 2023, NLI will focus on protecting sacred sites such as Chaco Canyon and the Caja del Rio, while supporting the co-management of state and federal lands with indigenous nations. By building effective coalitions and creating better public policy, we aim to foster prosperous indigenous communities now and in the future. Additionally, NLI will invest in the next generation of indigenous leaders and organizations through capacity building and training with other tribal-serving nonprofit organizations.

Friends, we invite you to join us on this journey towards creating a better future for all our communities and preserving these sacred landscapes for generations yet to come. Together, let us work towards a more just and equitable future for all people.

Thank you for considering supporting our cause.

www.native-lands.org

Editor's Note:

New Mexico Wild is proud to host the Native Land Institute, to increase the capacity of Native voices to meaningfully engage and help lead on conservation and related policy issues affecting Native people.

We are committed to supporting indigenous led efforts to proactively push forward a community-led agenda and to create more equitable, respectful, sustainable, and reciprocal relationships between conservation organizations and Tribal and Pueblo interests.

The current plan is for the Native Land Institute to become an independent organization within the next twelve to twenty-four months, separate from its current fiscal sponsorship affiliation with New Mexico Wild.

This model initiative was made possible by the generous support from the Kellogg Family Foundation, Conservation Lands Foundation, Western Conservation Foundation, and The Wilderness Society. ▲▲



KEEGAN KING is a political and public policy professional with nearly 20 years of experience, specializing in government affairs and advocacy. He is a tribal member of the Pueblo of Acoma and founded Atsaya Consulting, a Native-owned political consulting company, in 2009. He has also held key leadership positions in several national and statewide organizations. Keegan is currently the founder and CEO of the Native Land Institute, a non-governmental organization committed to promoting economic, environmental, and social justice for Native Americans and protecting their cultural heritage for future generations.

Meet the NLI Board of Directors



Brian Vallo

Brian is a member of the Pueblo of Acoma in New Mexico where he recently completed three terms as Governor. He has dedicated over 30 years working on sacred sites protection, repatriation of ancestors and cultural patrimony, historic preservation, Native language revitalization, cultural tourism, and the arts.

Julia Bernal

Julia is from the Indigenous Nations of Sandia Pueblo and Yuchi and is the Executive Director of the Pueblo Action Alliance. She is pursuing dual master's degrees in Water Resources and Community and Regional Planning at the University of New Mexico.



Mayane Chavez Barudin

Mayane advocates for inclusive renewable energy policy development and implementation. A proud Indigenous woman and a Tribal member of Kewa Pueblo in New Mexico, Mayane hopes to enable economic prosperity and environmental justice for her community and Indigenous peoples.

Sarah Silva

Over the past 19 years, Sarah has organized and worked with communities in San Francisco, CA and in Southern New Mexico where she was born and raised, on issues including affordable housing, immigration reform, conservation, and economic dignity.



Romir Lahiri

Romir is the New Mexico Associate Program Director for Conservation Lands Foundation and is based in Tiwa lands. Romir has consistently advocated for community-based conservation efforts around New Mexico and Arizona, with a focus on centering indigenous and other local voices.



The bipartisan **Rio Grande Security Act** 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. Provisions of the bill were incorporated into companion Senate legislation. Sponsor: Stansbury; cosponsors: Leger Fernández, former Rep. Yvette Herrell, R-N.M.

The **Buffalo Tract Protection Act**, which was reintroduced in February, would protect local communities and wildlife on and around the Buffalo Tract and the Crest of Montezuma by withdrawing four parcels of U.S. Bureau of Land Management land from all forms of mineral development. Sponsors: Heinrich, Stansbury; cosponsors: Luján, Leger Fernández.



Caja del Rio: Permanent protection of 107, 068 acres of U.S. Forest Service and BLM lands of significant cultural, historic and ecological value, including protection of 16 miles of the adjacent Rio Grande as a Wild and Scenic River.

Permanent protection of areas statewide now designated as **Wilderness Study Areas** ▲▲

Administrative/Executive Action Priorities

Greater Chaco region administrative mineral withdrawal

Creation of **Caja del Rio National Monument**

Pecos administrative mineral withdrawal, mirroring the federal legislation

Creation of **Otero Mesa National Monument**

Calling on the Department of the Interior and the BLM to **increase administratively designated areas** like Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Backcountry Conservation Areas and Wilderness Study Areas to safeguard wildlife corridors, restore damaged landscapes and protect our remaining wildlands

Enacting a strong, lasting rule across federal public lands to **protect mature and old-growth trees and forests** from logging

Three years of water and aquatic insect sampling coordinated by New Mexico Wild along the 24.6-mile Wild and Scenic stretch of the Rio Chama has shown the river is home to a robust community of aquatic insects and overall good water quality for the region. However, results also found some declines in aquatic insects that warrant further study.

The goal of the study, which covered the river between El Vado Dam and Big Eddy Take-Out just above Abiquiu Reservoir, is to gain a better understanding of the river ecosystem resiliency through the relationship between flow and sediment management at El Vado Dam, water characteristics and macroinvertebrate diversity.

The project was carried out in partnership with volunteers from the boating community who collected hundreds of samples and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Program. It was based on the successful U.S. Geological Survey's Bug Flows citizen science project on the stretch of the Colorado River that flows through the Grand Canyon below Glen Canyon Dam. A similar project has also been conducted on the San Juan River, which is a comparable reach to the Rio Chama.

These past three years have been a particularly important window in which to conduct this exper-



iment because major repairs are being done on El Vado for the first time in decades, temporarily requiring reservoir storage reduction and the use of different release outlets. Water management regimes at the dam create flow characteristics and macroinvertebrate habitat that influence the health of the wider riverine ecosystem. Macroinvertebrates' place in the food chain and their sensitivity to pollution, temperature, turbidity and other factors make them key indicators of the Rio Chama's health, and data about them can suggest areas for improvement in water management. The study has been able to establish baseline water quality conditions under existing dam operations, collect water quality data during the work at the dam and then compare those two datasets to determine the ecosystem impacts of the two different flow regimes.

Our results point to a strong difference in conditions between 2020 before repairs began and 2021–2022. Recent modeling of data from the

much larger dataset on the Colorado River has indicated that lags in impacts on aquatic insect populations are possible. The effect of an environmental change may not appear until the summer after a stressor or when eggs have hatched, matured and become themselves susceptible to sampling capture. In other words, the effects of maintenance on El Vado Dam may not even be present in the 2022 Rio Chama data but might be evident in 2023 or future years.

The study also concluded that additional diversity of insects is likely present in the Rio Chama and that identifying them becomes more likely with additional years of sampling. New Mexico Wild hopes to continue the community science project. Please check our website for details of the next phase and upcoming volunteer opportunities.

Thank you to Rebecca Neal, Rhett Sanders-Spencer, Dr. Jeffrey Muehlbauer, Dr. Rebecca Bixby and Dr. Michael Harvey for your contributions to this project. ▲▲

Protecting New Mexico's Wilderness, Wildlife, and Water

The role of public lands in addressing the climate
and mass extinction crises



Addressing the Climate and Mass Extinction Crises

Public Lands Protections are Essential

STAFF REPORT

Federal land protections can promote climate change adaptation and mitigation, according to a new study commissioned by New Mexico Wild. The study identified several key areas where increased protections can have substantial climate and biodiversity benefits, including the Bootheel, the greater Gila region, the Guadalupe Mountains, Otero Mesa, and the Pecos region.

The world struggles with the related environmental crises of climate change and mass species extinction. New Mexicans are already experiencing reduced snow-pack, historic drought and catastrophic wildfires. Climate change threatens our cultural heritage, our economic well-being, the safety of our communities and our natural world. Climate change also has contributed to accelerated loss of plant and animal species to the extent that current rates of extinction are an estimated 1,000 times higher than historic levels.

To better understand how our public lands protection work can help address the climate and extinction crises, New Mexico Wild recently commissioned a study by EcoAdapt, a team of climate scientists. The study examined nearly 6 million acres of federally managed public lands that New Mexico Wild has identified as roadless, ecologically intact and possessing Wilderness qualities, yet lacking permanent protections.

Only 6.1% of protected lands in New Mexico are managed primarily for biodiversity, and most of our public lands are vulnerable to threats like oil and gas development, mining, logging and road fragmentation. Expanding the protection of public lands has many benefits, including safeguarding cultural resources, defending traditional uses and protecting species and water.

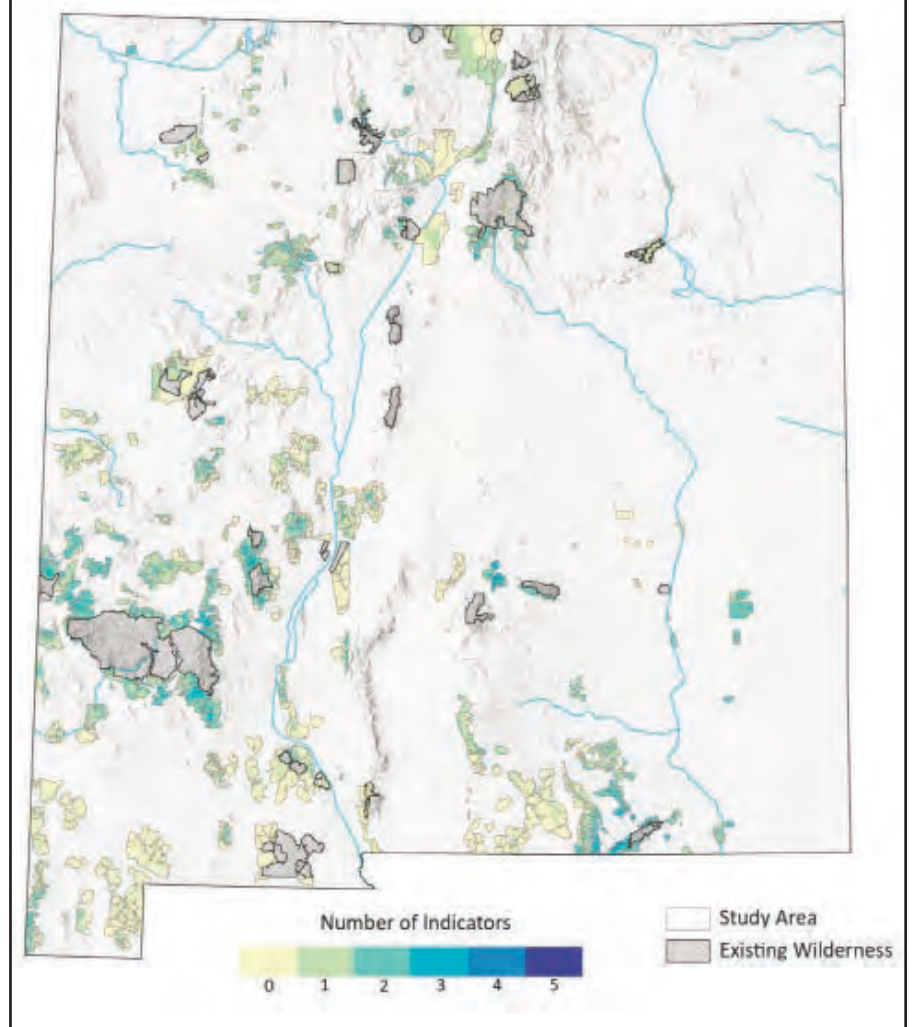
To identify where new or increased protections would provide the greatest benefit, the study areas were assessed against five indicators: biodiversity, connectivity, site resilience, carbon sequestration and storage, and potential greenhouse gas emissions associated with released fossil fuels.

The scientists identified which 25% of the study area provides the greatest contribution to each of the five indicators. Those priority areas for each indicator were

then combined to highlight where enhanced federal land protections might make the greatest cumulative contribution to climate adaptation and mitigation.

The climate and extinction crises necessitate that we take action to protect wildlands more rapidly and boldly than ever before. While the protection of wildlands for their own sake has inherent value and remains critically important, this study highlights opportunities for federal lands protection to address the climate and extinctions crises. We will use these insights to craft campaign priorities in the years to come.

Number of Indicators for Which the Study Area
Scores in the Top 25%



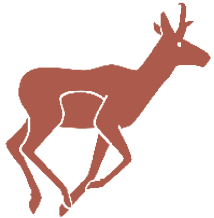
Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Indicators

BIODIVERSITY



Species richness—with consideration of species with small range sizes that are more likely to be endemic, rare or of significant conservation concern—was used to evaluate biodiversity. Because species that are isolated or have small populations or limited distribution tend to be more vulnerable to climate change, biodiversity helps identify where protected areas could play a greater role in protecting critical species from climate-driven declines.

CONNECTIVITY



The extent to which regions are highly connected to surrounding intact ecosystems was used to evaluate connectivity. Connected landscapes—such as riparian zones and large areas with few barriers to connectivity—facilitate species movement, dispersal and gene flow, thereby promoting climate change adaptation. Highly connected protected areas provide access to suitable habitat patches that can act as “stepping stones” so species can more easily shift ranges as climate conditions change.

RESILIENCE



The presence of intact, high-quality ecosystems—particularly where surface water and complex geophysical conditions create diverse microclimates and vegetation communities that support a wide variety of species—was used to evaluate resilience. Resilient habitats provide a buffer from rapid changes and climate extremes. Protecting these places promotes the persistence of species, particularly those with limited mobility or dispersal ability; prevents the loss of genetic diversity; and allows species to adapt over longer time scales.

CARBON



Forests, shrublands and grasslands play a central role in retaining stored carbon. Protecting public lands in carbon-dense areas prevents loss of existing carbon stocks, ensures continued carbon sequestration into the future, and thereby contributes to climate change mitigation.

GREENHOUSE GAS



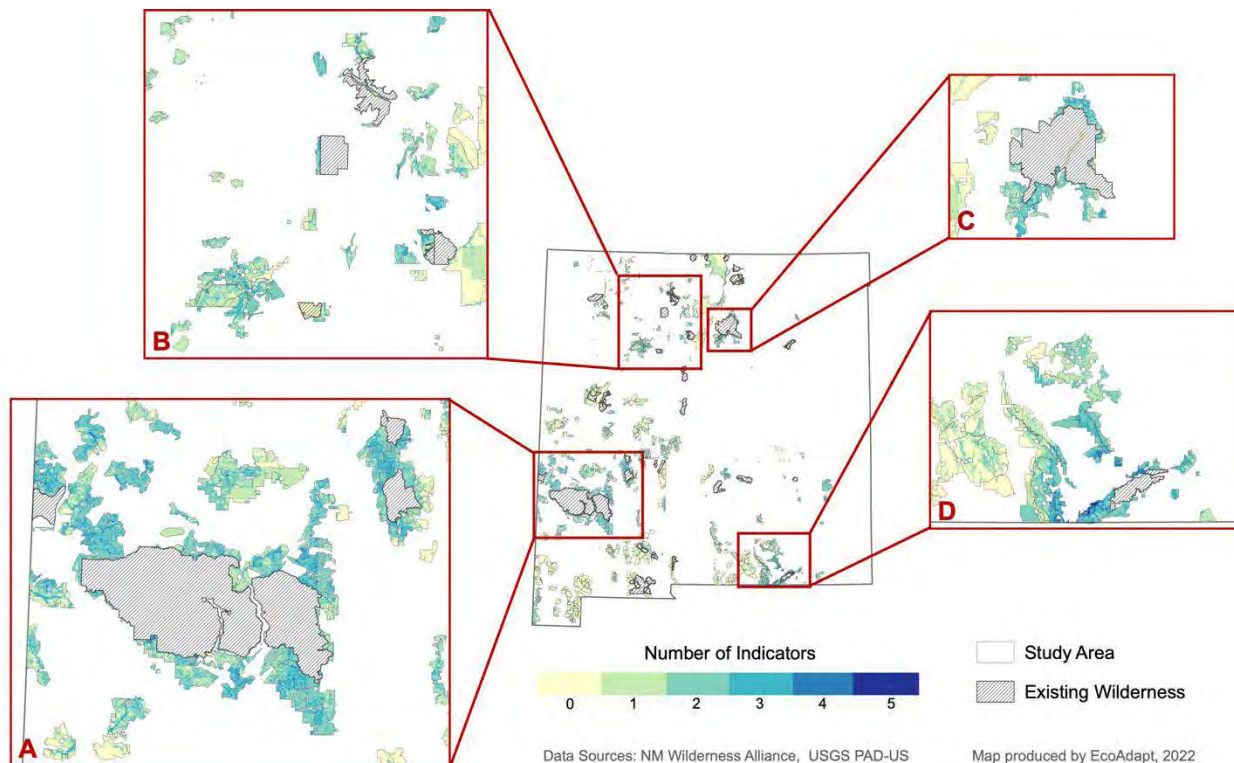
A large proportion of national energy production comes from federal public lands in the Western U.S. that are leased to private companies for oil, gas and coal extraction. In New Mexico, most U.S. Bureau of Land Management lands in the Permian and San Juan basins are leased for extractive purposes. Studies suggest that public lands account for up to 50% of all remaining unleased U.S. fossil fuels. Keeping oil, gas and coal in the ground through the establishment of new and greater federal land protections will help to avoid future emissions and is therefore critical to climate change mitigation efforts. ▲▲

**READ THE FULL EcoAdapt
STUDY HERE**

Or visit: nmwild.org/ecoadapt



Number of Indicators for Which the Study Area Scores in the Top 25% (Detail view)



- (A) Portions of the study area in the vicinity of the Gila, Aldo Leopold, Blue Range, Apache Kid, and Withington Wilderness Areas.
- (B) Portions of the study area within the Southern Rockies ecoregion, near the San Pedro Parks, Chama River Canyon, Bandelier, and Dome Wilderness Areas.
- (C) Portions of the study area around the Pecos Wilderness.
- (D) Portions of the study area in the vicinity of Otero Mesa and the Carlsbad Caverns Wilderness.

**Providing greater levels of
protection for public lands is
a vital strategy for climate
adaptation and mitigation, and
for reducing
biodiversity
loss.**



Burrowing Owl.
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

2023 STATE LEGISLATIVE RECAP

The New Mexico Legislature scored some conservation wins during the recently completed 60-day session. New Mexico Wild's team worked diligently on three major initiatives: the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund, the Wildlife Corridor Fund and funding for the Strategic Water Reserve.

Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund, groundbreaking legislation that creates New Mexico's first dedicated and long-term funding stream for land and water conservation. Appropriations totaling \$100 million make it the single largest land and water conservation investment in New Mexico history.

"Thanks to Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and the leadership in both the state House and Senate, New Mexico has made a historic investment in our future. Establishing the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund ensures that communities across the state have the resources they need to build climate resilience for the many challenges ahead—from aridification to flooding to wildfires and beyond."
—Tricia Snyder, Senior Water Policy Analyst

Wildlife Corridor Fund

Gov. Lujan Grisham also signed Senate Bill 72, creating a wildlife corridor fund and investing \$5

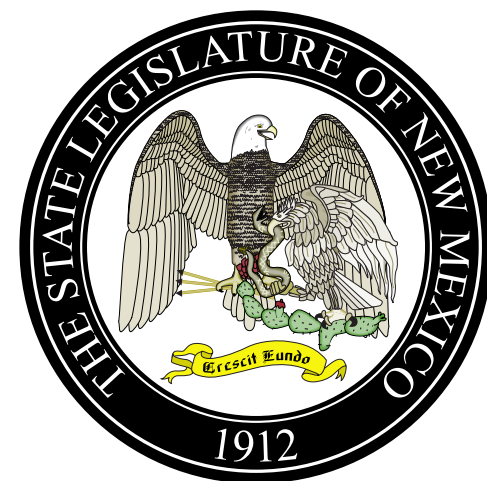
million to decrease wildlife-vehicle collisions. In New Mexico, there are roughly 1,200 crashes involving wildlife a year, costing drivers nearly \$20 million in damages.

"The creation of the Wildlife Corridor Fund is a key step forward in addressing the issues of saving the lives of humans and wildlife alike. We look forward to continuing to work with the governor and the legislature to drastically ramp up the funding for crucial infrastructure in the minimum of 11 hotspot areas of critical need. We thank Sen. Mimi Stewart for her leadership and the governor for signing this landmark legislation."

—Garrett VeneKlasen,
Northern Conservation Director

Strategic Water Reserve

New Mexico Wild also worked on the Strategic Water Reserve. Though the bill did not pass with the proposed funding and timeframe we had hoped for, the reserve will receive a record amount of funds.



"We're thrilled to see a \$7.5 million appropriation for the Strategic Water Reserve in this year's final budget. This is the largest appropriation the reserve has ever seen, after years of receiving piecemeal funding that was then clawed back for other purposes. Unfortunately, there is still work to be done to ensure these funds can be put on the ground to maximum effect. But funding this tool is a critical piece of building the climate resiliency we need to see across New Mexico to prepare and mitigate the challenges ahead."

—Tricia Snyder

This legislative session was another step in the right direction for protecting and preserving our land, water and wildlife. We will continue to advocate for land and water stewardship, forest and watershed health, outdoor recreation and infrastructure, agriculture and working lands, historic preservation, and wildlife species protection. ▲▲

Two New National Monuments...It's a Bloomin' Miracle

STAFF ARTICLE

As covered in our Spring 2018 newsletter, conservationists in Texas have been working hard to protect Castner Range, a high-desert mountain area just outside of El Paso. We were thrilled to see President Biden sign a proclamation establishing the 6,672-acre Castner Range National Monument in March of 2023.

This action will protect the cultural, scientific, and historic objects found within the monument's boundaries, honor our veterans, servicemembers, and Tribal Nations, and ultimately expand access to outdoor recreation on our public lands.

Once the area is sufficiently remediated to be safe for public access, Castner Range will offer unique opportunities for the El Paso community to experience, explore, and learn from nature. This designation serves as an example of the power of the Antiquities Act. We implore the administration to do more to protect our nation's precious wildlands

with National Monument designations, including the Caja del Rio and Otero Mesa, both in New Mexico.

Congratulations to the Frontera Land Alliance, Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition, El Paso Community Foundation, Nuestra Tierra, Conservation Lands Foundation, Hispanic Access Foundation, and everyone who fought for this new National Monument.

Also newly designated is the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument in Nevada, an area considered to be among the most sacred places on Earth by the Mojave, Chemehuevi, and some Southern Paiute people. Notably, the Interior Department will implement co-stew-



Castner Range National Monument in bloom. Photo by Mark Klune

ardship of the monument with Tribal Nations. At 506,814 acres, the designation of the new National Monument creates one of the largest contiguous areas of protected wildlife habitat in the United States. ▲▲

Fossilized Federal Mining Laws Need Modernization

STAFF ARTICLE

The General Mining Act of 1872 governs the mining of hard rock minerals on federal public lands. This archaic federal statute, which has remained virtually unchanged for over 150 years, allows mining companies to enter lands that belong to all Americans to search for minerals. If a mining company finds a valuable mineral deposit and follows procedures to establish a mining claim, the company obtains the right to occupy the surface of the land, remove the ore deposits throughout their entire depth, and sell the minerals. Mining companies have extracted minerals worth over \$300 billion from our public lands, yet these companies are not required to pay royalties to the United States. Even worse, taxpayers have been forced to cover billions of dollars in cleanup costs from abandoned mines, and the headwaters of over 40% of Western watersheds have been polluted by toxic heavy metals and acid mine drainage. The lands and waters at risk of being destroyed often have great cultural and environmental significance to Tribes, Pueblos and local communities.

Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., has shown great leadership in advocating for mining reform. New Mexico Wild stands in strong support of Heinrich's efforts to reintroduce the Clean Energy Mineral Reform Act or similar legislation to modernize our outdated mining laws. ▲▲



Chevron Questa Mine Superfund Site. Staff photo

Create Your Wild Legacy

New Mexico Wild's Wilderness Legacy Fund provides a way for donors to protect our public lands far into the future. The Fund is designed to accept gifts through bequests and other planned giving methods, but outright donations to the Fund are welcome.

The Legacy Fund is ideal for unrestricted gifts because the future needs of the organization may change, and unrestricted gifts offer the greatest flexibility. However, restricted gifts for a specific purpose may also be accepted for the Fund with approval from the New Mexico Wild Executive Director.

The Wilderness Legacy Fund is administered and invested by the New Mexico Foundation with headquarters in Santa Fe, NM.

For more information contact
Tisha Broska, Deputy Director
tisha@nmwild.org or call 505.321.6131



WILDERNESS LEGACY FUND
SUPPORTING NEW MEXICO WILD

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

I want to make a one-time donation

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- ☐ \$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!



GET OUT!

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

West Fork-Three Mile Ruin

Gila Wilderness

TRAIL INFO

Trailhead: 33.2303° N 108.2554° W

Length: 4.07 miles round trip

Trail Type: Out and Back

Difficulty: Intermediate - Not difficult by any means for seasoned hikers, but may be difficult at times for novice hikers.

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: Moderate Use

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

USGS 7.5" Topographic maps: Little Turkey Park-33108-B3

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

DESCRIPTION

The entire West Fork Trail No. 151 runs more than 34 miles in length and is the second longest in the Wilderness. The trail wanders through wetlands and open forest for about a mile before arriving at the first of many river crossings. Just after you emerge from the water here, take a short side trip south to the remains of a small cabin in a clearing. Look for a grave nearby, with a weathered headstone that reads, "William Gurdging waylaid and murdered by Tom Wood Oct. 8 1893 age 37 years 8 mos." From here the trail continues to follow the river, crossing it several times as it winds between the canyon's steep walls. After about 2 miles, obvious campsites are observable. Three Mile Ruin, three miles from the trailhead, is the most popular West Fork destination for hikers. It is a tiny, very fragile cliff dwelling in a shallow cave on the river's west side.

GETTING THERE

This trail begins at the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. Follow Highway 15 north for almost its entirety to reach the monument.

NATURAL FEATURES

Streams, Mountain Terrain

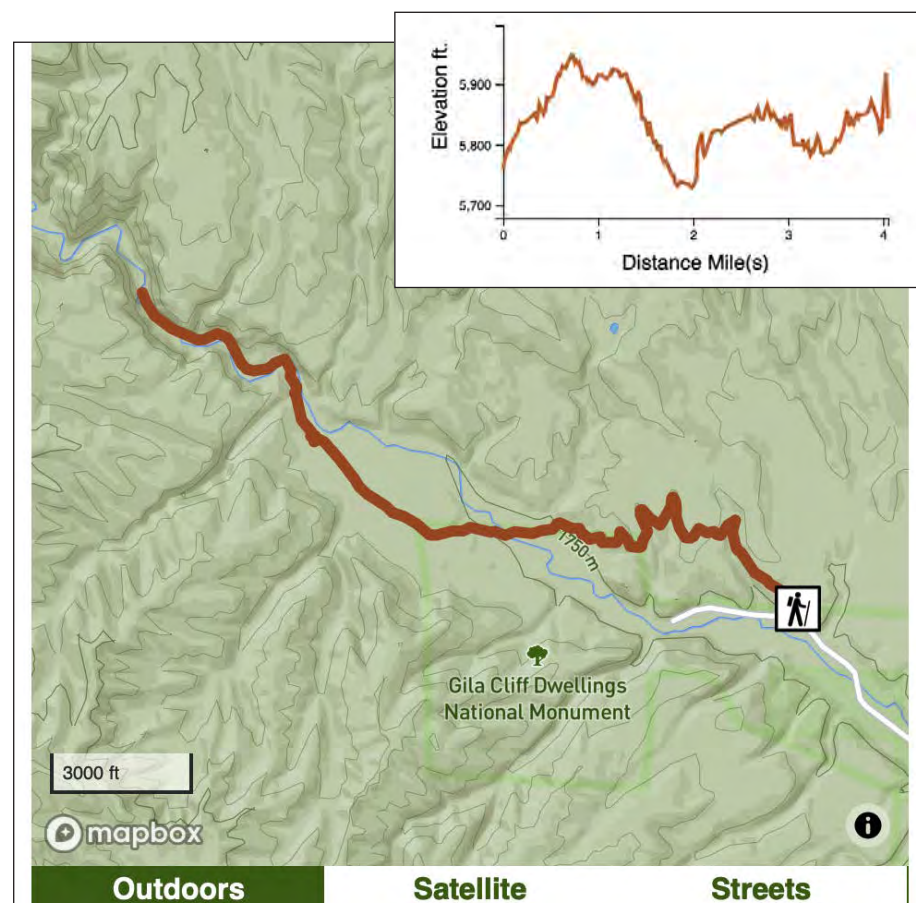
Ponderosa Pine - Ponderosa pine trees occur as pure stands or in mixed conifer forests in the mountains and have a lush green color and pleasant odor.

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.

Riparian Deciduous—This is more of a descriptive term than a specific type of plant or tree. "Riparian" meaning, occurring and benefitting 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.



Cliff dwellings along West Fork-Three Mile Ruin Trail, Gila Wilderness. Photo by Nathan Newcomer



ABOUT THE GILA WILDERNESS

Established in 1924, the Gila Wilderness is New Mexico's largest formally designated Wilderness and the world's first—a vast, wild tract of high mountains, arid uplands, and rivers flowing through steep-sided canyons. The area is rich in natural and human history. Hot and warm springs are numerous reminders of the region's volcanic past. ▲▲

would clamor to connect with him. Whatever the particular topic, he invariably exhorted the audience to value the natural world for its own sake, apart from any human-centric lens or benefit. Chickadee Dee Dee!

I was able to spend time with Dave in his last days. He was dying; he knew it, told us so and said he was not afraid. To the last, he was gracious and wanted us to know how proud he was of his role helping establish New Mexico Wild and of what it had become. He expressed regret at not being able to organize his papers to completion; though to be fair, that would have taken several lifetimes. He wasn't a hoarder exactly ... but let's say he was conscientious about saving. And a lifetime of work advocating for wild places and wild creatures adds up, in more ways than one.

After Dave's passing, I received messages from his friends and colleagues (and from some who didn't even know him personally), several of whom used the term "North Star" to describe what Dave meant to them and to conservation in general. I think that's right. Dave shined brightly and never wavered. He didn't lose focus on what was important, and his clarity and constancy guided many of us—and will continue to do so.

Dave was not without his faults, none of us are. But he was a powerful force, a significant figure in the evolution of the conservation movement. He was a contributor to and proponent of big ideas, years and even decades ahead of his time—formative concepts like rewilding, biodiversity, connec-

tivity and, of course, the essentialness of wildness. For its own sake.

Dave was a friend and a mentor to me and countless others. I will remember him for his intellect, his encyclopedic memory, his epic stories, his willingness to poke fun at himself, his easy laugh, his generosity to me and my family, and his big heart.

Dave was a powerful force, a significant figure in the evolution of the conservation movement.

His passion about Wilderness and his true joy and wonder at experiencing even the humblest of creatures was an inspiration to me. His lifelong commitment to advocating for their protection is the model and standard that we at New Mexico Wild and all who loved him will look to as our obligation to truly honor his memory.

Alas, though Dave wasn't able to meet his end by being trampled by a muskox on the Arctic tundra as he fairly longed for, he was able to escape the hospital to be with friends and family at home.

In some of his last words to me, he said he didn't want to be forgotten. I told him he wasn't exactly the forgettable type. I still don't know if gin without vermouth is really a martini, but here's to you, Dave. Well done. ▲



Dave participated in our photo campaign to save threatened national monuments like Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks. Staff photo



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

Thank You Stone Age!

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Albuquerque
505.209.2081

STONE AGE MIDTOWN
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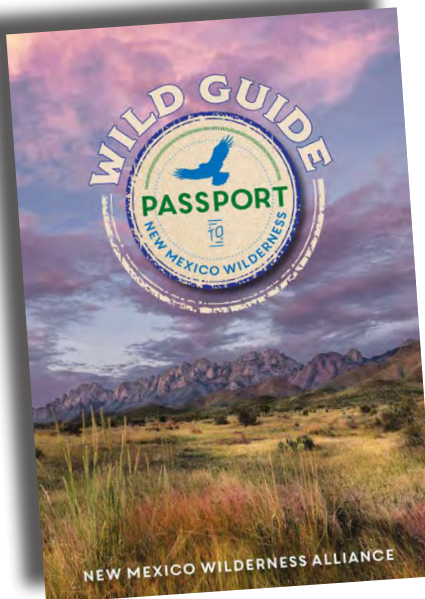


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This comprehensive guide to New Mexico's protected wildlands is the only book that features each of the state's designated wilderness areas and wilderness study areas as well as other treasures, such as the new Rio Grande del Norte National Monument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

CONGRATULATIONS 2023 NEW MEXICO WILD WOLF STAMP ART WINNERS!

This was our most exciting and competitive Mexican Wolf Conservation Stamp contest ever, with 105 pieces of original art work submitted whose beauty and diversity are truly inspiring. We are deeply grateful to every single person who submitted their art to honor and celebrate the Mexican gray wolf.

The Mexican Gray Wolf Stamp is sold to support Mexican gray wolf conservation and education programs. This year's winner is Darien Bogart. Second place goes to Ed McKay, and third place goes to Alicia Lundburg. Youth honorable mention goes to Lincoln Mason, age 9.

ORDER YOUR WOLF STAMP TODAY! www.nmwild.org/shop/



First Place: "Lobo Luna Lady" by Darien Bogart

Darien Bogart is a Las Cruces-based artist working in acrylic medium primarily on canvas. His designs are inspired from his experiences in nature. With the use of sculpting tools and no traditional brushes, he creates a 21st century approach to impressionism. Layering his paints to create depth and variation, emphasizing color, a luxurious texture, and a variety of applications, he translates his inspiration of the Southwestern landscape and wildlife into bold, contemporary visions.

My goal as an artist is to recreate the spirit of place. Using sculpting tools to create a variety of strokes, a bright sense of color and luxurious texture; to transport the viewer to that unique space and moment of tranquility where they may discover their own respite, embrace their own moment of reflection and meditation and to instill in them the wonderful sense of being."

See more of Darien's art at www.darienbogart.com ▲▲



Second Place:
"Cuddling" by Ed McKay

Third Place: "Snow Pup" by
Alicia Lundburg



Youth Honorable
Mention:
Lincoln Mason



WELCOME TO OUR NEW STAFF!

Bjorn Fredrickson, Conservation Director

Bjorn grew up in Seattle, Washington and spent his childhood and young adult years frequenting public lands across the West. Experiences in remote settings – often in designated wilderness – instilled in him a passion for wild places and environmental issues. These passions led Bjorn to obtain B.A and M.S. degrees in environmental studies and science from Yale University, as well as a graduate certificate in wilderness management from the University of Montana.

In the initial chapter of his career, Bjorn spent 13 years working with the U.S. Forest Service, with positions focused on the management of recreation, wilderness, wild & scenic rivers, commercial uses and infrastructure, archaeology, and minerals in Washington DC, Washington State, California, and New Mexico.

Bjorn and his wife, Amy, moved permanently to New Mexico in 2015, and in his spare time Bjorn enjoys cooking, gardening, mountain biking, gravel grinding, backpacking, and kayaking. Bjorn is thrilled and honored to bring the knowledge, skills, and experience gained from his previous work to furthering New Mexico Wild’s efforts to protect wildlands, water, and wildlife.



Nick Streit, Friends of Rio Grande del Norte Coordinator

Getting into the family business at an early age, Nick was guiding fisherman before he was old enough to drive them to the river. By the age of 17, Nick was a member of the U.S. fly fishing team that took second place in the World Championships in Wales. In 2004 Nick, along with his wife Chrissy, opened the Taos Fly Shop. The shop has grown from its humble beginnings and is now Northern NM’s premier Fly Shop.

Nick has also done considerable volunteer work for conservation groups. In recent years, Nick was the driving force behind the Red River Habitat improvement project, which raised nearly 1 million dollars for habitat restoration on the Lower Red River. ▲▲



UPCOMING EVENTS

New Mexico Wild hosts and collaborates on conservation-focused events all year round.

- HIKES • MEMBER EVENTS • PUBLIC LAND CELEBRATIONS
- WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS • FILM SCREENINGS
- CONSERVATION COMMUNITY EVENTS

Get Involved!
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STOP THE ILLEGAL KILLING NOW.

BETWEEN 1998 AND 2021, 131 ENDANGERED MEXICAN GRAY WOLVES WERE ILLEGALLY KILLED. THIS IS THE **LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FOR LOBOS,** A FEDERALLY PROTECTED SPECIES.

CRIMINALS ARE DESTROYING WOLF FAMILIES, JEOPARDIZING LOBO RECOVERY.

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO STOP THEM.

CONSERVATIONISTS HAVE PLEDGED A **\$40,250 REWARD** FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO ARREST AND PROSECUTION OF WOLF POACHERS.

ANYONE WITH INFORMATION ABOUT THE DEATH OF A MEXICAN GRAY WOLF SHOULD

CALL 1-844-397-8477 OR EMAIL
FWS_TIPS@FWS.GOV.

ENSURE JUSTICE FOR LOBOS. DON'T LET THEIR HOWLS FALL SILENT.



THE ALDO LEOPOLD CIRCLE
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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/



New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
P.O. Box 25464
Albuquerque, NM 87125
[Not a member yet? Go to nmwild.org.](http://nmwild.org)



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Critical Conservation Legislation Victories
Featured Hike: West Fork-Three Mile Ruin



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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