



Fall/Winter 2025
The Semiannual Publication
of the New Mexico
Wilderness Alliance

NEW MEXICO WILD!

PUBLIC
LANDS
OWNERS
UNITE!



Thousands of New Mexicans
Rally to Keep Public Lands
in Public Hands

New Mexico WILD!

The Semiannual Publication of the
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 2
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | Mark Allison

FINDING COMMON GROUND ON PUBLIC LANDS

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter! In the following pages, you can read about the broad range of activities ranging from advocacy to stewardship that New Mexico Wild is undertaking to protect public lands, waters and wildlife. Learn about the many ways you can become involved in these efforts throughout the state. We need you now more than ever before, as our national public lands and natural world are experiencing devastating harm.



It is a truism that we tend to respond more to threats of something we have being taken away. Frequently this entails a newfound, or reinvigorated, appreciation for what we might have taken for granted or about which we have become complacent. And when something we fundamentally value is at risk, we react and defend with urgency because it is necessary for us to do so.

This was undoubtedly what we witnessed at the public lands rally held in Santa Fe on June 23 to coincide with the Western Governors' Association annual meeting with numerous Trump administration officials in attendance. New Mexico Wild was proud to have instigated and planned that rally and humbled and inspired by the thousands of you who came from near and far to make it the single largest demonstration for public lands in state history.

"This is your lands we are talking about." — Bernard DeVoto

"A republic, if you can keep it."

**—Benjamin Franklin's response to the question,
"Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?"**

We proudly exercised our First Amendment rights, did so peacefully and did so loudly to patriotically defend the birthright to our irreplaceable public lands. It was electric, it was moving. Your voices were heard all over the country. It made a difference, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

Many of us, myself included, are feeling the same way at this moment about the future of our American experiment as a constitutional republic. Just as New Mexico's natural and cultural heritage are inseparable, so, too, I'd argue, are our national public lands and democracy.

Public lands make the United States different from other countries. Unlike a society of landed gentry, all Americans own public lands. You are a public lands owner.

Public lands, at their promise, are an equalizer and accessible to all, regardless of how wealthy you are or where you come from. At a time of historic disparities, this equal footing is, to my mind, fundamental. Americans do not just own public lands; we also have a say in how they are used and how they are managed. We have the ability—and obligation—to participate. That, too, is foundational to democracy.

These lands are inseparable from our traditions, our cultures and our identity. Talking specifically about wilderness, Aldo Leopold asked, "Shall we now exterminate this thing that made us American?" And during a time when we are so divided, the love of public lands can be our literal and figurative common ground and possibly a path toward more understanding and eventual healing.

In "The Open Space of Democracy," Terry Tempest Williams, writes: "A shared love of place opened a dialogue with neighbors. We asked for help. We found partners. We used our collective intelligence to formulate a plan. And then we had to search within ourselves to find what each of us had to give."

Since our last newsletter, the pace of attacks on public lands has only continued to grow. The Public Lands Rule, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Roadless Rule and the National Environmental Policy Act are being weakened or eliminated.

ON THE COVER

New Mexico Wild leads the charge on organizing the largest rally for public lands in New Mexico state history. Photo by Sara Berghold

This is part of an aggressive and comprehensive assault on the very idea and value of conservation and the multiple use doctrine in favor of the already outsized influence of industry and its designs to utilize our shared public lands for private corporate profit. If that sounds vague, it isn't. The on-the-ground effects are real and devastating.

The threat to the Antiquities Act and the national monuments created through this authority, including Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks in Doña Ana County, continue. The protections around the Greater Chaco region to prevent new oil and gas developments and those to prevent new mining in the sensitive Pecos Watershed are being reversed.

And though together—against all odds—we successfully defeated proposals to privatize our public lands through the congressional budget reconciliation process, those cynical efforts continue. Talk about a “land grab!” (A notable historical analog dates to 1946, when stockman groups tried to force the transfer of about 220 million acres of public land to states, which would then sell them off to ranchers for as little as 9 cents an acre. Sound familiar? Thanks to noted historian Bernard DeVoto raising the alarm, the effort was defeated.)

These attacks are coming from Washington, D.C., by politicians completely out of touch with New Mexico's special places, people and cultures and without any meaningful consultation or community engagement. In fact, many of the rollbacks reduce the public's ability to participate and inform management practices on our public lands.

Paradoxically, during this time of national division; political violence; the erosion of the rule of law; attacks on history, science and the constitutional right of free speech; the silencing of critics; the persecution of political opponents; the red flashing warning signs of authoritarianism—a time when we need our public lands more than ever as a place for solace and respite from the turmoil and grief—these very places are at risk of being lost to us.

Imagine how different our lives would be without these places. Think how much poorer we would be as a country without them.

If you made it this far, you are either a masochist or a steadfast supporter of New Mexico Wild (or you should be). I'm glad you did make it because this newsletter also showcases historic successes, passionate people doing remarkable things, upcoming new publications and ambitious plans to increase our legal capacity and grow the number of our already formidable ranks of supporters.

I don't think it's possible to be neutral on saving our public lands or keeping our democracy. I've never felt more patriotic and motivated to do what I can to preserve that which makes this country unique among nations and, however flawed, an idea worth fighting for.

In solidarity,


Mark Allison



Mark set the tone for a peaceful but spirited rally in June. Not pictured: 4,000 public lands enthusiasts itching to make their voices heard in the state capital. Not for sale! Staff photo

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WILDERNESS DISPATCHES

Updates on New Mexico Wild Projects Across the State



The Gila River where it runs through the Gila Wilderness. Photo by Jay Hemphill

WILD, SCENIC AND ROADLESS: THE FIGHT FOR THE GILA RIVER CONTINUES

BY BJORN FREDRICKSON

New Mexicans continue to resoundingly support permanent protections for outstanding rivers and streams in the Gila region under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. We are also fortunate to enjoy an exceptional Congressional delegation that has now introduced and co-sponsored the M.H. Dutch Salmon Greater Gila Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in both the House and Senate in multiple Congresses, most recently in early 2025. As this legislation is pending final passage, the proposed rescission of the Roadless Rule would remove administrative protections from federal lands along 15 of 28 river and stream segments proposed for Wild and Scenic designation, demonstrating the importance of our ongoing work to permanently protect these exceptional rivers and streams in the Gila.

Read more about the Roadless Rule rescission in the article on page 14. ▲▲

CAJA DEL RIO TRANSMISSION PROJECT GETS GREENLIGHT DESPITE FIERCE OPPOSITION

BY SALLY PAEZ

In August 2025, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Santa Fe National Forest (SFNF) issued final decisions authorizing the construction of a 14-mile transmission line across the Caja del Rio Plateau and the Rio Grande to serve Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The Caja del Rio coalition, a group of Indigenous, Hispano and faith leaders; hunters and anglers; and conservation organizations opposes the project and has been working for years to gain long-lasting protection for the area.

In 2022, advocates persuaded the SFNF to include in its new Forest Plan a designated Caja Del Rio Wildlife and Cultural Interpretive Management Area where new transmission lines are prohibited. Under pressure from NNSA and LANL, however, the SFNF has now approved an amendment to the Forest Plan to allow the project to go forward.

The transmission line threatens the Caja's sensitive ecological balance, public access and the health of the Caja's waterways, wildlife habitats and cultural resources. The Caja coalition and sovereign Tribal nations have urged federal agencies to delay the project until a Tribal ethnographic study is complete and environmental concerns are addressed. We are deeply disappointed that the agencies have approved this project despite fierce opposition from a diverse group of stakeholders, and we are committed to continuing our work to secure lasting protection for the Caja. ▲▲



Tetilla Peak on the Caja del Rio Plateau. Photo by Sara Berghold

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

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

Get Involved!
nmwild.org/events





The incredible ruins of Chaco Culture National Historical Park are directly threatened by unfettered energy development on the landscapes surrounding the site. Photo courtesy of Getty Images

GREATER CHACO ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK

BY SALLY PAEZ

Protections for the greater Chaco Canyon landscape are under threat. The Trump administration wants to rescind the 20-year administrative withdrawal of federal lands and minerals within a 10-mile buffer around Chaco Culture National Historical Park to prioritize energy extraction. A majority of New Mexicans oppose this reversal—a poll released earlier this year found that 70% percent of voters want to prohibit energy development on public lands near the park.

It is unclear when a roll-back announcement may be made, but the entire New Mexico congressional delegation is already taking action. In April, Sens. Ben Ray Luján and Martin Heinrich and Reps. Teresa Leger Fernández, Melanie Stansbury and Gabe Vasquez reintroduced the Chaco Cultural Heritage Area Protection Act, which would permanently protect nearly 339,000 acres of federal public lands around the park from new oil and gas leasing. Although only 15% to 20% of this area has been surveyed, approximately 4,200 known archaeological, cultural and historic sites have been found. These sites make up a large cultural landscape significant to numerous Pueblos and Tribes in the Southwest and should be protected as a whole.

The National Congress of American Indians, the All Pueblo Council of Governors, sovereign Tribal nations and local elected officials, as well as a coalition of 25 Indigenous, historic preservation and conservation organizations, have been united in urging the Department of the Interior to uphold the administrative withdrawal. Stay tuned for updates and opportunities to support Chaco. ▲▲

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION PRIORITIZES MINERAL DEVELOPMENT IN UPPER PECOS WATERSHED

BY SALLY PAEZ

The upper Pecos watershed remains at risk from hard rock mining following an abrupt policy reversal by the Trump administration. In December 2024, under the Biden administration, the Department of the Interior (DOI) issued an order that could have led to a 20-year moratorium on new mining claims and development, securing the region’s water and air quality, cultural resources, critical fish and wildlife habitat, and recre-



An angler enjoying the Pecos River. Photo by Tisha Broska

ational values. In February, DOI canceled a public meeting on the proposal, and the Stop Tererro Mine Coalition hosted a community-led public rally instead. Following the rally, advocates submitted 864 individual public comments in support of the mineral withdrawal.

In April, the Department of Agriculture announced that the mineral withdrawal would be canceled to “help boost production of critical minerals,” citing the need “to remove burdensome Biden-era regulations” and expand energy and mineral development on public lands. We expect the agencies to formally terminate the existing protections soon.

In response, U.S. Sens. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján and U.S. Reps. Teresa Leger Fernández and Melanie Stansbury reintroduced the Pecos Watershed Protection Act, which would permanently protect the watershed from new mining claims and development. In these uncertain times, we are exceedingly grateful to our congressional leaders for continuing to stand with the people of New Mexico in our ongoing fight to protect the watershed. ▲▲

You're invited

NEW MEXICO WILD

ROOFTOP SUNSET

HOLIDAY HAPPY HOUR

AND ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING

THURSDAY, DEC. 11 4:30-6:30PM

VOLARE ROOFTOP BAR

IN UPTOWN ABO

DRINKS AND APPS

RSVP: [NMWILD.ORG/EVENT/HOLIDAY-PARTY](https://nmwild.org/event/holiday-party)



WILDERNESS DISPATCHES, CONTINUED

RIO CHAMA MACROINVERTEBRATE SURVEY BUZZES ALONG



With support from the Monastery of Christ in the Desert, in collaboration with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the University of New Mexico, and with extensive volunteer support, we continued our ongoing macroinvertebrate and water quality surveying effort in the Chama River this season.

Volunteers for the Rio Chama macroinvertebrate study are boaters who take a kit from our project staff at launch. In the evenings, they sit by the river's edge and use a light to collect insects in containers. When they arrive at the take-out, New Mexico Wild staff is there to receive the kits and take the samples back for processing. This project helps management agencies measure water quality and other important ecological metrics. Thank you, volunteers! ▲▲

At left and right: These volunteers aren't just smiling because they're about to launch on the Rio Chama's Wild and Scenic section for one of New Mexico's most beloved river trips. They also get to participate in citizen science and contribute to the river's conservation. Float on! Photos by Tayo Basquiat



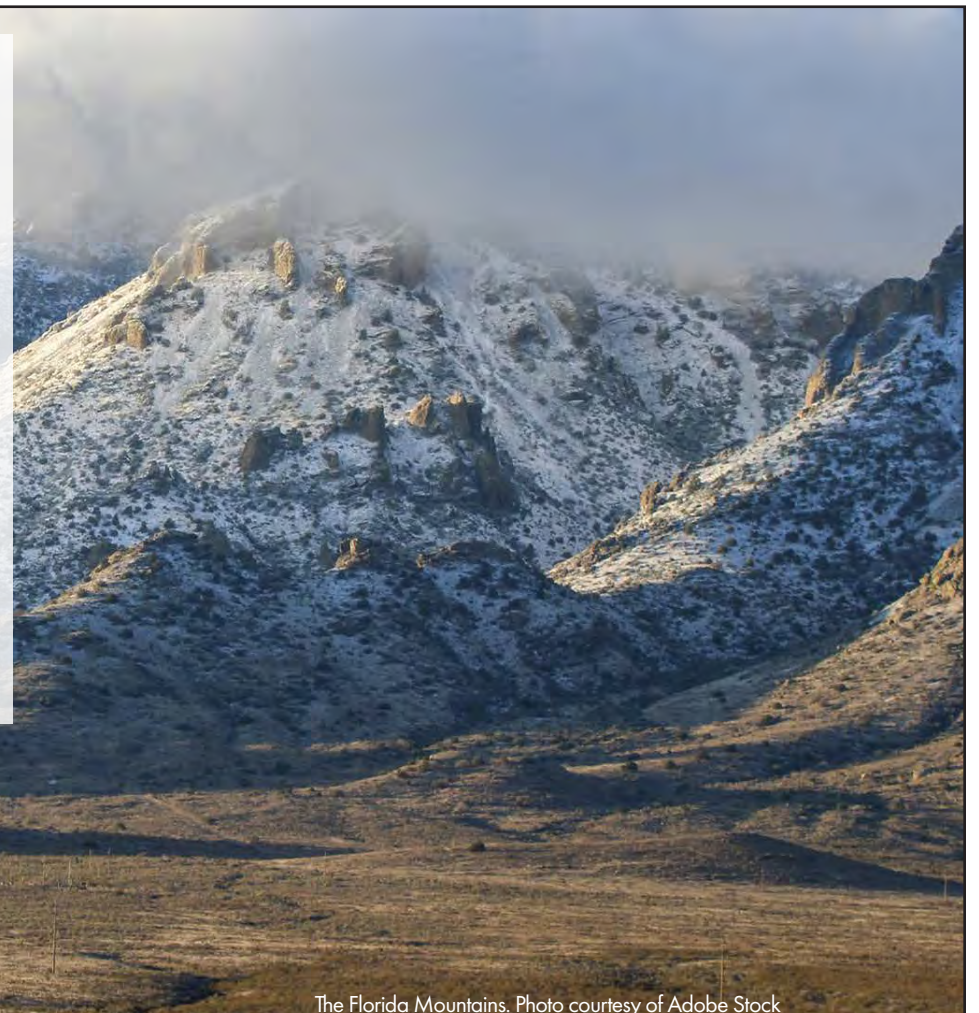
"I spend time regularly in nature to decompress from the fast speed of modern life. My favorite places to hike and camp around the state include the Sandias, the Pecos, the Jemez, the Gila and El Malpais. This is a hobby that allows me to spend time with my partner and live a healthy active lifestyle with little cost other than transportation. This is my favorite way to vacation and spend my free time. As an artist, I also find inspiration from the beauty of nature."

—Laura Peters

BLM AGREES TO ANALYZE TOXIC POLLUTION FROM FLORIDA MOUNTAINS MINE

BY SALLY PAEZ

In July 2025, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) agreed with New Mexico Wild, Friends of the Floridas and other conservation groups to settle a lawsuit over the proposed American Magnesium mine in the Florida Mountains of Luna County, southeast of Deming. The settlement agreement ends an appeal of a federal District Court decision in 2024. The court ruled that the BLM violated the law by approving the mine without considering the environmental impacts of toxic waste that would be generated by the mill that would be necessary to process the magnesium ore. The mill would produce 2,300 tons of magnesium sludge a year, which could harm surface water and underground aquifers. Under the settlement agreement, the BLM will prepare a revised environmental assessment that addresses these water quality impacts and will provide a 30-day public review and comment period. Stay tuned for opportunities to participate. ▲▲



The Florida Mountains. Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock



Trespass cattle have long been a problem in the Valles Caldera. Photo by Silke Bletzer

WILDERNESS DEFENDERS SEE THEIR VOLUNTEER EFFORTS TRANSFORM VALLES CALDERA

BY AKASHIA ALLEN

New Mexico Wild has over 300 Dave Foreman Wilderness Defenders—volunteers who work tirelessly to record the condition of wilderness quality lands and to document impacts and management needs on public lands.

A notable conservation win that Defenders have been integral in helping New Mexico Wild to achieve in recent years relates to trespass cattle within Valles Caldera National Preserve. These trespass cattle enter the preserve from adjacent grazing allotments on the Santa Fe National Forest and for many years have trampled sensitive riparian habitats, impacting a wide array of species, not to mention degrading water quality and recreation opportunities.



Wilderness Defenders monitoring for trespass cattle in the Valles Caldera. Photo by Silke Bletzer

Beginning in 2023, New Mexico Wild deployed Defenders to collect weekly data on the number and location of trespass cattle within the preserve. This data helped us last year to pressure the National Park Service and Forest Service to co-invest in constructing a new fence on the preserve’s boundary and to employ a wrangler to rapidly round up cattle that still find their way into the preserve. Both efforts are ongoing this year. To contribute to these and many other worthy efforts, sign up to volunteer today! ▲▲



Testimonials from two dedicated Defenders sum up the positive impact and rewards:

“The change from previous years is astounding. We stopped at the San Antonio Creek and the banks look so good, nothing is trampled or muddy. Even the corner in Valle San Antonio ... looked healthy and green, not the mud pit it used to be.”

—Silke Bletzer, Wilderness Defender

“I love doing this work! I’ve been visiting Valles Caldera for about 15 years, and my observation is that the grasses are really recovering this year. It looks better than ever ... There are many species of grasses and forbs, which are seeding out, vigorous and dense ... I think it’s due to all the hard work people have contributed to restoration and removing the cows. It’s making a big difference!”

—Susan Harrelson, Wilderness Defender

THANK YOU FOR WEIGHING IN ON THE FUTURE OF THE VALLES CALDERA NATIONAL PRESERVE

STAFF ARTICLE

The incomparable landscape of Valles Caldera National Preserve holds cultural, ecological, hydrological and geological treasures that demand careful stewardship, especially as visitation increases. In August, the National Park Service released its proposed general management plan and associated environmental assessment. These critical documents will guide resource protection and visitor management for decades to come. New Mexico Wild thanks our members and supporters for attending the public meeting and submitting public comments. Together, we advocated for a plan that prioritizes conservation of the preserve’s cultural resources, watersheds, critical wildlife habitats, free-flowing rivers and streams, and intact wilderness-quality lands. Thank you for engaging in this opportunity to shape the future of one of New Mexico’s most precious places! ▲▲

The Dave Foreman Wilderness Defenders Program

Through this program established in the name of one of our most visionary activists, these dedicated volunteers work in designated natural areas in New Mexico, helping to monitor Wilderness values and conditions.



The Wilderness Defenders explored Ceja Pelon to document significant paleontological and geological resources, in light of a proposed oil and gas lease sale by BLM.

WILDERNESS DISPATCHES, CONTINUED



At a Friends event in July, Senator Martin Heinrich spoke about the significance of the Monument and New Mexico's public lands heritage. Staff photo

RIO GRANDE DEL NORTE FRIENDS GROUP TAKES WING

STAFF ARTICLE

The Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument has successfully secured 501(c)(3) tax exempt status and launched as an independent nonprofit organization. New Mexico Wild is proud to have been the fiscal sponsor for this stellar place-based group, whose passionate local staff has already spent over two years doing remarkable work protecting the monument and serving the community.

Beyond their crucial stewardship and advocacy efforts, the friends group has created the Outdoor Academy, a unique program serving Taos area youth. This hands-on education and workforce development initiative connects local young people with the monument and surrounding public lands, building both environmental awareness and career skills. We look forward to our continued partnership with this dedicated organization. ▲▲

“UN POQUITO
PARA MÍ,
UN POQUITO
PARA VOS,
UN POQUITO
PARA LAS
CRIATURAS
DE DIOS”



HONORING OUR COLLEAGUE RALPH VIGIL

STAFF ARTICLE

It is with heavy hearts that we share the loss of our beloved colleague Ralph Vigil. Ralph was a tireless defender of the Pecos Watershed—which he called “the arteries of the mountain”—and his leadership was central to our campaign to protect the Pecos from mining threats.

Ralph's favorite saying captured his philosophy: “*Un poquito para mí, un poquito para vos, un poquito para las criaturas de Dios*” (A little for me, a little for you, and a little for God's creatures). He brought together diverse voices—from traditional Hispano families to conservation groups—helping create and nurture the powerful coalition fighting to protect the Pecos.

We will honor Ralph's legacy by continuing his vital fight to stop the Tererro Mine and permanently protect the Pecos River. His spirit of *querencia*—love of place—guides us forward in our work. ▲▲

RALPH IN HIS OWN WORDS

BY RALPH VIGIL

In the spring, we asked members and supporters to share with us what public lands mean to them. Ralph submitted this response in April. The love of land and water that Ralph explores here permeated everything Ralph did in life.

Public lands have never been just places on a map to me, they're where my family's story is rooted, where memory lives in the land. My father taught me to hunt in the Santa Fe National Forest. I still remember those early mornings, the cold air biting at our cheeks as we hiked through thick pine and aspen. He showed me how to move quietly, how to watch for signs, how to respect the animals and the land. Those lessons weren't just about hunting, they were about patience, responsibility and connection. In high school, the Pecos Wilderness became my escape. I'd ride horseback through its canyons and meadows, feeling like I belonged to something timeless. There's something about being deep in that wilderness, far from roads and noise, that makes you understand who you are. It's where I learned to trust the land and my place in it. But the land holds sorrow, too. Elk Mountain is sacred to my family. In 1949, my grandfather and uncle were struck by lightning while tending cattle there. Both were killed. That mountain still carries the weight of their loss. It's a reminder that public lands are not just beautiful, they're powerful. They're places of life and death, of memory and meaning. Public lands are woven into the fabric of who I am. They've given me food, freedom and connection. They've held my family's joys and tragedies. That's why I fight to protect them—so the next generation can find themselves out there, too.





2025 Ranger Season Stewards Federal and State Lands

STAFF ARTICLE

New Mexico Wild's Wilderness Ranger Program is now nine years strong! This year has marked a contrast to the more exclusively U.S. Forest Service-funded model of previous years. While the Forest Service is still a key partner, this season we also collaborated extensively with the state through New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division grants for trail work and New Mexico Department of Agriculture funds supporting invasive plant removal projects. An increasingly diversified funder, partner and collaborator network has made this initiative even stronger, and we are happy to report we have a crew of nine Wilderness Rangers working on the ground to protect and maintain our state's wild places, including:

In the Santa Fe National Forest:

After carrying out an extensive data collection effort in 2024 spanning the entire trail system within the Hermit's Peak-Calf Canyon burn scar, this season we began the maintenance phase of this project. Coordinating closely with the Forest Service and collaborating with youth crews (Conservation Corps and Rocky Mountain Youth Corps) we've been clearing miles of trail to reopen access and lay the foundation for more intensive maintenance in the future.

In the Gila National Forest:

Between April and June, a crew of four New Mexico Wild Rangers worked in partnership with Heart of the Gila to carry out an extensive invasive plant removal project. We targeted exotic plants threatening native diversity in the Gila, including poison hemlock, bull thistle, Siberian elm and more.

In the Carson National Forest:

New Mexico Wild's community science coordinator is working with volunteers to collect solitude monitoring data across the Columbine Hondo Wilderness, helping to assess locations impacted by high visitor use. We are also working to clear Trampas Trail, a popular access route to the beautiful Trampas Lakes area.

In the Lincoln National Forest:

We are planning some trail work projects toward the end of the season, when field conditions make us wrap up work in the north. ▲▲



Top left: Hats off to New Mexico Wild's 2025 Season Wilderess Rangers! Photo by Vicente Ordonez
Top right: Wilderness Rangers use a crosscut saw to remove deadfall in the Hermit's Peak-Calf Canyon fire burn scar area. Photo by Jax Gaglianese-Woody
Bottom right: Wilderness Rangers carried essential tools hundreds of miles across our public lands this year. Photo by Jax Gaglianese-Woody

VOLUNTEER WITH US!

Our ranger work would not be possible without contributions from our volunteer community, which is engaged in all aspects of the work outlined above. Check out nmwild.org/events and sign up for our newsletter using this QR code to stay in the loop about upcoming events. Going out with our Wilderness Ranger crew is a wonderful way to support our work while connecting with the New Mexico Wild community through backpacking and camping trips in beautiful wilderness areas!



Rollback of BLM's Oil and Gas Rule Will Harm New Mexico

BY SALLY PAEZ

A Trump administration rollback of oil and gas leasing rules could cost New Mexico billions of dollars in royalty revenue for schools, hospitals and infrastructure improvements and limit protections for areas with unique natural and cultural resources.

In April 2024, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved new regulations to modernize the framework for the onshore “Mineral Leases and Leasing Process” on federal public lands (the “Oil and Gas Rule”). This marked the first comprehensive update to the oil and gas regulations in almost 40 years. The Oil and Gas Rule’s modest, common-sense provisions included the following:

- **Increased the royalty rate from 12.5% to 16.67%**
- **Increased the rental rates and minimum bid amounts for leases**
- **Eliminated wasteful, low-cost “non-competitive leasing” that allowed oil and gas companies to lease public lands that are hardly ever put into production**
- **Updated reclamation bonding amounts to more closely approximate clean-up costs**
- **Adopted preference criteria to direct leasing and development toward areas with higher oil and gas potential and to avoid leasing in areas with sensitive cultural, wildlife and recreation resources**

The Oil and Gas Rule did not solve the climate crisis or expedite the needed transition to a clean energy economy, but the reforms held great potential to benefit New Mexico. Our state has two prolific oil and gas producing regions, the Permian Basin and the San Juan Basin, which include vast acreage of federal public lands. The federal government distributes about half of the royalties

from these lands to New Mexico, where it is used to fund our schools, hospitals and other government infrastructure. The updated bonding amounts ensured that New Mexico taxpayers would not be on the hook for expensive clean-up costs. The adoption of sensible preference criteria and the elimination of noncompetitive leasing encouraged leasing in the most productive and efficient locations, avoiding impacts to other resources.

Unfortunately, the Trump administration and Congress have acted swiftly to undo the progress made in the Oil and Gas Rule. Executive Order 14154, “Unleashing American Energy,” directed federal agencies to review and remove regulations “hindering” domestic energy production (despite historic levels of production). The Interior Department responded by issuing an array of new rules, including removing the BLM’s discretion to avoid leasing in places with sensitive resources or low oil and gas development potential. Congress rolled back the royalty rate from 16.67% to 12.5% and reinstated noncompetitive leasing in the July 2025 Budget Reconciliation Bill.

New Mexico will bear much of the impact from these changes. A recent analysis found that New Mexico will lose about \$1.7 billion in royalty revenue from 2026 to 2035 and about \$5.1 billion from 2036 to 2050. Our local BLM offices will no longer have the authority to defer leasing to protect areas with unique natural and cultural resources. Oil and gas companies will be able to secure low-cost leases that lock up vast swaths of public lands, preventing other land uses regardless of actual oil and gas production. We urge everyone to demand better from our federal government and to support policies that benefit our communities and public lands, rather than oil executives. ▲▲

Our local BLM offices will no longer have the authority to defer leasing to protect areas with unique natural and cultural resources.

C3s and C4s Explained: Our Dual Approach to Conservation

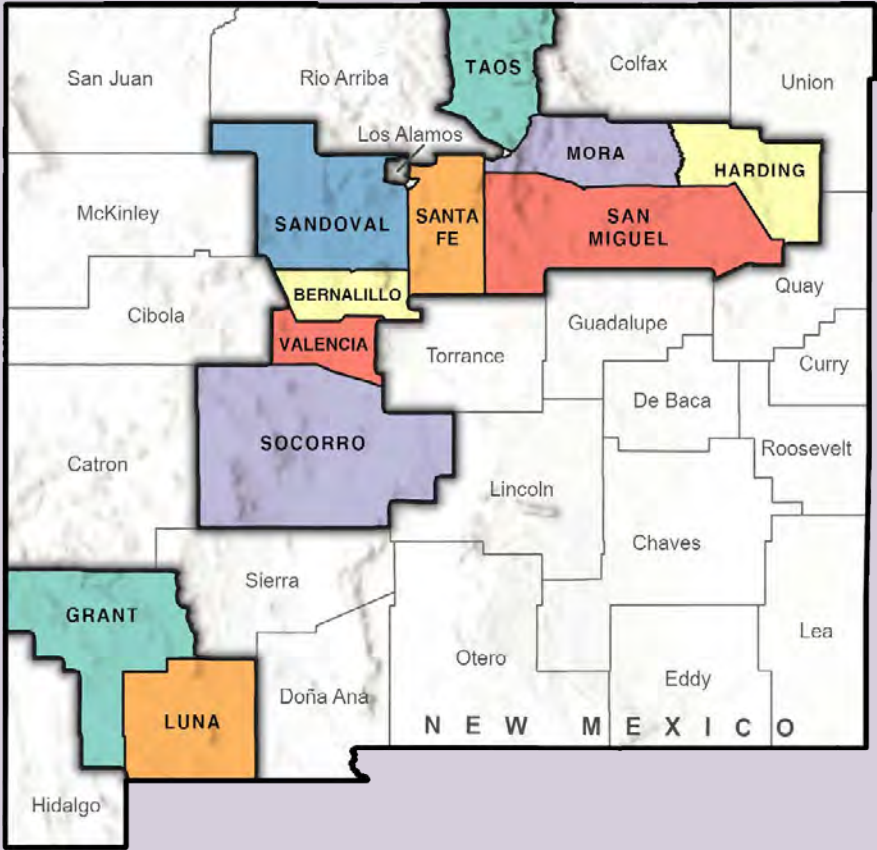
STAFF ARTICLE

New Mexico Wild is a 501(c)(3) organization—a nonprofit focused on education, advocacy, stewardship and building coalitions to protect public lands, waters and wildlife. We get a lot done through this grassroots work, but C3s are strictly prohibited from engaging in electoral activities. That’s why in 2019 we created the New Mexico Wild Action Fund, our 501(c)(4) sister organization. The Action Fund can directly support pro-conservation candidates in local and statewide elections, recruit candidates and engage in campaign activities that the C3 cannot. Both organizations work toward the same crucial conservation goals, but with different tools and capabilities.

Why should I support New Mexico Wild Action Fund?

Local elections decide the future of our vital conservation campaigns. When our federal delegation asks, “Do you have local support?” for wilderness protection, we need pro-conservation county commissioners in campaign areas to say yes. Your donation to the New Mexico Wild Action Fund supports relationships with candidates who share our values and fights anti-conservation forces that can influence rural politics. Small donations make huge impacts in these overlooked races—we’ve already flipped commissions and stopped projects like the Gila River diversion. Help us build the local leadership that our conservation campaigns need to succeed by donating to the Action Fund today.

Contributions to 501(c)(4) organizations are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. ▲▲



NEW MEXICO WILD ACTION FUND PRIORITY COUNTIES 2026

New Mexico Wild Action Fund works at the local and county levels to recruit and elect conservation-minded candidates. County commissions and the resolutions and ordinances that they support or oppose are often the foundation of nascent state and federal policy initiatives. Everything—from keeping public lands in public hands to responsible Mexican gray wolf recovery efforts—is impacted by county commissions. Helping to elect informed and conservation-minded commissioners is a critical part of the overall state and federal conservation policy initiative strategy.

Interested in learning more about serving as a county commissioner? Give us a call at 505-843-8696. ▲▲



THANKING OUR CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION FOR DEFENDING PUBLIC LANDS

New Mexico Wild teamed up with Conservation Voters of New Mexico (CVNM) in August to thank our congressional delegation for their steadfast defense of our public lands in the face of a proposed selloff during the budget reconciliation process. NMW Executive Director Mark Allison presented Senator Martin Heinrich and Congresswoman Melanie



Stansbury with tokens of our appreciation. Although not every member of the delegation could be present, we are thankful that every federal legislator representing New Mexico stands up for our public lands. Photos courtesy of CVNM ▲▲

WE RIES



Outside the Eldorado Hotel in Santa Fe where Western governors and federal officials convened, thousands of protesters turned the plaza into a rallying cry against the proposed sell-off of public lands.



PUBLIC LANDS PROTEST 6.2025



IST



The crowd—estimated at 3,000 to 4,000—brought together ranchers, families, hikers, hunters, and tribal members to oppose the federal effort to privatize millions of acres. This rally was the largest show of support for public lands in our state's history, underscoring the depth of grassroots resistance.



“Not For Sale” echoed for hours through downtown Santa Fe as marchers made their way from De Vargas Park to the Eldorado Hotel. The procession sent a clear message to leaders: New Mexicans will defend their public lands!

Roadless Rule Rescission: Trump's Sellout to Big Timber

BY BJORN FREDRICKSON

Since 2001, prohibitions on road building and commercial logging under the federal Roadless Rule have protected approximately 58.5 million wild and intact acres of our national forests across the country, including 1.6 million roadless acres in New Mexico. At its core, the rule forces balance on the Forest Service and its long history of prioritizing road building for commercial logging interests by establishing a system of Inventoried Roadless Areas to remain undeveloped for the benefit of other values as well as for future generations.

Yet, in its nearly 25-year existence, the Roadless Rule has faced challenges and litigation from timber industry groups and conservative state governments, as well as efforts by the George W. Bush and first Trump administrations to rescind it in full or part. In June of this year, Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins announced at an event in Santa Fe that the current Trump administration would take yet another run at rescinding the rule.

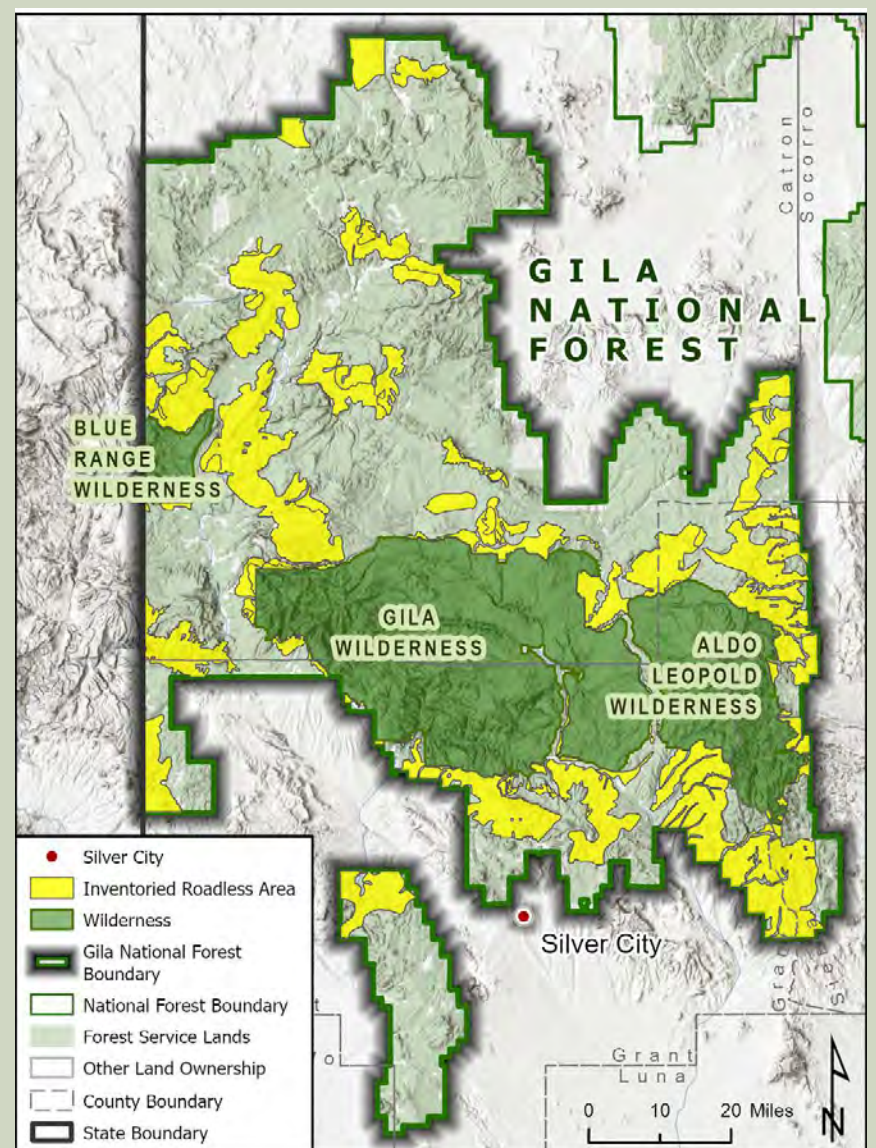
Rescinding the Roadless Rule is being disingenuously framed as essential to reduce wildfire risk. This logic falls hard on its head for two reasons. First, the rule explicitly allows tree cutting and the removal of timber from Inventoried Roadless Areas for the purpose of reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Indeed, the Forest Service has proposed and implemented restoration treatments to reduce hazardous fuels in Inventoried Roadless Areas in numerous instances in recent years right here New Mexico. And second, wildfires are significantly less likely to occur in roadless as compared to roaded areas. Specifically, federal wildfire data shows that per acre, wildfires start approximately four times more often in close proximity to roads than within Inventoried Roadless Areas. This data makes sense when one considers that about 85% of wildfires nationally are human-caused and roads facilitate easy public access into the backcountry—more people in the woods simply means more wildfire.

The real reason the Trump administration seeks to repeal the Roadless Rule is more sinister and while not explicitly articulated, right before our eyes. While Americans of all stripes came together to defeat recent efforts by certain Republican politicians to sell off our public lands, Trump has issued executive orders and launched deregulatory efforts to sell out these very lands and our communities to oil and gas, mining, coal, and now, timber industry interests. By rescinding the Roadless Rule, the Trump administration is greasing the skids to increase commercial logging on public lands by 25% as decreed in a recent executive order.

We will be rallying communities across New Mexico to fight this attempt to rescind the Roadless Rule because it is bad policy. Bad for wildlife, bad for watersheds and water quality, bad for recreationists, bad for cultural resources and sacred sites, and bad for the climate. In September, we submitted technical comments to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, opposing its proposed rescission of the Roadless Rule. This initial comment period was brief, but we anticipate a second comment period in 2026 prior to a final decision later in the year on the fate of the rule.

Stay up to date on Roadless Rule developments by becoming a member of New Mexico Wild or signing up

for our email alerts. We will keep our supporters apprised of opportunities to make your voice heard to defend this critical conservation tool and our wild, roadless places. ▲▲



The Gila National Forest has a wealth of Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs), shown in yellow. There are dozens of additional IRAs in the other national forests across New Mexico. See our interactive web map to explore statewide: bit.ly/roadlessmap

ROADLESS RULES FAQs

Icons courtesy of Vecteezy

By rescinding the Roadless Rule, the Trump administration is greasing the skids to increase commercial logging on public lands by 25%

What is the Roadless Rule?

The Roadless Rule is a federal policy implemented in 2001 to establish basic protections for Inventoried Roadless Areas on national forests across the United States. The Inventoried Roadless Areas at the heart of the rule are undeveloped, mostly roadless tracts of backcountry forest land identified during the rulemaking process as having a high degree of air and water quality; undisturbed soils; an important role in providing municipal water supplies; diverse wildlife and botanical communities; habitat for threatened, endangered and sensitive species; quiet recreation opportunities; outstanding scenery; traditional cultural properties and sacred sites; and other locally important characteristics. To protect this array of values, the Roadless Rule prohibits the Forest Service from constructing or reconstructing roads and authorizing timber cutting within Inventoried Roadless Areas, with limited exceptions.



How Much Land is Protected Under the Rule?

Nationally, the Roadless Rule established approximately 58.5 million acres of Inventoried Roadless Areas, equating to about 30% of the National Forest System. In New Mexico, we have approximately 1.6 million acres of Inventoried Roadless Areas, an area more than twice the size of Bernalillo County and equivalent to the size of the Santa Fe National Forest.

Why was the Rule Established?

The Forest Service has a multiple use mission that ostensibly seeks to balance resource extraction with other values such as wildlife, fish, watersheds and recreation. Yet, in its early years through the 1990s, the agency over-emphasized commercial logging. And to get the cut out, the Forest Service built what it has estimated to be in excess of 380,000 miles of roads across our national forests, a staggering distance that is equivalent to approximately eight times the length of our Interstate Highway System or 15 trips around the Earth's equator. This ballooning road network, coupled with extensive logging and clearcutting, has fragmented wildlife habitat, polluted streams with sedimentation, imperiled a wide array of terrestrial and aquatic species, degraded scenery and recreation opportunities, and damaged cultural resources across the country. Ultimately, these issues prompted the American people to demand change in how the Forest Service implemented its mission. The Clinton administration heard these demands, hosted more than 600 listening sessions and collected approximately 1.6 million public comments—the vast majority in favor of protecting roadless lands—and in 2001 established the Roadless Rule to protect some areas from logging and roadbuilding.



What is the Problem with Roads (and Why are Inventoried Roadless Areas Important)?



While roads provide access for people to use and enjoy our national forests as well as access for management needs, they also come with drawbacks. For one, roads are correlated with wildfire. Based on federal wildfire data, people are the cause of most wildfires nationally, and areas near roads experience about four times the number of wildfires per acre than roadless areas. Roads also fragment wildlife habitat, resulting in an inability for many species to migrate to meet needs related to shelter, food and breeding. Roads increase noise in remote areas, disturbing both wildlife and people seeking solitude and quiet recreation experiences. Erosion on roads in our forests is a major driver in the degradation of water quality from sedimentation and other pollutants, adversely affecting aquatic species along with downstream communities and agricultural users. Inventoried Roadless Areas are therefore important because they represent balance in the management of our national forests and experience fewer wildfires, protect wildlife habitat, retain a sense of quiet for species and people alike, and protect water quality. Lastly, Inventoried Roadless Areas represent some of the best remaining opportunities to enhance protections for our remaining wildlands through wilderness designation.

Can the Forest Service Manage Inventoried Roadless Areas?

The Roadless Rule allows a great degree of management flexibility within Inventoried Roadless Areas. Even the rule's prohibitions against constructing or reconstructing roads and authorizing timber cutting in Inventoried Roadless Areas have exceptions. Roads can be built to facilitate disaster response and protect public safety, allow access to private property, and allow access to exercise other legal rights. Timber cutting can be authorized to reduce hazardous fuels to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfire; to improve habitat for threatened, endangered and sensitive species; and to provide firewood for personal use. Additionally, within Inventoried Roadless Areas the Forest Service can implement projects to restore watersheds, improve habitat, manage grazing, promote recreation and more.



What can People do in Inventoried Roadless Areas?

The public can enjoy hiking, camping, backpacking, hunting, fishing, rock climbing, paddling, horse riding, mountain biking and, where authorized, motorized recreation within Inventoried Roadless Areas. Roadless areas are also available for traditional, cultural and ceremonial uses by Indigenous and other communities.





GET OUT!

An Excerpt from New Mexico Wild's Upcoming Wild Waters River Guide

Map by Akashia Allen



SAPILLO CREEK

Gila Wilderness

Location: Southwestern New Mexico in Grant County, about 170 miles southwest of Albuquerque and 100 miles northwest of Las Cruces

Segment description: From the point at which Sapillo Creek enters the Gila Wilderness to its confluence with the Gila River

Segment length: 7.2 miles

Elevation range: 5,761 to 5,178 feet

Land ownership/management: Gila National Forest

Featured recreational uses: Canyoneering, fishing, hiking, backpacking

Best seasons: Year-round

River access: The Spring Canyon Trail (#247) is the common way to visit Sapillo. This trail runs along Sapillo Creek near the wilderness boundary before climbing to the ridge above, then drops back to the creek just before the creek's confluence with the Gila River. From Silver City, travel north on Highway 15 (Pinos Altos Road) about 22 miles to the junction with Highway 35. The trailhead isn't marked, so you'll need to look for a small pullout near the highway where you can park. Be sure not to block any gates or driveways, as some of the land nearby is privately owned.

SAPILLO CREEK IS A CLASSIC GILA CANYON, AND ITS INNER NARROWS IS THE CLASSIC BOX CANYON.

Running generally east to west, Sapillo undergoes a dramatic character transformation between its crossing with Highway 15 and where it finally meets the Gila River, downstream and within the depths of the Gila Wilderness. It's a lazy, willow-lined creek that passes through small meadows along the highway; then, the pools deepen and the walls rise as Sapillo flows downhill into its gorge. Eventually the creek enters its inner box—perhaps the preeminent example of a “box canyon” in all the Gila. Multiple small waterfalls and tributary slot canyons feed into this exquisitely carved, narrow crevice, and between the cliff walls are deep pools—a wondrous experience for the seasoned adventurer.

It's trailless for much of its length, so the best way to visit the splendors of Sapillo's inner box is from the “bottom up,” accessed via the end of Spring Canyon Trail (#247) or Sheep Corral Trail (#231). Note that the dirt road to the Sheep Corral Trailhead may require a high-clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle. Alternatively, backpackers may access these lower reaches from the Gila River Trail (#724) during periods of lower water in the Gila River. Anglers, picnickers, and more casual day hikers can enjoy Sapillo's lush, gentler upper reaches by parking along Highway 15 and following the upper portion of Spring Canyon Trail (#247) until it veers away from the creek.

Be prepared to get wet, and even swim, to reach the more astounding parts of the box. As is the case with all Gila-area streams, frequent water crossings demand a well-draining shoe, a sense of adventure, and a positive attitude. Fed by the tailwaters of Lake Roberts and shielded from direct sun by towering cliff walls, the



A male elegant trogon. Photo by Lenny Worthington

waters of the inner Sapillo may be the coldest in the Gila. The creek flows through ancient volcanic formations, primarily composed of rhyolite and tuff, which are remnants of massive eruptions from the Mogollon volcanic field more than 30 million years ago.

Along with the Gila River's three "Forks," Sapillo Creek is one of the major tributaries of the Gila River, weaving its way through the Gila National Forest before joining the Gila River about 8 miles west of Lake Roberts as the crow flies. It's a short, narrow waterway, but the cool and perennial Sapillo is a significant vein of life in this arid landscape, supporting an incredible array of flora and fauna. Along the riparian

corridor, cottonwoods, willows, and sycamores thrive, providing critical habitat for bird species. The elegant trogon, a tropical bird rarely seen in the U.S., has been spotted along the Sapillo, joining red-tailed hawks, great horned owls, and migratory songbirds. Mule deer, javelinas, and black bears likewise frequent the creek's banks, while mountain lions utilize the creek to move undetected across the landscape. The threatened Chiricahua leopard frog and threatened Gila trout can be found in the creek alongside the native longfin dace, desert sucker and nonnative fish species such as rainbow trout and brown trout, and hybridized rainbow-Gila trout.

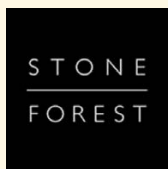


Photo by Jim O'Donnell

Archaeological evidence indicates that the Mimbres people inhabited the watershed about 1,000 years ago. Ceramics and petroglyphs found near Sapillo Creek suggest that the Mimbres lived in semipermanent towns, relying on the fertile floodplains for agriculture and the rich wetlands for hunting. Later, Apache peoples hunted the Sapillo watershed, utilizing the creek's canyon and dense vegetation for cover as both the American and Mexican governments waged war on them.

Prior to Euro-American colonization in southwestern New Mexico, Sapillo Creek fed extensive wetlands. Today, most of these rich wetland ecosystems have been converted to semi-dry pastureland and monocropped farms. In addition to these changes in landform and ecological function, grazing contributes to erosion and water-quality issues in Sapillo Creek. ▲▲

**Special thanks to the
sponsors of the
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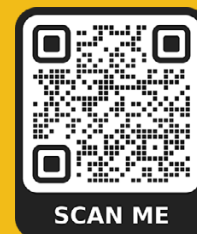
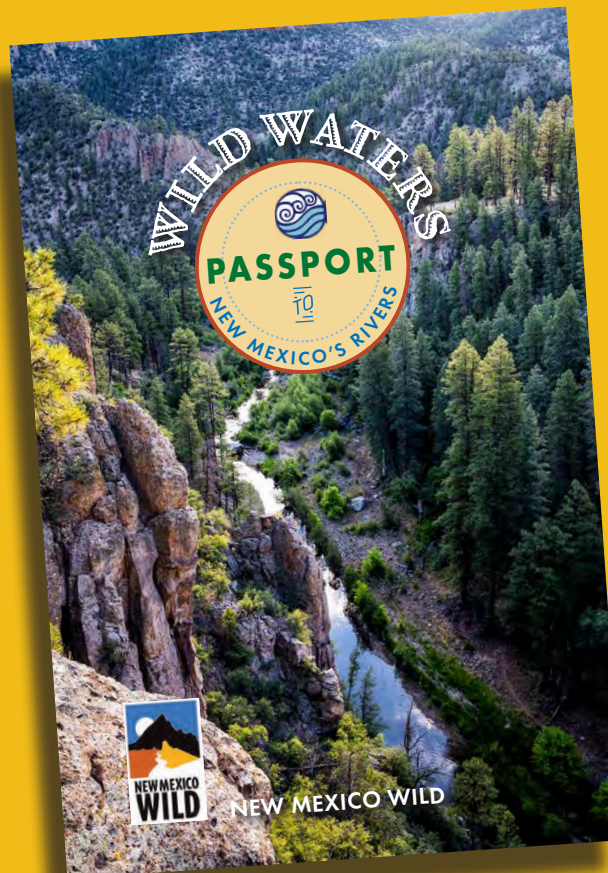


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Wild Waters: Passport to New Mexico's Rivers

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SCAN ME

CELEBRATING CLEAN WATER PROTECTIONS

BY TRICIA SNYDER

The 2025 New Mexico Legislative session included passage of one of the most important water-related bills the state has seen in recent years.

SB 21 sets the framework for a state-led surface water quality permitting program, covering a gap left by the U.S. Supreme Court decision Sackett vs. EPA, which removed federal Clean Water Act protections from 95% of our waterways and 88% of wetlands. Thankfully, New Mexico's legislature recognized this critical vulnerability and acted, ensuring our most precious resource is protected for future generations. Special thanks to sponsors Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth, Sen. Roberto "Bobby" J. Gonzales and Rep. Kristina Ortez!

The next step will be to complete an administrative rulemaking process. A critical question the legislature still must answer is how the program will be funded, either fully through state-appropriated funds, by assessing fees on water quality permits or some hybrid of the two, which is the option most other states take. New Mexico Wild staff continue to engage and will be working to ensure the intent of the bill—retaining clean water protections that have allowed New Mexico's communities, environment and economy to thrive for over 50 years—is realized.

Swimmers enjoying the water at the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. Photo by Tisha Broska



priated funds, by assessing fees on water quality permits or some hybrid of the two, which is the option most other states take. New Mexico Wild staff continue to engage and will be working to ensure the intent of the bill—retaining clean water protections that have allowed New Mexico's communities, environment and economy to thrive for over 50 years—is realized.

As this process continues, we'll keep members and supporters updated on the highlights and how you can engage to support this important effort. ▲▲

As this process continues, we'll keep members and supporters updated on the highlights and how you can engage to support this important effort. ▲▲



"As a young teen, I was introduced to the splendor of public lands during summers spent in the Southwest, camping in places like the Grand Canyon, Bryce and Zion national parks. We also hiked and camped on BLM and national forest land that provided solitude and grandeur that made a lasting impression on me as I became an adult. As a professional geologist, I have had the privilege of spending time working in some of the remotest places on Earth, far from the trappings of civilization. A connection to wilderness is a fundamental right of all Americans where our government has designated public lands to belong to all of us. As Wallace Stegner said, "The best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst." And they provide all of us an opportunity to gain the wisdom and knowledge that nature imparts to us. Public lands must be protected and preserved for future generations to gain that knowledge that only nature can teach us." —John Bloch

COMMUNITIES PLAN FOR A FUTURE WITH LESS WATER

BY DR. AIDAN MANNING

As chile fields, riverbeds and habitats go dry across our state, New Mexicans are wondering how we'll make do with 25% less water in the coming decades.

Thanks to the Interstate Stream Commission's (ISC) revamped regional planning process, the answers will be locally driven. This planning

process has real potential to bring legislative attention and state funding to the local water projects, programs and policies that communities deem most critical. In this process, each of nine regions around the state will receive state support to convene planning councils composed of local leaders and stakeholders. Those councils will be tasked with developing regional water plans that include prioritized lists to guide state dollars to these efforts.

gional councils and their water plans, with an official rulemaking hearing in mid-October. Through research and public comment, New Mexico Wild is working to ensure that these rules foster sustainable, equitable plans that consider environmental and traditional water needs. To find out more about regional water planning, including your proposed region and next steps, visit the ISC's planning website: MainstreamNM.org. ▲▲



The dry bed of the Rio Grande, where it normally flows through Albuquerque. Staff photo

Done well, regional water plans could help implement the genuine water solutions New Mexico needs: solutions that are nature-based, backed by science and that provide sustainable benefits to ecosystems and communities alike. Efforts like river and wetland restoration, thoughtful beaver reintroduction and improving environmental flows have been shown to support healthy ecosystems, local recreation economies, water quality and endangered species.

Right now, the regional water planning process is at a critical stage. The ISC is developing a ruleset on the requirements for re-

CHECK OUT OUR CAREERS PAGE FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO JOIN OUR TEAM.

Apply@nmwild.org/careers



CALL FOR ARTISTS: ENTER THE 2026 WOLF STAMP CONTEST!

Help Save the Lobo by Tapping into Your Creative Side!

New Mexico Wild invites artists of all ages and skill levels to submit original artwork for our 2026 Mexican Gray Wolf Conservation Stamp Contest. We welcome all two-dimensional drawings, paintings and photographs featuring the Mexican gray wolf. No generative AI artwork will be accepted. The winning piece from the adult category will be printed on the 2026 stamp. Proceeds from stamp sales will directly support Mexican gray wolf conservation and education programs. The winner of the youth category will receive a special prize pack!

Grand Prize: \$250

Submit your art by February 25, 2026.

For complete rules and to enter, visit nmwild.org/WolfStamp

Your creativity can make a difference
in wolf conservation!



STANDING UP FOR WOLVES

BY LUKE KOENIG

In recent months, several southern New Mexico counties, led by Catron County, have passed a spate of so-called emergency declarations targeting the critically endangered Mexican gray wolf. Even more alarming, U.S. House Republicans introduced legislation in July to remove the species from the Endangered Species Act—an action that could push the wolves toward extinction.

On the ground, however, a different story is unfolding. In August, nearly 100 people gathered in Silver City for an event hosted by New Mexico Wild and



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the Center for Biological Diversity to learn the facts about wolf recovery. That same day, the iconic wolf Asha and her mate were rereleased into the wild. A week later, advocates traveled from Silver City to a New Mexico Game and Fish Commission meeting in Reserve to speak in support of wolves. Ultimately, and despite Catron County Commissioners' hopes for a one-sided narrative, most public commentators backed wolf recovery.

Earlier that same week, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham fired Game and Fish Commissioner Sabrina Pack for failure to disclose a conflict of interest after it was revealed that Pack had been privately communicating with the head of a cattle grower's association and a county commissioner regarding a strategic marketing plan aimed at shifting policies around Mexican wolf management.

Meanwhile, hundreds across New Mexico have signed our petition urging the governor to reject Catron County's declaration and support science-based wolf management that protects wildlife and rural communities alike.

Yes, there are those who would rather see protections for wolves go away. But many more of us believe wolves belong. We may not hold all the power in government—but we are raising our voices, and we are being heard. ▲



THE FUTURE OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN NEW MEXICO

284 SPECIES ADDED TO WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

STAFF ARTICLE

An update to New Mexico's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) is underway. This important tool for wildlife management has been deployed in every state to guide wildlife management decisions based on the best available science and to make state governments eligible for federal State and Tribal Wildlife Grants to do wildlife conservation work to prevent new endangered species listings.

New Mexico's SWAP incorporates input from a broad array of stakeholders from the public, government agencies and Tribes and Pueblos. It examines habitat, threats, needed conservation actions and research and monitoring

plans for New Mexico's outstanding wildlife population, comprised of almost 6,000 known species.

The SWAP must be updated regularly, and the newest iteration of the plan adds a staggering 284 species to the Species of Greatest Conservation Need list, including for the first time pollinating insects. The plan was just approved by the State Game Commission. To be considered finalized, however, the plan must be reviewed and approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This final step is critical to securing federal funding and to the ability of wildlife managers in the state to protect New Mexico's incredible biodiversity. ▲▲



STATE WILDLIFE REFORMS TAKING EFFECT IN 2026

STAFF ARTICLE

Some much needed changes to state wildlife management are just around the corner thanks to the passage of Senate Bill 5 in the 2025 legislative session. The transformation of the Department of Game and Fish as specified in the bill will begin to take effect in 2026.

The department will become the Department of Wildlife officially on July 1, 2026, codifying its shift in focus from primarily game and fish species to all wildlife species in New Mexico. The expanded scope of the agency will be made possible by enhanced funding, with an increase in license fees to take effect in April 2026. That increase is expected to contribute \$11 million per year to the department's budget.

Aside from one key provision removed from the law by the governor's line-item veto, reforms to modernize and depoliticize the State Game Commission will take effect on Jan. 1, 2027.

The department's evolution is timely, as new threats of climate change and development increase, and federal land and wildlife management change for the worse. ▲▲

Protect Otero Mesa:

THE SOUTHWEST'S LAST GREAT
CHIHUAHUA GRASSLAND

LEARN HOW AT
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Art by Ivan Hall

A Changing Legal Landscape: National Environmental Policy Act

BY SALLY PAEZ

New Mexico Wild and our members and supporters routinely engage in opportunities to provide public input on federal public land decisions subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). When NEPA went into effect in 1970, it became the first landmark environmental law in the United States. In passing the law, Congress recognized the importance of protecting environmental and cultural resources

from the impacts of population growth, development and resource extraction. NEPA provides a critical tool for encouraging responsible stewardship of our public lands by requiring federal agencies to take a hard look at the environmental consequences of major federal actions and to consider alternatives that might reduce environmental harm. The law also requires federal agencies to give citizens a voice before making a decision.

After decades of relative stability, the legal framework for implementing NEPA has been changing at an unprecedented pace. Attacks to NEPA have come from Congress, the White House and the U.S. Supreme Court. Congress overhauled the law a couple of years ago and again in the July 2025 Reconciliation Bill; these reforms are ostensibly aimed at streamlining procedures and speeding up environmental reviews. Additionally, the Trump administration has eliminated the nationwide regulations that once guided the NEPA process and has issued an array of executive orders intended to shorten and minimize environmental reviews. What this means is that our collective rights and ability to meaningfully engage on project reviews—or even be aware of them in some instances—is being significantly constrained.

The biggest legal change comes from a Supreme Court decision in a case called *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition vs. Eagle County*, issued in May. In a unanimous decision, the court concluded that NEPA reviews do not need to consider projects separate in time and place from the project at issue, such as associated increases in greenhouse gas emissions, for example. Additionally, the Supreme Court directed federal courts to defer to agencies regarding the proper scope of NEPA reviews. This decision will limit the types of effects that agencies must consider under NEPA and will

reduce the likelihood of environmental organizations succeeding in future NEPA lawsuits.

While the full impact of these changes is yet to be seen, NEPA remains the law, and New Mexico Wild will continue working to achieve the law's goal of transparent, reasoned decision-making that takes our natural and cultural resources into account. Thank you for standing with us as we continue to advocate for public participation and informed analysis in future public lands decisions.



NEPA provides a critical tool for encouraging responsible stewardship of our public lands.



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



New Mexico Wild Legal+Outreach Fund

New Mexico Wild launched our Legal+Outreach Fund to fight back against threats to our public lands on two fronts: filing lawsuits to stop, delay, or mitigate the worst of these threats using the courts and mobilizing public support to protect the lands we all treasure.

We need your help. Every dollar you give helps us:

- Fund legal action to delay or stop harmful policies
- Educate the public about these threats
- Protect the places you love for future generations

**The threats are real. The time is now.
Your support makes the difference.**



Give Today

TRANSITIONS

WARM WELCOMES AND FOND FAREWELLS ON OUR BOARD

Please join us in welcoming our newest board member, **Alicia Edwards**. Alicia recently retired as coordinator for Healthy Kids Healthy Communities Grant County, which implements initiatives creating policy and environmental changes to increase access to healthy eating and physical activity in schools and communities. She previously served as executive director of the Volunteer Center and the Commons Center for Food Security and Sustainability, working to end hunger and poverty in Grant County through social justice-rooted projects designed to increase community self-sufficiency and resiliency.



Alicia helped found the Grant County Food Policy Council, Grant County Community Foundation and New Mexico Collaboration to End Hunger. She has served on the Southwest Regional Food Policy Council, Grant County Community Health Council, Gila Regional Medical Center governing board and two terms on the Grant County Board of Commissioners. In retirement, she is honored to serve on a board that aligns with her vision and values.

Meanwhile, we are extending our gratitude and fond farewells to our departing board members.

Sam DesGeorges, a lifelong champion of public lands and retired Bureau of Land Management Taos Field Manager, enriched our board with his extensive regulatory expertise and profound understanding of the Taos region's remarkable public lands and waters. Thank you, Sam, for a decade of dedicated service!



Carol Johnson's love of wilderness fueled an amazing 12-year stint on New Mexico Wild's board. Carol has been a fierce and passionate advocate for the land and water of the Pecos Wilderness and the surrounding areas still in need of permanent protection. Thank you for your years of inspiring service, Carol! ▲▲



WELCOME NEW STAFF!

Janice Varela | Northern New Mexico Organizer

Janice served as San Miguel County Commissioner from 2016-2024 and has over 30 years of nonprofit experience. A lifelong Pecos resident with deep family roots, she has dedicated her adult life to protecting the Pecos River from damage and pollution. Her legacy includes teaching village children to swim in the river, which her own children and grandchildren now enjoy.



Janice worked for Rio de las Gallinas Acequias defending water rights during the Pecos River adjudication and served as an organizer and specialist for the New Mexico Acequia Association. As an elected official, she helped achieve Outstanding National Resource Waters status for the Pecos River and tributaries. Janice is excited to join the New Mexico Wild team to continue public lands protection work.

Nell Decker | Communications Specialist

Congratulations to Nell Decker, former Nancy Morton Wilderness Intern, now our newest full-time staff member. As our Communications Specialist, Nell is supporting the communications team in expanding our reach online to connect with new supporters of all ages and backgrounds. Welcome to the team, Nell!

istration. He has also worked toward protections for Otero Mesa, and on the Mexican gray wolf recovery effort.

Nathan's political career has been an impressive one. He serves in a powerful leadership position in the state legislature as chair of the House Appropriations and Finance Committee, with immense influence over the state's budget. He has exhibited great leadership on a range of conservation issues, including wildlife reform and the establishment of the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund. Nathan has recently determined that he needed to devote his time and energy more completely to that critical work.

He has our thanks, appreciation, and admiration for his many contributions while at New Mexico Wild. We will continue to work with him to protect New Mexico's lands, waters, and wildlife. Thanks, Nathan, for everything! ▲▲



THANKS FOR A GREAT 20 YEARS, NATHAN!

Nathan Small started out with us as a fresh-faced college graduate, recruiting new members 20 years ago. He contributed much during this time, highlighted by the New Mexico Wild-led campaign that saw the creation of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument (OMDP) in Doña Ana County in 2014. It is not an exaggeration to say that without Nathan (and his colleague state Senator Jeff Steinborn—also a New Mexico Wild organizer at the time), there wouldn't be an OMDP National Monument. Later, Nathan helped lead the successful effort to defend OMDP against attacks on the monument during the first Trump admin-

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Another Way to Give: QCD

By making a QCD (Qualified Charitable Distribution) of funds from your IRA, you can make a gift that may be excluded from your taxable income and you receive the benefit of supporting New Mexico's Wilderness. You can also designate New Mexico Wild to receive Required Minimum Distributions (RMD) from your retirement plan.

Learn more at
nmwild.org/other-ways-to-give



Photo by Gene Vance

ALDO LEOPOLD CIRCLE MEMBERS ENJOY SPECIAL OUTINGS YEAR-ROUND

New Mexico Wild Board Chair Wendy Brown is a career biologist who worked with Sandhill cranes for years. Her crane tour with Aldo Leopold Circle members in January was charmingly snowy and educational. Being a member of the Circle provides special outing opportunities with experts and senior staff for a unique glimpse into our work and the wild world we work to protect. ▲▲

"I am in a master's degree program at the University of New Mexico, studying landscape architecture. I hope that I can bring nature into urban areas instead of urban areas into nature. I take my son into the woods and the desert every time I can, and I see the peace it brings him, just like it does me. The wild lands of America are where our collective soul resides—it is what makes me proud to be an American. I care not for fast cars or football or hot dogs. I care about the big trees and the open skies and the stories of everybody who has managed to make a good life alongside nature. To lose her to the whims of a handful of rich people who seem bent on sending us all to bunkers underground or to a miserable life on an uninhabitable planet is lunacy, it is heartbreak, it is a death."
—Nikoma Henkels



THE ALDO LEOPOLD CIRCLE
SUPPORTING NEW MEXICO WILD



Many thanks to everyone at New Mexico Wild for your unending care and persistence in preserving the treasures of New Mexico. Your commitment to working with citizens and local agencies, as well as legal efforts, is a unique approach that is much needed.
—Lois Farrington

THE ALDO LEOPOLD CIRCLE IS A SPECIAL GROUP OF NEW MEXICO WILD MEMBERS WHO HELP SUSTAIN OUR VITAL WORK.

Members of the Aldo Leopold Circle contribute \$1,000 or more each year to New Mexico Wild or plan to remember us in their estate. Members of this group participate in special events and outings and receive exclusive briefings on conservation issues in New Mexico.

[Learn more about the Circle on our website](#)



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

I want to make a one-time donation

- ☐ \$25 (Student/Senior)
- ☐ \$35
- ☐ \$50
- ☐ \$100
- ☐ Other amount \$_____

*I want to become a monthly sustaining donor**

- ☐ \$10
- ☐ \$30
- ☐ \$60
- ☐ \$100
- ☐ Other amount \$_____



*If you are already a monthly sustainer, thank you! You can use this form to increase your recurring donation. Donations totaling \$1,000 or more over the course of a year become members of our Aldo Leopold Circle.

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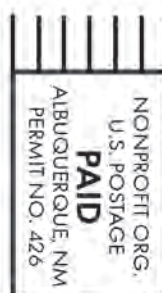
Other payment options:
1) Enclose your check payable to: New Mexico Wild
2) Donate online at nmwild.org/donate

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



New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
P.O. Box 25464
Albuquerque, NM 87125

Not a member yet? Go to nmwild.org.



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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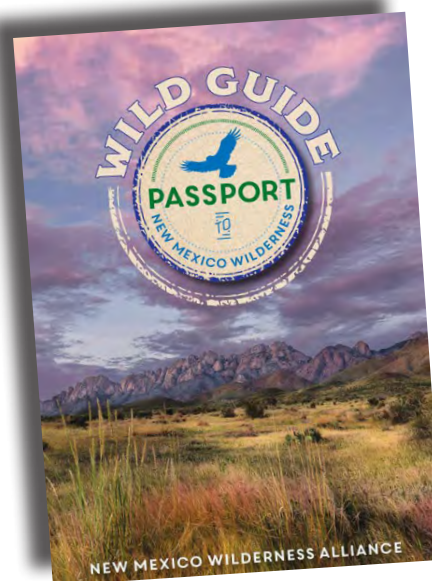
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