



Stopping toxic pesticide spraying in the Rio Chama watershed

FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Grassroots advocacy in action

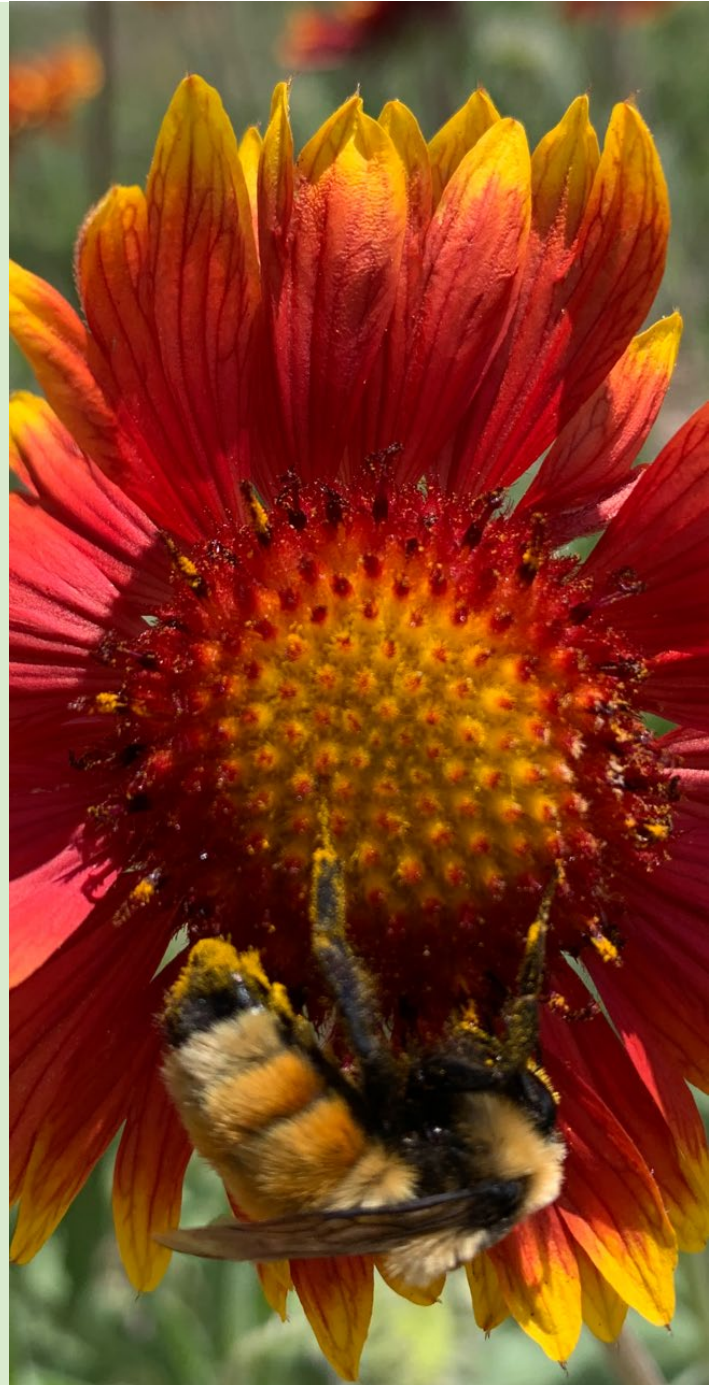
This summer, we learned that the USDA planned aerial spraying of highly toxic pesticides over

40 square miles of BLM land in and around the Rio Chama Wilderness Study Area to reduce the number of grasshoppers. Of course, the pesticide would also kill pollinators and many aquatic insect species. With just days before the planned application was to take place, our team at New Mexico Wild leaped into action. (No grasshopper pun intended.)

We immediately coordinated a letter from 28 community and tribal leaders to key federal land managers and our Congressional delegation to alert them to our environmental concerns. In just a 48-hour period, we collected petition signatures from 2,460 members and supporters to fight this ill-advised plan. Senator Heinrich and staff were also quick to respond and assist in this effort. This was truly grassroots advocacy in action and the result was that the BLM stopped USDA's plans for spraying this summer.

*A small win for us, but a big win for nature. Your support continues to make grassroots advocacy possible. **Thank you!***

Mark Allison
Executive Director
New Mexico Wild



What the USDA was planning to do

The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) set a target date of June 26 to spray the toxic pesticide carbaryl to reduce the number of native grasshoppers, which could potentially eat the forage (grass) available to a handful of public land cattle permittees. To be clear, carbaryl not only kills grasshoppers but virtually every other insect it touches. It is especially toxic to aquatic

"It is not my contention that chemical insecticides must never be used. I do contend that we have put poisonous and biologically potent chemicals indiscriminately into the hands of persons largely or wholly ignorant of their potential for harm. We have subjected enormous numbers of people to contact with these poisons, without their consent and often without their knowledge." — Rachel Carson, from her 1962 landmark book, *Silent Spring*

invertebrates. Carbaryl is an indiscriminate insecticide that would have decimated local insect pollinator populations at the height of a crucial wildflower blooming period and posed a threat to multiple species listed under the Endangered Species Act, including the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, Mexican spotted owl, and Southwestern willow flycatcher. USDA's Animal and Plant Inspection Service

Pollinators, like the monarch butterfly, are under grave threat from pesticides as well as herbicides that kill the milkweed they depend on for food. As many as 300 million monarchs migrate through New Mexico in the spring. Across the nation, monarch populations are in drastic decline. As a result, the species was recently added to the endangered list by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).



has acknowledged the toxicity of carbaryl to non-target pollinators, fish and wildlife, and humans.

The EPA has also determined that carbaryl is likely carcinogenic to humans, and exposure to carbaryl can cause nausea, headaches, dizziness, anxiety, mental confusion, convulsions, coma, and death.

What we plan to do to prevent this type of hazardous decision in the future

The denial of this specific proposal, while absolutely justified, does not mean that similar operations will not be proposed in the future. The ability of APHIS to propose and undertake broad-based aerial spraying of toxic pesticides demonstrates a need for policy reform at the state and federal levels. To that end, New Mexico Wild has submitted Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to APHIS to learn as much as possible about past plans for insecticide applications of this kind.

New Mexico Wild will remain vigilant in

monitoring for similar proposals that would impact federal public lands and will immediately work to mobilize partner organizations, community leaders, and the public in opposing proposed aerial insecticide applications.

While monitoring this is vital, it is also imperative to change the policies of federal land management agencies in the use of pesticides. A coalition of local and national nonprofits like ours will be working with federal, state, and local lawmakers to permanently reform the shortsighted and irresponsibly managed insect suppression program. This will not be an easy task. Stay tuned as this issue progresses.

For today, we celebrate and thank our members who added their voices. We also thank Pamela Mathis, BLM Taos Field Office Manager, for her decision to deny this proposal by APHIS to spray the toxic insecticide. "Additional environmental analysis and outreach for this project is necessary, and we are dedicated to doing so in an open and transparent manner," said Mathis.



Grassroots advocacy to protect our Wilderness, Wildlife, and Water is made possible by your support. Please use the enclosed donation form and envelope or donate online at:

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