

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW! SEN. MARTIN HEINRICH



Spring/Summer 2024
The Semiannual Publication
of the New Mexico
Wilderness Alliance

NEW MEXICO WILD!



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ON THE COVER

The U.S. Forest Service sponsored a Gila Wilderness Centennial Poster Contest. The winner was Christina Wilkinson, and her beautiful illustration is featured in this issue. The winning contributors' artwork is being used as part of an outreach campaign in celebration of 100 years of the Gila Wilderness.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | Mark Allison

REFLECTING ON ALDO LEOPOLD, WILDERNESS' BEST FRIEND

My wife, Jenny, and I recently decided that we—apparently—no longer wanted a clean house and the ability to enjoy a rare Saturday morning sleeping in. So, we welcomed a puppy to the family. A beautiful, black Labrador retriever. Still very much in training, he is, one might say, a bit wild.



In honor of the centennial celebration of the administrative designation of the Gila Wilderness this year, we named him Aldo after Aldo Leopold, the driving force behind the creation of the *world's* first place protected for its inherent wildness. It started right here in New Mexico, and the Gila Wilderness remains the largest and wildest Wilderness area in the state.

Designated Wilderness continues to be the gold standard for land protection and the best way to permanently safeguard self-willed natural places and cultural resources. Looking back at what's been saved over the last 100 years, we see places that help define the very identity of New Mexico, like the Gila and the Pecos. At under 3% of our total land area, designated Wilderness makes up a small, but essential, part of the Land of Enchantment.

**Our organization is strong and,
thanks in large part to your generous support,
continues to grow.**

That it began right here at home makes us proud and reinforces a sense of obligation for us to play our part. We believe we are rich enough as a country, generous enough in spirit, conservative enough in foresight, and prudent enough in temperament that certain places are so special, so increasingly rare, so critical to biodiversity and climate change, so integral to who we are as a people that they should be protected in perpetuity from roads, extraction, commercialization, and development.

Read more about the Gila and what makes Wilderness special in the following pages and keep an eye out for events around the state throughout the year to mark this special occasion.

This issue also includes an exclusive interview with New Mexico's senior U.S. senator, Martin Heinrich. He is recognized nationally as a leading voice for public lands and conservation, and we're proud to count him as one of our founders over 25 years ago. And look at what we've been able to accomplish together! During this time, you'd be hard pressed to identify a single significant conservation win where Heinrich's leadership hasn't been critical. Read more to see what is currently on his mind.

With some notable disappointments, particularly around water, the 30-day state legislative session that ended Feb. 15 was historically important for conservation. Inside you can read more about this progress, including securing an additional \$300 million for the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund! A truly remarkable coalition worked for years for this win, one that will pay dividends for conservation for generations.

Also in this issue, we discuss the dire state of New Mexico's rivers and surface waters and what we are doing about it and provide updates on our pending federal legislation, the status of Mexican wolf recovery efforts, and the amazing work of our Wilderness Defenders and volunteer stewardship activities throughout the state, among other highlights.

Reflecting again on the vision of Aldo Leopold this year, I'm reminded of a hard lesson in conservation, but one well worth remembering: Doing nothing has a real cost. Public lands that are special enough—for their wildness, wildlife habitat, cultural and historical values, or importance for climate change mitigation, as examples—need to be permanently protected proactively *before* they are lost. Threats, whether they come from hard rock mining interests, oil and gas development, or major dams and diversion projects, often emerge with little notice. While we've become very adept at fighting off

threats, sometimes it is too late, and another part of our natural and cultural landscape is irretrievably lost.

Even though we have been successful in defending many places, we must be so *every* time. If we lose just one time, that special wild place is damaged and changed forever.

Public lands protection campaigns are complicated and involve countless stakeholders, interests, levels of government and Tribal Nations. Any effort that is going to be successful—and durable—needs to involve everyone, to be open and respectful, and to demonstrate humility.

At the same time, we must work with clear sightedness, determination and a sense of urgency. The forces that chip away at our natural world are relentless. They don't rest. Time is not on our side. The status quo results in bite after bite taken, loss after loss, after which, at some point, we realize another special place is gone. Some of these forces are explicit and intentional—a different world view that sees public lands only through the eyes of profit and exploitation. These interests have far more resources than we do to advance their agenda.

Losses are doubly wounding when we have long known and seen the threats right before our eyes but have been unable to come to agreement, or to act in time, to win the safeguards we know a place deserves.

Our sense of resolve comes with the understanding that it is our obligation to conserve what we still have left, not just for ourselves, but for future generations unknown to us. The destruction of wildness is a theft of what should be their birthright, as much as it was and is for us. Can we do what we must to avoid future generations saying, “I wish we still had ...” or “Why didn't they do something when they could have?”

And even that tells only part of the story. Apart from—or in addition to—this anthropocentric view, we at New Mexico Wild believe that wild places and wild creatures—present and future—are worth fighting for—for their own sake, irrespective of us. They are valuable in and of themselves.

We must be their voices. We will not win every time. But we must do the hard work, be ready, take advantage of political opportunities when they arise—create those opportunities!—and, above all, act. There is a time for talking and a time for doing. If we fail to act, that is on us.

Our organization is strong and, thanks in large part to your generous support, continues to grow. We're gratified to have been able to add new positions recently, including a conservation GIS specialist, a southern grassroots organizer (based out of Deming) and a new rivers and water program associate. Increasing our organizational capacity is critical if we are going to meet this historically urgent moment. Read more about these stellar additions to the team in the following pages.

As always, thanks for your confidence in us and your continued support. For those of you picking up this newsletter for the first time, please visit our website for more information about what we are doing and how you can help. We can use it!

In the following months, puppy Aldo will, presumably, become less wild, less self-willed. But with lots of hard work, and your help, we will do what we can to keep New Mexico Wild.

With gratitude,



Mark's new Labrador retriever Aldo has some pretty big conservationist shoes to grow into.
Staff photo

ALBUQUERQUE MAIN OFFICE **WE HAVE MOVED!**

6000 Uptown Blvd. NE, Ste. 350
Albuquerque, NM 87110
505-843-8696
info@nmwild.org | www.nmwild.org

SILVER CITY FIELD OFFICE

301 W College Ave. #14 | Silver City, NM 88061
505-843-8696

NEW MEXICO WILD STAFF

Mark Allison, Executive Director, Albuquerque

Tisha Broska, Deputy Director, Albuquerque

Akashia Allen, Conservation GIS Specialist, Albuquerque

Sara Bergthold, Communications Coordinator, Albuquerque

Marissa Chavez, Wilderness Intern, Albuquerque

Bjorn Fredrickson, Conservation Director, Albuquerque

Mollie Fullerton, Grants Manager, Albuquerque

Julian Gonzales, Northern NM Grassroots Organizer, Santa Fe

Keegan King, Tribal Community Organizer, Acoma Pueblo

Luke Koenig, Gila Grassroots Organizer, Silver City

Aidan Manning, Rivers & Waters Program Associate, Albuquerque

Ben Mortensen, Friends of RGDN Youth Outreach
Coordinator, Taos

Devon Naples, Operations Manager, Albuquerque

Rebecca Neal, Rio Chama Community Science, Albuquerque

Vicente Ordoñez, Gila Ranger & Community Organizer,
Silver City

Sally Paez, Staff Attorney, Santa Fe

Kerry Renshaw, Administrative Assistant, Albuquerque

Terry Richey, Fundraising & Marketing Advisor, Albuquerque

Nathan Small, Wilderness Wrangler, Las Cruces

Tricia Snyder, Rivers and Waters Program Director, Albuquerque

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Nick Streit, Friends of Rio Grande del Norte Coordinator, Taos

BJ Trejo, Southern New Mexico Grassroots Organizer, Deming

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Ralph Vigil, Northern New Mexico Organizer, Pecos

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WILDERNESS DISPATCHES

Updates on New Mexico Wild Projects Across the State

NEW REPORT LISTS EVERY RIVER IN NEW MEXICO AS ENDANGERED

BY TRICIA SNYDER

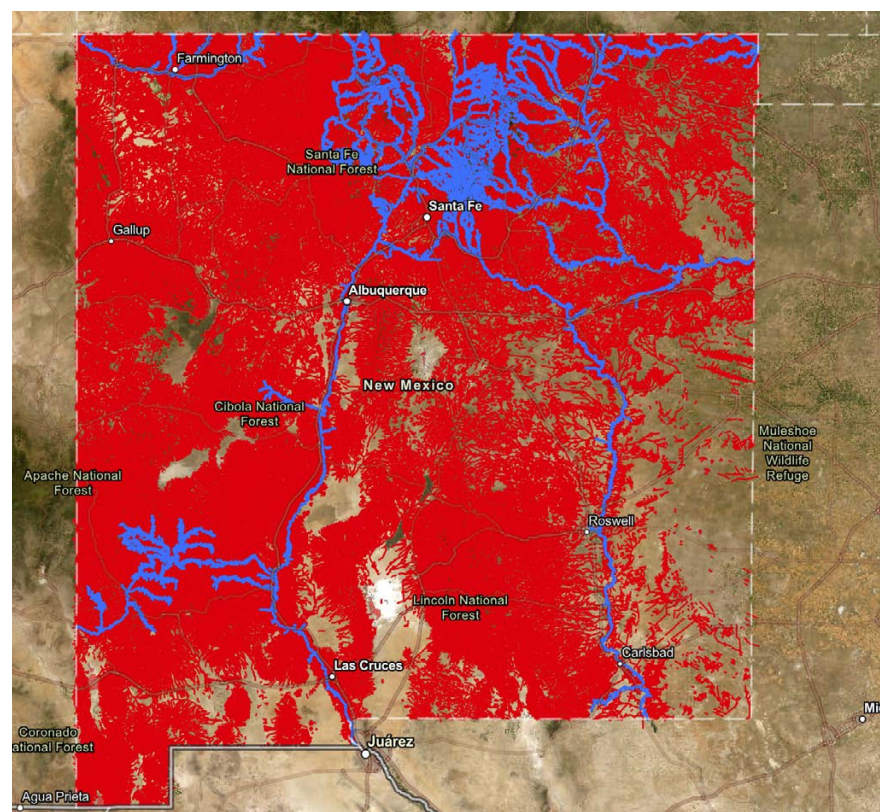
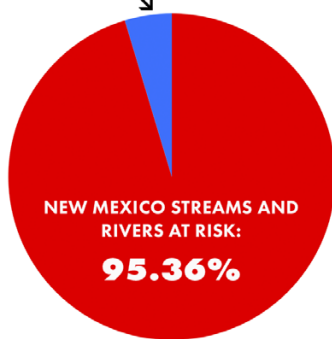
Each year, our partner American Rivers releases an annual list of the Most Endangered Rivers, highlighting the most vulnerable rivers across the nation. Topping the list for 2024 are all rivers within the state of New Mexico. This is the first time American Rivers has ever listed every river in an entire state.

The waterways of the Land of Enchantment are its very lifeblood, supporting everything that makes this such a special place to live, work and play. But the erosion of federal protections in recent years and the uncertainties created by regulatory changes—most recently seen in the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Sackett vs. EPA*—have left New Mexico’s waters increasingly vulnerable to pollution and degradation.

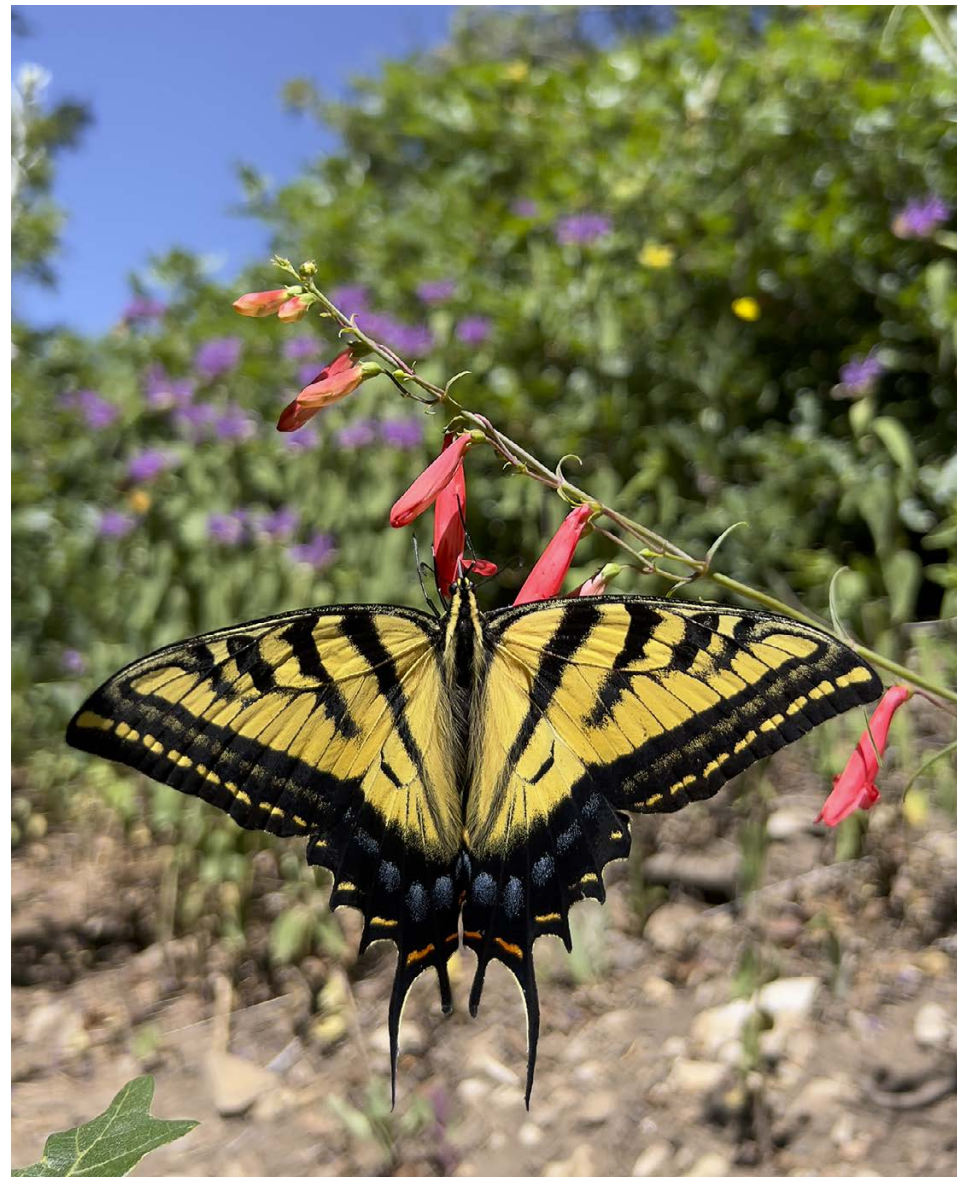
For example, the wastewater treatment plant in Silver City is no longer required to obtain a permit for its surface water discharges. Tracking where discharges are occurring into New Mexico’s waters has become more challenging because without a permit process, there is no paper trail to follow. This massive rollback of federal clean water protections has the potential to wreak havoc on important habitats, and pollution can cause harm to iconic downstream rivers like the Rio Grande, the Gila and the Pecos. New Mexico Wild will continue to work with our partners to identify workable solutions to ensure the state’s waters are protected for future generations.▲▲

PROTECTED NEW MEXICO STREAMS AND RIVERS:

4.64%



In the aftermath of the US Supreme Court’s *Sackett* decision, the loss of federal Clean Water Act protections is far-reaching across New Mexico’s waterways. Waterways indicated in blue are protected; waterways indicated in red are at risk. Map courtesy of Amigos Bravos and St. Mary’s Geospatial



Pollinators throughout the Rio Chama watershed are at risk of extermination from pesticides sprayed by the USDA in an attempt to protect cattle grazing. Staff photo

RIO CHAMA POLLINATORS ONCE AGAIN THREATENED BY PLAN TO SPRAY TOXIC PESTICIDE

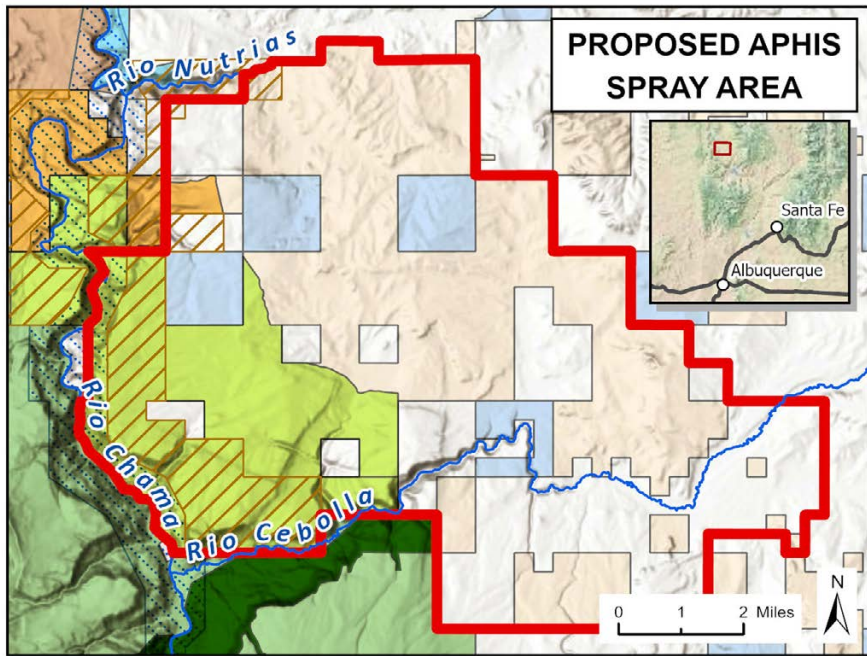
STAFF ARTICLE

Despite being defeated in its bid to spray highly toxic insecticide over public lands near the Rio Chama last year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is at it again.

In 2023, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) quietly prepared to aerially spray insecticide over nearly 40 square miles of mostly public lands in Rio Arriba County to control native grasshopper species that could compete with cattle for forage.

This ill-conceived effort would have devastated local pollinator populations and directly impacted a wide array of wildlife species and protected areas like the Rio Chama Wilderness Study Area. It also likely would have impacted aquatic species, water quality, human health, and the Rio Chama Wild and Scenic River. Thanks to a tip about these plans and a rapid outcry by thousands of New Mexico Wild’s supporters, we were able to defeat last year’s planned spray.

We recently learned that APHIS is once again plotting to saturate this sensitive area with toxic insecticide. New Mexico Wild and more than 1,300



- Rivers & Streams
- APHIS proposed boundary
- Chama Canyons Area of Critical Environmental Concern
- Rio Chama Wilderness Study Area
- BLM Lands with Wilderness Characteristics
- Wild & Scenic River Corridor
- Chama River Canyon Wilderness
- BLM
- Forest Service
- Jicarilla Apache Nation
- Private
- State Trust Land
- Rio Chama Wildlife Area (State Game & Fish)

supporters provided formal comments to APHIS that its draft Environmental Assessment for the proposal fails to demonstrate a need for aerial insecticide spraying and contains deeply flawed analyses of impacts to specially designated areas, fish and wildlife, cultural resources, water quality, and public health. Stay tuned for developments and opportunities for engagement to help us stop the spray. ▲▲

Citizen Science Volunteers Needed

Rio Chama Boaters

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS SPRING 2024

Do you have plans to run the Wild and Scenic section of the Rio Chama in 2024? We are looking for volunteers to collect insect samples during your trip. We will provide training and sampling kits at the launch and meet you at the take out to retrieve the samples. Please contact info@nmwild.org if you are interested in learning more about this project.



Conflicts between wildlife corridors, habitat, natural landscapes, and solar development are why New Mexico Wild is closely watching—and providing input to—the BLM as it updates its Western Solar Plan. Photo by Mati Kose/Wirestock - stock.adobe.com

NEW MEXICO WILD WATCHDOGS THE BLM'S WESTERN SOLAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

STAFF ARTICLE

As part of the Biden administration's efforts to mitigate the growing climate crisis, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is updating its Western Solar Plan to determine which public lands may be appropriate for utility-scale solar development and which areas should be reserved for other uses. New Mexico Wild staff are analyzing the proposal and preparing comments to help the BLM ensure that it appropriately balances the need for a growing renewable energy economy with the protection of natural landscapes, wildlife habitat and corridors, and cultural resources.

Our comments highlight the need to protect lands with Wilderness qualities, including hundreds of thousands of acres inventoried and identified by New Mexico Wild, as well as biodiversity hotspots, wildlife and bird migration corridors, and ecologically intact landscapes that enhance habitat connectivity.

We are emphasizing the need for BLM to update its inventories and Resource Management Plans to ensure that special resource values meriting protection are not inadvertently proposed for large solar projects due to delays in BLM's land use planning process. Additionally, we are encouraging BLM to locate utility-scale solar projects on previously disturbed lands, such as areas heavily impacted by oil and gas development. Finally, we are working to identify data errors that have led the BLM to mistakenly identify some Lands with Wilderness Characteristics as appropriate for solar development. ▲▲

You can learn more about the BLM's Western Solar Plan on our website: <https://bit.ly/BLMsolar>

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!
nmwild.org/events

WILDERNESS DISPATCHES, CONTINUED

NEW NATIONAL MONUMENT PROMISES ECONOMIC BOON AND PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

BY BJORN FREDRICKSON

New Mexico Wild is working with a coalition that recently launched a campaign to establish the Mimbres Peaks National Monument. If designated, this National Monument would permanently protect federal public lands in the Cookes Range, Florida Mountains, Good Sight Mountains, and Tres Hermanas Mountains in Luna County.

Three of these ranges are visually iconic and visible for many miles across vast swaths of southern New Mexico. The four ranges are also home to a wide array of phenomenal archaeological resources, historic sites, sensitive and unique wildlife species, unmatched geological features, scientific values, and sky island habitats that are critical in allowing species to successfully adapt to the climate crisis.

The designation of Mimbres Peaks National Monument would also be a boon for the economy in Luna County. It is well established that protected public lands are a destination for visitors from far and wide, and the outdoor recreation economy is among the fastest growing sectors in New Mexico. We need not look far for evidence of these trends—the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument in neighboring Doña Ana County has experienced a notable increase in visitation that has fueled significant growth in the local economy, job creation and local tax revenues since its designation in 2014.

According to the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, Luna County has the highest unemployment rate of any county in New Mexico, a rate that is approximately triple that of surrounding counties. Communities in Luna County therefore stand to benefit immensely from the growing

outdoor recreation economy that would follow the protection of these four ranges.

The lands included in the proposed Mimbres Peaks National Monument are threatened by proposed mining and energy development, not to mention unknown future development proposals that may arise. The establishment of the National Monument would protect these ranges and their values in an unmarred state for public use and enjoyment in perpetuity. Additionally, recent National Monument designations in New Mexico have preserved traditional uses like ranching and hunting and recreational uses such as hik-



The proposed Mimbres Peaks National Monument would protect critical "Sky Island" landscapes in southern New Mexico. Image from Adobe Stock images

ing, horseback riding, camping and motor vehicle and mountain bike use on designated roads and trails. The designation of Mimbres Peaks National Monument would therefore be an unqualified win for the protection of these ranges and their special values, for communities and for the existing, ongoing, and responsible uses of these federal public lands. A list of Frequently Asked Questions about national monuments can be found on page 16.

Learn more and join us in our call to designate Mimbres Peaks National Monument at protectmimbrespeaks.org. ▲

LOCALS, TRIBES OBJECT TO PLANNED POWER LINE DESECRATION OF CAJA DEL RIO

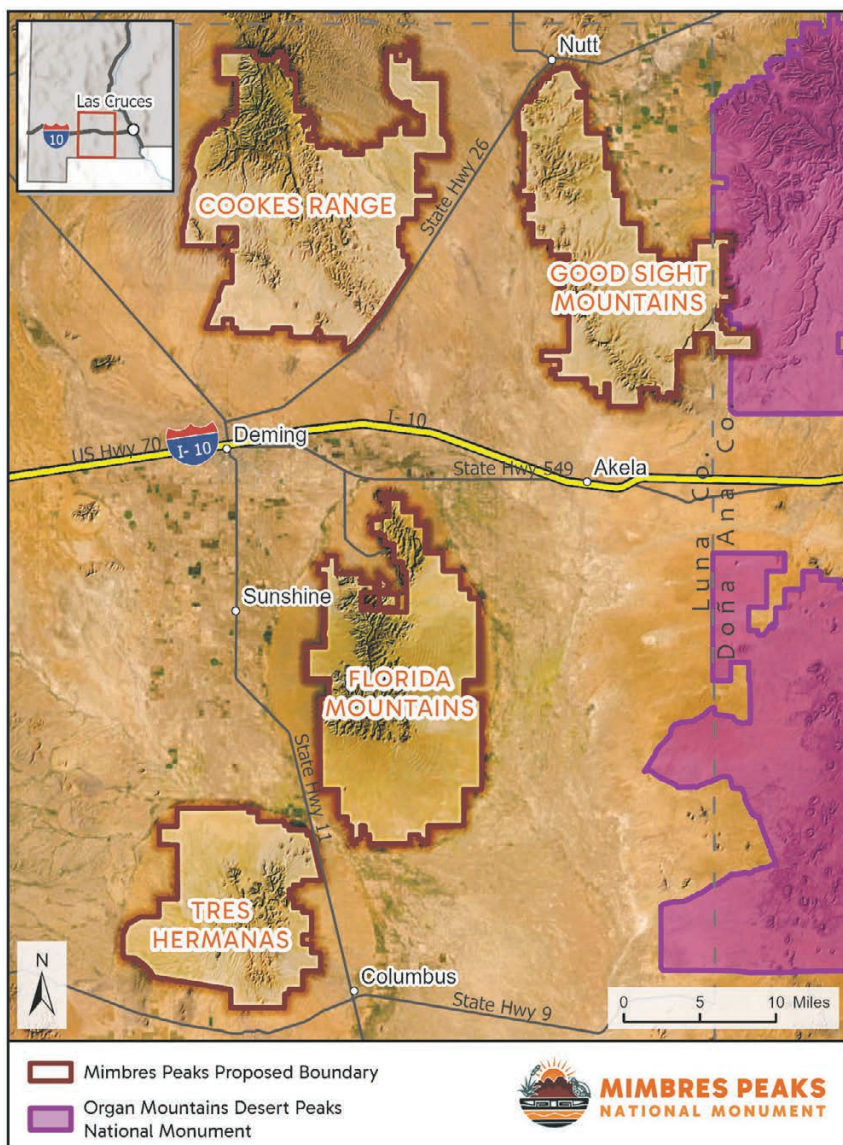
BY GARRETT VENEKLASEN

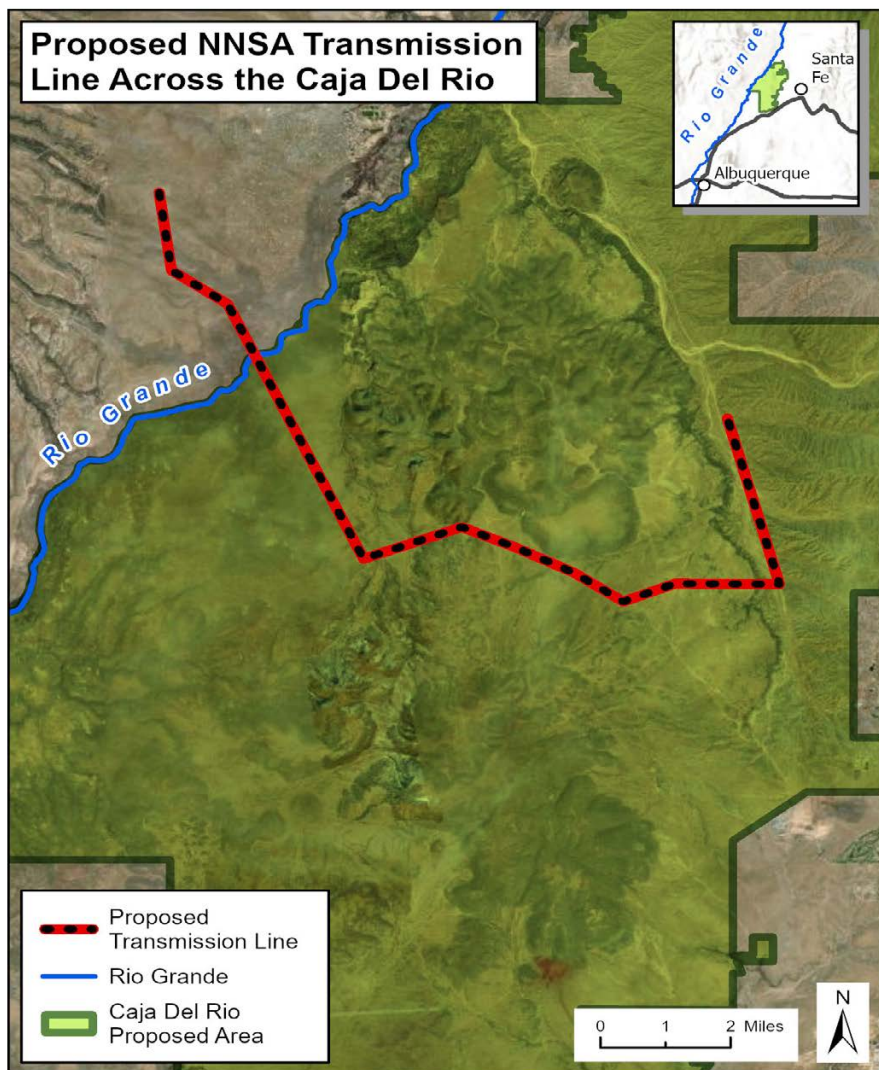
The National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA)'s proposal to run a high-capacity electric transmission line across nearly three miles of the Caja del Rio threatens a magnificent untrammelled landscape at the eastern base of Ortiz Mountain.



The agency wants to add a third, redundant line parallel to the existing Reeves transmission line from Public Service Company of New Mexico's Norton Substation across the Rio Grande to Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).

We cannot overstate the specialness of the Caja and the area NNSA plans to permanently alter. It is a living landscape, a storybook of New Mexico's Indigenous and Hispano communities who cherish and continue to utilize the area for a wide variety of traditional uses. The Caja is a unique cultural and ecological heirloom. What NNSA is proposing is nothing short of a desecration of the sacrosanct.





Having identified significant shortcomings in NNSA’s draft environmental assessment for the proposed plan, we echo the verbal comments of the traditional Hispanic communities and sovereign Pueblo Nations who have maintained ancestral ties to the land since time immemorial. In the words of Tesuque Gov. Milton Herrera, “We are opposed, and we will always be opposed.”

If the Biden administration truly honors our nation’s treaties and Tribal sovereignty, it will instruct NNSA to take its proposed transmission line elsewhere. Alternatively, if NNSA is determined to move forward, New Mexico Wild and the Caja Coalition loudly call for a comprehensive environmental impact statement.

New Mexico Wild expresses deep gratitude to everyone who attended and voiced their concerns at the two in-person NNSA meetings. We also send kudos to the 1,492 people who submitted written comments through our website link. Overall, the Caja Coalition generated 23,275 comments opposing the project!

It is time for all stakeholders who consider the Caja special to themselves and their communities to come together and unanimously support permanent protection of this unique place.

The fastest path would be through presidential executive action using the Antiquities Act. ▲▲

The iconic Caja del Rio Plateau is bordered on one side by the Rio Grande River. Photo by JacobH/ Getty Images Signature – canva.com



Boaters enjoying the Rio Chama Wilderness. Photo by Garrett VeneKlasen

BUILDING SOLUTIONS TO PROTECT NEW MEXICO’S WATERS AND WETLANDS

BY TRICIA SNYDER

The back and forth of federal clean water protections in recent years, most recently in the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Sackett vs. EPA*, has left New Mexico’s waterways particularly vulnerable (see our article on American Rivers’ Most Endangered River List).

Setting up a state-led surface water quality permitting program is an important component of ensuring New Mexico’s precious water resources are protected. This will ensure state-level protections remain intact and are enforceable, regardless of the status of federal protections. It also provides a mechanism by which the communities who know these waters best can have a say in how they are protected. This legislative session, \$7.6 million was appropriated to set this program up—a huge win for clean water!

Now the hard work must begin. The New Mexico Environment Department’s current timeline aims to bring together a technical advisory committee this spring, with a draft rule available for public comment published in the fall. New Mexico Wild will continue to advocate for this program and ensure critical wetland protections, appropriate government-to-government consultation and collaboration with Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations, and community input are built into the program—keep an eye out for future opportunities to engage! ▲▲



BREWING UP SUPPORT FOR WILDERNESS!

Local New Mexico Wild members gathered for a collaborative brew day at Grant County’s newest brewery, Open Space Brewing. A month later, over one hundred people came out to the release party for “Aldo’s Dream,” a beer that celebrates protections for the Gila, past, present, and future. Staff photo



WILDERNESS DISPATCHES, CONTINUED

VOLUNTEERS MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE. THANK YOU!

STAFF ARTICLE

Volunteering is important to the work we are doing at New Mexico Wild and for the wild areas we are stewarding for so many reasons. Here are some of them:

Capacity: Public land agency field staff and personnel seem to dwindle each year, especially in Wilderness programs. Volunteers add capacity to accomplish the work that needs to be done.

Community voices: When you volunteer with us, you learn about what we are doing organizationally to protect New Mexico's Wilderness, wildlife, and water. You tell those stories to other folks you know, spreading the word and raising awareness about what is happening on our public lands and waterways.

Dollar value: Volunteers bring a quantifiable dollar value to our programs. Our work is often funded through foundations and grants that require a dollar-for-dollar match.

We had a tremendous 2023 for volunteering, and we are excited to keep that momentum rolling in 2024.



Left: Volunteers counted trespasscattle at Valles Caldera National Preserve. Above: Volunteers relaxing after a long day of stewardship in the Gila. Staff photos

We also want to recognize our amazing volunteers who went above and beyond, contributing so much of their time to our programs. Those volunteers are:

Outreach Volunteer of the Year: **Sheryl Russell**

Office Volunteer of the Year: **Lawrence Clayton**

Wilderness Defender Volunteers of the Year: **Penny and David Bennett**

Wilderness Ranger Volunteer of the Year: **Camile Kruger**

Special Recognition for Outstanding Service: **Silke Bletzer**

Volunteer of the Year: **Kenneth Shiau**

2023 VOLUNTEER STATS

Wilderness Ranger Program:

1,518 volunteer hours

16 volunteer events

67 signs installed

40 miles of trail cleared

170 logs cut (>2 foot diameter)

93 campsites rehabbed

Outreach & Tabling:

100+ hours of tabling work in the community

100s of new members and volunteers reached

Wilderness Defender Program:

412 volunteer hours

3 training days

32 individual Defender trips into the field

1,100+ cattle recorded in the Valles Caldera National Preserve

100s of valuable data points collected



WILDERNESS RANGER UPDATE

STAFF ARTICLE

The job of a Wilderness Ranger is multidisciplinary—we are jacks-of-all-trades, to say the least. Our Rangers are highly skilled individuals who have been called professional hikers, laborers, scientists, leaders, educators, volunteer coordinators and happy campers. They spend their work lives outdoors, understanding and bettering the wildest areas of the country, seasonally, for about eight months of each year. At least that's how we used to operate ...

This winter, our program's scope of work expanded to Wilderness stewardship on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), thanks to a new cooperative agreement developed with the BLM. We were able to turn our typically seasonal program into a year-round gig for some of our Rangers, who were tasked with braving the cold weather and difficult conditions in some of the state's low(er)-lying BLM Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). This winter, our Rangers surveyed 14 WSAs, collecting information on Wilderness characteristics, ecological impacts, opportunities for solitude, and much more. Data collected is used to inform the agency on the ecological conditions and management needs of these designated areas. This work is the beginning of a partnership with the BLM. We hope to continue to work collaboratively to adequately steward our WSAs.

Our Wilderness Ranger Program started and continues thanks to numerous cooperative agreements that we have developed with the Forest Service since 2017, which we augment with some grant and private funding. So, as the snow begins to melt and our high-country areas open up, we are also looking ahead to another season in Wilderness Areas managed by the Forest Service, building on years of stewardship work. Last year, we had tremendous growth cultivating important volunteer stewardship projects, and we hope to continue providing those opportunities that will improve the Wilderness Areas we all love and seek to protect. **If you are interested in volunteering, check out our list of volunteer projects at www.nmwild.org/events.** ▲▲



Editor's note: After dedicating five years to serving as the Wilderness Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator for New Mexico Wild, Will Ribbons is embarking on a new journey to pursue his musical aspirations. While we are saddened to bid farewell to Will as part of our team, we are confident that his passion for New Mexico's Wilderness will continue to shine through. We wish Will the very best in his future endeavors and eagerly anticipate the melodies he'll create on his musical journey. Check out Will's music here: <https://trillbot.com>. Follow Will's music on Instagram @trill.bot.

Thank you, Will, for your invaluable contributions to New Mexico Wild.

LET'S GET SOCIAL!

SCAN ME



Left: Wilderness Rangers take part in trainings on Leave No Trace ethics, visitor engagement, campsite rehab, signage installation, and more. Staff photo

Top: Using hand tools and grit, Wilderness Rangers cleared over 170 logs greater than 2 feet in diameter from trails in 2023. Staff photo

Middle: Crosscut Saw training day with Forest Service staff and partners. Staff photo

Bottom: Wilderness First Aid training is an essential course for New Mexico Wild Wilderness Rangers before they hit the trails. Staff photo

A CONVERSATION WITH SENATOR MARTIN HEINRICH

New Mexico Wild Executive Director Mark Allison sat down with Senator Martin Heinrich, a conservation champion and longtime friend of the organization, in late February to catch up on conservation, Congress, and family. Their conversation has been edited for clarity and length.

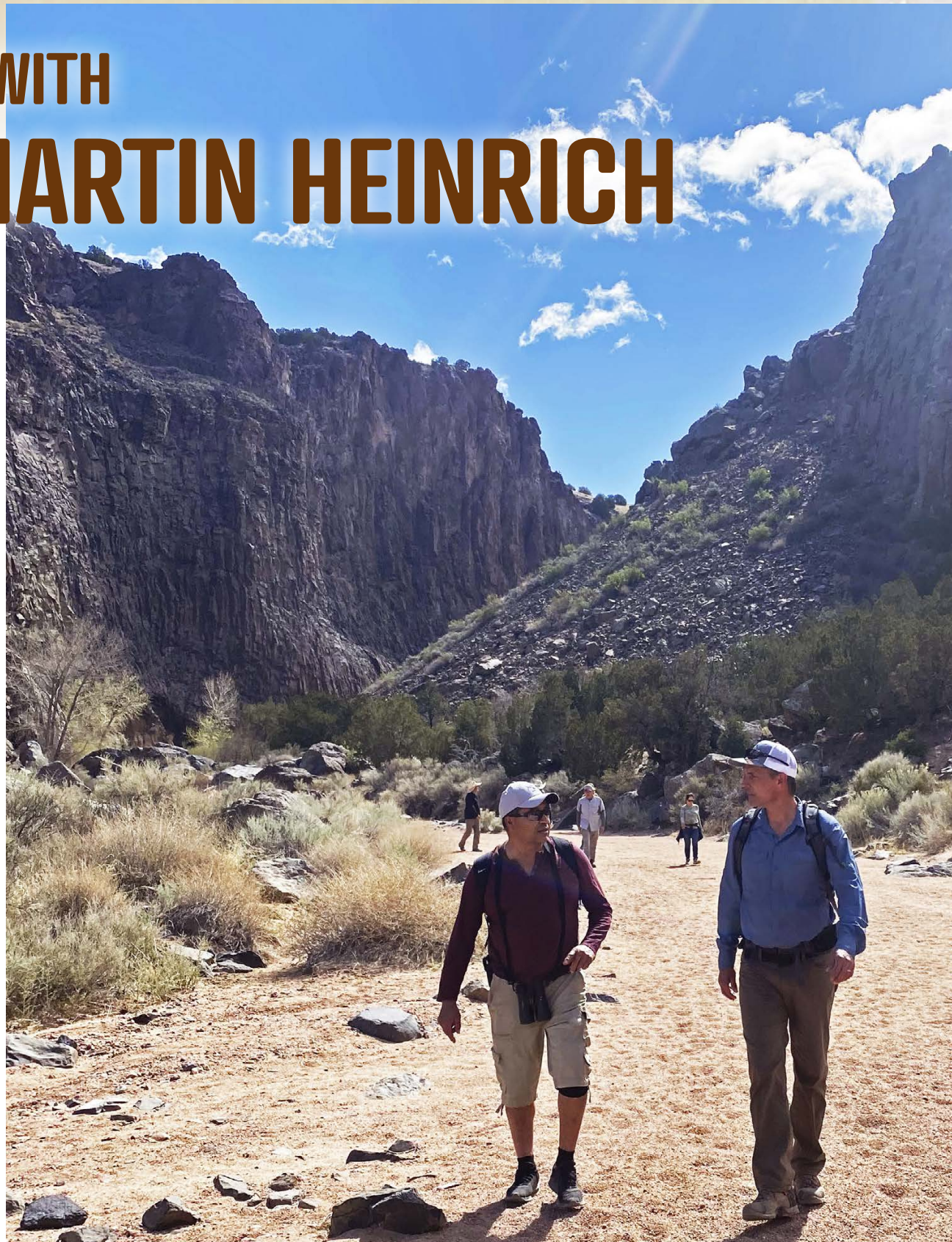
Mark Allison: Good morning, senator. Thank you so much for making the time to talk with me this morning.

My first question is about clean energy siting and generation. You were an early and critical supporter of the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project, the largest clean energy infrastructure project in United States history. And I was pleased to join you and hear your remarks at the groundbreaking event last September. What do you see as the lessons from that effort and more generally, how do we transition to clean energy as quickly as we can and site solar and wind generation and transmission projects but also protect the cultural, conservation and wildlife values that we care about at the same time?

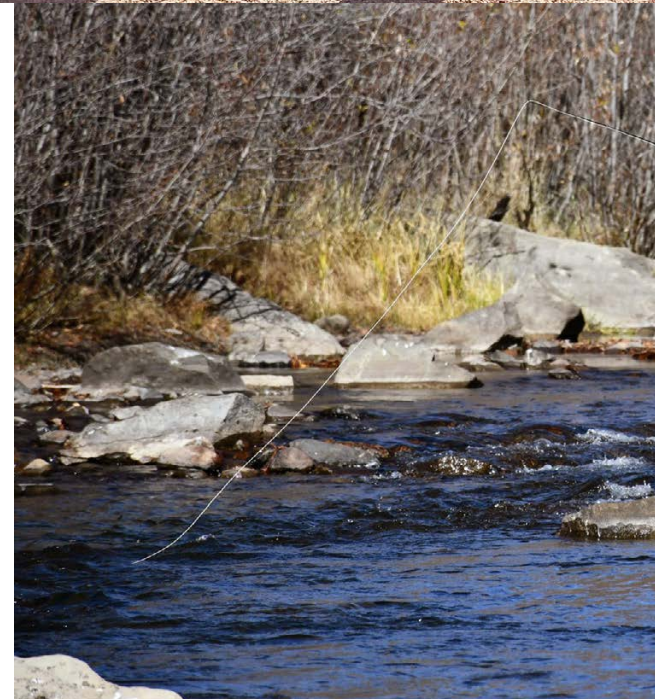
Sen. Martin Heinrich: I think it's worth taking a step back and realizing what a big accomplishment SunZia was. A lot of people in New Mexico have been thinking about it as a transmission project for a long time. But what it really facilitated was over 3 gigawatts of clean energy, or three nuclear power plants worth of carbon-free energy, and we need to be able to generate clean electricity at scale like that to solve our climate challenges.

In 2024, 96% of all the new generation coming onto the grid, like the wind generation through SunZia, will be carbon free. That's a sea change from where we were just a few years ago. And the vast majority of that is wind and solar and batteries. A small portion of it is nuclear, but the vast majority is actual renewables. To get renewable generation from the places it's going to be generated to the places where it's going to be consumed requires transmission.

If there's one thing I think SunZia has really taught us, it's that you have to have stakeholders at the table very early in the process. Figure out where those places of habitat or cultural significance or other places that you absolutely do not want to disturb are early in the process of siting transmission and create buy-in with all the stakeholders along the way.



It took 14 years of my career to see SunZia start to be constructed, and we're going to need to be able to do projects more quickly in the future. I think that means getting to either yes—or to no, frankly, if it's a poorly thought through project—much, much faster. I think we can take a lot of the things that we learned from the SunZia process and institutionalize those in transmission legislation. We need to make sure that for communities between the two ends of a transmission line, between where the generation is and where the consumption is, the benefits are spread over that entire line to support local communities. Pattern Energy was willing to do many of these things voluntarily, including purchase some really important conservation land as mitigation for that line, but we also need to take those lessons and apply them to our transmission planning process nationally.





Left: Senator Heinrich on a visit to Diablo Canyon on the Caja del Rio Plateau with Tribal leadership." Photo by Sen. Heinrich's staff

Top: Mark Allison and Senator Heinrich kayaking a wild river. Staff photo

Top Right: Senator Heinrich and New Mexico Wild organizer Julian Gonzales at a 2022 event celebrating Caja del Rio's culture, land, water and wildlife. Photo by Irene Owsley

Bottom: Senator Heinrich fishing for trout on the Pecos River. Photo Courtesy of Sen. Heinrich's staff

MA: I couldn't agree more. Really exciting stuff. I want to get your thoughts on native trout restoration. It seems that New Mexico is on the forefront of this with the Gila trout and the Rio Grande cutthroat. Much of the trout reintroduction is happening in designated Wilderness, but places like Valle Vidal have also been important to reclaiming habitat. Do you have thoughts on this, and do you see, for example, the Valles Caldera and places like that playing a similar role going forward?

MH: Given the given the climate pressures that we're under, I think native trout restoration and the management of native trout habitat are going to become even more important. We're going to see some of the marginal habitat no longer be viable for cold water fisheries. So, I think a really intense focus on the quality of that habitat, on restoring stream segments from nonnative fisheries to our native Gila and Rio Grande cutthroats is going to be really important.

Historically, sometimes game and fish agencies got credit for a certain number of stream miles in terms of trying to make sure that a species like Rio Grande cutthroats is not listed. I think that has sometimes created incentives that worked against us. You know the Valles Caldera didn't have the number of stream miles that you see in other places like the Valle Vidal, but I think it's a really important place for restoration of the native trout species. The Valles Caldera is one of the most special places on the planet and certainly one of the most special places in New Mexico. And it should really have its native fishery in place. I think people would be very excited about the prospect of fishing the Caldera for Rio Grande cuts. Whether it's looking at restoration in places like the Gila or the Valles Caldera in Northern New Mexico, we need to be maximizing trout

restoration in all the places where we have opportunities and protecting the quality of that habitat to make sure the temperature ranges that support native fish continue to be viable.

MA: What's your favorite secret fishing place in New Mexico? I'm kidding!

I want to turn to some National Monument issues. We've been gratified to see President Biden create several Tribally led and supported National Monuments, such as Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni—Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon in Arizona and Avi Kwa Ame in Nevada. We certainly have places here in New Mexico that are deserving of National Monument status. What lessons do you think these recently designated monuments have for us here back home?

MH: This is a journey that we began back in the Obama administration when I was engaging with them around Bears Ears (National Monument) in part because of what I was hearing from New Mexico Tribes about the cultural relationship with Bears Ears and that there was deep interest from New Mexico Pueblos and from the Navajo Nation in the importance of that landscape and the importance of having a Tribal involvement in the management of that landscape, which has certainly not always been the case, and there's been conflict between our delegation and the Utah delegation of over some of those principles. We learned that Tribes should be actively engaged in the management of landscapes that they have historic relationships with, and we're figuring out how to structure some of the tools to do that. We're making additional progress, including in the new monuments you mentioned that the Biden administration designated. We'll need monument plans and structures for how Tribes can be directly involved in the management of those places.

MA: I have a related question that goes a step beyond co-stewardship and co-management. We're hearing here in New Mexico and around the country Tribes talking more publicly about their ultimate goal to reclaim ancestral homelands. I want to talk a bit about any tension you see between that longer and perhaps more complicated conversation and more immediate protections like National Monuments to safeguard those spe-

Continued on page 19.



The Gila

This year, we celebrate the centennial anniversary of its initial administration.

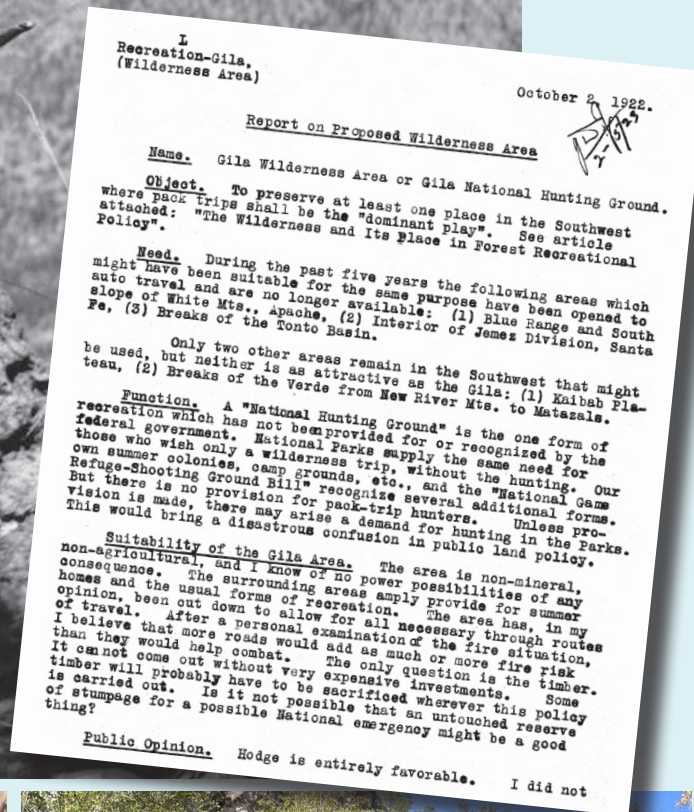
BY BJORN FREDRICKSON AND LUKE KOENIG

In the early 1900s, forester and conservationist Aldo Leopold was employed by the Forest Service and working in the Southwest. It was a time of great change for the American landscape, when, to the fledgling Forest Service, managing forests meant clear-cutting, road building, fire suppression, predator extirpation and introducing nonnative fish. It was in this context that a young Leopold had the most radical idea of all: What if we let nature lead the way?

And so, in 1924, at the urging of Leopold and his allies, the Forest Service administratively designated the land surrounding the headwaters of the Gila River as the Gila Wilderness—the first such designation in the world. The Gila Wilderness became the model upon which the Wilderness Act was based.

Indeed, a full 40 years later, after continued commercial development of our public lands and the commensurate loss of vast tracts of wildlands and habitat, Congress passed the Wilderness Act of 1964. The act defines Wilderness as: “A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man ...”

The concept of “untrammelled” Wilderness is one in which ecological processes are allowed to play out without human intervention, a rare antidote to an increasingly human dominated world and an acknowledgement that even the best of human intentions—for example, the century-long emphasis by the Forest Service on fire suppression and the resulting unhealthy forests and the new era of mega-fires that we are coping with—can have profoundly negative ecological consequences. Congress further de-



Top: Aldo Leopold seated on rimrock above the Rio Gavilan in northern Mexico while on a bow hunting trip in 1938. Photo courtesy of the Aldo Leopold Foundation

Inset: This document is the now-famous report in which Aldo Leopold recommended a wilderness area policy for the Gila that would limit motorized accessibility—the first step toward designation of the Gila Wilderness. Photo courtesy of the Aldo Leopold Foundation

Left: The unique geology of the Gila Wilderness is attributed to a combination of ancient volcanic activity, tectonic movements, and erosion processes over millions of years. Aerial photo by Michael Melford - National Geographic.

Above: A backpacker rests in the cool of the Gila River on a warm fall day in the Gila Wilderness. Staff photo



Centennial of the Gila Wilderness—the 100-year administrative designation by the U.S. Forest Service

at 100

defined Wilderness as undeveloped, affected primarily by the forces of nature and offering outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined types of recreation.

New Mexico Wilderness by The Numbers

Wilderness Areas: **39**

Total Acreage:

1,981,947

Percentage of total land protected as Wilderness:

2.55%

The Wilderness Act protects these special, wild places, and federally designated Wilderness is the most robust and permanent form of protection available for public lands in the United States. Wilderness is critical in preserving habitats and biodiversity in the context of the increasingly severe climate and associated mass extinction crises. Prohibitions on development and commercial activities in Wilderness protect cultural resources and cultural landscapes, clean air and water, and dark night skies and offer visitors the opportunity to experience a sense of adventure, self-reflection, humility, and awe.

Upon its passage, the Wilderness Act instantly established 53 Wildernesses in 13 states, totaling 9.1 million acres and including the Gila. Thanks to grassroots advocacy by communities across the country and subsequent acts of Congress, the National Wilderness Preservation System has since grown to 806 Wildernesses in 44 states plus Puerto Rico, totaling nearly 112 million acres. New Mexicans should be proud that our very own Gila Wilderness was the genesis of this groundbreaking conservation tool.

Left: Volunteers install kiosks to hold interpretive signage at a gateway to the newly defined "Centennial Loop Trail," a 100-mile loop through the heart of the Gila Wilderness. Staff photo



New Mexico Wild will be ringing in the Gila's centennial in numerous ways:

We will be installing trailhead kiosks and interpretive panels to educate the public about the history of Wilderness and the Gila's unique values.

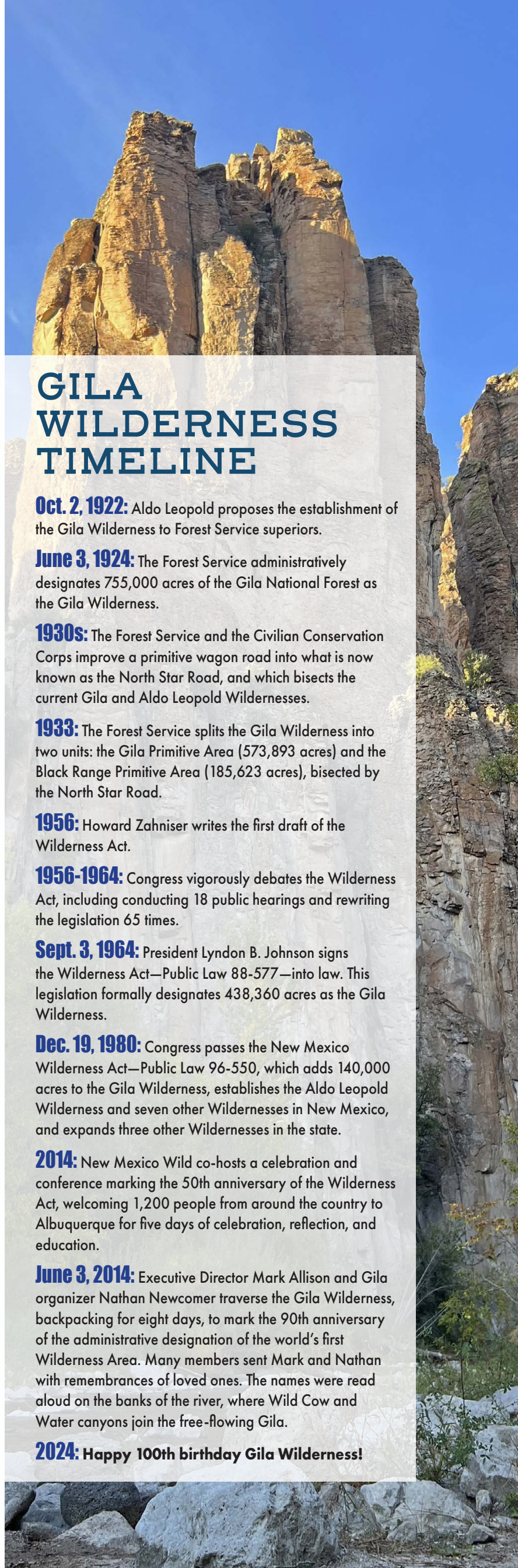
Our Wilderness Rangers will engage volunteers to steward the Wilderness.

We will host events and engagements in communities all around the Wilderness to celebrate this exceptional occasion and to look ahead to future conservation needs in the area.

We will continue our tireless work to permanently protect the Gila River, including sending a delegation of Tribal and community leaders to Washington, D.C., to speak with members of Congress about the importance of passing the M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic Rivers Act—a response to ongoing and repeated threats to dam and divert the Gila River, which originates in the Gila Wilderness and is the last undammed mainstem river in New Mexico.

We have Wilderness today thanks to Leopold's foresight and vision and the efforts of the countless people who have stood up to advocate for it since 1924. Yet, our work is not done. Millions of acres of public land across the United States are eligible for protection as Wilderness, including in the Gila National Forest and on public lands across New Mexico, but remain at risk of being lost forever to development and other factors. To this day, Wilderness exemplifies the simple idea that humility, foresight, and restraint are really all it takes to "manage" these powerful, mysterious, and increasingly rare wild places. Indeed, the Gila remains one of the most substantially intact ecosystems in the continental United States.

In this centennial year of the Gila Wilderness, we are going to follow the lead of those who came before us and follow the lead of nature. And as we continue to fight for new Wilderness designations, we will use all the tools we have to ensure the health of and respect for our existing Wilderness Areas, the wild creatures that inhabit them, and the wild rivers that run through them. We will stand up for Wilderness, wildlife, and water. ▲



GILA WILDERNESS TIMELINE

Oct. 2, 1922: Aldo Leopold proposes the establishment of the Gila Wilderness to Forest Service superiors.

June 3, 1924: The Forest Service administratively designates 755,000 acres of the Gila National Forest as the Gila Wilderness.

1930s: The Forest Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps improve a primitive wagon road into what is now known as the North Star Road, and which bisects the current Gila and Aldo Leopold Wildernesses.

1933: The Forest Service splits the Gila Wilderness into two units: the Gila Primitive Area (573,893 acres) and the Black Range Primitive Area (185,623 acres), bisected by the North Star Road.

1956: Howard Zahniser writes the first draft of the Wilderness Act.

1956-1964: Congress vigorously debates the Wilderness Act, including conducting 18 public hearings and rewriting the legislation 65 times.

Sept. 3, 1964: President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Wilderness Act—Public Law 88-577—into law. This legislation formally designates 438,360 acres as the Gila Wilderness.

Dec. 19, 1980: Congress passes the New Mexico Wilderness Act—Public Law 96-550, which adds 140,000 acres to the Gila Wilderness, establishes the Aldo Leopold Wilderness and seven other Wildernesses in New Mexico, and expands three other Wildernesses in the state.

2014: New Mexico Wild co-hosts a celebration and conference marking the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, welcoming 1,200 people from around the country to Albuquerque for five days of celebration, reflection, and education.

June 3, 2014: Executive Director Mark Allison and Gila organizer Nathan Newcomer traverse the Gila Wilderness, backpacking for eight days, to mark the 90th anniversary of the administrative designation of the world's first Wilderness Area. Many members sent Mark and Nathan with remembrances of loved ones. The names were read aloud on the banks of the river, where Wild Cow and Water canyons join the free-flowing Gila.

2024: Happy 100th birthday Gila Wilderness!

MORE GREEN FOR THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT

STAFF ARTICLE

New Mexico Wild celebrates the Legislature's appropriation in this year's session of \$300 million in critical funding for conservation programs across the state through the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund (LOELF).

The fund, created in 2023, is New Mexico's first-ever dedicated source of recurring dollars for conservation, prioritizing land and water stewardship, forest and watershed health, outdoor recreation and infrastructure, agriculture and working lands, historic preservation, and wildlife protection. It provides funding for existing programs that have not received consistent or adequate funding in the past.

Like many states, New Mexico historically has suffered from a severe lack of dedicated state funding for conservation-related agencies and programs. As a result, New Mexico has missed out on millions of dollars of federal conservation funding simply because it lacked a mechanism to provide the required matching state money.

Last year, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, legislators and a broad coalition came together to solve this problem through the passage of SB 9, which created a two-part investment and funding strategy. The legislation created an investment fund, called the Conservation Legacy Permanent Fund, and a spending fund, the LOELF. The permanent fund is managed by the State Investment Council. Once the permanent fund exceeds \$150 million, annual interest disbursements will be made to the LOELF. Annual distributions from the LOELF will fund existing state programs that are shovel-ready, have a proven track record of success, are popular in communities, or have rarely been funded. In 2023, the Legislature appropriated \$100 million to the permanent fund.

The additional \$300 million appropriated by the Legislature this year far exceeds the \$150 million annual distribution threshold. According to the State Investment Council, a \$350 million permanent investment fund will be self-sustaining and will generate \$20 million a year for LOELF pro-

grams. These state investments could unlock millions of federal matching dollars.

Starting in fiscal year 2025, the following state agencies and programs will begin receiving distributions:

Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (22.5%): Natural Heritage Conservation Act (conserve and restore open space, private lands, cultural sites, and wildlife habitat; leverage federal Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars), Forest and Watershed Restoration Act, Forest Conservation Act and Prescribed Burning Act (protect water supplies and help communities restore forest and watershed health).

Environment Department (10%): River Stewardship Program (improve water quality and river/watershed health and functionality).

Department of Agriculture (22.5%): Healthy Soils Act (farming and ranching to promote soil health, including for acequias), soil and water conservation districts (improve grassland ecosystems and support acequia restoration projects), Noxious Weeds Management Act.

Department of Game and Fish (22%): Game Protection Fund (conserve and restore imperiled species and sustainably manage game species).

Economic Development Department (15%): Outdoor Equity Program (connect underserved youth with the outdoors, conservation, and traditional land-based cultural values) and trails grants (maintain and build community-approved trails for recreational use).

Department of Cultural Affairs (8%): Pre-historic and Historic Sites Preservation Act (fund public-private partnerships for preservation).

The ambitious creation and funding of the LOELF has been many years in the making. This victory would not have been possible without the support of the governor and EMNRD staff, as well as the tireless bipartisan leadership of Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth, Sen. Steven Neville, House Appropriations Chairman Nathan Small, House Speaker Javier Martinez and other key legislators statewide. New Mexico Wild was proud to contribute to the broad and diverse coalition, which included stakeholders who have previously opposed conservation-related initiatives. This forward-thinking policy gives us hope for the future and serves as a shining example of consensus building in a time of divisive and counterproductive political rhetoric. To learn more, visit www.enchantmentfund.org. ▲▲

HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE PROJECTS THAT WILL RECEIVE FUNDING:



Sacramento Salamander

The Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund is supporting the survey for Sacramento Salamanders in Otero County. These unique creatures, found in the Capitan, Sierra Blanca, and Sacramento Mountains, are currently listed in New Mexico as a threatened species.

Rio Grande Chub

Funding will go toward fish health assessments for the Rio Grande Chub and Sucker Fish in New Mexico. These assessments support the human assisted movement of these species to native trout waters, helping to preserve their populations and prevent the spread of fish pathogens.

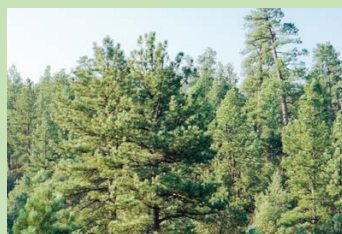


San Antonio Creek

The restoration of San Antonio Creek's riparian and beaver habitat will be supported by the Fund. This project will enhance 1.35 miles of the creek and around 47 acres of adjacent wet meadow and riparian wetland in Valles Caldera National Preserve. The goal is to improve the ecological balance in an area historically impacted by drought, overgrazing, mining, logging, beaver eradication, and severe fires.

Taos Canyon Forest Thinning

A project to thin vegetation in Taos Canyon will receive funding, covering federal, private, and tribal lands with high wildfire risk. Important areas at risk include a state highway linking Taos and Angel Fire, numerous homes, recreation sites, and the Rio Fernandez, which serves 22 acequias in the Taos Valley. Federal funding has supported thinning on private and national forest lands over the years.



American Mink Survey

The Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund is backing the American Mink Habitat and Population Survey in Northern New Mexico. This initiative funds surveys for the rare American Mink, utilizing camera traps at various sites across the region.

2024 STATE LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

STAFF ARTICLE

In a huge win for clean water, state legislators in this year's session approved \$7.6 million for the New Mexico Environment Department to set up a **state-led surface water quality permitting program** and shared infrastructure with the groundwater permitting program. The new programs will be critical in the wake of last year's Supreme Court ruling that removed federal protections for most of New Mexico's waters. Read more on page 7. The new programs will be critical in the wake of last year's Supreme Court ruling that removed federal protections for most of New Mexico's waters. *Read more on page 7.*

Other important statewide water investments made this session include:

- **A truly historic investment of \$300 million for the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund** *Read more on page 14*
- **\$2 million for the River Stewardship Program, which works to enhance the health of rivers**
- **\$5 million for acequia improvements**
- **\$50 million into the Water Trust Fund, which funds crucial water projects every year**
- **An extension of the historic \$7.5 million appropriated last legislative session to the Strategic Water Reserve, a tool that helps keep more water in New Mexico's rivers**

Creation of the **New Mexico Match Fund (HB 177)** was another monumental win. The fund is a first step toward getting more federal dollars on the ground in New Mexico. \$75 million was appropriated, providing necessary state matching funds for a wide variety of project types.

One of the most difficult challenges of this legislative session was determining how to engage with the **Strategic Water Supply**. This initiative, announced by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham late last year, proposed to invest \$500 million to purchase treated brackish water and produced water, a by-product of the oil and gas industry. We continue to have questions around this proposal and appreciate that the idea will receive additional vetting in the interim session.

Updating New Mexico's **1935 Oil and Gas Act** presented another challenge. New Mexico Wild has been working with the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department and various stakeholders to develop proposed reforms supported by the governor. The resulting legislation, HB 133, addressed the state's mounting liability for the plugging and remediation of abandoned wells. Although the bill passed two committees, it ultimately died on the House floor without being heard. We look forward to continuing this work in the next session.

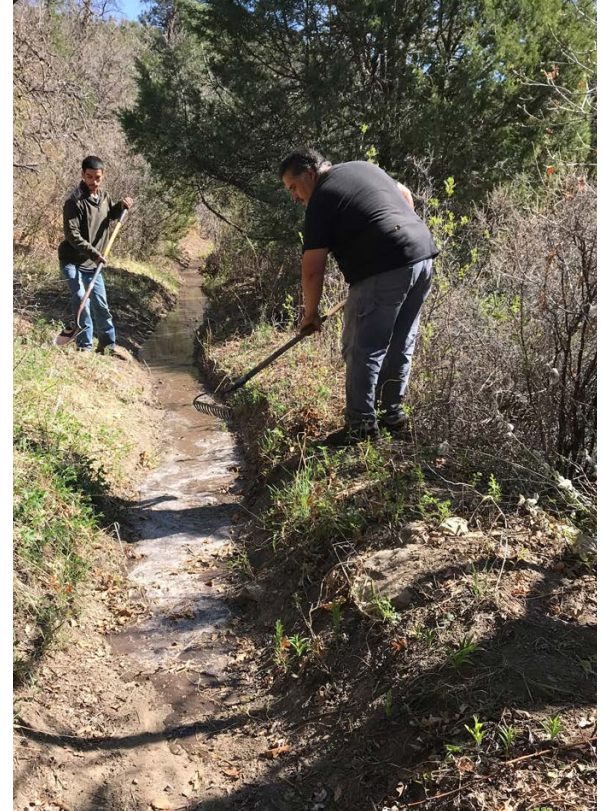
The Wildlife Corridor Fund, created in 2023, saw a \$5 million investment this session. The fund supports efforts to reduce animal-related vehicle collisions through highway infrastructure projects that include signage, fencing and overpass/underpass projects and promotes habitat connectivity across the state. Unfortunately, corridor infrastructure projects are expensive, requiring hundreds of millions of dollars. With 11 critical priority projects identified statewide, \$5 million is a drop in the bucket. We will continue to advocate for appropriate funding for this important initiative.

Amendments to the state **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) (SB 169)**, passed unanimously and will help the state better access federal LWCF dollars. The federal LWCF provides grants for projects throughout the country to safeguard natural areas, water resources and cultural heritage and to provide equitable recreation opportunities. The state legislation:

Prioritizes funding requests from Pueblos, Tribes and rural communities

Invests \$10 million to help communities meet federal match requirements

Provides needed support for the state Parks Division's program administration



Statewide water investments made this legislative session include \$5 million for acequia improvements. Photo by Ralph Vigil

The New Mexico Game and Fish Department badly needs reform to transition from an agency focused solely on game and fish species to a modern agency that holistically stewards all New Mexico's precious wildlife. Unfortunately, efforts to accomplish this (HB 147/178) were stalled in this short 30-day session. We continue to support legislative efforts to pass this critical initiative in the 2025 session. ▲▲

THANK YOU GOV. LUJAN GRISHAM AND SEN. PETER WIRTH!
FOR MAKING THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT LEGACY FUND A PRIORITY THIS SESSION

Thanks to the leadership of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and New Mexico Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth, the legislature is on track to provide a \$300 million investment for the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund.



Because of their dedication, New Mexico now has its first-ever dedicated source of conservation funding - prioritizing land and water stewardship, forest and watershed health, outdoor recreation and infrastructure, agriculture and working lands, historic preservation, and wildlife species protection.

WE ALSO THANK ALL THE SANTA FE AREA SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

Alianza Agri-cultura de Taos • Amigos Bravos • Audubon Southwest • Back Country Horsemen NM Gila Chapter • Climate Advocates Voces Unidas • Chama Peak Land Alliance • Conservation Voters New Mexico • Defenders of Wildlife • Forest Stewards Guild • Friends of the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks • Indian Nations Conservation Alliance • National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association • National Parks Conservation Association • Native Land Institute • New Mexico Acequia Commission • New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts • New Mexico Council of Outfitters and Guides • New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council • NM Healthy Soil Working Group • New Mexico Land Conservancy • New Mexico Wild • New Mexico Wildlife Federation • Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project • Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust • Rocky Mountain Farmers Union • Santa Fe Conservation Trust • The Semilla Project • Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter • Taos County Chamber of Commerce • Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership • Trout Unlimited • Trust for Public Land • Western Landowners Alliance • Western Resource Advocates • The Wilderness Society • Wildlands Network



Paid for by New Mexico Wild



A student of the new Rio Grande del Norte Outdoor Academy learns some valuable guiding skills while having a great time outdoors. Photo by Nick Streit

Outdoor Academy: Fun for Youth, and Maybe Even a Job

BY NICK STREIT

Many New Mexicans choose to live here for the state's vast beauty, its wild places, and the recreation opportunities they provide. The Land of Enchantment boasts world class fly fishing, mountain biking, skiing, rafting and more. But are all New Mexicans experiencing outdoor recreation in the same way? Are the people on our ski slopes, trails and rivers as diversified as the state's population?

Outdoor recreation is one of the state's fastest growing segments of the economy, grossing almost \$2.5 billion a year. While most of this growth is happening in rural communities, many native New Mexicans are left out of job opportunities. Ironically, it's these same people who are often best suited for the work, as they have a deep connection with and understanding of the landscape.

The Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte aims to address these issues with the creation of a pilot program called the "Outdoor Academy." Program coordinator Ben Mortensen explained, "Activities will include fly fishing instruction, rafting workshops and specialized certifications needed to become a rafting or fishing guide. We will foster kids through

the entire process, from introducing them to rafting and fishing to navigating the outdoor recreation industry."

The support won't stop at education, however. The guiding companies contracted to teach these courses will provide mentorship and internship opportunities post-academy. This is a win-win situation, as the New Mexico outdoor recreation economy's homegrown labor pool is seriously deficient, especially relative to Indigenous, Hispano and Latino communities.

Courses begin in the spring, and New Mexico youth under the age of 18 can apply at www.riograndefriends.org/outdoor-academy or get more information by emailing nick@nmwild.org.

This program is funded by the Outdoor Equity Fund, LOR Foundation, Northern Rio Grande Heritage Area, and the Lillard Fly Fishing Conservation Fund.

Editor's Note: While the RGDN Friends group is currently a project of New Mexico Wild, the goal is to cultivate sufficient community and funder support to create and sustain an independent Friends organization. ▲▲

2024 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

STAFF ARTICLE

During the 118th Congress, New Mexico's conservation-minded congressional leaders have pursued an array of legislation that aims to protect public lands, water, and wildlife. New Mexico Wild has been closely tracking several bills that concern our protection priorities. This is not a comprehensive list of all of the bills we're tracking, but here are some highlights:

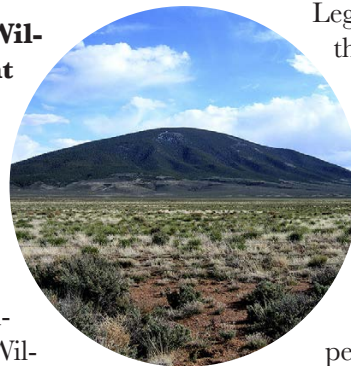


The Pecos Watershed Protection Act (S 3033, HR 5943) would enact a mineral withdrawal for approximately 163,000 acres managed by the Santa Fe National Forest and 1,600 acres managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the Upper Pecos Watershed. Additionally, the act would create the Thompson Peak Wilderness Area, consisting of approximately 11,599 acres of rugged lands and encompassing several tributaries of the Pecos River. The act would protect sensitive riparian areas, water quality and other important natural and cultural resources by preventing new mining claims. The Senate bill, sponsored by Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., and cosponsored by Sen. Ben Ray Luján, D-N.M., passed the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in December 2023. 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 Stop Tererro Mine website for more information about past and present mining threats impacting this crucial watershed: stopterro.com.

The Cerro de la Olla Wilderness Establishment Act

(S 593, HR 1303) would create a 12,898-acre Wilderness area administered by the BLM within the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument in Taos County, adding to the two existing Wilderness areas in the Monument, Cerro del Yuta and Rio San Antonio. Cerro de la Olla consists of an impressive volcanic shield and dome-shaped caldera, 9,500 feet above sea level. The Senate bill, sponsored by Heinrich and cosponsored by Luján unanimously passed the Energy and Natural Resources Committee in May 2023. An identical House bill is sponsored by Leger Fernández and cosponsored by Stansbury.



The M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic River Act

(S 776, HR 1611) would designate 446 miles of the Gila and San Francisco rivers as Wild, Scenic or Recreational, permanently protecting these rivers in their free-flowing condition. The Senate bill, sponsored by Heinrich and cosponsored by Luján, passed the Com-

mittee on Energy and Natural Resources in May 2023 on a bipartisan vote. For the first time since this legislation was first introduced in 2020, there is a companion bill in the House, sponsored by Rep. Gabe Vasquez, D-N.M., and cosponsored by Leger Fernández and Stansbury. The Gila River is the last free-flowing river in New Mexico.

The Chaco Cultural Heritage Protection Act of 2023

(S 1404, HR 3062) would withdraw approximately 336,400 acres of federal public lands within a 10-mile radius of Chaco Culture National Historical Park from new oil and gas leasing and mineral development. The legislation would provide permanent protection for the lands encompassed by the 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal that Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland enacted in June 2023. The Senate bill is sponsored by Luján and cosponsored by Heinrich. The identical House bill is sponsored by Leger Fernández and cosponsored by Stansbury. The legislation would protect a living cultural landscape, important to multiple Pueblos and Tribes and encompassing thousands of significant cultural properties and sites. The bill would also benefit air quality and public health in the region and would safeguard dark night skies, paleontological resources, remnant wildness, natural beauty, and wildlife habitat.▲▲



CONGRATULATIONS 2024 NEW MEXICO WILD WOLF STAMP ART WINNERS!

First place: Tiana Stoeppler, Ancestral Call, 11 in. x 14 in., acrylic on canvas
Tiana Stoeppler is a self-taught wildlife artist and photographer based in the east mountains of New Mexico. She grew up in Santa Fe, exposed to a vast art community. Even as a child she was enchanted by the natural world. Tiana continues to find endless inspiration in the natural environment and wildlife of New Mexico. She primarily works in acrylics on canvas and is always excited to try new mediums and techniques. Her current collection of original artwork and prints are inspired by the beauty of New Mexico's high desert.

If you're interested in viewing more of Tiana's wildlife inspired original artwork you can view some of her work displayed locally at Greenside Café in Cedar Crest or Dream Gallery in Madrid. And check out her Etsy shop! <https://linktr.ee/tianastoeppler>



Second place: Robbin Bates, Canis Lupus, 4.5 in. x 5 in., digital drawing



Youth First Place: Kira Kampschmidt (age 14), Luminescent Whispers, 9 in. x 11 in., colored pencils

PURCHASE A WOLF STAMP TO SUPPORT LOBO PROTECTION!
www.nmwild.org/shop/



SCAN ME



Third place: Ed McKay, Wake Up Call, 24 in. x 20 in., acrylic on canvas

US Fish and Wildlife Service 2023 Wolf Census counted 257 wolves in Arizona and New Mexico, just one third of a viable minimum population. The lack of genetic diversity caused by artificial habitat boundaries presents a long-term threat to the species.

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

\$92,250 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.

NATIONAL MONUMENT FAQs

What is the purpose of a National Monument designation?

National Monuments are designated to protect public lands and waters that have cultural, historic, ecological and scientific importance to ensure that future generations can enjoy these places as we can today.

What are the benefits of a National Monument designation?

A designation ensures that public lands are managed with local input to facilitate careful, responsible enjoyment of these special areas. The management takes into consideration preexisting uses and local priorities. Designating National Monuments may also help increase agency staff and funding to improve management of recreation and other activities on these lands as well as the protection of resources.

How can a National Monument be established?

A National Monument can be established either by Congress through legislation or by the president through use of the Antiquities Act.

How are National Monuments managed?

National Monuments are managed by federal agencies, including the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A Monument designation directs the agency or agencies to develop a resource management plan with input from and consultation with state and local governments, Tribes, communities, and the public. Plans take into account local considerations such as promoting cooperative conservation, preserving Tribal culture and religious activities, conserving critical wildlife habitat, improving recreation opportunities, and other priorities.

Will a National Monument designation impact my private property?

Monument designations apply to federally owned public lands and do not impact or influence what you can do on your private property. National Monuments protect existing rights, including the right to access your property. Development of private property is governed by county or local municipal zoning laws and is not affected by a National Monument designation.

Does New Mexico have any National Monuments?

Some of New Mexico's most iconic natural areas are protected as National Monuments, including Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, Bandelier, Gila Cliff Dwellings, Petroglyph and Rio Grande del Norte. White Sands and Carlsbad Caverns National Parks were first designated as National Monuments, too.

What is allowed in National Monuments?

National Monuments recognize valid existing rights, including access to private property, traditional cultural and customary uses by Indigenous tribes, valid mining claims, flood control, rights of way for roads and utility infrastructure, and previously existing oil and gas leases. Other activities allowed in National Monuments include:

- Hunting and fishing
- Livestock grazing
- Camping and backpacking
- Riding motorized vehicles on designated roads
- Horseback riding
- Hiking and biking, including with dogs
- Firefighting and fuels reduction
- Law enforcement and border security

Activities like rockhounding—the public collecting small amounts of rocks, mineral specimens, and semiprecious gemstones for noncommercial purposes—are also generally allowed in National Monuments so long as the materials being collected are not specifically identified as monument objects in the enabling legislation or presidential proclamation used to establish the National Monument, and that collection activities do not adversely affect another resource value identified as a monument object.

Where can I learn more about New Mexico Wild's work to protect our vulnerable public lands with a Monument designation?

In this newsletter! Look out for articles on the Caja del Rio and Mimbres Peaks, two of our top campaigns for National Monument designation. Don't forget to become a member of New Mexico Wild to contribute to this work and be kept informed on these important campaigns. Join at www.nmwild.org/become-a-member. ▲▲

Thank You Stone Age!

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Albuquerque
505.209.2081

STONE AGE MIDTOWN
4130 Cutler Ave. NE
Albuquerque
505.341.2016



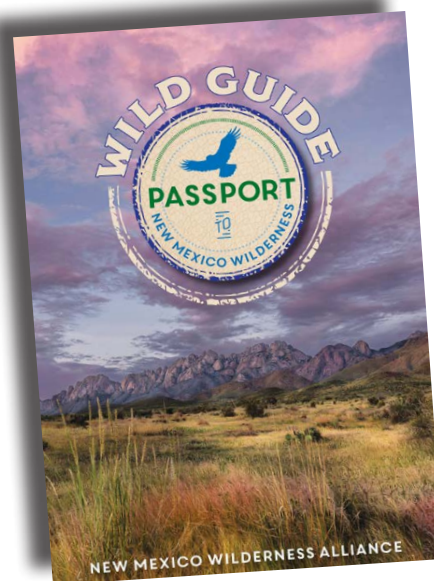
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This comprehensive guide to New Mexico's protected wildlands is the only book that features each of the state's designated Wilderness areas and Wilderness Study Areas as well as other treasures, such as the new Rio Grande del Norte National Monument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

Martin Heinrich interview, continued from page 11.

cial places from urgent threats even as they may be working towards an ultimate goal of Land Back.

MH: I think the most progress comes from continual engagement on these issues and looking for opportunities where we can align different constituencies, including Tribal communities, in the relationship and management of landscapes. I've learned from a whole host of Tribal mentors who I've become close with over the years that it's really important to recognize that landscapes important to Tribal communities are not important from the

MA: That sounds right to me. And, by the way, thank you for your leadership on Chaco. That was an amazing success story to secure that 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal. So, thank you from all of us. I wanted to ask a question about your sons who are now young men. Has raising children changed your perspective on how you approach public service? And what lessons have you taught each other about public lands conservation?

MH: You know, the best thing about raising my boys has been getting to watch them discover the world for the first time and discover these places

MA: Yeah, it's one of the best parts of our job. Thanks for that answer. New Mexico Wild is going to continue to work—with your help!—toward securing protections of special public lands through designations like Wilderness and National Monuments. At the same time, we see plenty of examples all over New Mexico where even formally protected areas are frankly neglected and abused. We know that the land management agencies like the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are under-resourced and understaffed, and we're sympathetic to that. But what needs to happen to ensure that there is sufficient management and enforcement for issues like illegal off-road vehicle use

“Land is for the very wealthy in most countries. And that's not how it is in the United States of America. I think this experiment in the democratization of our landscapes has been truly one of the greatest accomplishments of our nation.”
— Sen. Martin Heinrich

point of view of a museum or a history book. These are living cultural landscapes where cultural activities continue to be performed today, and that can really shift a mindset.

When I took (former Interior Secretary) David Bernhardt to Chaco Canyon, I think the aha moment that really helped us keep oil and gas from the area around Chaco during the Trump administration was when he realized in his engagement with former Gov. Brian Vallo of Acoma

that Gov. Vallo's family has direct ongoing cultural relationships with this place that happen now. It's not about who is there in the year 1200, it's about the relationship and the ongoing cultural importance *today*. That really shifted his view of how we should be approaching Chaco and the area around Chaco. It bought us some time to be able to do more to protect that landscape.

I've been working with Tribes across the country, as well as New Mexico Tribes and Congressman (Raúl) Grijalva from Arizona, on a bill that would create a system, like our systems of refuges and Wilderness areas, that would be Tribal cultural areas with an overlay of protection—a mineral withdrawal as well as a structure for management engagement for these important areas. That's an effort to do legislatively and permanently what has been attempted through one-off monument designations up to now.



Above: Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury, Executive Director Mark Allison, Senator Martin Heinrich, and Deputy Director Tisha Broska gather at a community event to protect the Buffalo Tract. Staff photo

Left: Sen. Heinrich, Santa Fe County District 2 Commissioner Hansen, and Executive Director Mark Allison at an event celebrating the Caja del Rio's culture, land, water and wildlife. Photo by Irene Owsley

ness and the wonder of these places in their eyes on our first big backpack through the Gila, discovering the cultural sites and watching them play in the Gila River. I think all of us working in difficult spaces get jaded over time, and when I see the wonder of this amazing unique resource of public lands that we have and what it means to kids to be able to be a part of that, it just sort of wipes the slate clean and allows me to reinvigorate my approach toward why I do this work in the first place. It really validates how important and how lucky we are to have this amazing birthright of public lands that does not exist in the vast majority of the world. Land is for the very wealthy in most countries. And that's not how it is in the United States of America. I think this experiment in democratization of our landscapes has been truly one of the greatest accomplishments of our nation. And watching kids in the outdoors really reinforces that.

that have been part of my life now for many decades—to see the new-

and dumping and shooting and trespass cattle and all those things that we see and hear about from our members every day?

MH: I think there are a couple of answers here. One is at the agencies. I really think there needs to be a thoughtful approach to a new generation of leadership and not just, “What we've done in the past is OK for what we're going to do in the future.” We need to empower land managers with the leadership and the ethic that says, “We expect you to protect these places and to treat them with the reverence that they deserve and we expect you to set that expectation with the public.” In addition, we have to create a culture outside of the agencies that demands that kind of stewardship and have organizations on the ground helping the agencies to know when landscapes are being abused and when illegal activities are occurring and to partner with them, to set an expectation that raises what all of us expect out of our public landscapes.

You know, it's interesting to see what a little bit of signage and interpretation can do to reset expectations. This is not a place for an illegal dump. It's

not a place to be abused. It's not a place where you get to drive your vehicle anywhere across the landscape. And having some very modest, inexpensive infrastructure that tells people about the history and the resources of a place can really eliminate some of the worst behaviors that we have tolerated for far too long in many of these public spaces.

MA: I think most people in the public view New Mexico Wild as an advocacy group, which we certainly are. Perhaps lesser known, we have this robust stewardship and public engagement program, paid Wilderness Rangers throughout the state and hundreds of volunteers we call Wilderness Defenders. They are our eyes and ears, and we learn a lot about the abuses from them, but they also do trail work and signage and interpretative kiosks, which is really gratifying. When we meet members of the public on the trail, they're very appreciative of our presence and our work, and so we're going to do more of that in the upcoming years.

New Mexico Wild promotional question here: You were one of our founding board members and you obviously saw the need and value in creating an organization that does what we do. Why should people become members or supporters of New Mexico Wild? Can you describe how what we do here in New Mexico helps you when you're in D.C.?

MH: Absolutely. New Mexico Wild is critical to creating the sort of locally rooted conservation engagement that allows for legislation and admin-

istrative conservation actions to be possible. Without your grassroots engagement in communities around the state, it simply wouldn't be possible to get many of the things that we've done in the last couple of decades to happen. If you look back at New Mexico's conservation timeline, the time before New Mexico Wild came along, there were a couple of decades when almost nothing happened. It's that infrastructure, that engagement, the grassroots that you harness and represent that has made it possible to do so many things. Think of White Sands National Park, the Columbine-Hondo Wilderness Area, all of the Wilderness areas in the Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monuments, those Monuments themselves, some of the new refuges that we have seen in New Mexico—all of these things require a huge amount of grassroots support to be successful. I think the proof is in the pudding that so many things have gotten accomplished, and New Mexico Wild has become a real force of nature in the state.

MA: Thank you so much. That means a lot to the board and staff and the members of New Mexico Wild. You've been very generous with your time. Is there anything that we didn't get a chance to talk about that you'd like to raise or highlight?

MH: I would just leave folks with an ask, which is ask yourself how you can give back to these landscapes that we are so lucky to have in New Mexico. I think almost all of us who have some relationship with New Mexico Wild are deeply connected to

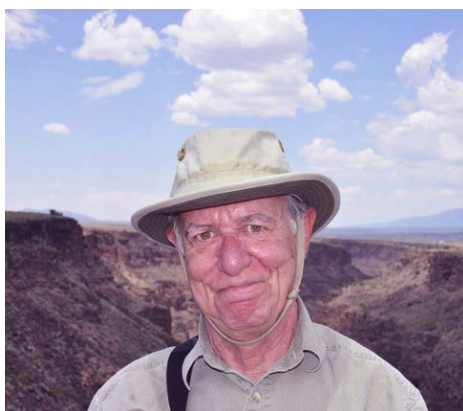
places that we know and love. We have a responsibility to think about how to steward and protect those places and pass them on to the next generation in better shape than we inherited them. And that's a responsibility for me and for you, but it's also a responsibility that I think all of your members take very seriously. When your membership is engaged, it makes a lot of really important things possible.

MA: Thank you so much, again, for your time and for your leadership. It's just such a joy to be able to work with you on things that we really care about. And I also want to thank you for having such a fantastic staff. They are also exceptional to work with. I really appreciate all that you do and look forward to seeing you soon, Martin. Thank you.

MH: Thank you, Mark. ▲



To read this interview in its entirety, scan the QR code or go to <https://bit.ly/43q3P6M>



"I HAVE ALWAYS FELT THAT THE BEST REASON TO HAVE MONEY IS SO YOU CAN GIVE IT AWAY. AND WHEN I CROSS OVER INTO THE NEXT GREAT ADVENTURE, IT WILL GIVE ME GREAT PLEASURE TO KNOW THAT I AM LEAVING BEHIND A LEGACY GIFT THAT IN SOME SMALL WAY WILL MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE."

—ERIC VAN HORN, LEGACY SUPPORTER

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



New Mexico Wild Action Fund is a 501 (C)4 not for profit organization dedicated to advancing policies, increasing civic participation in the democratic process, and cultivating and electing candidates for local offices that support policies and positions that protect New Mexico's wilderness, wildlife, and water.

Visit www.nmwildactionfund.org to learn more about how you can help.



GET OUT!

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

EE CANYON

Gila Wilderness

TRAIL INFO

Trailhead: 33.2247° N 108.2516° W

Length: 7.25 miles full loop

Trail Type: Loop

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

Route Type: Day Hike

Water: Year-round water - Water sources can be found year round along trail or in general area. Recommended to bring water purification tools if planning on replenishing supply along the way.

Solitude: Lightly Used

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

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

Low and High Elevations: 5,674 and 6,684 feet above sea level

DESCRIPTION

Trail #160 (Miller Springs Trail) climbs steeply out of the river bottom, approximately 400 feet, and then through grassy meadows dotted with Pinon, Oak and Juniper trees. Be aware that the first few miles of this hike have little shade since burning in the 2011 Miller Springs Fire. Once on the ridge, Ponderosa Pine dominate until the junction with Trail #162 (Ring Canyon Trail) in approximately 3 miles. Go right (north) on #162 to the junction with Trail #813 (Ring Canyon Trail). Head north again and then down this beautiful, rock towered canyon, towards the West Fork of the Gila River. Once at the river, head downstream (several river crossings) to the trailhead at the West Fork and Gila Cliff Dwellings. Woody's Corral is approximately a half mile down the Park Road. For a longer hike, stay on #160 and head down to the junction with Little Creek for a shady, mid hike break. At the junction with Little Creek, pick up Trail #161 west to loop back to the Ring Canyon Trail. Please note that in high water this hike can be done as an out and back rather than coming down the West Fork. Please refer to this website regarding water levels before starting your hike: https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nm/nwis/uv?site_no=09430500

GETTING THERE

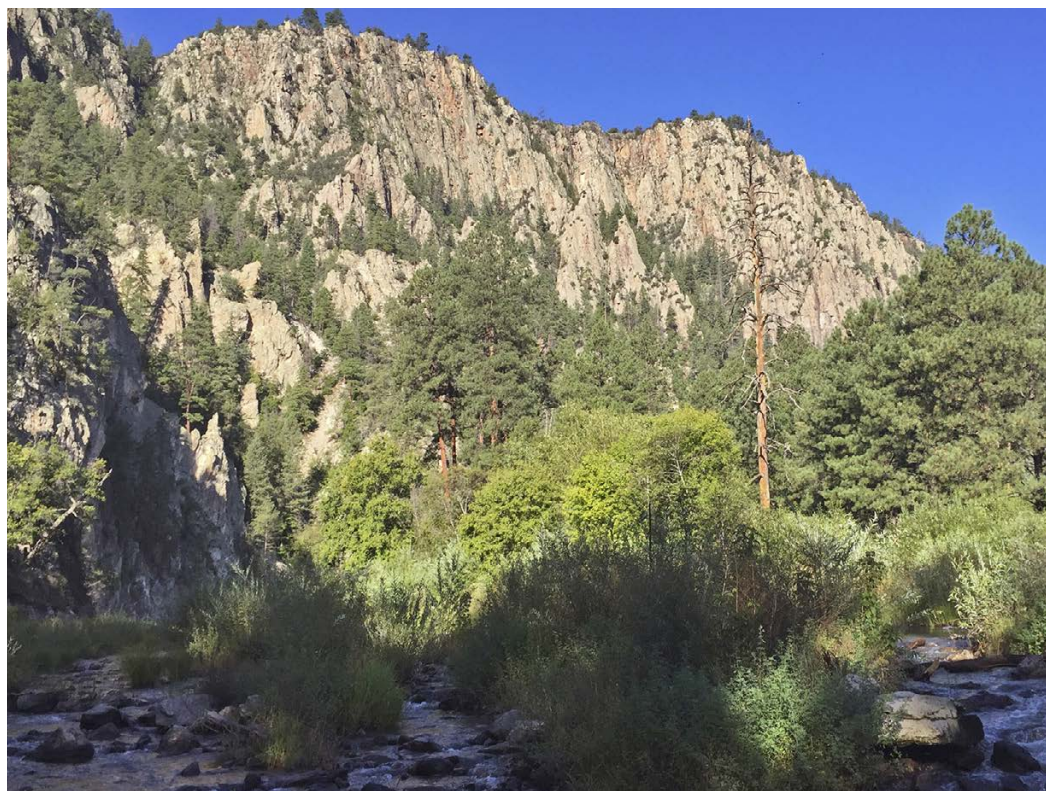
To reach the trailhead, head north on Highway 15 from Silver City toward the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. At the junction to the Visitor Center, turn left towards the Cliff Dwellings. Woody's Corral Trailhead is on the left (south) before the bridge.

ECOSYSTEMS

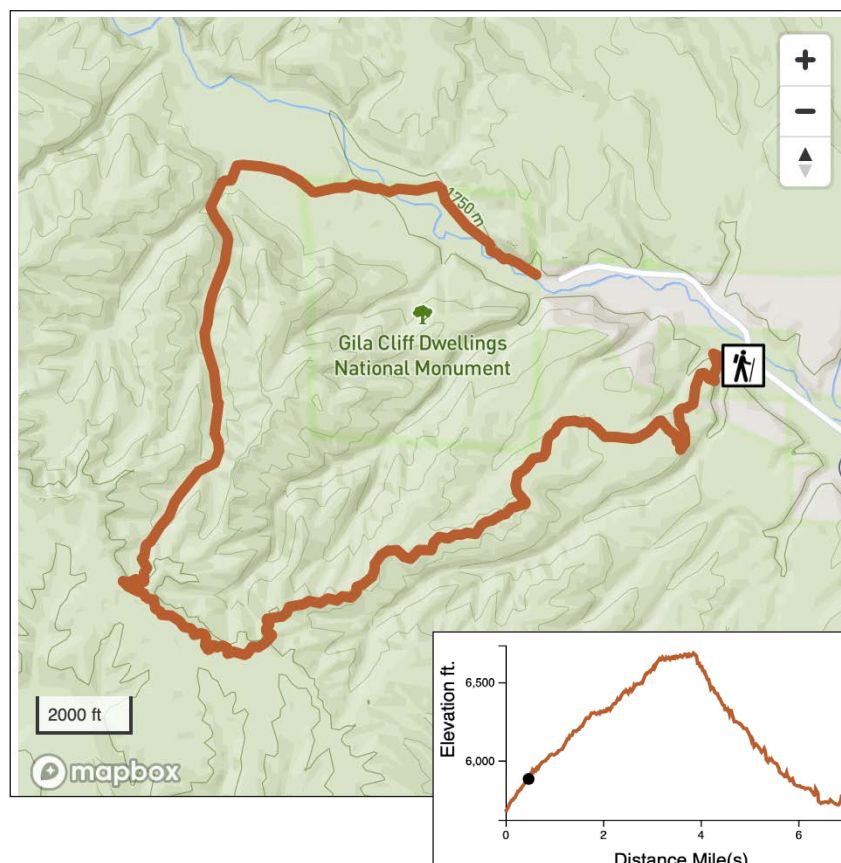
Piñon-juniper: Piñon-juniper woodlands generally occur between 4,500 to 7,500 feet in elevation, transitioning from grasslands or shrublands at lower elevations, and to ponderosa pine or other montane forest associations at higher elevations.

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.

Oak: The main type of Oak that occurs most commonly in New Mexico is the Emory oak, mainly common in the southern reaches of the state. Emory oak is a 30-60 ft. oak with a round crown, very roughly furrowed black bark and nearly evergreen leaves.



The Gila Wilderness is a landscape of steep rhyolite cliffs and lush riparian areas. Staff photo



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.

ABOUT THE GILA WILDERNESS

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

NEW BLM PUBLIC LANDS RULE: A CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY

BY SALLY PAEZ

Federal land managers have a tremendous opportunity to recognize the value of conservation as a land use and manage lands to preserve natural and cultural resources in their new Public Lands Rule. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) published its draft Conservation and Landscape Health Rule, as it is officially known, for public comment in April 2023. A final rule was expected this spring.

The BLM is the nation's largest land manager, overseeing 245 million acres, and plays a critical role in New Mexico, managing over 13.5 million acres of lands across the state—areas vitally important to the conservation of water, wildlife, and cultural resources and to our growing demand for access to the outdoors. The Public Lands Rule presents a generational opportunity to improve BLM's management of our shared federal public lands and resources, to satisfy long-standing directives from Congress, and to address the climate, nature and biodiversity loss, and environmental challenges we are facing.

Adopted in 1976, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires the BLM to

manage federal public lands for “multiple use” and “sustained yield.” As part of that mission, FLPMA directs the BLM to “protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archeological values; where appropriate, preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition; (and) provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife.” The draft Public Lands Rule would implement this law by confirming that conservation is a multiple use on equal footing with extractive and consumptive uses, such as mining and oil and gas development, and by ensuring sustained yield by making sure BLM-managed lands remain healthy and productive to support natural and cultural resources into the future.

To do so, the Public Lands Rule would create a management framework that directs BLM to identify and protect intact landscapes and wildlife habitat, to restore degraded habitat and ecosystems, and to use the best available science and data to make informed decisions. The draft Public Lands Rule addresses key tools like Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, the prevention of unnecessary and undue degradation of our public

lands, and the identification and protection of intact landscapes.

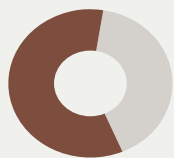
Despite the solid legal and policy justifications for adopting the Public Lands Rule, opponents of conservation-oriented public lands management have raised an array of inaccurate claims that the rule is illegal and inconsistent with BLM's mission. Opponents' arguments are not only absurd; they are also contrary to public opinion in New Mexico. In a 2024 poll conducted by Colorado College (see the infographic below), 79% of New Mexicans surveyed supported a national goal of conserving 30% of America's land and waters by the year 2030, and 83% support the creation of new protected areas. The Public Lands Rule should be implemented to help meet these goals.

New Mexico Wild commends the BLM for undertaking the difficult task of modernizing outdated regulations to promote the responsible stewardship of our shared public resources for current and future generations. We urge our members and supporters to voice strong support for the Public Lands Rule, an important step toward a more sustainable future. ▲

Colorado College's State of the Rockies Project
2024 Conservation in the West Poll

NEW MEXICO

CLIMATE CHANGE



59% believe climate change is an extremely or very serious problem.

69%

have noticed significant effects from climate change over the past ten years.

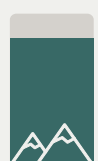


PROTECTING 30X30



79%

support a national goal of conserving 30 percent of America's land and waters by the year 2030.



83%

support the creation of new national parks, national monuments, national wildlife refuges, and tribal protected areas.

WATER SUPPLY



64%

believe inadequate water supply is a serious problem.



74%

think that the low level of water in rivers is a serious problem.

CONSERVATION

57%

believe that loss of habitat for fish and wildlife is an extremely or very serious problem.

80%

support constructing wildlife crossing structures across major highways that intersect with known migration routes.

74%

think more emphasis should be placed on conserving wildlife migration routes than on new development, roads, ranching, or oil and gas production in those areas.

ENERGY ON PUBLIC LANDS

63%

support only allowing oil and gas companies the right to drill in areas where there is high likelihood to actually produce oil and gas.

70%

prefer that leaders place more emphasis on protecting water, air, wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities over maximizing the amount of land available for drilling and mining.

90%

support requiring oil and gas companies, rather than federal and state governments, to pay for all of the clean-up and land restoration costs after drilling is finished.

coloradocollege.edu/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewest

WELCOME NEW STAFF!

Akashia Allen | Conservation GIS Specialist

Akashia was enchanted by the magic of western landscapes in high school when she traveled from the Midwest to backpack in the Colorado Rockies and the Grand Canyon. She went on to earn a B.A. in Biology from Colorado College and an M.S. in Geography, specializing in Geographic Information Sciences, from UNM. Professionally, she has worked in both public and private sector GIS roles. Akashia has called New Mexico home for 24 years.



Marissa Chavez | Wilderness Intern

Marissa was born and raised in Albuquerque. From a young age, she spent time exploring trails with her dogs and grew to love and appreciate wildlife and the outdoors. Her work with organizations like Wildlife Rescue Inc. and the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program inspired her to pursue a career in wildlife conservation. She is currently in her senior year at UNM pursuing a B.S. in biology with a concentration in conservation and a minor in sustainability. She loves hiking, running, and photography.



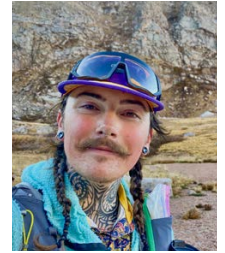
Mollie Fullerton | Grants Manager

Mollie grew up in North Dakota as an indoor child. She started to venture outside to urban green spaces when she moved to Minnesota to attend Macalester College, where she received her B.A. in History and German Studies. After college, she began to discover the magic of wilderness and has been making up for lost time ever since, exploring canyons, waterfalls, rivers, lakes, and peaks. Professionally, Mollie has worked in education and program management at museums and educational institutions.



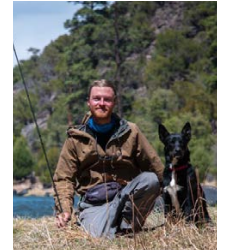
Aidan Manning | Rivers & Waters Program Associate

Aidan grew up in Colorado's semiarid foothills during unprecedented drought. Western waters and wildlands have since taken a central role in their life, drawing them to a B.A. in Ecology at the University of Colorado Boulder, a Ph.D. in Hydrology at the University of Nevada Reno, and environmental science communication roles in Grand Canyon National Park and the San Juan Mountains. Aidan was drawn to Northern New Mexico by the region's diverse and dynamic communities, lands, and waters.



Ben Mortensen | Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte Youth Outreach Coordinator

As a teacher and an avid outdoors person, Ben is passionate about connecting the youth of New Mexico to their public lands. After finishing his undergrad in Environmental Planning and Sustainability at UNM, Ben moved to Taos, where he's worked with the USFS building the Continental Divide Trail, the BLM conducting botanical surveys, and New Mexico Wild as a Wilderness Ranger before becoming a teacher in Taos Public Schools.



BJ Trejo | Southern New Mexico Grassroots Organizer

As an avid outdoorsman, BJ has spent his life exploring the great state that he calls home. Having spent the past 10 years in education, BJ has done his part to show students that there is much to learn outside the traditional four walls of a classroom. This has led BJ to a career that allows him to help ensure that future generations are able to share the same opportunities he has been fortunate enough to have.



THE ALDO LEOPOLD CIRCLE SUPPORTING NEW MEXICO WILD

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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/

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

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- \$35
- \$50
- \$100
- Other amount \$ _____

I want to become a monthly sustaining donor*

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- 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!

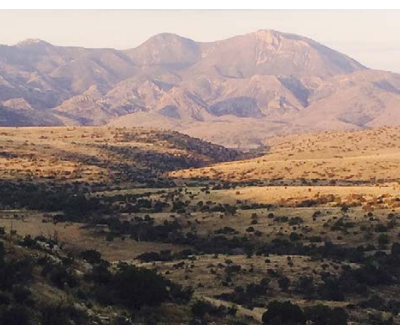


New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
P.O. Box 25464
Albuquerque, NM 87125
Not a member yet? Go to nmwild.org.



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- Pollinators Around the Rio Chama Threatened by Planned Spraying
- Fighting a Power Line Across the Caja del Rio



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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